

Thoughts, attitudes, and intentions under personal nostalgia

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Abstract: *Nostalgia is often examined in the marketing literature as a 'single' response. However, Personal nostalgia as a specific type of nostalgic response is experiencing an increase in investigation within the marketing literature. This nostalgic appeal is also frequently utilized in the marketplace for a range of product categories. Important consumer behavior reactions such as cognitive, attitudinal, and purchase intent responses are all expected to be significantly influenced as a result of the specific nostalgic appeal type used. This research uses regression to examine cognition, attitude towards the advert, attitude towards the brand, and intention to purchase the brand, in consumers experiencing a personal nostalgic response. Although the association between consumer's cognitive, attitudinal and purchase intent responses to advertising appeals is widely examined, the connection between these reactions when experiencing specifically personal nostalgia have not been empirically examined. The results further the understanding of how this specific type of nostalgia influences these important consumer behavior responses. For managers, the possible benefits and detrimental effects of using personal nostalgia are examined.*

Keywords: nostalgia, cognition, attitudes, personal nostalgia

The study examines the connections between cognition, attitudes and intentions when respondents are exposed to a personal nostalgic advertisement. Although many studies have examined these connections before and found varying results, they have not been examined under these conditions. This study begins to fulfil this empirical research gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nostalgia

A number of academics have discussed the existence of different 'types' of nostalgia, most commonly in the forms of 'Personal' or 'Historical' nostalgia (e.g. Baker and Kennedy 1994; Batcho 1995; Havlena and Holak 1991; Hirsch 1992; Holak and Havlena 1992; Marchegiani and Phau 2010, Stern 1992a, 1992b). 'Personal Nostalgia' is commonly referenced as responses generated from a personally remembered past ('the way I was'), while 'Historical Nostalgia' are responses generated from a time in history that the respondent did not experience directly, even a time before they were born ('the way it was') (Havlena and Holak 1991; Stern 1992b). Despite the two types of nostalgia being identified, few empirical studies

examine these types independently of one another. The common definition of nostalgia indicating a time ‘when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood, or even before birth)’ (Holbrook and Schindler 1991) is a good example of the ‘unified’ view of nostalgia in which both the personal (adolescence, childhood etc.) and historical / non-personal times (i.e. ‘before birth’) are combined. This definition is of course accurate in terms of the unified view, but evidence suggests marketers may wish to be wary of testing nostalgic appeals by grouping the origin of the nostalgic reaction together in this way. Stern’s (1992a) work draws some conclusions as to the differences in the nostalgic types in providing differences in the types of characters, values, settings and similar in each type. Cues for evoking the two types are also shown to vary, as well as the fact that Personal Nostalgia is expected to use ‘autobiographical / real’ memories (Brewer 1986; Neisser 1988) while Historical Nostalgia will use more ‘collective / imaginary’ (Halbwachs 1950; 1992) memory processes. This change in cognitive responses and associated reactions are expected to result in a change in other consumer behaviour responses such as attitudes, intentions, and more.

Cognition, Attitudes, and Intentions

Cognition: Cognition refers to the thoughts of the consumer. These thoughts may occur consciously and unconsciously. It is logical that consumers will experience some cognitive effect before exposure affects behaviour, even if they are unaware of it themselves. These include (but are not limited to) awareness, memory and attitude towards the brand and advertisement (Vakratsas and Ambler 1999). Exposure to nostalgic cues has been shown to affect the viewer’s thought process (Muehling and Spratt 2004). Any exposure to any element will entail some cognitive reaction, but empirical studies have shown that exposure to nostalgia may result in some effects significant to marketers. This includes generation of a greater number of nostalgic thoughts; fewer brand related messages, and a more positively valenced set of nostalgic thoughts (Muehling and Spratt 2004).

