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Contemporary Product Packaging is Good, but Beware of its Negative Effects: Evidence from a Nostalgic Brand⁽¹⁾

Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the impact of contemporary product packaging for nostalgic brands on consumer attitudes toward the brand, attitudes toward the advertisement, word of mouth, and purchase intentions.

Study design/methodology/approach: Participants were exposed to advertisements featuring contemporary (non-nostalgic) and old-fashioned (nostalgic) product packaging for a nostalgic brand in Kuwait in a laboratory experiment. Differences in participants' responses toward the advertisements were examined using a series of t-tests, and the mediating effect of advertisement involvement on the dependent measures was tested using Preacher and Hayes's procedure.

Sample and data: A convenience sample of 393 undergraduate students from a large university in Kuwait was used to test the research hypotheses.

Results: Participants in the non-nostalgic (compared to the nostalgic) condition responded less favorably with respect to brand attitudes, advertisement attitudes, word of mouth, and purchase intentions. More importantly, these negative effects were significant only for individuals who had consumed (childhood brand) and currently consume (current brand) the relevant brand. Furthermore, the examined relationships were fully mediated by advertisement involvement, with the exception of partial mediation of the purchase-intention measure.

Originality/value: This study is the first to test the impact of contemporary packaging for nostalgic brands on consumer responses and use product packaging to evoke nostalgia in a laboratory experiment. Practical implications and future research directions are discussed.

Research limitations/implications: Drastic changes in product packaging for nostalgic brands may cause controversies in the marketplace and negatively affect consumer responses. To successfully transition from nostalgic packaging, a nostalgic brand must plan gradual changes and use promotional programs (e.g., limited-edition promotions) to send occasional cues and revive consumers' childhood memories.

Keywords: Nostalgia, packaging, branding, brand involvement, Kuwait.

JEL classification: M310, M370

Submitted: 24/2/2020, revised: 13/7/2020, accepted: 12/8/2020.

(1) This work was supported by Kuwait University, Research Grant No. [IM02/18].

Introduction

Product packaging plays an important role in marketing communications and is a key element of product strategy (Holmes and Paswan, 2012). To stay at the top of the branding game, brands may change product packaging to attract the attention of existing or new users (Rundh, 2005), enhance brand image among consumers (Khuong and Tran, 2018; Rundh, 2005), and stimulate purchase intentions (Khuong and Tran, 2018; Wells *et al.*, 2007). Even classic brands such as Pepsi, Lipton, Quaker, and McDonald's have made gradual changes in their logo, packaging, product, and advertising designs over the years to modernize their brands. However, drastic changes in product packaging can sometimes be costly, especially for brands that consumers associate with childhood. The consumer behavior literature indicates that consumers who have childhood memories of brands are less likely to engage with non-nostalgic cues than nostalgic ones (Muehling, Sprott *et al.*, 2014; Muehling and Sprott, 2004). Moreover, research has shown that nostalgia can influence consumer responses both emotionally (Miranda and Ruiz-Moreno, 2020; Bambauer-Sachse and Gierl, 2009; Holak and Havlena, 1998; Batcho, 1995; Davis, 1979) and cognitively (Holbrook and Schindler, 1996; Marconi, 1996; Stern, 1992) for products (Cui, 2015; Muehling *et al.*, 2014; Muehling and Sprott, 2004), as well as services (Seeger-Guttmann and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2016). Even for modern brands, a nostalgic touch in communication can decrease consumers' loss of confidence (Vignolles and Pichon, 2014).

Worldwide, brands have used nostalgic themes successfully in their marketing communications to promote products from breakfast cereals to gaming systems (Barauskaite and Gineikiene, 2017; Muehling and Pascal, 2012). In its 2018 Super Bowl commercial, PepsiCo featured Pepsi cans of the past to show that the brand has always been a part of consumer culture as "the Pepsi that your father drank, and his father drank". In a 2017 Super Bowl advertisement highlighting the Big Mac's nostalgic qualities, McDonald's announced that it was bringing back two sizes of the Big Mac to its menu. In Kuwait, a number of local brands have used similar marketing tactics to appeal to consumers and remind them of the "good old days" to positively influence their attitudes toward the brand and future behaviors. For example, the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), the largest financial institution in Kuwait since 1952, has used a nostalgic composition called '... Hala Hala Zaina' in its advertisements during special occasions. This composition is very familiar to many local people in Kuwait and brings back warm memories from childhood, like

receiving money from parents and relatives during special occasions such as Eid and saving it in their NBK “camel piggy bank”.

Instead of using nostalgic cues to remind consumers of the past, some established brands in Kuwait introduce contemporary packaging, from tweaks to major redesigns, to stay competitive in the market. For example, KITCO NICE, a Kuwaiti snacking brand that is beloved across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Middle East region, introduced small changes to its packaging and brand icon in 2018 to modernize its brand (Kaleidoscope, 2018). KITCO NICE was able to execute this change successfully without negatively influencing consumers.

