

# **Determinants of Nostalgia Sensitivity in Nostalgic Driven Advertising**

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## **Abstract**

The research investigated several determinants potentially influencing consumer sensitivities towards nostalgia sentiment. A total of five variables were selected for investigation, where the research instrument used were survey methods supplemented by a series of nostalgic advertising stimulus; deployed to a sample size of 100 respondents comprising the general Malaysian population. It was revealed that factors such as ageing effect, past childhood experience and event repetition frequency in the past has positive and significant influence over nostalgia sentiment sensitivity of consumers.

**Keywords:** Consumer Attitudes, Nostalgia, Emotional Appeals, Advertising, Mere-Exposure Effect.

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## **Introduction**

Marketing plays a prominent role in the pursuit of organizations attaining success; a pivotal business function that attracts customers to businesses through the process of creating, delivering and communicating value to customers. One of the most essential elements in the quest of communicating values to consumers can be found in the marketing communication mix, namely advertising. Various types of appeals may be deployed in advertising in order to influence the logical or cognitive aspect of consumers in an attempt to invoke emotions with the ultimate target of an effective advertisement. The advertising industry today is a highly diverse sector with many players emerging in a fast rate, globally; in part, majorly due to the rapid advancements of technology seen in the past few decades which however subliminally signals a paradox; the level of competition in advertising today is at its highest peak ever, as never before. Advertising sector is an industry with indisputably colossal amounts of influence towards businesses and organizations; where the global advertising expenditure in 2012 alone reported a massive USD 503 billion spent (<http://www.emarketer.com>) and is predicted to keep rising in years to come.

For whatever objective there is in organizations deploying advertising campaigns, this constituent of the marketing communication mix faces a challenge today in terms of being highly homogenous in nature due to saturations caused by increased intensities of competition; causing ineffective efforts in businesses delivering their intended advertising messages across to consumers. This signals an immense need in distinguishing advertisements to stand out amongst the numerous amounts of competitors. It was discovered that differentiation tactic solves this issue by the deployment of emotional appeals in advertisements; a method so subliminal yet so deliberately obvious. Emotional appeals allow marketers to effectively engage with their prospective consumers in advertising their product and services in a much personal and meaningful way. Being one of the constituents of the 11 diverse emotional appeals, nostalgia has been classified to be a highly persuasive advertising tactic in influencing consumers (Naughton & Vlastic, 1998). Nostalgia revolves around an emotional state where a person longs for a sanitized rendition of an earlier time period. The themes driven by nostalgia seeks in tapping into the “vast structures of memory recollections” of the consumers through deployment of initiatives such as reviving products, packaging and promotions which are strongly associated with the past. Unfortunately, a critical gap exist mainly attributed to individual’s sensitivity towards nostalgia sentiment being a personal reaction universally; where different factors play a critical role in determining the projections of different feelings, actions and reactions in different people. There are several potential factors that explain the differing reactions towards nostalgia among individuals which are ageing effects, gender variations, childhood experiences, event repetition frequency in the past and time lag duration of event last encountered.

Targeting in becoming a developed industrialized nation by year 2020, Malaysia enjoys high rates of urbanization; where the people of Malaysia are exposed to enormous amounts of advertising in a daily basis by various channels of modern communications such as social media, television commercials, internet advertising, mobile advertising and many more. Being one of the constituents of the Asia Pacific nations, this region reported spending the second highest amount of advertising expenditures in regions across the world with a total of USD 142 billion from the total USD 503 billion in year 2012, falling second just behind North America (<http://www.emarketer.com>). Thus, investigations carried out in the perspective of Malaysia are highly relevant.