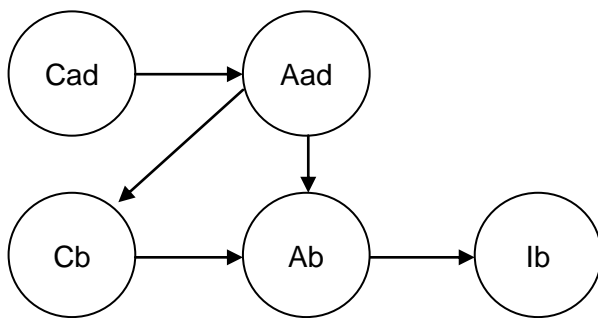
Attitude: Attitude is defined as ‘the psychological tendency of a person to respond, or behave, in a consistently positive or negative manner with respect to a stimulus as a result of their attitude towards the stimulus’ (Page and Luding 2003). The responses generated by adverts have a relation to (1) the formation of an attitude towards the brand (see Edell and Burke 1987; Holbrook and O’Shaughnessy 1984; Mitchell 1986; Ray and Batra 1983), and (2) the formation of an attitude towards the advertisements / expression of likeability to the advert itself (see Aaker, Stayman, and Hagerty 1986; Batra and Ray 1986; Machleit and Wilson 1988; Stayman and Aaker 1988). Previous studies support the notion that individuals exposed to a nostalgic advert and experienced nostalgic thoughts held more favourable attitudes towards the advert and brand, than did those exposed to a non-nostalgic ad (Muehling and Sprott 2004; Pascal, Sprott, and Muehling 2002). This transfer affect has significant implication for marketers as it provides another tool in influencing consumer behaviour.

Purchase Intentions: Schlosser (2003) defines purchase intentions as people’s ‘predictions about their own behaviour’. Anderson (1983) proposes that people’s expectation about their own behavior depends partially on their ability to imagine themselves performing the behavior. Schlosser (2003, p. 187) also discusses how “...the easier and more vividly individuals can envision a scenario, the higher their likelihood estimates that the scenario will occur (Bone and Ellen 1992; Kahneman and Tversky 1982; Sherman et al. 1985).” A positive relationship between ad-evoked nostalgia (measured by a 10-item Likert scale) and attitudes toward the ad, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions was identified when individuals’ responses to nostalgic print ads was examined (Pascal, Sprott, and Muehling 2002). However, this study, as others, is limited to nostalgia as a ‘unified’ concept with no distinction between nostalgic types. How consumers may react dependent on the specific type of nostalgia experience is open to questions. More thorough information on nostalgia’s influence on purchase intention is a gap in the literature that deserves future research.

KEY UNDERPINNING AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The major theoretical underpinning for this study is the Dual Mediation Hypothesis (DMH) (MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch 1986). This model illustrates the relationship from initial exposure leading to cognition, through to attitudes and purchase intentions, and is shown at Figure 1. These connections are discussed in detail subsequently. The hypothesis in this study uses the DMH model as a base to examine the connections under the personal nostalgic context in order to re-confirm / examine the connections and any changes in the suggested paths. Edell and Burke's (1987) 'conceptual model of the role of feelings in advertising', helps to also illustrate these connections.

Figure 1: Dual Mediation Hypothesis



(Adapted from MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch 1986)

C_{ad} represents ad cognitions

C_b represents brand cognitions

A_{ad} represents attitude towards the ad

A_b represents attitude towards the brand

I_b represents intention to purchase the brand

MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch (1986) examined this model along with three other alternative models and suggested the DMH as being '...superior to the three competing specification of the causal mediating role of Aad' (p. 140). This model has achieved mixed success in the literature but has, as discussed by Geuens and De Pelsmacker (1998), received the most support (at the time) as a means of '...representing the interrelationships between Aad, brand and ad cognitions, Ab and PI [purchase intent]' (MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch 1986, Brown