However, extreme changes in packaging may lead to negative reactions that affect consumers' brand evaluations, especially for nostalgic brands associated with joyful and happy childhood memories. Such was the experience of the Kuwait Danish Dairy Company (KDD), a pioneer in the dairy industry in Kuwait since 1962 and the leading dairy producer and marketer in Kuwait (Rao, 2008). KDD's ice cream products are particularly popular among local consumers, for whom the sight of an ice cream man roaming around residential neighborhoods and calling out'...' Ice Cream' brings back sweet memories from childhood. Despite being a leading dairy company in Kuwait, KDD has experienced stiff competition from other GCC and international dairy companies, especially in the dairy product categories (Rao, 2008). In an attempt to restore its market position and expand to new international markets, KDD took its customers by surprise in 2011 and changed the name of its ice cream products to'...' Blitz' with modernized packaging. Many consumers reacted negatively to the new change and posted negative comments on social media, as well as blogging websites requesting that KDD bring back the old names and packaging (Danderma, 2011). Most consumers believed that the nostalgic feelings associated with KDD products were a big part of their ice cream consumption experiences. Most surprisingly, even though KDD only changed the names and packaging of their ice cream, some consumers claimed that the ice cream flavors had changed, while others felt that the tastes and sizes of the ice cream products were different (Mark, 2011).

Given the strong effects of nostalgia on consumer responses, one may question whether nostalgic brands should temper or mess with their packaging and introduce radical changes that distance consumers from the lived past. The present study seeks to answer this important research question via a laboratory experiment examining a real-world scenario for a nostalgic brand that has introduced changes in product packaging and caused controversies in the

marketplace. While the positive effects of using advertising messages to evoke nostalgia have been studied extensively (Muehling *et al.*, 2014; Muehling *et al.*, 2012; Muehling and Sprott, 2004), no study has tested the impact of contemporary or radical changes in product packaging for nostalgic brands on consumer responses or used product packaging to evoke nostalgia in a laboratory experiment. The results expand the scope of research in this field and support recommendations for nostalgic brands that plan to introduce new packaging in the marketplace.

Literature Overview and Hypotheses Development

Nostalgia

In 1972, The American Heritage Dictionary defined nostalgia as “a longing for things, persons, or situations that are not present” (p. 485). Subsequent scrutiny of the definition of nostalgia by researchers from different disciplines have uncovered related concepts (e.g., Muehling *et al.*, 2014; Holak and Havlena, 1992; Davis, 1979), including evocation (Davis, 1979), mood (Belk, 1990), preference (Holbrook and Schindler, 1991), emotion (Belleli, 1991), emotional state (Stern, 1992), and affective reaction (Divard and Robert-Demontrond, 1997). While most studies have categorized nostalgia as a positive emotion elicited by remembering good days in the past (Sedikides *et al.*, 2008; Holbrook, 1993; Davis, 1979), some studies include negative feelings induced by a sense of loss because the experience is already gone (Batcho, 2007; Berntsen and Rubin, 2002). Most recent research has considered nostalgia as a self-relevant emotion (van Tilburg *et al.*, 2018; Cheung *et al.*, 2017; Vess *et al.*, 2012) that mixes positive (e.g. joy, happiness) and negative affect (e.g. loss, sadness), resulting in a more sweet than bitter feeling (Sedikides and Wildschut, 2016). Furthermore, some researchers claim that nostalgia is a psychological variable that varies among individuals, regardless of frequency, i.e. it occurs several times a week (Wildschut *et al.*, 2006), age (Madoglou *et al.*, 2017; Zhou *et al.*, 2008; Holbrook, 1993), gender, social class, or other social groupings (Greenberg, *et al.*, 2004; Holbrook 1993).

With respect to nostalgia in consumer behavior, Holbrook and Schindler’s (1991) definition has become the conceptual reference that provides far more depth than other definitions in the literature (El-Bassiouny and Zahran, 2018; Muehling *et al.*, 2014; Kessous and Roux, 2008). Holbrook and Schindler (1991, p. 330) define nostalgia “as a preference (general liking, positive attitude, or favorable affect) towards objects (people, places, or things) that were more common

(popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood, or even before birth)”.

A number of researchers have studied the influence of nostalgia on different consumer aspects that are important to marketing, including brand loyalty, brand meaning, attitude formation, cognition and memory processes, and consumption preferences (Muehling *et al.*, 2014; Muehling and Pascal, 2012; Muehling and Sprott, 2004; Pascal *et al.*, 2002). For example, Pascal *et al.* (2002) examine consumer responses to nostalgic advertisements and report a positive relationship between such advertisements and attitudes toward the advertising, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions. They also show that attitudes toward the advertising mediate the effects of nostalgia on brand attitudes and purchase intentions. Muehling and Sprott (2004) present empirical evidence supporting the claim that an advertisement with a nostalgic theme can promote nostalgic thoughts in individuals, thus extending previous findings and providing useful insights on consumers’ thought processes and attitudinal responses to nostalgia-themed advertising. Furthermore, Marchegiani and Phau (2010) report that the number of nostalgia-related thoughts, attitude toward the advertising, attitude towards the brand, and purchase intention are positively correlated with personal nostalgia. More recently, Muehling *et al.* (2014) demonstrate that the effects of nostalgia on purchase intentions and brand attitudes are most pronounced for those who have had some past personal associations with the advertised brand.

