

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

THE CURRENT ROLE OF RETRO MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

In uncertain times, people like to think back to the good old days. Different industries are taking advantage of this nostalgia and using old-style packaging or old logos for marketing purposes.

Consumers are addressed on an emotional level and this marketing model is successful with target groups with certain character traits. This article is intended to take a deep insight into character traits that are appealing to retro marketing. The work on retro marketing aims to investigate and analyse how and why retro marketing strategies affect consumers, and what are the main motivations behind buying retro products. The work also seeks to understand which age groups are most responsive to retro marketing campaigns, what role nostalgia plays in attracting consumers, and how retro brands and products are used to create an authentic image and emotional connection with customers. Therefore, research was conducted to determine the lifestyle of consumers of retro products and to understand the key factors that influence their purchasing decisions. The research aimed to identify specific patterns of behaviour, values and preferences of consumers who prefer retro products, as well as to investigate to what extent their lifestyle contributes to their preference for these products.

The research also analysed how consumers perceive retro products – whether they perceive them as symbols of quality, authenticity or perhaps innovation in a contemporary context. The results of the research will provide insight into the demographic characteristics of consumers, their motives for shopping, and the role that retro products play in their everyday life and identity. Based on these insights, developing more precise marketing strategies adapted to target groups is possible.

Keywords: Retro marketing, nostalgia, emotional connection, age



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1. Introduction

Retro marketing uses elements from the past to evoke positive emotions in potential consumers. Neuroscience has established links between human emotions and associated behaviour. This connection also affects consumer behaviour and retro marketing takes advantage of this fact. The retro look of products relates to brand loyalty and triggers trust (Hoffmann, 2018).

Uncertainty about the future also contributes to the feeling of nostalgia and reminiscing. Nostalgia acts as a link between the consumer and the marketer. Retro marketing relies on the brand heritage of products from the past and marketing symbols in the familiar style are used. This allows companies to minimize risks that are taken with new brands and to fall back on existing strategies. Pir (2019a). Retro products and retro marketing are not only a return to the past but are a dynamic part of the modern market that combines nostalgia with modern needs. And while older generations look for connection with their memories in retro products, younger generations are attracted to the style, authenticity and aesthetic value of these products. Retro marketing, on the other hand, uses the power of cultural memory and nostalgic elements to appeal to different age groups, showing that the past can be a powerful tool for creating a long-lasting emotional connection with a brand. Ultimately, retro products and marketing successfully balance tradition and modernity, making the past relevant today.

2. Retro Marketing

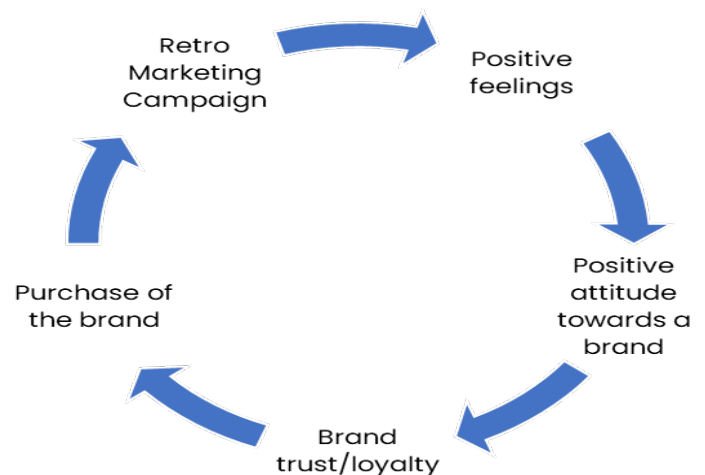
According to Harvard Business Review, 75% of consumer goods fail during their first year. American families on average maintain their routine to buy regularly the same 150 items that cover about 85% of their household needs. This makes it very difficult for companies to launch and establish new products on the market Schneider (2011). For this reason, companies are constantly looking for new and proven ways to introduce new products or further expand their market position. A popular method here is to fall back on brands and products that have already proven themselves and to use the past to pave new paths for the future, which is what the retro marketing method offers.