Despite researches in nostalgia gaining popularity in the past two decades and being described by various numbers of theories, however they are not quite unified and still remain scattered. Moreover, many present literatures seem to focus solely on the impacts of nostalgia; ultimately overlooking the factors or antecedent model of nostalgia which is deemed equally essential as well. Therefore, indentifying the accurate factors influencing the sensitivity towards nostalgia is highly imperative as it fills up a crucial gap which presently exists. Thus, this research's ultimate aim is to investigate what are the determinants that influence consumer sensitivity towards nostalgia when exposed to a nostalgic driven advertisement.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies focusing on the effects of nostalgia can be traced back all the way to the 17th century in the year 1688 by Johannes Hofer's medical dissertation on the topic, with the main theme in French called "*La Maladie du Pays*" which describes nostalgia as particular "disease" back in the days which was prevalent in the military; a psychological and physiological disorder among troops that were sent to war battles in foreign lands which collectively helped define and led towards the definition inception of "a painful longing to return home". From the domains of medicine to psychology, to sociology, literature, history, philosophy and anthropology, over the centuries nostalgia has evolved into a notion accentuating on "a person's yearning towards returning back in thoughts or reality to an earlier phase of life" (Random House Dictionary, 1966) and today widely known to be a state of longing in general. Nevertheless, it was only after the early 1990s that the area of nostalgia turned out to be a topic of attention by consumer behaviour and marketing scholars.

Nostalgia as defined by research experts Holbrook and Schindler (1991) describes a positive preference concerning objects (products, people, events, place) which were once popular at a time in a person's younger years (before birth, childhood, mid-life). The expressions of nostalgia widely describes the psychological personality in humans that appear to have a yearning for the past which helps humans preserve their identities when going through major life transitions and discontinuities with some examples worth mentioning are the passing of loved ones, divorce, losing a job, going off to war, dealing with deaths or moving to a new country. When tested with these harsh episodes in life, humans tend to draw on inner sources of strength which could help them in restoring the feelings of stability, continuity and security (Elson, 1992)

which is achieved through hanging on to blissful events and objects that were once encountered in the past. They then look for stimulus that could help stimulate their past memories; where these stimuli could be anything from music, a product, an event, an advertisement, pictures, or anything related that might aid in taking them back in time; helping the process of relieving the past and ultimately experiencing nostalgia. This allows the person to re-experience the warm memories of an earlier time (Ornstein & Ornstein, 1985).

The role of evoked emotions in advertisements and commercial stimulus have been comprehensively tested over the years and authors have well established that emotional advertising has the ability to invoke consumers in feeling good about products through the process of generating favourable brand associations and increasing purchase intentions. Researcher Moriarty (1991) listed 11 diverse emotional appeals present in humans, with them being sorrow, fear, guilt, excitement, relief, pride, poignancy, pleasure, love, family and nostalgia most importantly. Chaudhari (2002) stated that in the process of making an advertisement more persuasive, advertisers often use dramatic emotional appeal messages crafted to “shock emotions and make the consumer’s brain itch” in order to increase purchase intention. Nostalgia has been classified to be a highly persuasive and effective advertising tactic used in influencing consumers (Naughton & Vlasic, 1998) and its association helps it establish a network of mental and emotional connections between brands or products with consumers (Muehling & Pascal, 2011). Its practical significance have been proven to be a precious psychographic element in the strategy of market segmentation perspective where marketing strategist ought to identify and distinguish consumer reactions to nostalgic driven advertisements, in part, of how successful nostalgia “connects” with a person (Muehling & Sprott, 2004). With multiple parallel findings in support of the effective nature of nostalgia, it makes perfect sense why marketers today are persistent in capitalizing on the popularity of nostalgic driven themes deployed in communication and advertising strategies (Elliott, 2009). Companies that markets products through nostalgia typically experience sudden sales boost; a proof that nostalgia in advertising has a strong selling proposition (Haas, 2000). This demonstrates how product styles (e.g, motion pictures, cars, music) that was once popular during a person’s younger youth and adolescence years influences their lifelong preferences.