Holbrook (1993, 1994) argue that some people are more prone to nostalgia than others and develop a nostalgia proneness index to measure people’s preferences for things of the past (Holbrook, 1993). Following Holbrook’s research, Pascal *et al.* (2002) introduce an evoked nostalgia scale to measure the level of nostalgia evoked by an advertisement. Individual preferences for nostalgia underlie not only cognitive thinking or affect toward favorable places or people but also behavioral aspects such as buying items that are associated with personal memories. Individuals with a higher propensity for nostalgia may have an urge to relive those experiences by purchasing items, going to places, or even thinking about events that remind them of those experiences. The present research focuses on advertisement-evoked nostalgia (Muehling *et al.*, 2014; Muehling and Sprott, 2004; Pascal *et al.*, 2002) and how one’s exposure and past attachment to a brand influence their present responses. In contrast to previous research using message-evoked nostalgia in advertising (Muehling *et al.*, 2014; Muehling and Sprott,

2004), the present research uses package-evoked nostalgia in advertising to remind consumers of past-lived events.

Packaging as a Rebranding Strategy

Given its significant role in today's society and influence on consumer responses, nostalgia is becoming a vital topic in the marketing and advertising literature (El-Bassiouny and Zahran, 2018; Cui, 2015; Muehling *et al.*, 2014). Incorporating nostalgia in product packaging is a particularly effective communication strategy for nostalgic brands, with implications for the overall consumer experience (Holmes and Paswan, 2012). Several studies have examined the functions of packaging and labelling as marketing communication tools that enhance sales, brand preferences, and overall selling proposition (c.f., Ryyänen and Hakatie, 2014; Rundh, 2005; Nancarrow *et al.*, 1998). One of the important factors influencing a purchasing decision is packaging design (Wells *et al.*, 2007). Lewis (1991) claims that good packaging is more important than a salesperson and can act as a flag of recognition and a symbol of values. According to Rundh (2005), good packaging appeals to consumers' attention, improves brand image, and enhances consumers' perceptions of a product. A package design carries distinctive brand values that influence a consumer's choice of a brand from a wide range of products (Silayoi and Speece, 2007; Underwood, 2003). Furthermore, a package can offer knowledge about the brand and its products and serve as a tool to communicate product quality (Simmonds and Spence, 2017; van Ooijen *et al.*, 2017; Silayoi and Speece, 2007).

Although much has been written about packaging from consumer perspectives, few studies have used packaging in experimental settings to elicit remembered experiences (c.f., Ryyanen *et al.*, 2016; Underwood, 2003). Vingnolles and Pichon (2014) study the relationship between nostalgia and food consumption, and Kessous and Roux (2008) examine the semiotic perspective of nostalgic experiences. Additionally, Muehling *et al.* (2014) claim that when consumers associate a product design with childhood memories, they form an emotional attachment to the brand that influences their attitudes toward the brand and purchase intentions. In the context of advertising, research shows that attitudes toward an advertisement are more favorable when the advertisement contains high levels of nostalgic cues (Baumgartner, *et al.*, 1992). As the intensity of personal nostalgia in communication messages increases, attitudes toward the brand and intentions to buy the brand improve (Marchegiani and Phau, 2010). These derived nostalgic experiences may also trigger word of mouth activities and

intentions to discuss extraordinary experiences with others (Martin, 2010; Bruwer and Alant, 2009). Furthermore, consumers experiencing nostalgia in advertisements are more likely to purchase the advertised products (Muehling *et al.*, 2014; Reisenwitz *et al.*, 2004), particularly nostalgia-related products (Sierra and McQuitty, 2007). Given previous research findings regarding the positive effect of nostalgia, the present research argues that distancing consumers from the lived past by introducing contemporary (non-nostalgic) compared to old-fashioned (nostalgic) product packaging in advertising negatively affects consumer responses, leading to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Exposure to non-nostalgic (compared to nostalgic) packaging will result in:

- a. less favorable attitudes toward the brand,
- b. less favorable attitudes toward the advertisement,
- c. less engagement in word of mouth, and
- d. lower levels of purchase intentions.

The Mediating Role of Advertisement Involvement

Involvement is considered an essential variable in message processing and persuasive communication in theoretical models such as the Elaboration-Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1979) and Heuristics-Systematic Model (Chaiken, 1980). In these models, consumers with higher degrees of involvement use extended problem solving and take more time to process information and make a purchasing decision, while consumers with lower degrees of involvement use little effort and mostly shortcuts or short-term cues to process information and make a purchasing decision. Past researchers have also studied involvement as a mediating variable during persuasive message processing (Greenwald, 1968; Krugman, 1965). More recently, Celsi and Olsen (1988) state that the level of involvement with an object, situation, or action is determined by the degree to which s/he perceives that concept to be personally relevant (p. 211). These personal connections are mostly associated with nostalgia (Muehling and Pascal, 2012; Belk, 1990; Davis, 1979). Davis (1979) assert that “nostalgia is deeply implicated in the sense of who we are, what we are about, and (though possibly with much less inner clarity) whither we go” (p. 31). Objects from the past that bring back childhood memories can assist in maintaining an individual’s self-concept and self-esteem (Sedikides *et al.*, 2008). Under certain circumstances, the ability of

nostalgia to elevate consumer involvement with the advertisement nostalgia enhances consumer evaluations of the advertised brand and advertisement (Muehling and Pascal, 2012). As a result, individuals may experience a heightened state of nostalgic feelings that is reflected in their positive evaluations and consumption of the associated brand. By contrast, a change in product packaging that does not introduce personal relevance will distance consumers from their lived past and limit their engagement in advertising stimuli. In other words, non-nostalgic (compared to nostalgic) advertising reduces consumer involvement, and hence weakens the relationship between the experimental stimuli and consumer responses. Therefore, the present research hypothesizes that the relationship between the manipulated effect and consumer responses will be mediated by the level of consumer involvement, leading to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Consumer involvement in the advertisement will mediate the relationship between the manipulated effect and:

- a. attitudes toward the brand,
- b. attitudes toward the advertisement,
- c. engagement in word of mouth, and
- d. purchase intentions.

