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The Effects of Nostalgia-based Advertising on a Toy Company's Brand Equity: The Example of the LEGO Group

Abstract

Objective: The paper aims to demonstrate whether or not nostalgia can be regarded as an antecedent of brand loyalty and, more importantly, how nostalgia might affect overall brand equity.

Research Design & Methods: A total of 255 Polish consumers (172 males and 83 females) participated in the study. The sample was obtained using computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) technique in the period between June and September 2020, and the research procedure was designed so the subjects would engage online. The author chose a correlational approach (Spearman's ρ), given its frequent use in the literature on nostalgia.

Findings: It was found that previous experience with a brand, particularly during childhood, does influence a nostalgia-oriented purchase intention, $t_{253} = 2.634$, $p = 0.009$. In addition, the intensity of consumer nostalgia towards a brand positively affected the strength of LEGO® brand equity, which is conceptualised in the paper as consisting of four dimensions.

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Implications/Recommendations: This paper offers insight to both managers and marketers looking for differential marketing techniques in building consumer loyalty whilst improving the effectiveness of the marketing message.

Contribution: The findings expand the literature by examining the influence of nostalgia-based advertising endeavours on consumer-based brand equity in an international context.

Keywords: LEGO, nostalgia, brand equity, brand management, toys.

JEL Classification: M31, M37.

1. Introduction

Not since the recession of 2009 has there been a year so severe to the world of marketing as 2020, marked by the contagion of an unknown virus (*The New Admen* 2020). Hitherto advertisers have been experiencing stiff competition given the vast array of firms of different sizes striving to claim a substantial portion of the share on the market. Moreover, the issue of marketing accountability, or – to be more specific – the lack of it, at least in the eyes of CEOs, has put advertisers in a tough position, thereby throwing the need to pour money into this area into question (e.g. Christodoulides & de Chernatony 2010, Mizik & Jacobson 2008). Group M expects the industry to be hit by the worst depression in years, which has already caused a 10% decline in ad spending (*The New Admen* 2020). But even in a world without the virus there is the challenge for marketing of delivering a message so endearing that it would immediately provide the much-desired differential effect. Nevertheless, many forego research or analysis of their target audience. After all, in the light of pervasive advertising, numerous messages have become so obscure that few to whom it is addressed would be able to get it right. Therefore, the need to adopt outstanding advertising techniques today seems justifiable.

Nostalgia can be approached as a tool promising to diversify a brand by offering people exactly what they have wanted – seemingly, a more peaceful time (Goulding 2001). Only after the new wave of consumer research in the 1990 emerged did marketers start to practise psychological tricks to become bound with their clients (Grębosz-Krawczyk 2020b). Given the ability to create a mediated illusion of a past period that once was, advertisers have come to realise that by giving their brands a sense of authenticity an additional outcome will be achieved: not only will the target audience respond but also other generations, thereby forging a generational link. Known as “backward innovation”, this technique has helped various companies relaunch and revive themselves, helping them survive and even flourish (e.g. Kessous & Roux 2008, Brown 2018, Naughton & Vlasic 1998, Robertson 2013). The products did not have to be the same as they had

been – that would be too immense a task (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry 2003). The key was in encapsulating a seeming paradox, a combination of old and new (Brown 2003). As Holbrook has noted, turning the past into a new desirable object in both the consumer products and communication channels is a promising area of marketing for nostalgia.

Much of the initial effort in the 1990s devoted attention to spontaneous purchase scenarios, thereby underestimating the power of nostalgia. But the idea has gradually transformed into promoting a trustworthy image of a brand with a proven record of achievements (Reisenwitz, Iyer & Cutler 2004). It was the brand's heritage that allowed it to succeed (Merchant & Rose 2013). A company had to have existed in consumer' minds at some point in the past, yet another thing to consider was to make consumers perceive the brand as positively appealing. And that is what advertisers have aspired to deliver through broadcasting TV commercials. As observed by Spigel (and cited in Pickering & Keightley 2006), commercial motivation has a profound effect on the narratives of the past.