Nostalgia takes 2 prominent forms. Personal nostalgia refers to nostalgia that is based on a past, which is personally remembered through direct experiences (“the way I was”). It is what has been called by Davis (1979) as the “true nostalgia”; where the memory locus revolves highly on the sentimentalized “home” of a person’s childhood (Davis, 1979). When certain harsh episodes happen in a person’s life, individuals might feel unsure of themselves thus leaning in reverting back to memories of their joyful past for support and comfort (Nawas & Platt, 1965). Events such as one’s childhood days, family dinners and meeting long lost friends are some significant events which take place in the form of personal nostalgia. The second form known as historical (cultural) nostalgia on the other hand are responses spawned from a moment in history. Individuals do not go through these events directly and the events may have even taken place before they were born (“the way it was”) (Stern, 1992) where the locus is the depiction of the past as “a time before audiences were born”. Actions projected are elements

such as hopes, desires and fears that take into account materials such as history, folklore, myth and dreams (Abrahams, 1988) with the goal of reviving the past as a golden age. Wilson (2005) stated that sometimes, nostalgia works not as a result of consumers merely being triggered by the remembrance of their youth days; but it works due to the desire of consumers in associating their self identities with the values that a society had over a product or brand; for example when the Volkswagen Beetle were the hype for the first time in history. This can be simulated in a simple scenario where the older generation once had an actual experience over the Beetle, thus personal nostalgia applies to them, where on the other hand a younger individual associates his identities to the Beetle due to a strong sense of respect over the values that the Beetle once had impacted on the society, thus the aforementioned echoes the more collective historical nostalgia. The same nostalgic stimulus acts as a trigger for personal nostalgia on the baby boomers but on the other hand acts as a historical or collective nostalgic activator for the younger generation. Each form of nostalgia is anticipated to induce different mental processes; where they result in various affective and cognitive outcomes. It would also be imperative in noting that dissimilarities in the forms of nostalgia may influence the degree in where consumers associate the advertised brand in regards to their self concepts (Stern, 1992).

In another instance, many past research have proven that some individuals are more prone to nostalgia than other people (Batcho, 1995; Holbrook, 1993). Nostalgia proneness (sensitivity) is the propensity for individuals to experience nostalgic sentiments (Holak & Havlena, 2006). The tendency of nostalgia sensitivity has been defined to be a facet of individual characters, and a psychographic element as an aspect of life style that may differ among consumers. Batcho (1995) discovered that individuals in the high nostalgia prone group were found to be more receptive towards nostalgic appeals, tend to perceive the past more favorably and had a tendency in becoming more nostalgic compared to individuals from the low nostalgia prone segments. Thus, highly sensitive individuals towards nostalgia are apparently more compliant towards nostalgic appeals, branding and advertising strategies (Zimmer et al., 1999). In regards to the highly nostalgia sensitive individuals, consumption of a particular brand acts as a way that allows them to experience nostalgia (Holbrook & Schindler, 2003). These segments of consumers are more attentive towards nostalgic appeals and they tend to invest in products that enable them to re-live nostalgia.

### **HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

The use of nostalgia in advertising and marketing today continues to grow in popularity; also seem to have increasing patterns as well in its studies conducted in literatures. Reviews from numerous literatures have discovered that a number of factors exist in influencing the level of nostalgia sensitivity being projected by a person.

Davis (1979) suggested that individuals moving into “mid-life crisis” would be particularly prone towards nostalgia, as would people with “discontinuities” coping with harsh phases such as divorce, losing their jobs, reaching retirement or death of loved ones. In another instance, according to Holak and Havlena (1992), nostalgia sensitivity has been theorized as reaching its

peak when a person moves into middle age and is amplified during the retirement years. The study by Kusumi et al., (2010), also reinforces this notion where they have reported that nostalgic reaction increases with age; proven through a series of qualitative studies of text mining methods. Nostalgic predisposition appears to be augmented by ageing, and this tendency occurs mainly due to one's preference and inclination to return to their younger happier years; as people grow older, they tend to develop a fondness for the more blissful bygone days in the past. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1:** *There is a positive relationship between ageing effect and nostalgic sentiment sensitivity of consumer's when exposed to a nostalgic driven advertisement.*