Methodology and Experimental Design

Design and Procedure. The research participants were exposed to two advertisements. KDD ice cream was featured in both advertisements because it is a low-involvement brand that has many associations with childhood memories for consumers in Kuwait. More importantly, the KDD brand has recently implemented changes in its branding strategy (new name and contemporary packaging) to modernize the brand and expand to new international markets. However, the change in KDD branding has created controversies among consumers in the local market (Danderma, 2011). These factors position KDD ice cream as a real-world case that can be used to operationalize the examined research topic and enhance research realism.

Recent research has shown that past-focused advertisements (compared to present-focused advertisements) elicit higher perceived self-continuity by creating and linking remembered selves coherently over lived time (Ju *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, as the contemporary or present-focused advertisement (non-nostalgic), the actual artwork used in the KDD rebranding campaign with its new ice cream

name and packaging is employed in this study. As the old-fashioned advertisement (nostalgic), a modified version of the KDD rebranding campaign artwork featuring the old ice cream packaging (as a limited edition) to evoke nostalgia is used. The limited-edition artwork is used to enhance the believability of the scenario and improve research realism. It is also important to note that the contemporary-packaged ice cream products were still being sold in the local market at the time of data collection, while the old-fashioned ice cream packaging had been discontinued nearly five years before.

Participants. The research relies on a convenience sample to recruit undergraduate students from a large public university in Kuwait in exchange for extra class credit. Although some researchers have been cautious in using young people in nostalgia research (Sierra and McQuitty, 2007; Holbrook and Schindler, 1996; Batcho, 1995; Holak and Havlena, 1992; Davis, 1979), other researchers have found no significant correlation between age and nostalgia (Holbrook and Schindler, 1994; Holbrook, 1993). In addition, a number of recent studies have found that nostalgia in advertising can appeal to younger consumers (Grebosz-Krawczyk, 2019; Youn and Jin, 2017; Güzel and Okan, 2016). Most importantly, young individuals are the main target of this study because of the associations that they may have had with KDD whilst growing up.

The sampling procedure results in 393 participants (67 males and 326 females; mean age = 21.6 years, minimum age = 18 years, maximum age = 36 years). The majority of participants are younger than 26 years of age (98%) and local citizens (97.7%); all non-citizens speak the local language (Arabic). In addition, 92.9% of the participants have consumed KDD ice cream at one point in their lives. The participants are randomly assigned to the two experimental conditions: 196 participants are exposed to the nostalgic advertisement, and 197 participants are shown the non-nostalgic advertisement. The participants in the nostalgic condition are told that KDD is re-introducing the old ice cream products for a limited-time period, while participants in the non-nostalgic condition are told that the advertisement is for KDD's new ice cream products.

Measures. The experiment is conducted in a controlled laboratory setting during a 30-minute session. In this setting, the participants use laboratory computers to complete an online survey containing survey instructions, the advertisement (nostalgic or non-nostalgic), and the research questionnaire. During the survey, the participants are restricted to viewing the advertisement for a period of one minute and then asked to complete the dependent measures.

The measures include attitudes toward the advertised KDD brand anchored with bad/good, dislike/like, unfavorable/favorable, or worthless/valuable; attitudes toward the advertisement anchored with bad/good, dislike/like, unfavorable/favorable, or worthy/valuable; purchase intentions anchored with unlikely/likely, improbable/probable, or impossible/possible; and involvement in the advertisement anchored with not at all interesting/very interesting, not at all involving/very involving, or not at all personally relevant/very personally relevant. These measures have been used previously in the nostalgia advertising literature (e.g., Muehling *et al*, 2014) with semantic-differential items. In addition, the word of mouth scale developed by Arnett *et al* (2003) is used with three seven-point Likert-type statements measuring the degree to which a person speaks well of the brand, anchored with strongly disagree/strongly agree. Brady *et al.*'s (2005) behavioral loyalty scale, which comprises three seven-point Likert statements that measure the degree to which a consumer engages in or plans to engage in positive behaviors with respect to a brand, anchored with strongly disagree/strongly agree, is used. Furthermore, the participants are asked to indicate the brand of ice cream that they have mostly consumed while growing up (childhood brand) and are consuming now (current brand) from a list of ice cream brands. These variables are used to classify participants' prior and current relationships with KDD and divide them into groups. At the end of the survey, as a manipulation check, the participants are asked to complete 10 items of the advertisement-evoked nostalgia scale adapted from Pascal *et al.* (2002) with seven-point Likert scales anchored with strongly disagree/strongly agree (Appendix for the advertisement stimuli and scale items).

The survey questionnaire is administered in the Arabic language. If scale items were not available in Arabic, two graduate students translated them from English to Arabic using the back-translation method.

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is conducted using principal component with varimax rotation on all research measures. The measures are suitable for factor analysis because the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic indicates a value of 0.93, which is greater than 0.60, and communalities greater than 0.30. As shown in Table 1, the measure items have loadings above 0.60 and cross loadings below 0.30. All items are loaded on seven unique factors. The variance explained by the measures is 73.34%, and the reliabilities of all measures are above 0.70 (Table 1).