Several attempts have been made to demonstrate that past brand exposure (sometimes referred to as “brand penetration”) has a significant effect on purchase decisions. For example, a study by Muehling, Sprott and Sultan (2014) found that previous experience with a brand, particularly during childhood, influences both purchase intention and brand attitude. However, nostalgia advertising may also stimulate consumers who have no developed association with the brand. Romaniuk and Nenycz-Thiel (2013) observed that behavioural associations resulting from past purchase activity are antecedents of current brand loyalty, thereby affecting consumers' perception of the brand as being of the highest quality of service. Specifically, those were the consumers who had bought the brand five or more times became attached to it. In a more recent study, Toledo and Lopes (2016) sought to determine if a nostalgic feeling towards a brand one has known changed significantly when it was acquired by a larger company or has entered into a partnership to avoid liquidation. Despite such impressive literature on brand equity and the affective outcomes of nostalgia-oriented advertising, it appears that those themes have been treated independently (Toledo & Lopes 2016).

The present paper has an exploratory character and aims to demonstrate, first, whether or not nostalgia is an antecedent of brand loyalty (hereby understood as “a generational link”), and, more importantly, how this feeling might actually affect overall brand equity. To these ends, a correlational approach frequently cited in the literature on nostalgia is used (e.g. Holbrook & Schindler 1989, Reisenwitz, Iyer & Cutler 2004, Muehling, Sprott & Sultan 2014). The study is limited to the empirical analysis of a single toy-making company, the LEGO Group, so further investigations on the subject will be needed.

2. Literature Review and Development of the Hypotheses

2.1. Nostalgia and Its Use in Marketing

With early records dating back to the ancient Greeks, the experience of nostalgia is certainly not new. However, thanks to semantic drift, the notion has taken on new meaning (Davis 1977). Stripped of the medical connotations of mental disease and supported by the revolutionary findings of the 20th-century psychology, nostalgia offered a remedy for dealing with the traumatic events that had occurred in the past. In 1979, Davis defined nostalgia as “a positive evocation of a lived past” (Davis 1979). Now, given the account that people reminisce only about events that have occurred in the past, then it must be the past one has personally experienced. For how can people be nostalgic about a place they have never been, or a person they have never met? Therefore, the past understood as an individual’s lived time is the material of which nostalgia is made. Stern (1992) has pushed Davis’ work one step further by determining two types of nostalgia: “historical” and “personal”. The first is usually manifested as the individual’s desire to have been born into different times. The second is best described as an idealisation of a past personally experienced (Pascal, Sprott & Muehling 2002).

Davis’ work was just the beginning of a new chapter in nostalgia research as it pertained to consumer behaviour. However, it left many questions unanswered: how could customers’ perception of an advertised brand be easily manipulated when displayed in motion pictures of the past period. This piqued the focus of marketers, who decided to make use of these findings, especially as the country needed an economic boost to prevent the approaching crisis (Angé & Berliner 2015). It has been witnessed that when the nation’s spirit deflates, people look back to times that seem more reasonable, perhaps desiring a return to innocence (Davis 1979). Nostalgia was picked as the strategic means of reaching customers thanks to the incredible opportunities television and the simultaneous emergence of pop culture (Unger, Mcconocha & Faier 1991).

Exhibiting the manifestations of the “identity crisis” caused by the unstable political situation in the U.S., Baby Boomers were the first target audience (Davis 1979). Many products were therefore advertised with the intention of the Boomers recalling their childhood and teenage years – the 1950s and 1960s. At the same time, those nostalgia-inducing messages were unexpectedly reaching younger generations as well – and finding the new audience a receptive one (Pascal, Sprott & Muehling 2002). More recent attention has focused on individuals born between 1961 and 1980, commonly referred to as Generation X, the offspring of Baby Boomers. As the communal mid-life crisis emerged, Boomers looked to simpler, less stressful times, and a desire to restore and protect the past (Brown,

Kozinets & Sherry 2003), a curious side-effect of which was the Boomers' escape into "maudlin sentimentality" (Brown 2018). Davis (1977, 1979), for instance, regarded older people as very likely to be nostalgic. In a study that sought to explain why older consumers perpetually buy older brands, Lambert-Pandraud and Laurent (2010) have suggested that younger consumers have much more flexibility in terms of changing their preferred brand, while older ones exhibit a propensity to remain loyal to the same brand. Another found that nostalgia for adolescence and early adulthood appears to be stronger than for any other age group (Havlena & Holak 1991).

