

## **The Role of Nostalgia in Consumer Decision Making in Slovenia**

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Over the past few decades, the concept of nostalgia has been gaining momentum in consumer research. Nostalgia is often defined as a bittersweet yearning from the past, which helps consumers to maintain their own identity in many life experiences (Holak & Havlena, 1998; Holak, Havlena & Matveev, 2005). Consumers more often choose moments full of happiness as well as pleasure and relate to them in present-day life (Nostalgia: benefits of our bittersweet memories, 2016). Many scholars define nostalgia only as a universal emotion, which could be positive or negative (Holak & Havlena, 1998; Sedikides, Wildschut & Baden, 2004; Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt & Routledge, 2006). In today's fast-paced world where days are full of stress and tension, nostalgia brings "good old" memories and helps many retailers to gain competitive advantage, increase brand perception and maximize profit (Sharma, 2013). Four types of nostalgia have been identified in the literature: personal, interpersonal, cultural, and virtual nostalgia (Holak et al., 2005; Gineikienė, 2013). Interestingly, through the years, a social phenomenon known as yugonostalgia has evolved among Slovenes (Spasić, 2012; Bošković, 2013; Kolstø, 2014).

Holbrook and Schindler (1991) describe consumer nostalgia as a preference toward objects that were more common when one was younger. Nowadays, nostalgia is used by many international companies as a marketing strategy and nostalgic products are reintroduced to evoke many nostalgic memories of consumers from their past (Cui, 2015; Holak & Havlena, 1991). Nostalgia as a marketing strategy means to integrate marketing themes or products from the past as a present-day marketing strategy and consequently the purchase decision involves a lot of emotions between nostalgic product/brand and consumer (Jones, 2015; Pioneer, 2010, Sharma, 2013). For example, a number of nostalgic products such as carbonated soft drinks Cockta and Bibita, have been recently reintroduced on the shelves of Slovenian grocery stores.

Against this background, the purpose of the current study is to examine the role of consumer nostalgia in consumer decision making in Slovenia. Hence, a qualitative research method based on netnography was employed. Netnography is generally considered to be a very dynamic method and useful to analyse online culture either communities (Kozinets, 1998). Guided by the research questions, the researchers first identified relevant web sites (forums) offering discussions related to nostalgia. After a careful consideration of the content, the analysis was divided into three main topics: Nostalgia and consumers in Slovenia, Nostalgic products in Slovenia, Nostalgic marketing strategies in Slovenia. It was found that the role of nostalgia seems to have a noteworthy impact on consumer decision making in Slovenia. Many consumers still report experiencing nostalgic mood, and still express preference for many of nostalgic food products. In addition, they also positively perceive nostalgic marketing strategy. Nostalgic marketing strategy attracts many of consumers to more likely make a purchase decision, which involves strong and intensive emotions, after being again in touch with nostalgic product (Jones, 2015; Pioneer, 2010). Based on our study, it can be concluded that many of Slovenian nostalgic products are still alive in Slovene consumer's mind.

*Keywords:* nostalgia, marketing strategy, nostalgic products, consumer purchase decision

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