Table 1
EFA of Research Constructs

Cronbach Alpha	Factor						
	0.85	0.90	0.85	0.78	0.88	0.79	0.98
BRANDATT1	0.83						
BRANDATT3	0.80						
BRANDATT2	0.73						
BRANDATT4	0.70						
ADATT4		0.82					
ADATT1		0.80					
ADATT3		0.78					
ADATT2		0.74					
WOM2			0.83				
WOM1			0.80				
WOM3			0.74				
PI2				0.77			
PI3				0.74			
PI1				0.68			
INVOL1					0.73		
INVOL2					0.70		
INVOL3					0.60		
BEHLOY2						0.78	
BEHLOY3						0.76	
NEHLOY1						0.70	
NOST10							0.92
NOST7							0.91
NOST8							0.91
NOST9							0.90
NOST6							0.89
NOST5							0.88
NOST2							0.86
NOST3							0.86
NOST4							0.84
NOST1							0.81

- N = 393; BRANDATT = Brand attitude, ADATT = Ad attitude. WOM = Word of mouth, PI = Purchase intentions, INVOL = Involvement, BEHLOY = Behavioral loyalty, and NOST = Ad-evoked nostalgia.
- Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis, Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization, Rotation Converged in 6 Iterations
- Item loadings not shown are below 0.60 and cross-loading above 0.30
- Sub-numbers indicate items under each construct; refer to Appendix

Manipulation Check. A t-test demonstrates that the participants in the nostalgic condition have higher levels of nostalgia than the participants in the non-nostalgic condition ($M_{\text{Nostalgic}} = 5.30$, $M_{\text{Non-Nostalgic}} = 3.82$, $t(391) = 9.96$, $p < .001$), which statistically proves that the experimental manipulation is successful.

Another set of t-tests is used with all measures as dependent variables to examine the research hypotheses (Table 2). All predictions are confirmed by the data for measures of brand attitudes ($M_{\text{Nostalgic}} = 6.25$, $M_{\text{Non-Nostalgic}} = 6.02$, $t(391) = 2.06$, $p < .05$; supporting hypothesis 1a), advertisement attitudes ($M_{\text{Nostalgic}} = 5.22$, $M_{\text{Non-Nostalgic}} = 4.73$, $t(391) = 3.50$, $p < .01$; supporting hypothesis 1b), word of mouth ($M_{\text{Nostalgic}} = 5.31$, $M_{\text{Non-Nostalgic}} = 5.07$, $t(391) = 2.12$, $p < .05$; supporting hypothesis 1c), and purchase intentions ($M_{\text{Nostalgic}} = 5.64$, $M_{\text{Non-Nostalgic}} = 5.42$, $t(391) = 1.68$, $p = .09$; supporting hypothesis 1d). Overall, participants in the non-nostalgic (compared to the nostalgic) condition have reported significantly lower values of brand attitudes, advertisement attitudes, and word of mouth using a two-tailed test, while the variable of purchase intentions is only significant using a one-tailed test.

Table 2
T-tests of Nostalgic and Non-Nostalgic Conditions

Means of Ad Treatments			
DV	Nostalgic	Non-Nostalgic	t-value (2-tailed)
	(n = 196)	(n = 197)	
Brand Attitude	6.25	6.02	2.06 ^b
Ad Attitude	5.22	4.73	3.50 ^a
WOM	5.31	5.07	2.12 ^b
Purchase Int.	5.64	5.42	1.68

^a significant at $p < .01$

^b significant at $p < .05$

One may argue that the previous findings are confounded by brand loyalty/familiarity, which could impact consumers' advertisement involvement. To respond to this alternative argument, the hypotheses are tested using a multi-variate analysis (MANOVA) with Brady *et al.*'s (2005) behavioral loyalty measure as a covariate. The results confirm that the difference between the nostalgic and non-nostalgic conditions for advertisement attitudes ($M_{\text{Non-Nostalgic}} = 5.22$, $M_{\text{Non-Nostalgic}} = 4.73$, $F(391) = 11$, $p < .001$) is statistically significant using a two-tailed test, while the differences in attitudes ($M_{\text{Non-Nostalgic}} = 6.25$, $M_{\text{Non-Nostalgic}} = 6.02$, $F(391) = 3.22$, $p = .07$) and word of mouth ($M_{\text{Non-Nostalgic}} = 5.31$, $M_{\text{Non-Nostalgic}} = 5.07$, $F(391) = 2.12$, $p = .15$) are not significant.

$M_{\text{Nostalgic}} = 5.31$, $M_{\text{Non-Nostalgic}} = 5.07$, $F(391) = 3.27$, $p = .07$) are only statistically significant using a one-tailed test. However, the difference in purchase intentions ($M_{\text{Nostalgic}} = 5.64$, $M_{\text{Non-Nostalgic}} = 5.42$, $t(391) = 1.90$, $p = .17$) is found to be non-significant. These findings provide some support for the directions of the earlier findings, and thus behavioral loyalty is not a confounding variable.