Davis (1979) stated that nostalgia works as an adaptive mechanism in times of transition or disruption; therefore individuals that face higher amounts of changes in their life would be more sensitive in experiencing nostalgic sentiments. Kusumi et al., (2010) discovered patterns projected in their research which reports that men are more prone to nostalgia compared to women, as observed in several other studies such as Davis (1979). Davis elaborated this phenomenon by claiming that the cause is mainly attributed to the fact that transitional discontinuities of status and roles are sharper for men compared to women. Davis (1979) further deliberates that males have always been more likely in feeling nostalgic due the fact that they face more life discontinuities in events such as going off to war, joining an organizational workforce, losing jobs, retirements from workplace and related. Women are less prone towards nostalgia as until recent decades they on the other hand have been more likely remaining at more and staying close to their original birthplace; thus facing lesser discontinuities. From these assertions, it is hypothesized that:

**H2:** *There is a significant difference between genders in the sensitivity level towards a nostalgic driven advertisement.*

According to Dickinson and Erben (2006), the intense feeling of loss in nostalgia often has some relationship with a person's childhood; either the loss of one's own childhood or an ideal imagined childhood. The childhood phase is a strong driving force in determining what type of person a person would become later on in their lives. Further strengthening this notion is Hagerty et al., (2002) which reports that positive memories of childhood make up a strong foundation for optimism in the later years of adulthood. The desire in humans to relive their past within the present happens to be one of the driving forces behind human behavior; how a person adopts political preferences or intolerance of their forebears before them, how almost often individuals marry with spouses with characteristics that are reminiscent of their parents (Hirsch, 1992), why abused children or children of alcoholics eventually marry an abusive spouse or alcoholic spouses later on in their lives or why family recipe's could endure time by being passed down from generation to generation; signifying a strong instance regarding the influence of nostalgia that a person has over their behavior emulated in their daily lives. Nostalgia researches has also noted the importance of social connectedness in suggesting that happy social experiences such as birthday parties in childhood with friends are more remembered compared to experiences enjoyed alone for example playing with toys. Nostalgia



works as reflective reminiscence which helps protect identity continuity of a person by reminding themselves of one's own remembrance of their younger past (Sedikides et al., 2008) and enabling individuals to assess personal changes over time (Batcho et al., 2008). Batcho et al., (2011) further strengthened this notion stating that individuals with happier childhood memories are more likely to have greater sensitivity to nostalgia. Thus, from the aforementioned, it is proposed that:

**H3:** *There is a positive relationship between past childhood experience and nostalgic sentiment sensitivity of consumer's when exposed to a nostalgic driven advertisement.*

From time to time, when something has been exposed repeatedly to a person, it will eventually invoke them to feel positive towards the object. Olsen (1995) stated that brand loyalty amplifies after consistent years of purchase made to the same brand in the life of that person. Nostalgic reaction triggers for example popular music are based on frequent exposure to an object in the distant past; especially in the childhood years or adolescence. The mentioned are closely related to mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 2002) and the impact of reminiscence portraying autobiographical memory (Rubin, 1999). The research by Sultan et al., (2010) stated that the effect of nostalgia is reported to be the highest among consumers that are frequent users of a brand, being used particularly while their childhood years. The research by Kusumi et al., (2010) reinforced this notion, with their theory that when a person was frequently exposed to a popular song in the past, the frequent repetition would increase their preference for it. And after a long time gap, if the person listens to that particular music again in for example in a television advertisement, the person would most likely feel nostalgic and retrieve the related past experience that they have gone through. The study by Zajonc (1968) on the mere exposure effect or also known as the "familiarity principle" has provided support that mere exposure to a stimulus or event will eventually lead towards liking them; this phenomenon is amplified when a particular phase of an individual's life is associated with an elevated number of exposures to certain events or products where this amount of exposure concentration would ultimately result in a lifetime preference towards the mentioned stimulus that were popular during that particular phase (Holbrook & Schindler, 1992). Hence, it is hypothesized that:

**H4:** *There is a positive relationship between event repetition frequency in the past and nostalgic sentiment sensitivity of consumer's when exposed to a nostalgic driven advertisement.*