The literature emphasises the widespread popularity of television as the main avenue to stimulating nostalgic references (e.g. Pascal, Spratt & Muehling 2002, Holbrook & Schindler 2003, Reisenwitz, Iyer & Cutler 2004). Holak & Havlena made clear that the best way to accelerate nostalgia was by employing visual representations, as appealing to the sense of nostalgia was most effective when approached through the eyes (Havlena & Holak 1996). TV shows like "The Wonder Years" or more recently "Downton Abbey" and "Stranger Things" have sought through apparel and music to access past times. Others have gone to extraordinary lengths to redesign the packaging of their merchandises to capture a "nostalgic vibe". Ads containing nostalgia-inducing imagery shape viewers' perceptions, at times conjuring an almost utopian reflection of the past (Goulding 2001). The sentimental objects relating to the special periods in one's lifetime have become accessible to everyone who can afford them. Belk has written about the "Fire of Desire" that causes people to buy these goods no matter the price as they regard them as collectable. The objects then become part of the individual's identity, which defines his intimate world (Belk 1991).

Why does nostalgia work in marketing? Because curiosity compels humans to stop and pay more attention and feed their thirst for knowledge (Unger, McConocha & Faier 1991). Davis (1979) wrote that rapid development increases uncertainty in society, destroying the old-world order. Since older generations have adopted the new way of thinking that accompanies such development, they no longer need any changes. The political turmoil, economic uncertainty and sexual liberation of the 1960s indoctrinated many, and many, especially Baby Boomers, were forced to seek shelter in reminiscences of a bygone world that seemed more reasonable (Brown 2018). It was in the 1970s when the marketers noticed that by offering the promise of a return to a time of innocence that people would not only accept this offer but also forget the propaganda that had been desolating their conservative understanding of the world (Turner 1987).

Surely "conservatism" or "traditionalism" is a keyword here as it may allow us to find the answer to why so many famed companies failed at the turn of the century. It was a bitter pill to swallow, but it was the old-fashioned way

of conducting business that was causing enterprises to drown. Rapid development and the western hustle of the new world severely challenged inexperienced managers devoted to the traditional way of conducting business (Brown 2018). LEGO®'s business model in the 1990s and early 2000s relied heavily on debt and merchandising. The emergence of computer games was enough to prove that such a system would not be enough for the company to survive.

The solution was found in the most paradoxical product the company has ever delivered – mechanical warriors known as the “Bionicle” (Robertson 2013). An additional factor to consider was the appearance of pop-culture. Many of LEGO®'s brick sets were designed around movie classics of the 1980s like “Star Wars” and “Indiana Jones”, accelerating nostalgia. LEGO® thus created a generational link with their customers. All this supports the following two hypotheses:

H1: A positive relationship exists between past brand exposure and nostalgia-induced purchase intentions.

H2: Consumers aged 30–39 display the strongest nostalgic feelings towards the LEGO® brand.

2.2. Brand Equity

The concept of brand equity has in recent years taken off among marketers as they have come to understand that intangible assets play an important role in determining a company's place on the market. The presence of a stable customer base is one characteristic of these assets (Cho & Chiu 2020). The literature recognises two instruments for measuring a company's performance. The first and probably the most obvious one is the company's finances, which can be defined in a number of ways, though central among them will be the achievement of a profit or loss within a given period (Mizik & Jacobson 2008). While this method no doubt provides tangible proof of evaluating a firm's condition, scholars believe it to be inaccurate given the lack of intangible factors that give these numbers a soul (e.g. Christodoulides & de Chernatony 2010, Ambler 2003). Numbers can be forged, but do they really mean, in any case, that a company has gained a real competitive advantage? Brand equity can thus be acknowledged to be the second measure aiming to address whether a company has succeeded or fallen short (Hunt & Morgan 1995).

Aaker (1996) defines brand equity as “a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and to that firm's customers” (p. 15). Specifically, this enhanced value, which a brand name yields to its assortment of goods, is the reason companies have been investing so much in branding (Farquhar 1989).

Hence it is a truth universally acknowledged that well-maintained brand equity often gives a company a differential advantage; one that enables it to generate greater volume and margins (Cobb-Walgren, Ruble & Donthu 1995). It follows, then, that not until spending enough time on growing these intangible assets should a company start thinking about its future profits (Christodoulides & de Chernatony 2010).

Keller (2008), on the other hand, aims at a more behavioural approach to the notion of brand equity, calling it “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (p. 69). That is, brand equity is seen as a biased appraisal of a brand that aggrandises its actual market value (Vogel, Evanschitzky & Ramaseshan 2008). If customers hold nostalgic associations of a brand they once bought, they are more likely to purchase it again, especially when faced with a choice between products in the same category (Romaniuk & Nenycz-Thiel 2013). Financial outcomes contribute little to the overall value of a company in the absence of consumers’ reaction to its business name (Christodoulides & de Chernatony 2010).