The large discrepancy in the numbers of male and female respondents could potentially impact the results. The nostalgia literature provides mixed results regarding the effect of gender on nostalgia, with both non-significant (Greenberg *et al.*, 2004) and significant effects (Giral *et al.*, 2020) reported. Therefore, a post-hoc analysis is performed using MANOVA to test for an interaction effect between the experimental conditions and gender. The results show no significant interactions for all dependent measures ($p > 0.05$), thus providing empirical evidence that gender does not significantly affect the present research findings.

Another set of t-tests are performed to compare groups based on the brands of ice cream that the participants have mostly consumed while growing up (childhood brand) and are consuming now (current brand). According to Table 3, for the group of participants who have consumed KDD while growing up and are consuming KDD now, the differences between the nostalgic and non-nostalgic conditions are statistically significant for all measures ($p < .05$) except brand attitudes. For all other groups, the differences between the nostalgic and non-nostalgic conditions are not significant for all measures.

Table 3
T-tests Comparisons for Current/Childhood Groups

Ad Treatment Conditions				
Group*	DV	Nostalgic	Non-Nostalgic	t-value (2-tailed)
KDD/KDD		(n = 99)	(n = 111)	
	Brand Attitude	6.44	6.23	1.49
	Ad Attitude	5.33	4.95	1.96 ^b
	Purchase Int.	6.01	5.67	2.03 ^a
KDD/Other	WOM	5.62	5.28	2.56 ^a
		(n = 66)	(n = 71)	
	Brand Attitude	6.01	5.74	1.41
	Ad Attitude	5.42	4.39	3.30 ^a
	Purchase Int.	5.23	5.11	0.74
	WOM	5.07	4.88	0.93

Cont/ Table 3
T-tests Comparisons for Current/Childhood Groups

Ad Treatment Conditions				
Group*	DV	Nostalgic	Non-Nostalgic	t-value (2-tailed)
Other/KDD				
	Brand Attitude	(n = 12)	(n = 6)	
	Ad Attitude	6.21	6.33	0.31
	Purchase Int.	4.42	3.89	0.69
	WOM	5.42	5.22	0.35
Other/Other				
	Brand Attitude	(n = 19)	(n = 9)	
	Ad Attitude	6.05	5.42	1.34
	Purchase Int.	4.83	4.75	0.15
	WOM	5.12	4.96	0.29
		4.88	4.19	1.37

^a significant at $p < .001$

^b significant at $p < .05$

* childhood brand/current brand

Lastly, the method for identifying mediation proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2004) (bootstrap sample = 2000) is used to test for the mediation hypotheses of involvement in the relationships with the dependent measures (hypothesis 2a to hypothesis 2d). Full mediation requires a significant indirect effect and non-significant direct effect, while partial mediation requires that both the indirect and direct effects be significant. As demonstrated in Table 4, the direct effect of nostalgia on purchase intentions is significant ($p < .05$), while the direct effect of nostalgia on attitudes toward the brand, attitudes toward the advertisement, and word of mouth is non-significant ($p > .05$). Moreover, the indirect effects of nostalgia on attitudes toward the brand, attitudes toward the advertisement, word of mouth, and purchase intentions are significant ($p < .001$). Therefore, the results confirm that involvement partially mediates the link between nostalgia and purchase intentions (hypothesis 2d) and fully mediates the link between nostalgia and attitudes toward the brand, attitudes toward the advertisement, and word of mouth (hypothesis 2a to 2c).

Table 4
Testing of Mediation Hypotheses Using Bootstrapping (Preacher and Hayes 2004)

Hypothesis	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Indirect effect lower confidence	Indirect effect upper confidence	Result
H2a: Nostalgia → Involvement → brand attitudes	-.09	.34**	.27	.41	Supporting a full mediation
H2b: Nostalgia → Involvement → ad attitudes	-.04	.57**	.50	.62	Supporting a full mediation
H2c: Nostalgia → Involvement → word of mouth	.11	.21**	.15	.29	Supporting a full mediation
H2d: Nostalgia → Involvement → purchase intentions	-.12*	.37**	.31	.44	Supporting a partial mediation

N = 393; **p < .001; *p < .05; All reported effects are standardized; Bootstrap sample = 2000

Discussion and Conclusion

This research provides empirical evidence that drastic changes in product packaging for nostalgic brands can negatively affect consumers' brand attitudes, advertisement attitudes, word of mouth, and purchase intentions. Moreover, the findings indicate that these negative effects on nostalgic brands are most pronounced in consumers who have consumed (childhood brand) and are currently consuming (current brand) the associated brand, whereas other groups of consumers do not show significant differences in the examined effects. These findings support past research demonstrating the complexity of nostalgia effects (Khoshghadam *et al.*, 2019). Such studies have argued that nostalgia is not simply an activation of past memories but represents complex interactions between the past and present, which are reflected in childhood and current brand consumptions. Therefore, loyal consumers who have nostalgic associations with their current brands are very likely to be influenced by the negative effect of changes in product packaging identified in the present research and will respond more negatively when the new packaging design weakens their nostalgic associations. Furthermore, these relationships are explained by advertisement involvement as a mediator. That is, the effect of the experimental stimulus (non-nostalgic versus nostalgic conditions) on the examined consumer responses is due to the level of consumer involvement in the advertisement. Therefore, the present research indicates that changing product packaging will influence the level of

consumer involvement in the advertisement, which in turn will determine consumers' responses toward the advertisement and, in turn, the advertised brand.