Brands need to be remembered by consumers through experiences and special memories. By understanding the cognitive processes of consumers and their impact on the purchasing process, companies can generate competitive advantages and for this reason, the area of nostal-

gia is also an important element for marketing research. Retro marketing initiatives trigger nostalgic memories, which can trigger positive feelings and can lead to a positive attitude towards a brand or advertising campaign, thereby rekindling trust and loyalty towards the brand. These positive feelings in turn can increase the likelihood of a purchase of the product or brand (Crespo-Pereira et al., 2022).

Figure 1.

From positive emotions to retro marketing (Crespo-Pereira et al., 2022)



Uncertain times, crises and the disappearance of values are increasingly leading people to cling to nostalgic thoughts. Products and brands that take advantage of this situation can help people relive these feelings through the product or brand. In addition to the advantage of retro marketing in triggering positive feelings from the past in customers, retro marketing can also extend the life cycle of a brand (Oral, 2021).

Mass-produced goods and fast, disposable products have dominated in recent years, but this has led to a longing in society for old values and quality. Old trends such as record players or certain fashion styles are experiencing a revival. However, the nostalgia trend is also linked to other topics such as sustainable consumption and the purchase of long-lasting products. The "retro" trend does not go back that far - products from the 80s and 90s are already being traded as retro products. Companies such as Coca-Cola are taking advantage of the retro trend and allowing their customers to travel back in time by buying retro products. But even in the technology sector, products such as the Nintendo NES or the Polaroid disposable camera have been reissued despite technological progress (von Bronewski, 2019).

An important distinction must also be made in this context between retro and vintage. While vintage products are products that have already been produced in the past, the term retro describes products that are currently manufactured but have been inspired by the style of the past. However, retro products can also have a modern design and only remind us of the past in details (Pötter, 2022). There are many examples of companies that make use of retro marketing, but one success was that of Coca-Cola. In 1994, the company opted for the old design of its bottles from 1923 and even doubled its sales (Nostalgie in der Markenkommunikation: Verbraucherprofile beachten, 2014). As already described, retro marketing gives consumers sentimental feelings. The feeling that is awakened in consumers is also a high degree of social connection. By gaining a social connection, the consumer can also be prompted to make the purchase and be less price sensitive. Through the positive feeling of social connectedness, the focus on controlling money moves more into the background for the consumer, which in turn has a positive effect on the economy (Lasaleta et al., 2014). Further experiments have confirmed that in an interpersonal and intrapersonal context, people spend more money when they are in a nostalgic mood (Wiltermuth et al., 2011).

Marketing generally draws on emotions and experiences. As consumers not only see the product itself, but are also interested in the values conveyed by the purchase, retromarketing has become a marketing strategy. There are hardly any product areas that can escape retromarketing (Membie-la-Pollán et al., 2022). A study from 2017 has examined which products were bought by consumers for nostalgic reasons. The following products were named among the 1000 people surveyed:

- Home items
- Entertainment items
- Fashion
- Technology
- Food

In total, 80% of respondents also stated that they trust brands that have been with them for a long time (Nostalgic Purchases Survey: Consumers Prefer Established Brands, 2017).

Retro marketing has many advantages for companies and consumers, but alongside all the opportunities and benefits, there can also be risks. The retro trend can also be viewed critically, as

companies fall back on the tried and tested due to a lack of advertising expenditure or new ideas. Nostalgia is a change, but a new edition of a product can also fail. Another important aspect is the planning of the advertising campaign. The wrong decisions can damage a product and either present it as too outdated or be perceived as no longer identical due to current adaptations. This can cause irreparable damage to the product and possibly the entire brand (RETRO Special Teil 4: Nostalgie wird zur Marketingstrategie und ist wichtiger Wirtschaftsfaktor, 2023).

A recent study also took a very interesting look at the topic of retro marketing. The following study was carried out in this context. The effects of brand revitalization and retro branding were examined. Brand revitalization is described in this context as the possibility of breathing fresh air into a brand and modernizing products, packaging or marketing strategies. Retro branding as described in this chapter reintroduces a brand from the past, whereby the brand characteristics or the brand itself is associated with a timeline from the past. The study by Chen, (2022) examined the reaction of customers to these two forms of marketing. The study found that both brand revitalization and retro branding have a positive effect on customers' attitudes towards the brand and their purchasing decisions in contrast to the control group. The study also revealed an interesting aspect about consumer attitudes, as retro branding works more effectively than brand revitalization among consumers who are not particularly nostalgic. This contribution can be important for companies when determining their target group and marketing strategy. Another part of the study also dealt with the willingness to pay and, as a continuation of the first part, retro branding and brand revitalization under various aspects such as different designs and advertising appearances. It was again confirmed that the personality of consumers plays an important role. This again confirmed an interesting aspect for science, as self-oriented consumers agree more strongly with the brand and their willingness to pay also increases. In the case of independent-oriented consumers, approval of the brand and willingness to pay increases with retro branding. The more effective method in the same setting for dependent-oriented consumers is the brand revitalization (Chen, 2022).