and Stayman 1992, Homer 1990, Homer and Yoon 1992)...” (p. 1). Although they do discuss that this model does not specifically take into account the role of feelings. Only some connections between these responses under nostalgic influence have also been explored. However, as discussed throughout this research, knowledge of any changes in direction or strength of these connections under the distinct nostalgic reactions is unknown. The justifications for the connections made in the DMH are discussed at length by MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch (1986). As an overview, however, these are discussed in brief and this is drawn chiefly from the MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch (1986) study. For instance the ad-related cognitions (Cad) are seen as determining Aad, a relationship demonstrated in previous studies (Lutz, MacKenzie, and Belch 1983; MacKenzie and Lutz 1983). This logic is also based on the multiattribute attitude models (e.g. Mitchell and Olson 1981) and cognitive response (e.g. Wright 1973). Likewise, brand-related cognitions (Cb), stimulated by ad exposure, are put forward as causal antecedents of attitude towards brand (Ab) consistently, and are based on the same logic. MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch (1986) also state how the direct casual relationship from Ab and brand purchase intention (Ib) ($Ab \rightarrow Ib$) has considerable evidence of support under the ‘extended’ Fishbein model (see Ryan and Bonfield 1975). Thus the initial support for the linkages of $Cad \rightarrow Aad$, $Cb \rightarrow Ab$, and $Ab \rightarrow Ib$, is revealed. The $Aad \rightarrow Cb$ linkage, as explained in MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch (1986), is developed from a cognitive structure / cognitive response model of communication effects (Lutz and Swasy 1977). They go on to say that this linkage represents the “...notion of ad affect as one of a general class of persuasion ‘cues’ (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975) that can either enhance or diminish the acceptance of message content” (pp. 132). However, it should be mentioned that this was the case under a low-involvement condition. It should also be noted that the $Cb \rightarrow Ab$ relationship was not supported in MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch (1986), a finding they suggest was possibly due to the measure of Cb, or due to a more ‘peripheral processing’ (e.g.

Petty and Cacioppo 1981) situation being evoked. The DMH in original form actually suggests that the "...central and peripheral processes are 'intertwined' rather than substitutes for one another" (MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch 1986, p. 132). In regards to the Aad → Ab link, Mitchell and Olson (1981) found using covariance analysis that Aad explained significant variance in Ab beyond that contributed by measures of brand beliefs and evaluations. The Aad → Ab linkage is shown in the study to be consistent with prior research (e.g. Gardner 1985; Mitchell and Olson 1981; Park and Young 1984; Shimp 1981). Park and Young (1984) reported that Aad dominated both cognitive response and expectancy-time-value measures in the prediction of Ab under low involvement and "affective involvement" conditions (however no significance was found in high involvement... researchers may wish to test this under different circumstances). In addition, the Aad → Ab link in the model can be viewed as representing the peripheral route to persuasion in Petty and Cacioppo's (1981) elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch 1986). The ELM falls under the heading of 'Persuasive Hierarchy Models (CA)' (Vakratsas and Ambler 1999). The discussed pathways are expected to be reconfirmed under the nostalgic conditions and as such the hypothesis is presented:

Hypothesis 1: The following will be significant under the personal nostalgic condition:

- a) Thoughts about the advert exerts positive influence on Attitude towards the advert
- b) Attitude towards the advert exerts positive influence on Attitude towards the brand
- c) Attitude towards the advert exerts positive influence on Thoughts about the brand
- d) Thoughts about the brand exerts positive influence on Attitude towards the brand
- e) Attitude towards the brand exerts positive influence on Intention to purchase the brand
- f) Thoughts about the brand partially mediates between Attitude towards the advert and Attitude towards the brand

METHODOLOGY

Development of the stimulus

The hypothesis in this study is tested through an empirical research design. The stimulus is a conceptual advert shown in the form of a conceptual broadcast style advert and was pre-tested with respondents similar to that of the main study in three focus groups. It was designed in keeping with the information discussed in the literature review, especially Stern's (1992a) findings of Personal Nostalgia cues (although these were in reference to romance books) as to which elements / cues would be included. Consequently, this meant the Personal Nostalgia advert uses 'familiar / real-life' characters in 'sentimental / tearful' roles. Kodak is the brand / product chosen for the study. This brand is successfully used in past studies of nostalgia (Muehling and Spratt 2004). The photographs used in the advertisements were found on public Internet sites and in personal and friends photo albums. Pictures were chosen through three focus groups for the Personal Nostalgia advert if they had the personal nostalgic elements of warmth, references to family, special occasions, and similar aspects. The chosen pictures were also considered suitable for Personal Nostalgia as they referenced being a child, and the respondents (being undergraduate students) were all old enough to have lived through the presented periods of life. Feature attributes of the brand included a reference of 'quality and reliability'. Copy used was developed by the researchers based on the literature on Personal Nostalgia and includes terms such as 'remember your past' and 'when you were young'. Students of the same university and of similar life stations, ages, and ethnicities to those of the main study were used in pre-tests of the advertisements and study instruments. This was conducted in a classroom setting (as per the main study) and was completed in the same fashion as was intended for the main study. After this time an open discussion on the aspects of the test was allowed in order to identify any problems with survey instructions, layout, or procedure.