Aaker (1996) understands a strong brand as one that sets new trends in the market it operates on. When a rival unexpectedly achieves outstanding results, managers seek to discover why. For instance, when LEGO® was facing a corporate crisis in 2003, it was not clear whether not the famous toy manufacturer would survive (Robertson 2013). Not only did LEGO® handle the crisis, but actually stunned the competition with results a company would achieve after adopting a pro-nostalgia approach (indeed, it was the biggest toy manufacturer in the first half of 2015). As a result, the toy company Hasbro ceded its seemingly invulnerable position to LEGO®. Moreover, a generational link has allowed LEGO® to improve how it addresses the appropriate audience, for even though a nostalgic message is targeting older consumers, it is fostering brand awareness among their kids. Therefore this supports the following hypothesis:

H3: There is a positive relationship between nostalgia-oriented brand associations and the dimensions of LEGO®’s brand equity.

2.3. Brand Loyalty

Loyalty is at the heart of the consumer relationship. According to Aaker’s definition of brand equity, brand loyalty is one of the four assets, if not the most significant of them, that form brand equity (Aaker 1996). Once a bond with the consumer has been established, the brand becomes dependent on its loyal consumers. It is a psychological phenomenon where people compare and evaluate two or more brands within the same product category at the same time and develop a preference for one of them. Naturally, the psychological spectrum of this

is nothing new: long before Aaker, Jacoby and Kyner (1973) described brand loyalty as “the biased, behavioural response, expressed over time by some decision-making unit with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and is a function of psychological processes” (p. 2). There is no future for a brand without its loyal consumer base. Moreover, it is a less expensive approach to maintaining the relationship with a current consumer base rather than beginning a new one (Aaker 1996). When consumers are loyal to a particular brand, the brand simultaneously blocks other companies from entering the market and gaining the customers that would steal the brand’s market share.

As the final creation of the four assets, brand equity creates value for the customer as well as the company (Aaker 1996). Aaker highlights the word “customer” here as it refers to both the end-user and people who represent the target audience yet somehow fail to accept the brand’s invitation (in other words, they choose the competition instead). As suggested earlier, because the author of the following study has written that brand loyalty is purportedly the most significant of all the assets, it does not mean that the other three should be neglected as they also provide substantial value to the brand. Brand equity may also provide intelligence on how properly a company is managed. It tells why some big players on the market fail or, conversely, set new standards of innovation (Aaker 1996). Therefore, a brand with well-developed brand equity is considered a strong brand.

The most evident indicator of brand loyalty is “a premium price”, which is the amount a consumer is going to pay for the product one brand over another (Keller 2008). I suggest the following consideration of brand loyalty: when a consumer subconsciously chooses a particular brand over others offered on the market no matter what. The price premium can be measured only with other brands, and preferably more than one, as a benchmark. If a top player is missing, then the results are inaccurate. At the same time, when a brand has a strong local rival in another country, the data gathered will not present a solid illustration as it requires an additional interpretation of the local businesses (Aaker 1996). Generally, market research is limited to the “dollar metric”, which manifests itself in simple hypothetical questions such as how much more would they be willing to pay for the branded product (Grębosz-Krawczyk 2018). An advanced and more reliable approach, contrary to the dollar metric, is trade-off analysis. Consumers are given questionnaires presenting varied purchase situations and specify how long would they support the brand. Aaker considers the price premium the best tool to analyse and evaluate brand loyalty because consumers are given a choice whether to buy a brand or not (Aaker 1996).

H4: LEGO®’s well-developed brand equity continues to keep its consumers to remain loyal to the brand.

3. Research Methodology

Research has examined the effect of nostalgia advertising in the context of the consumption of cultural products (e.g. Pascal, Sprott & Muehling 2002, Muehling & Pascal 2011) as a practical follow-up to Holbrook and Schindler's theoretical findings (Holbrook & Schindler 1989, 1994, Holbrook 1993) regarding the impact of aesthetic preferences as cues to develop an ultimate set of nostalgic preferences towards particular products, thus influencing consumer choice. Reisenwitz, Iyer and Cutler (2004) were the first to test nostalgia proneness towards advertisements for food and household cleaning products. In addition, recent research such as that done by Muehling, Sprott and Sultan (2014) focused on a toothpaste brand which seemed not to have used nostalgia-based advertising, though it could have given its popularity. Results from a 2007 study by Sierra and McQuitty appear to be overlooked, though "toys" were identified as the most purchased nostalgic product, second only to an intangible product: music. Since toys are physical goods from childhood (e.g. action figures, wooden bricks, teddy bears), it should come as no surprise that they awaken the most nostalgia among the tangible products on the market. Marketers go to great lengths to evoke consumers' childhoods. That is why LEGO® constantly renews and reissues sets that have been popular for decades (Lubiński 2019). They offer a souvenir from the past or the object of one's desire (Belk 1991) that was not satisfied – in the ultimate tangible form of a plastic brick toy. The current study therefore aims to fill the research gap by examining a company representing the toy industry.