3. Nostalgia

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term nostalgia describes a sentimental longing for or regretful memory of a period of the past (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). The term nostalgia is

associated with positive benefits in the field of psychology. Nostalgia directs a positive view of the past and the future and creates a psychological sense of well-being. Nostalgia creates a counterbalance to the loss of meaning (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2024). The initial meaning of the term nostalgia is related to the greek word nostos that means "returning to the homeland" and algos which means pain and suffering (Loveland et al, 2010). Nostalgia as a psychological phenomenon that is perceived by a person on both a subjective and objective level and describes a memory with which a person is familiar was described by (Chen et al., 2014) In the marketing context, a study examined that advertising with a nostalgic background is also able to trigger nostalgic thoughts. The nostalgic aspect leads to a more positive view of the advertising and the advertised brand (Muehling et al., 2004)

Nostalgia acts as a bridge builder between consumers and producers, creating a common thread and replacing lost attributes. The nostalgic emotions should be aroused by brand symbols, colours or signs of already-known marketing activities. Familiar marketing strategies also minimize the risks associated with a new brand (Pir, 2019b).

Nostalgia as an emotion is very similar in some respects to shame, guilt and embarrassment. In all of these feelings, the focus is on the person and an action by the person as a consequence. Another similarity is the period, as nostalgia focuses on a specific period in a person's life. The difference between nostalgia and shame/guilt/embarrassment, however, is the nature of the feelings. Nostalgia as an emotion is not associated with painful feelings but with a positive emotion (Sedikides, et al., 2006).

The popularity of retro marketing also has to do with the current situation in the world. Nostalgia leads to positive feelings and moments of happiness. Uncertainty and fear of the future can trigger feelings of happiness in consumers with products from the past. The increasingly fast-moving world and new technology also often trigger a feeling of longing for an even simpler and better past. Retro marketing is a simple process that uses visual aspects such as a logo from the past or packaging that is already familiar from the past to quickly re-establish a connection between the past and potential consumers. Increasing competition is also prompting companies to choose this marketing approach (Pir, 2019c). Nostalgia serves as an effective means of communicating with consumers and, as is generally the case in marketing, must also be aware of the needs and desires of consumers, as each generation has its own needs. One challenge

for companies when advertising with a nostalgia background is to satisfy the needs of the older target group as well as those of the younger target group and to present the product as appealing to everyone (Khanna & Dixit, 2023). The effects of retro marketing can also influence brand loyalty and also depend on the respective generation. Generation X has maintained a stronger commitment to traditional values, in contrast to generations Y and Z. As Generation X is also more aware of retro marketing, this also leads to increased brand loyalty and this generation is also more influenced by retro marketing (Oğuz, 2017). The different generations can also be classified into consumer types based on a study.

Generation Y (1978-1988), also known as "kidults", has a longing for their childhood and advertising in the style of the 80s and 90s works particularly well.

Generation X (1968-1977), also known as Traditional, is attracted by traditions and attaches particular importance to the authenticity of products and brands.

The **Baby Boomer generation** (1948-1967), also known as "Transgenerational ", understands nostalgia as the preservation of their identity and advertising that promotes products with freedom and rebellion works for them.

The **generation born between 1928-1947** can be attracted by advertising that uses black and white images and familiar melodies to create a romantic mood (Nostalgie in der Markenkommunikation: Verbraucherprofile beachten.2014).