Research participants (sample)

The researcher was responsible for all collection, entering and analysis of the data, with the exception of the two independent judges used to code the thoughts in the study.

Undergraduate students studying at a large Western Australian university are the subjects for the study. No incentives were provided for completion of the survey. Student sampling has been proposed as being representative of general consumers (Yavas 1994) and the use of students in this study is beneficial as they provided a relatively homogenous sample for the experimental study. For example, there was less chance of data being corrupted by other influences such as consumers 'life station', age differences, past historical experiences and differences in brand / product recognition / familiarity. Students have also been used in past studies on nostalgia (Muehling and Sprott 2004) and evidence of personal nostalgic appeals can be seen in the market place targeting these consumers. The age of the sample was restricted to 18 to 26. Subjects deemed unsuitable due to age, or with a large number of missing values (greater than five missing) were removed. The true intention of the study was not revealed.

Survey Instruments

The survey instrument consists of a thought collection exercise, survey style instruments on attitudes and intentions, a manipulation check, and demographic information collection.

These elements are discussed subsequently.

Measures: Thought – A thought elicitation exercise was used in order to collect data on the thoughts generated by respondents. As in line with previous studies (Muehling and Sprott 2004) no mention of nostalgia was made prior to this and the instrument was completed immediately after viewing the advert. This exercise required respondents to list all thoughts that came to mind as they viewed the ads in separate boxes on the survey instrument. They

were given three minutes to complete this task (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 1998).

Respondents were then asked to evaluate the thoughts listed as either positively, negatively, or neutrally valenced by placing a "+," "-", or "0" next to each (as per Muehling and Sprott 2004; Wright 1980). Wording of the instructions for this instrument were adapted from previous studies (Homer 1990; MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch 1986) and read:

“In the spaces below, please write down all the thoughts that went through your mind when viewing the advert for [item was inserted here]. Please list all the thoughts (not the mere content of the ad) that occurred and your reaction during the viewing of the ad. Do not worry about spelling and punctuation.”

At a later stage, as per the existing literature and past studies (e.g. Baumgartner, Sujan and Bettman 1992; Muehling and Sprott 2004; Sujan, Bettman and Baumgartner 1993) two judges working independently, blind to the treatment conditions, coded the thoughts. Thoughts receive one of five codes: brand / message-related, ad execution-related, Personal Nostalgia-related, Historical Nostalgia-related, or miscellaneous. These categories are used in Muehling and Sprott's (2004) study, except the 'personal' and 'historical' categories are not specified (as the study was looking at a unified version of nostalgia). Interjudge reliability was calculated and disagreements resolved by discussion between the two judges (e.g. Cipolli et al. 2001; Gentner, Loewenstein, and Thompson 2003; Homer and Yoon 1992; Judge and Ilies 2002; Muehling and Sprott 2004). The suitability of this technique is indicated in its use by previous academics as referenced. Next, as discussed in MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986) who credit Calder, Insko, and Yandell (1974) for the original method, an index of each category was formed by subtracting the total number of negative statements (in relation to the desired category) from the total number of positive statements. Each index represents the net valence of the cognitions included in the categories to form the index. The assumption underlying the use of these indices is consistent with the theory underlying the Fishbein

multiattribute model, which is widely used for measuring cognitive structures (e.g. Lutz 1975). This assumption is that consumers employ some form of compensatory processing in combining their cognitive reactions to marketing stimuli. Means and standard deviations of these indices can then be produced thus assisting in data analysis for the study.