A total of 255 individuals (172 males and 83 females) representing Polish consumers participated in this study. The sample was obtained using computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) in June–September 2020, and the research procedure was designed such that the subjects would engage online by sending their responses using "Google Forms" without putting their health at risk. Each participant was also asked, either individually or collectively on a focal Facebook groups, to share the link to the online questionnaire among their friends or family members so that the author would obtain a wide span of variation on the age variable (Figure 1). Respondents ranged in age from 12 to 58 years (mean age of males = 30.157 years, mean age of females = 33.518 years, total mean age = 31.251 years).

First, participants were asked to select the statement that best described both their recent affection for the brand and the affection that preceded it (i.e. „I am very attached to the LEGO® brand currently, but I was not very attached when I was younger [today]”, „I was very attached to the LEGO® brand, but I am not very attached currently [yesterday]”, „I was very attached to the LEGO® brand and I am very attached currently [yesterday & today]”, and „I have never been

attached to the LEGO® brand [never]”). Participants were then asked to use Aaker’s loyalty segmentation (1996) to determine the consumer type that best described them (as shown in Figure 2). After completing the past brand exposure and preliminary loyalty assessment, participants were then instructed to answer a brief questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale.

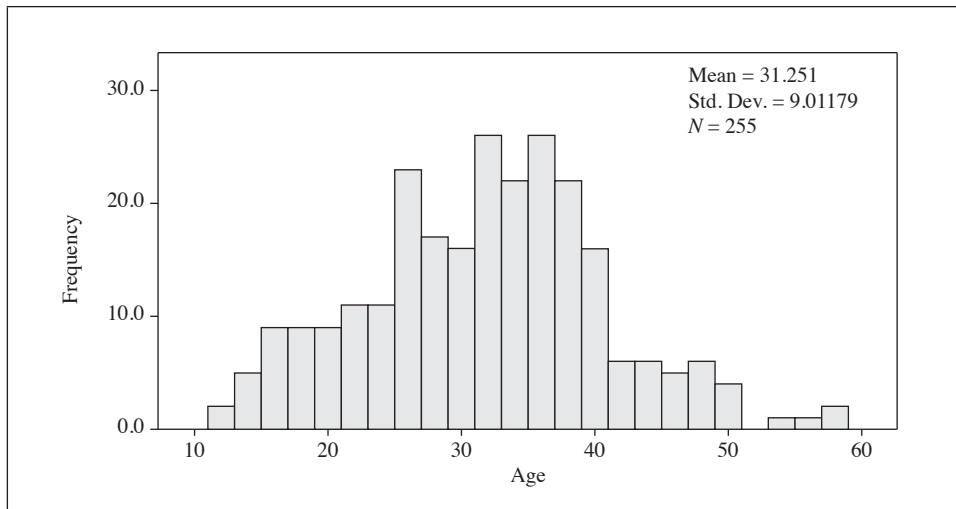


Fig. 1. Age Variation of the Study Sample (SPSS Output)

Source: the author.