A good example of a long time lag between a nostalgia inducing event and the present can be illustrated with scenarios such as meeting with long lost old friends (Holak & Havlena, 1992) and visiting one's high school after a long time (Kusumi, 2010). The research by Kusumi et al., (2010) is the base and fundamental idea for the theory of time lag duration of nostalgia inducing event last encountered where their experiment have discovered that respondents who have heard a music exposed in the distant past, tend to grow a sense of sentiment for the song once heard again after a very long time. Their research reported that a particular song which was commonly played during an individual's childhood evoked a strong sense of sentiment when heard once again after a long time; which corresponds with the previous hypothesis H4. The long interval from the original experience that helped enhance the nostalgic feelings later on in life, can be understood by the phenomenon of "decaying of source

memory”, which according to (Brown, 2004; Kusumi, 2006) is basically caused by the consequence of ageing that ultimately enhances the sensitivity to nostalgic sentiment triggers. The source memory’s decaying process which is related to the déjà vu phenomenon is assumed to further catalyze nostalgia sentiments. From these assertions, it is hypothesized that:

**H5:** *There is a positive relationship between time lag duration of event last encountered and nostalgic sentiment sensitivity of consumer’s when exposed to a nostalgic driven advertisement.*

## RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The theory revolving around the area of nostalgia and consumer sensitivity started gaining colossal recognition in the early 1990s. This area of research is described by various numbers of theories; however they are not quite unified. This research is mainly built upon the theory of nostalgia relevance in advertising proposed by Pieterse (2011) which makes up two of the research independent variables and the model is extended by taking into account the theories proposed by Kusumi et al., (2010) which extends the model with another two additional independent variables as well as one variable from Batcho’s (2010) theory on past childhood experience.

Figure 1 next depicts research framework of this study. The independent variables are comprised of five factors and their respective relationship with the research dependent variable specifically the nostalgia sentiment sensitivity when exposed to a nostalgic driven advertisement (NOSTSENSITIVITY) as proposed by earlier literatures listed as Ageing Effect (Holbrook, 2003; Kusumi et al., 2010; Pieterse, 2011; Sultan et al., 2010), Gender Variation (Holbrook, 1993; Pieterse, 2011), Past Childhood Experience (Batcho 2010), Event Repetition Frequency in the Past (Kusumi et al., 2010), Time Lag Duration of Event Last Encountered (Brown, 2004; Kusumi, 2006; Kusumi et al., 2010).

Figure 1: The Research Framework

## METHOD

### Measures

In assessing the target sample and testing the hypotheses, the research instrument that was utilized is the questionnaire method. Online medium was used for questionnaire distribution specifically through the creation of a survey website by utilizing “Google Drive Forms” where links to the survey website were generated in URL form and were passed on to ten initial individuals covering each of the five age range group and they then disperse the survey link to their respective networks of friends, colleagues and families. An advertisement was self created; acting as the nostalgic stimulus in a multiple collage (pictorial) form that resembles printed photograph images with a mixture of personal nostalgia cues and historical nostalgia cues. Some personal nostalgia cues used are such as a depictions of family dinners, sisters watching “Disney” shows, young boy scouts having Coke, an elderly man with his “beetle” car,



children with “Lego” toys, youngsters on holiday with the once highly admired “Samba” Bus and many other more. The other half of the picture collage were comprised of historical nostalgia cues such as Bruce Lee, Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe and her popular skirt blowing gesture, the Beatles, the late Michael Jackson, Audrey Hepburn, scenes from “Jitterbug” dances, Malaysia’s late P. Ramlee, Loganathan Arumugam and many more. The finalized stimulus was a series of 22 images that were tagged with an advertising slogan (brand proposition) of *“relive the magic from the past”* which was placed in the lower part of the advertisement where the stimulus was ultimately used to advertise the camera multinational giants “Nikon”; with their widely renowned branding of “I am Nikon” being embedded in the lower part of the nostalgic stimulus.