Measures: Attitude towards advertisement and brand - This study drew upon previous research to develop a four-item, 7-point semantic differential scale for each measure (Aad and Ab). The same seven-point scales are used by academics in previous tests of Aad and Ab under nostalgic situation (Muehling and Sprott 2004; Pascal, Sprott and Muehling 2002). On both occasions these scales show a Cronbach's alpha of .90 or above. To measure Aad, the four items used were; good/bad, favourable / unfavourable, positive / negative, pleasant / unpleasant. To measure Ab the items used were; good / bad, like / dislike, favourable / unfavourable, valuable/worthless.

Measures: Purchase intentions - Intentions to purchase the brand (Ib) are measured alongside Aad and Ab in Pascal, Sprott and Muehling's (2002) study of nostalgia. This is also the study from which the previously discussed attitudinal measures were taken from. The instrument consists of three-items in the form of a 7-point semantic scale. Previous Cronbach's alpha for this instrument are shown as > .90. Respondents were posed with the question of 'would you purchase this product?' and items available for Ib were; Likely / Unlikely, Probable / Improbable, Possible / Impossible.

Measures: Manipulation check - The Personal Nostalgia Scale (Marchegiani and Phau 2011) is used to test whether the advert is successful in establishing Personal Nostalgia.

Measures: Demographics - The respondent's age, gender, occupation, and country of origin were collected to ensure there were no demographic influencing factors between groups, especially regarding the respondent's age.

DATA ANALYSIS

Respondent characteristic and manipulation check

Respondents aged 18-26 (M=20.6). Males account for 208 respondents (49.5%) and females 212. Australia was the country of origin reported highest by respondents (42.1%) with the remained spread across 58 other countries of origin. The average Personal Nostalgic Scale score is 5.8 on a 7 point scale, indicating the stimulus did create a personal nostalgic response.

Hypothesis results

The hypothesis states the influence will be significant under the personal nostalgic condition for each paths. Linear regression and Barron and Kenny's (1986) is used to analysis H1.

H1a) 'Thoughts about the advert' exerts positive influence on 'Attitude towards the advert' – Accepted: A linear regression analysis revealed that Cad is a significant predictor of Aad ($\beta = .29, p = .000$), accounting for 12.5% of the variance in Aad.

H1b) 'Attitude towards the advert' exerts positive influence on 'Attitude towards the brand' – Accepted: A linear regression analysis revealed that Aad is a significant predictor of Ab ($\beta = .33, p = .000$), accounting for 14.4% of the variance in Ab.

H1c) 'Attitude towards the advert' exerts positive influence on 'Thoughts about the brand' – Accepted: A linear regression analysis revealed that Aad is a significant predictor of Cb ($\beta = .10, p = .000$), but accounts for just 2.9% of the variance in Cb.

H1d) 'Thoughts about the brand' exerts positive influence on 'Attitude towards the brand' – Accepted: A linear regression analysis revealed that Cb is a significant predictor of Ab ($\beta = .24, p = .001$), but accounts for just 2.6% of the variance in Ab.

H1e) 'Attitude towards the brand' exerts positive influence on 'Intention to purchase the brand' – Accepted: A linear regression analysis revealed that Ab is a significant predictor of Ib ($\beta = .83, p = .000$), accounting for 33% of the variance in Ib.

H1f) ‘Thoughts about the brand’ partially mediates between ‘Attitude towards the advert’ and ‘Attitude towards the brand’ – Accepted: Ab was regressed on Aad and Cb. These two predictors account for a relatively small amount of the variance in Ab ($R^2 = .153$), although this is significant, $F(2,417) = 37.78$, $p=.000$. Baron and Kenny’s (1986) approach was used to establish partial mediation, and both the Aad ($\beta = .31$, $p=.000$) and the Cb ($\beta=.15$, $p = .030$) demonstrated significant effects on the Cb score.