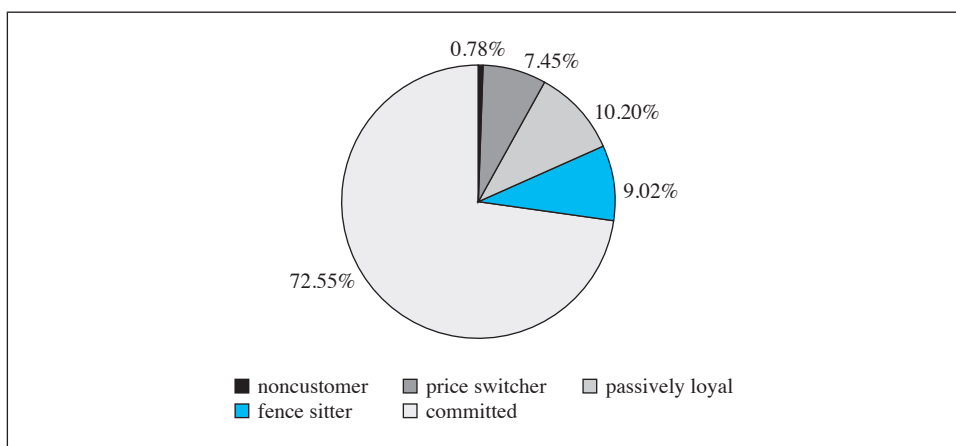


Fig. 2. LEGO® Customer Segmentation by “Loyalty” in Poland (SPSS Output)

Source: the author.

To further support the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between nostalgia-oriented brand associations and the dimensions of LEGO®'s brand equity, a scale was constructed to measure the impact of an individual's nostalgia proneness. The conceptualisation of the nostalgia scale (NOST) offered by Pascal, Sprott and Muehling (2002) was used as the basis for developing its constituent items. This scale continues to be successfully employed in research today (Grębosz-Krawczyk 2020a).

4. Research Results

Hypothesis 1 questioned whether or not past experience with a brand influences the emotional intensity towards a nostalgic purchase of that brand. This assumption was tested using a simple independent sample *t*-test (Table 1) on the variable past brand exposure (PAST BRAND EXPOSURE). The null hypothesis (H_0) posits that the means between the two groups are equal. Since $p < 0.009$ is less than the chosen significance level $\alpha = 0.05$, the null hypothesis can be rejected and the following conclusion drawn: there was a significant difference in mean scores regarding nostalgic purchase between individuals who have had and those who have not had experience with LEGO® ($t_{253} = 2.634, p = 0.009$). The results were consistent with the authors' expectations. Previous experience with a brand, particularly during childhood, does influence a nostalgia-oriented purchase intention. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Previous investigations of nostalgia often cite Davis' ground-breaking book from 1979, in which he identified that adolescents and early adulthoods have probably the strongest feelings associated with nostalgia when compared to any other moments in a lifetime (Havlena & Holak 1991). Graduation, the climax episodes of childhood and the entrance into a career appear to distress young adults. By analogy, it may possible that abandoning unfulfilled dreams releases even stronger feelings leading to reminiscences of one's own personal history. With respect to the research literature, it was found that there was a substantial tendency to evoke nostalgic thoughts regarding the LEGO® brand among the respondents aged 30–39 which corresponds to Hypothesis 2 (see Table 2). Specifically, a Kruskal-Wallis *H* test (see Table 3) showed that there was a statistically significant difference in nostalgia intensity towards the brand (LEGO_NOST) across the study's age groups, $\chi^2(4) = 19.364, p = 0.001$. Consistent with the findings of Holbrook and Schindler (1989), nostalgia, as a matter of preference towards specific objects (in this case, LEGO®), develops until a person reaches late adolescence. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Table 1. Independent Samples *t*-Test (SPSS Output)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> -Test for Equality of Means						
		<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
PAST BRAND EXPOSURE	NOST_Purch	1.021	0.313	2.634	253	0.009	0.50588	0.19204	Lower	Upper
	Equal variances assumed				2.634	253	0.009	0.50588	0.19204	0.12768
Equal variances not assumed		–	–	2.551	154.566	0.012	0.50588	0.19829	0.11418	0.89758

Source: the author.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics – Age Group

Age Group	Dependent Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Ranks (Kruskal- Wallis)
Under 20 (n = 29)	LEGO_Att	4.9310	0.25788	153.33
	LEGO_NOST	4.2069	1.01346	101.34
	NOST_PURCH	3.1379	1.27403	119.07
	IND_NOST	3.0690	1.41247	106.43
20–29 (n = 73)	LEGO_Att	4.5068	0.68967	112.49
	LEGO_NOST	4.5342	0.85118	128.26
	NOST_PURCH	3.1781	1.45624	122.79
	IND_NOST	3.3151	1.26795	117.38
30–39 (n = 117)	LEGO_Att	4.7521	0.53989	136.00
	LEGO_NOST	4.7179	0.62761	141.14
	NOST_PURCH	3.4530	1.47681	137.02
	IND_NOST	3.5983	1.37126	135.04
40–49 (n = 31)	LEGO_Att	4.5484	0.72290	119.08
	LEGO_NOST	4.1613	1.31901	113.23
	NOST_PURCH	3.1935	1.57944	124.77
	IND_NOST	3.6129	1.30837	134.48
Above 50 (n = 5)	LEGO_Att	3.8000	1.30384	75.60
	LEGO_NOST	3.8000	0.83666	62.90
	NOST_PURCH	2.0000	1.00000	64.90
	IND_NOST	4.8000	0.44721	203.30

Source: the author.