A study from 2021 examined adaptation to new products based on the influence of nostalgia. The study has investigated that the effect of nostalgia increases the acceptance of new products but not the acceptance of traditional products. The results conclude that the impact of nostalgia can increase the willingness of consumers to try new products that may involve a higher performance risk. Nostalgia increases people's perception of social support and this has a positive effect on the acceptance of new products (Zhou et al., 2021). An important aspect of the nostalgia factor was also identified in the area of brand expansion. Companies that want to open up further product categories with the brand can also benefit from the effect of nostalgia. Companies extend the scope of their products of the already known brand and especially in the case of extension products that are dissimilar to the original products, a positive evaluation by consumers could occur if they feel nostalgic. The

factor of nostalgia has proven to be a precious tool for companies when they expand the boundaries of their product range (Jun et al., 2022).

4. Research methodology

Retro marketing, as a strategy that uses nostalgic elements of the past, is increasingly attracting the attention of consumers and marketing experts. This form of marketing relies on evoking memories and emotions, often targeting specific generational groups that recognize and appreciate certain cultural symbols and products from a by-gone era. To better understand the impact of retro marketing on consumer behavior, several key research objectives were set. Following the above, the research objectives were set:

- Investigate the success of retro marketing among consumers aged 50 and over;
- To analyze the perception of the quality of retro products among consumers;
- To examine the association of retro products with positive memories among consumers.

These goals enable a detailed investigation of both demographic and psychological factors affecting the success of retro marketing and what are the specific motivations of consumers when purchasing retro products. In addition to the objectives of the research, the hypotheses of the research are listed, which read as follows:

Hypothesis H1: Retro marketing is mainly successful with consumers aged 50 years and over

Hypothesis H2: Customers buy retro products because they associate them with better-quality

Hypothesis H3: Customers associate retro products with positive memories.

The survey is based on data collected for the period from December 2023 to February 2023. The sample of respondents consists of 415 people between the ages of 18 and 75 who, in the specified period, were customers of products that use symbols of retro marketing in their marketing communication, such as design, logos, colour, packaging. Out of the total number of respondents, 259 respondents were female, which makes up 62.41% of the sample. As already stated earlier, the authors of the theory divided the stages of the development of the role and significance of retro marketing as

a style of shopping according to age. Since we do not have data on the purchase of a product that contains one or more elements of retro marketing before the age of 18 in its marketing communication, the sample of respondents in this research is divided into three categories. The first category consists of respondents between the ages of 18 and 29 (called Aesthetic Collectors), the second category consists of respondents between the ages of 30 and 39 (Pragmatic Traditionalists), while the third category includes respondents between the ages of 40 and 75 (Nostalgic enthusiasts). Younger consumers or Aesthetic collectors (20–35 years old) who buy retro products primarily for aesthetics and trends. They are not emotionally attached to the past but appreciate vintage style that they consider authentic and unique. Aesthetic collectors are attracted to the visual elements of retro marketing, such as design, colours and packaging. They often buy these products to express their style or to differentiate themselves from mass trends. Their purchase of retro products often depends on current fashion trends and social networks. Pragmatic traditionalists include middle-aged consumers (30–50 years old) who occasionally buy products with retro elements. Their shopping is not solely driven by nostalgia but by the combination of a sense of quality and reliability that retro products often symbolize. Pragmatic traditionalists value classical values and quality. They believe that products from the past are more durable and better made, so they tend to buy retro products because of their functionality and quality. Nostalgic enthusiasts include consumers who regularly buy products with retro elements. These are mostly older consumers (40+ years old) who grew up in the period when these products or symbols were popular. Their motivation for shopping is based on nostalgia and an emotional connection with past times. For them, retro products evoke memories of youth and represent a sense of security and continuity.

In this sample, 18.4% of respondents are in the first category, 30.6% are in the second category, and 51.00% are in the third category. The average age of the respondents is 31 years ($SD=9,056$). As for the marital status of the respondents, 53.2% are single, 7.4% are divorced, as well as cohabiting, 0.8% are widowed, and 31.2% are married. In terms of education, the majority of respondents have a university degree (67.2%), followed by respondents who have completed secondary school (27.4%). They are followed by respondents with primary school education (2.6%), respondents without professional qualification (2.3%), and finally respondents with completed doctoral studies (0.5%).