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study supports the cognition, attitudes, and purchase intentions connections made in the DMH model with consumers experiencing personal nostalgia. However, many of the antecedences explain very little of the dependent variables tested, and a number of suggestions for future research are thus discussed subsequently. In terms of contributions, the findings imply that the personal nostalgia experienced by respondents may have altered the strength of the usual pathways suggested in the Dual Mediation Hypothesis model. As this result may be due to the personal nostalgic scenario employed it is not an indication of the model’s accuracy under other conditions. More specifically, in terms of MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch’s (1986) model, the study supports the Cad \rightarrow Aad relationship, confirming that the thoughts about the ad predict attitude towards the ad when respondents experience personal nostalgia. However, this did account for just 12.5%, which suggests inclusion of thoughts from other categories could be used to better explain Aad. In particular, the nostalgic related thoughts may prove to be a significant indicator of Aad as nostalgic thoughts tend to be positive and prior research shows respondent’s experiencing nostalgia will have more positive Aad. This should be tested in future research. The Aad \rightarrow Ab relationship found by previous researchers was also supported and lends further support Aad as a potentially important mediator of brand attitude formation. The Aad \rightarrow Cb, and Cb \rightarrow Ab connections reveal a

potential issue with the study. The Aad → Cb link is found to be moderate in MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986), but in this study, although significant, it can be considered to be weak predictor. MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986) found that Cb → Ab was not significant, and although this study does find significance, it is again a weak predictor, similar to findings by Park and Young (1984) when including Aad as a predictor of Cb. This may be due to a problem in the Cb measure (as per MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch 1986) or may indicate that under the personal nostalgic condition alternative models may fit better; for example, the Affect Transfer Hypothesis model suggested by other researchers (e.g. Gardner 1985; Mitchell and Olson 1981; Moore and Hutchinson 1983, 1985; Park and Young 1984; Shimp 1981) which posits a direct one-way causal flow from Aad to Ab. The choice of a familiar brand and the level of involvement in the experiment may also have clouded these results. Finally, the Ab → Ib link was supported, and this in fact performed the best with Ab accounting for 33% of the variance in Ib. The discussed results have implications for academics in the support they provide for the connections between the measures under the personal nostalgic condition, although it has also resulted in a number of questions that future studies would need to answer. The similarity in results by MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986) indicates that the scenario explored in this study could be considered low involvement and that under the nostalgic response the processing method was more peripheral rather than central, however future studies would need to confirm this. From a managerial perspective this study begins to indicate the possible differences in consumers' experiencing specifically personal nostalgia. This is of significance to marketers when trying to decide which elements and cues will be included in their advertising. However, this is only a first step in the required research to understand personal nostalgia and a number of limitations and future research directions are suggested next.

As mentioned, in some cases only a very small amount of predictive capabilities was shown, especially regarding cognitions about the brand. There is a need to examine the way cognitions about the brand is measured. This alone could explain some of the weak predations in the model. This also can imply there is a need to examine including other measures in order to better predict the attitudes and intentions of consumers experiencing personal nostalgia. In particular, a measure of emotions and nostalgic thoughts would be expected to significantly improve the model. This should be undertaken in further analysis. The analysis also failed to test overall model fit and alternative models. This also is an important step to take in future research as the connections between the tested measures have received a number of suggested alternatives by researchers. Using a process such as structural equation modelling would be a worthwhile undertaking to examine alternative models and paths. The research also is undertaken on respondents exposed to a personal nostalgic advert. There are a number of suggestions regarding this; first, it would be worthwhile to compare respondents experiencing varying levels of this response (e.g. low vs. high). Second, comparing a group of respondent's when also exposed to a non-nostalgic advert would draw better comparisons. Third, this should also be undertaken under and compared to respondents experiencing historical nostalgia to further the understanding of the expected differences in these two responses. The use of Kodak as the brand may also have influenced respondents, and research with different brands, product categories, responses in high and low involvement products, and with brands with varying levels of familiarity are needed to generalise any results. Generalizability is also an issue due to the respondent characteristic; non-student populations, varying age groups, and cultural background are also worthwhile to examine. While this research does make a contribution to the existent literature, it is really only a first step in understanding these consumer responses and the personal and historical nostalgic appeals.

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