Table 3. Kruskal-Wallis Test for Significant Differences among Age Groups (SPSS Output)

Test Statistics ^{a, b}				
Specification	LEGO_Att	LEGO_NOST	NOST_Purch	IND_NOST
Chi-Square	18.590	19.364	6.576	11.124
df	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	0.001 ^c	0.001 ^c	0.160	0.025 ^d

^a Kruskal-Wallis test; ^b grouping variable: AGE_group; ^c significant at $p < 0,01$; ^d significant at $p < 0,05$

Source: the author.

Hypothesis 3 was tested using a Spearman's ρ correlation between individually perceived nostalgia (IND_NOST), nostalgia intensity towards LEGO® (LEGO_NOST) and variables representing Aaker's (1996) dimensions of brand equity (where brand image & brand awareness = "LEGO_Att", perceived quality

Table 4. Correlation Table for Relevant Data (SPSS Output)

Specification		Spearman's ρ						
		Inheritance	Quality	Price_Det	LEGO_Att	LEGO_NOST	IND_NOST	
Inheritance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.239**	-0.217**	0.239**	0.351**	0.050	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.423	
	N	255	255	255	255	255	255	
Quality	Correlation Coefficient	0.239**	1.000	-0.164**	0.302**	0.244**	-0.118	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.	0.009	0.000	0.000	0.060	
	N	255	255	255	255	255	255	
Price_Det	Correlation Coefficient	-0.217**	-0.164**	1.000	-0.228**	-0.188**	0.117	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.009	.	0.000	0.003	0.062	
	N	255	255	255	255	255	255	
LEGO_Att	Correlation Coefficient	0.239**	0.302**	-0.228**	1.000	0.211**	-0.028	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	.	0.001	0.658	
	N	255	255	255	255	255	255	
LEGO_NOST	Correlation Coefficient	0.351**	0.244**	-0.188**	0.211**	1.000	0.159*	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.003	0.001	.	0.011	
	N	255	255	255	255	255	255	
IND_NOST	Correlation Coefficient	0.050	-0.118	0.117	-0.028	0.159*	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.423	0.060	0.062	0.658	0.011	.	
	N	255	255	255	255	255	255	

* correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); ** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
Source: the author.

= “Quality” and brand loyalty = “Price_Det” & “INHERITANCE”). Surprisingly, individually perceived nostalgia had no significant effect on the company’s brand equity. In fact, it was the intensity of nostalgia towards the brand itself that brought the results supporting the hypothesis (see Table 2). First, nostalgia intensity evoked through advertising material (such as print catalogues) influences the way a brand is perceived ($r_s(255) = 0.211, p = 0.001$). Second, nostalgia hereby seen as a positive association of the previous purchase may also serve as an indicator of consistent quality ($r_s(255) = 0.244, p = 0.001$). Finally, because brands seek to build and retain customer loyalty, nostalgia may help develop a long-lasting relationship. Moreover, those consumers who already have children will unconsciously introduce them to the brand, thereby maintaining the phenomenon of “generational link” ($r_s(255) = 0.351, p = 0.001$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

As was explained in the literature review, Aaker (1996) introduced two best tools for determining whether or not brand loyalty occurs and how it manifests. One of them is the price premium. Having discussed the most feasible options for measuring the price premium, I opted to use a conjoint trade-off analysis. Results suggested that Polish consumers of LEGO® could not imagine buying a product from another brand ($r_s(255) = -0.188, p = 0.003$), therefore they appear to pay more just to possess the product they truly desire. However, given the weakness of the correlation ($p \leq 0.00-0.19$), further study should be done to examine more closely the links between the price and maudlin sentimentality.

An important strand in today’s subject literature on nostalgia marketing pays particular attention to products such as toys. For instance, it has been established by Lowenthal (as cited in Reisenwitz, Iyer & Cutler 2004) that even a simple object (such as a LEGO® model in this case) can awaken one’s associations with the past.