Interestingly, the research findings do not fully support the purchase intention prediction (hypothesis 1d and hypothesis 2d). The difference between the manipulated conditions is significant only when using a one-tailed t-test, and the mediation is partially supported. One possible explanation is the fact that KDD sells the contemporary-packaged ice cream in the marketplace and consumers are buying the newly packaged ice cream products in Kuwait. Therefore, although purchase intentions are higher under the nostalgic (compared to non-nostalgic) condition, the difference is not significant (two-tailed t-test) due to the fact that consumers purchase the contemporary-packaged products in the real-world situation.

In general, the research findings suggest that, although consumers might purchase products of nostalgic brands in contemporary packaging, their hearts and minds (attitudes and emotions) are still full of bittersweet feelings because of the lost childhood memories associated with the brand. Most importantly, the research findings indicate that these consumers may purchase the products for reasons other than their involvement with the advertisement, as demonstrated by the partial mediation effect of advertisement involvement.

Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, the present findings advocate against sudden changes in nostalgic packaging, as such changes might cause negative reactions in the marketplace, although this does not suggest that brands cannot change throughout the product lifecycle. In fact, many brands go through changes in product packaging to stay at the top of the branding game. However, these branding attempts can deteriorate the brand image in the market if consumers lose their childhood memories associated with the brand, thus weakening the brand in their minds. Past research has shown that cues such as image, color, and logos present on packaging may shape consumer perceptions of the product (Simmonds and Spence, 2017; van Ooijen *et al.*, 2017). Brands should avoid interfering with the positive effect of nostalgic cues on consumers. While nostalgic brands should change product packaging periodically to stay modern, such changes should not be so drastic as to negatively influence consumer perceptions. Managers of nostalgic brands must implement changes in product packaging gradually, so that consumers do not experience major differences between the new and old brand identities.

Weber's law of just-noticeable difference (JND; Britt, 1975) provides guidance for brand managers to deal with brand changes without negatively affecting consumers. JND is the "smallest detectable difference between a starting and secondary level of a particular sensory stimulus" (Monroe 1973, p.70). To accomplish JND, the change in the physical stimulus must be perceived by the consumer, which depends on how noticeable the stimulus has been previously and how significant the change introduced to it is. In some situations, brands want consumers to notice changes in the brand (e.g., price discount, larger volume), while in other situations brands do not want consumers to notice the changes (e.g., price increase, smaller volume). For nostalgic packaging (e.g. KDD's old-fashioned packaging), Weber's law implies that changes smaller than JND are desirable, so that consumers will not notice the difference in packaging and react normally. While reaching the final desired package design may require multiple changes below JND, such an approach will allow a brand to reach its long-term branding objectives while has been able to introduce contemporary packaging gradually and stay at the top of the branding game. Compared with the old packaging of KITCO NICE, the new packaging only slightly modifies the nostalgic elements (name, icon, colors, design) while providing a contemporary feel.

When compelled to undertake sudden changes in branding strategy, for example, due to legal requirements or hostile acquisitions, brands can still send occasional cues to their consumers that revive the personal associations consumers may have with the brand. For instance, many brands have deployed tactical promotional programs with limited editions of nostalgic packaging for special occasions such as national days, holidays, or the summer season. Additionally, some nostalgic brands have created advertisements with nostalgic cues to evoke nostalgia. These promotional programs revive childhood memories in the minds of consumers and speak to the history of the brand. When exercised well, nostalgic brands can use such programs to stimulate joy and remind consumers of the good old days.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The present research has several limitations that need to be addressed by future research. First, a real-world nostalgic brand that has executed changes in product packaging is used. Although this choice increases research realism, it may have created issues regarding differences in the participants' associations with the advertised brand. Some participants may have had different experiences with the brand that have inflated or deflated their responses due to uncontrolled factors

beyond the experimental setting. Future research can control these unforeseen factors by measuring consumer attitudes toward the advertised brand and brand loyalty prior to testing the manipulated effect and introducing them as covariates in the analysis. Although the present research controls for brand loyalty, it has been measured after exposing participants to the manipulated stimuli. This may explain the lack of detection of a significant difference in participants' purchase intentions (hypothesis 1d and hypothesis 2d), since the participants may have been purchasing the contemporary-packaged products in the marketplace.

Second, the present research has utilized a student-sampling procedure to test the research hypotheses. Much research in the nostalgia literature supports using students to test for theory because nostalgia is experienced by individuals regardless of age and time-related factors (Madoglou *et al.*, 2017; Zhou *et al.*, 2008; Wildschut *et al.*, 2006; Holbrook, 1993). However, the responses of the students may have been driven by the influence of the class-credit incentive, which is beyond brand value. Although this confounding effect has been controlled in the present study by randomizing the participants across the experimental conditions, it will be more natural to test the research hypotheses using non-student samples.

Third, the present research has used "limited edition" in the nostalgic condition to increase the believability of bringing back old-fashioned packaging and reduce participants' skepticism. One may argue that this term may have caused the participants to respond positively due to the limited time. Future researchers can test nostalgic stimuli by introducing a plausible story that do not interact with the nostalgic cues. It may also be beneficial to add a third experimental condition identical to the nostalgic condition but without the "limited edition" to test whether the two conditions differ in consumer responses to rule out the effect of limited time.

Fourth, the present research findings have demonstrated partial mediation of advertisement involvement for consumer purchase intentions. Future researchers should attempt to identify other factors that can explain the relationship between the manipulated stimuli and purchase intentions.