Table 1.
Metric characteristics of the questionnaire

categories	number of variables	min-max results	α	\bar{r}
Nostalgia and emotional connection	5	1-5 (5)	.611	.053
Perception of quality and authenticity	4	1-5 (5)	.509	.155
Aesthetic appeal and unique style	6	1-5 (5)	.617	.174
Search for experience and story	3	1-4 (4)	.778	.426
In total	18	1-19 (19)	.793	.144

The questionnaire that was used in this research was designed by the author of the paper to identify four types of consumer behavior when it comes to buying products that contain elements of retro marketing to a greater or lesser extent. Buyers of retro products are very often customers for whom nostalgia plays a key role in their decision to purchase these products, as it allows them to relive those memories. They buy retro products because they remind them of their childhood, youth or other positive moments from the past. The second type consists of customers who prefer quality and authenticity. They believe that retro products have a longer-lasting value, either because of the materials used or the simplicity of the design. Authenticity and fidelity to the original product concept are the key factors that attract them. The third group consists of consumers who appreciate the aesthetic value of elements: design, color, vintage graphics, and retro design in general. It is these customers who see retro products as a way to express their personal style, emphasizing uniqueness and originality in a world of mass production and uniform trends. Buyers of retro products often look for products that have a story, history or cultural value. They are interested in products that represent a certain period or movement and like to know more about the background of the product. Through the purchase of retro products, these consumers are not only looking for functionality, but also an experience that allows them to connect with the past on a deeper level, and we are talking about customers who are looking for a story and an experience. The reliability of the measurement coefficient is satisfactory, given that it is ($\alpha = 0.778$), but not to the expected extent when measuring particles of quality

and authenticity where it is ($\alpha = 0.509$), so the result is relatively acceptable. The results show that it is still necessary to work on this questionnaire to improve the measurement characteristics, especially on the first three categories of the questionnaire (Table 1).

About the set goals and hypotheses of the research, three discrimination analyses were conducted, where the age of the respondents, the quality of retro products and positive feelings were taken as independent variables, and the sum of the results of the four categories of the questionnaire was used as the dependent variable.

To determine whether there is a difference in the depth of lifestyle involvement when buying retro products about the age of the respondents, a discriminant analysis was conducted, where the age of the respondents was defined as an independent variable, while the sums of the results of the four categories on the questionnaire were defined as dependent variables. Discriminant analysis in the context of the purchase of retro products and consumer lifestyle was conducted with the aim of understanding and distinguishing different groups of consumers based on their purchasing habits and preferences regarding retro products. The discriminant analysis makes it possible to identify different segments of consumers based on their attitudes, values and behaviour. In this case, the analysis can help distinguish between groups of consumers who have different lifestyles and thus different preferences for retro products. For example, consumers who value authenticity and nostalgic values may differ from those who buy retro products for aesthetic reasons or social trends.

By looking at the significance of the discriminative function (table 2), it is evident that the first discriminative function is statistically significant. Therefore, it can be determined that there is a significant difference (at the $p < .001$ level) between the involvement in the lifestyle of those who buy retro products about the age of the respondents. Observing the values of standardized discriminative coefficients and correlations between factors and the canonical discriminative function (table 3) and group centroids (table 4), it can be concluded that higher scores on the LCSF questionnaire describe respondents aged 40+. It can be concluded that the lifestyle is not only oriented towards consumption but reflects deeper values – respect for the past, the search for quality and authenticity, and awareness of cultural and ecological sustainability. For them, retro products are not just goods, but part of their identity and the way they express who they are and what they value in life.

Table 2.
Significance of the discriminative function

Function	Characteristic root	Canonical correlation	% variance	Wilks's lambda	X ²	Df	p
1	.191	.401	98.5	.837	65.431	8	<.001
2	.003	.055	1.5	.997	1.095	3	>.050

Table 3.
Standardized discriminative coefficients (K) and correlations (S) between factors and the discriminative function of consumer behavior of retro products

categories	K	S
Nostalgia and emotional connection	.486	.750
Perception of quality and authenticity	.366	.736
Aesthetic appeal and unique style	.435	.724
Search for experience and story	.126	.401

Table 4.
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Age	Function 1
18-29	-.625
30-39	-.327
40-75	.412

Therefore, it is justified to conclude that respondents 50 + are more deeply involved in the lifestyle of consumers of retro products than other respondents. If we compare these results with the basic settings of consumer behavior, it is not surprising that this group is the most involved in the consumer behaviour of those consumers whose lifestyle reflects the consumer who buys retro products, which is often specific and associated with certain values, preferences and ways of thinking. These consumers do not choose retro products only for their functionality, but for emotional, aesthetic and cultural reasons, considering that they are most often consumers of retro products or they remind them of their youth.