Taken together, these results provide important insights into the relationship between brand equity and nostalgia. The present research is a crucial step in understanding the strength of toy brands in the market, but not a final one. A further development concerns the analysis of purchasing behaviours. What the study has achieved, however, is a substantial contribution and support to earlier research endeavours on illustrating a positive nostalgic relationship between the brands and the consumers from post-communist countries, as demonstrated by Grębosz-Krawczyk (2018, 2020a). In addition, it has addressed the much-needed international context on the scholarship on brand equity (Zarantonello, Grappi & Formisano 2020).

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine empirically the effect a nostalgic brand has on brand loyalty, as exemplified by the consumption of LEGO® products on the Polish toy market. From a practical perspective, these findings add further evidence to a growing body of literature suggesting that nostalgia has matured as another form of brand extension strategy. The design of the survey research limited the author as to the results he could obtain. At first, the brand loyalty section of the questionnaire was to be considered in the spectrum of perceived brand equity as a whole. The author's intent was thus to demonstrate support for his statement that the toy making company is a strong brand that understands its brand well and delivers superior benefits through its products. Therefore, it would be vital to perform a more precise measurement by segmenting the market by loyalty in order to see the correlation between the type of loyalty declared and the frequency of LEGO® sets purchased. This would help distinguish committed loyal consumers from passively loyal ones (Aaker 1996), as some would buy the brand due to its popularity on the market without realising it.

The following conclusions may be drawn from this study:

First, as a generational nostalgic brand, LEGO® does help evoke pleasant memories of bygone times. When a consumer encounters a brand that was popular in their youth their perception of brand manifests itself as an image of the happy childhood and recalls all those mesmerising moments of carefree play. The results from this study indicate that nostalgia-themed advertising is most likely to yield purchase intention for consumers who have had a previous experience with the focal brand and have favourable associations with it (H1 confirmed). This accords with the earlier finding that once they have encountered a brand in the past, and the experience was positive, a consumer will remain attached to it.

Second, people aged 30–39 have stronger nostalgic feelings than any other generation (H2 confirmed). Those consumers who have not had so much time to dive into the LEGO® brand felt that some part of their childhood is gone. Because consumers feel nostalgic towards the brand, the likelihood they will buy again is stronger. Therefore, there is every reason to believe they will become loyal in this manner.

Third, brand loyalty, as one of the four assets constituting brand equity, is the most significant element as it dictates how long a brand may operate on the market. LEGO® has shown that the adoption of the nostalgia-oriented strategy may have an extraordinarily positive influence on corporate results. Moreover, those consumers who already have children will unconsciously introduce them to the brand, thereby maintaining the phenomenon of “generational link”. As long as consumers are committed to the brand, the brand blocks other

companies from entering the market and gaining the customers that would steal the brand's market share. Therefore, both H3 and H4 can be confirmed.

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Wpływ reklamy opartej na nostalgii na wartość marki w branży zabawkarskiej na przykładzie Grupy LEGO

(Streszczenie)

Cel: Celem artykułu jest omówienie możliwości wykorzystania nostalgii jako narzędzia służącego do budowania lojalności konsumenckiej oraz wskazanie, jak ten konstrukt psychologiczny może oddziaływać na wartość marki.

Metodyka badań: Badania przeprowadzono na próbie $N = 255$ konsumentów z Polski (172 mężczyzn i 83 kobiety) z wykorzystaniem metody CAWI (*computer assisted web interview*) w panelu internetowym w miesiącach od czerwca do września 2020 r. Autor zdecydował się na badanie korelacyjne, mając na uwadze popularność tego modelu badawczego w literaturze przedmiotu.

Wyniki badań: Wyniki badań pokazały, że wcześniejsze doświadczenia z marką mają istotny wpływ na nostalgicznie ukierunkowaną chęć zakupu produktów tejże marki, $t_{253} = 2,634$, $p = 0,009$. Ponadto uczucia nostalgiczne żywione względem marki pozytywnie

oddziaływały na siłę wartości marki LEGO® – skonceptualizowanej jako składającej się z czterech elementów.

Wnioski: Badania przedstawione w artykule mogą posłużyć zarówno menedżerom, jak i marketerom szukającym rozwiązań dywersyfikacyjnych, wpływając na poprawę efektywności podejmowanych przez nich działań marketingowych.

Wkład w rozwój dyscypliny: Wyniki badań wnoszą do literatury przedmiotu określenie wpływu działań marketingowych odwołujących się do uczuć nostalgicznych na wartość marki dla konsumentów w kontekście międzynarodowym.

Słowa kluczowe: LEGO, nostalgia, wartość marki, zarządzanie marką, zabawki.