Fifth, the present research has argued that gradual changes (e.g., KITCO NICE packaging) compared to drastic changes (e.g., KDD's packaging) will keep consumers from reacting negatively to nostalgic brands. It would, therefore, be beneficial for nostalgic brands to understand the amount of change in product packaging that is considered gradual or drastic. Further research should examine the change intensity using different brand stimuli and establish a research

methodology that brand strategists can follow prior to introducing changes in product packaging.

Last, the present research has used an advertisement as the experimental stimulus and measured consumer responses using self-administered questions, which may not capture unconscious processes of consumer behavior. Future researchers could measure real behaviors by including a taste test of real products with contemporary and old-fashioned packaging. For the example of KDD ice cream, researchers might ask participants to taste KDD ice cream products in contemporary or old-fashioned packaging and then capture their behaviors using the latest sensor technology and data analysis in a synthesized process. By using eye-tracking and facial expression analysis, researchers could discern the real behavior of participants through visual attention and facial emotions. Furthermore, researchers could use electrocardiography (ECG) to measure the behavior of the heart as participants consume the assigned ice cream. These advanced research applications will allow future researchers to uncover many of unconscious processes of human behaviors and obtain deeper levels of understanding and better business outcomes.

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Appendix

Nostalgic Condition



Non-Nostalgic Condition



Research scale items

BEHLOY2: If asked, I would say good things about KDD brand.

BEHLOY3: I would recommend KDD brand to a friend.

Word of Mouth (Arnet *et al.*, 2003):

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)

WOM1: I “talk up” KDD brand to people I know.

WOM2: I bring up KDD brand in a positive way in conversations I have with friends and acquaintances.

WOM3: In social situations, I often speak favorably about KDD brand.

Evoked Nostalgia (Pascal *et al.*, 2002):

Please answer the following questions regarding the advertisement you just viewed (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)

The ad...

NOST1: reminded me of the past

NOST2: helped me recall pleasant memories

NOST3: made me feel nostalgic

NOST4: made me reminisce about a previous time

NOST5: made me think about when I was younger

NOST6: evoked fond memories

NOST7: was a pleasant reminder of the past

NOST8: brought back memories of good times from the past

NOST9: reminded me of good times in the past

NOST10: reminded me of the good old days

الملخص

العبوات العصرية للمنتجات وأثرها السلبي على العلامات التجارية المرتبطة بحنين المستهلك إلى الماضي

عبدالله جواد سلطان

جامعة الكويت

هدف الدراسة: تهدف الدراسة إلى اختبار مدى تأثير التغييرات العصرية في عبوات المنتجات لعلامات تجارية مرتبطة بالحنين إلى الماضي على موقف المستهلكين تجاه العلامة التجارية والإعلان والكلام المتناقل بينهم والنوايا الشرائية.

تصميم / منهجية / طريقة الدراسة: استخدمت منهجية التجربة المختبرية في عرض إعلانين لحالتين مختلفتين؛ حيث ظهر في إحدهما عبوات عصرية (غير مرتبطة بالحنين إلى الماضي) وفي الأخرى عبوات لها طابع قديم (مرتبطة بالحنين إلى الماضي) لعلامة تجارية في الكويت متخصصة في بيع منتجات الألبان.

عينة و بيانات الدراسة: أُجريت الدراسة على عينة ملائمة، قوامها 393 فرداً من طلاب البكالوريوس في جامعة حكومية بالكويت.

نتائج الدراسة: وجدت الدراسة أن ردة فعل المشاركين في حالة العبوات العصرية (مقارنة بالعبوات ذات الطابع القديم) كانت أقل إيجابية بالنسبة لموقفهم تجاه العلامة التجارية والإعلان والكلام المتناقل بينهم والنوايا الشرائية. الجدير بالذكر أن النتائج السلبية التي كانت لها دلالة إحصائية اقتصرَت على المشاركين الذين كانوا يستهلكون المنتجات المشار إليها في هذه الدراسة في مرحلة طفولتهم ويقومون أيضاً باستهلاكها حالياً. علاوة على ذلك وجدت الدراسة أن الرابط بين المتغيرات المستقلة والمتغيرات التابعة هو مستوى ارتباط المستهلك بالإعلان، باستثناء النوايا الشرائية للمستهلك؛ حيث إن ارتباط المستهلك له علاقة جزئية فقط.

أصالة الدراسة: تعد هذه الدراسة الوحيدة من نوعها التي تهدف إلى اختبار مدى تأثير التغييرات العصرية لعبوات المنتجات المرتبطة بالحنين إلى الماضي على ردة فعل المستهلكين، والوحيدة التي تستخدم عبوات المنتجات كعامل مؤثر على إحساس الأشخاص بالحنين إلى الماضي في تجربة مختبرية.

حدود و تطبيقات الدراسة: عندما تقوم العلامات التجارية المرتبطة بالحنين إلى الماضي على تغيير عبوات منتجاتها بصورة كبيرة فإن لذلك عواقب سلبية على ردة فعل المستهلكين في السوق. ومن الأفضل تغيير العبوات بطريقة تدريجية واستخدام برامج ترويجية (مثلاً بيع المنتجات ذات الطابع القديم لفترة محدودة)؛ لتذكير المستهلكين بمرحلة طفولتهم المرتبطة بمنتجات العلامة التجارية.

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