About the four behavioural categories of the lifestyle of consumers of retro products measured by the LCSF questionnaire, the results show that the

lifestyle of respondents 40+ is characterised primarily by nostalgic feelings towards the past. They appreciate the values, aesthetics and symbolism of past eras. This lifestyle includes looking at the past as a period when things were "simpler" or "higher quality", so they orient their purchasing decisions according to these values. Retro products attract people who value authenticity and want to stand out from mass trends. They choose products that have a "story" or historical value, and prefer unique or vintage items that reflect their personal style. For them, it is more important to own objects with character than to follow passing fashion trends.

The overall results of the discrimination analysis show that there is a statistically significant difference (at the $p < .001$ level) in the depth of involvement in the lifestyle of consumers of retro products between respondents who are nostalgic

Table 5.
Significance of the discriminative function

Function	Canonical correlation	% variance	Wilksova lambda	X2	Df	p
1	1.162	.733	.463	302.975	4	<.001

Table 6.
Standardized discriminative coefficients (K) and correlations (S) between the factors and the discriminant function

categories	K	S
Nostalgia and emotional connection	1.016	.967
Perception of quality and authenticity	.198	.368
Aesthetic appeal and unique style	-.051	.203
Search for experience and story	-.225	.202

Table 7.
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High quality and authentic	Function 1
Yes	1.236
No	-.935

Table 8.
Significance of the discriminative function

Function	Characteristic root	Canonical correlation	Wilksova lambda	X2	Df	p
1	.674	.634	.837	202.380	4	<.001

Table 9.
Standardized discriminative coefficients (K) and correlations (S) between the factors and the discriminant function

categories	K	S
Nostalgia and emotional connection	1.056	.975
Perception of quality and authenticity	-.147	.138
Aesthetic appeal and unique style	-.062	.088
Search for experience and story	-.089	.051

Table 10.
Centroids of groups

Nostalgia and emotional connection	Function 1
Nostalgic and emotional connection	1.534
No nostalgia and no emotional connection	-.437

and emotionally connected to times thirty or more years ago than those who are not. Table 5 shows that the discriminative function is significant. Data on group centroids (table 7) and standardised discriminative coefficients and correlations between factors and canonical discriminative functions (table 6) show that respondents who are more nostalgic and who are more emotionally connected to the time thirty years ago are more deeply involved in the purchase of retro products. According to the data from Table 6, it is evident that retro products are often associated with certain values, emotional associations and cultural symbols. Discriminant analysis helps understand how these values resonate with different consumers depending on their lifestyles. In this way, brands can shape their products and communications to align with the values that are important to the target segment. Although the younger generations did not grow up in the period when these products were popular, they have acquired a romantic view of the past through media, movies, music and pop culture. For them, retro products represent an idealized version of that time, giving them a sense of connection to the cultural heritage and styles of previous decades. Although retro products may at first glance appear to be a phenomenon associated with older generations, younger consumers also show a strong interest in them, but for different motives, which is the subject of new work in the future. For them, retro products are not only a memory of the past, but also a way of expressing style, sustainability, cultural awareness and creativity. Retro trends thus survive, not only as a link with the past, but also as part of the contemporary identity of younger generations.

5. Conclusion

Concerning the defined goal of the research, the results of the research showed that respondents who belong to the third, oldest category, respondents who are nostalgic and have respect for the past and an emotional connection are more deeply involved in the lifestyle of consumers of retro products. The results of this research are in line with the theoretical settings of the lifestyle of consumers of retro products who are inclined to detail. Authenticity and fidelity to the original product concept are the key factors that attract them. Namely, from the obtained data it is not possible to conclude whether the younger generations will also accept retro products with the same enthusiasm as the 50+ generation. Although the younger generations did not grow up in the period when these products were popular, they have acquired a romantic view of the

past through media, movies, music and pop culture. For them, retro products represent an idealized version of that time, giving them a sense of connection to the cultural heritage and styles of previous decades. Therefore, a recommendation for further research would be to improve this questionnaire in terms of improving the measurement characteristics so that further research into the lifestyle of consumers of retro products can be carried out. Carrying out this analysis allows brands and companies to target their campaigns more precisely.

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