Figure 2: The Research Stimulus (Nostalgic Advertisement)

After viewing the research stimuli, respondents were prompted to answer a series 50 itemized questions that would quantify their level of nostalgia sensitivity in response to the nostalgic driven advertisement stimulus by Nikon. The questionnaire items were adapted from the research by Marchegiani (2007). Originally a 69 item survey, the instrument was reduced to a 50 item survey; where some of the items that were closely similar in wordings were omitted in order to avoid redundancies. The construction of the nostalgia reaction measurement by Marchegiani (2007) were based on four prominent nostalgic scales which were developed by well known researchers in the areas of nostalgia and marketing which combined elements from the scales developed by Holbrook’s (1993) “Nostalgia Proneness Index”, Pascal, Sprott and Muehling’s (2002) “Evoked Nostalgia Scale”, Taylor and Konrad’s (1980) “Experience Scale” and Baker and Kennedy’s (1994) “NostScale”. The 50 item survey adapted from Marchegiani (2007) included a number of negatively worded statements (9 items in total) with regards to the normal positively worded statements; thus these specific items were “reverse coded” in terms of its weight for its implementation in SPSS. After viewing the research stimulus, respondents indicated how they generally feel towards a nostalgic advertisement by rating the degree of their nostalgic projections on a five point scale from 1 signifies “strongly disagree” to 5 signifying “strongly agree”.

### ***Samples and procedures***

The unit of analysis for this research were general Malaysian consumers. The participants comprised from both peninsular Malaysia as well as Malaysian Borneo respondents. The research technique for this study was deployed using snowball sampling technique; where an initial contact was made with ten individuals from each of the five age group categories and from there, additional respondents was obtained by referrals from the ten aforementioned initial respondents through them dispersing the online survey link to their respective networks of friends, colleagues and families. In terms of sample size, an amount of 100 responses were collected for the study. The demographic information of the respondents is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Background of the Research Respondents

## RESULTS

In assessing normality, the score on nostalgia sensitivity (NOSTSENSITIVITY) were deployed using SPSS exploration tool with the main analysis instrument being the normality plot test projected using the Normal Q-Q Plot. Graph patterns from the Q-Q plot displayed that most of the dots are scattered along the straight line; thus this indicates that the data was approximately normally distributed. Box plot illustrations also clearly illustrated that the box plot is almost in a symmetrical pattern. Although the box plots were not perfectly symmetrical, however this is adequate enough in suggesting that the data were normally distributed. In terms of outliers checking, subsequently after the data was collected, they were checked through the “outlier labeling rule” method originally modeled by Tukey (1977) which was enhanced by Hoaglin and Iglewicz (1986). Analysis on the lower quartile (25 percentile) and upper quartile (75 percentile) contrasted to the extreme values on the data affirmed that there were no outliers in the data collected for this research. The 50 item scales adapted from Marchegiani (2007) to quantify nostalgia based reactions scored a high Cronbach’s Alpha value of 0.955; thus it can be concluded that the measurement instrument used in this research was highly reliable.

### Hypothesis Testing

In accordance to the hypotheses developed previously, they were tested through comprehensive series of analyses covering descriptive statistics, graph plot analysis, Pearson’s correlation and finally multiple regression analysis. Descriptive statistics were analyzed and transformed into graph plot projections as illustrated in Figure 3 were several patterns can be observed in the graph; patterns reveal that sensitivity towards nostalgia seems to increase with regards to ageing, sensitivity towards nostalgia seems to increase with regards to happiness gone through in the past years of childhood and sensitivity towards nostalgia seems to increase with regards to the amount of event repetition frequency in the past. There are however, two other graph plots that depict insignificant pattern, namely the sensitivity level towards nostalgia between genders and sensitivity towards nostalgia with regards to time lag duration of event last encountered; where both of the aforementioned failed to project any distinguishable pattern. The respective graphs are illustrated in Figure 3 next. Vertical axis represents the mean on nostalgia sentiment sensitivity of the consumers (NOSTSENSITIVITY) whereas horizontal axis represents the investigated independent variables.

Figure 3: Graph Plots Projections on Nostalgia Sensitivity of Respondents

Based on the correlation result illustrated in Table 2, it is found that the independent variables ageing effect, gender variation, past childhood experience and event repetition frequency reports a positive relationship with the dependent variable, nostalgia sentiment sensitivity. One independent variable, namely the event last encountered however reports a negative relationship with nostalgia sentiment sensitivity. In terms of correlation strength guided by

Cohen's (1996) correlation coefficient interpretation, it is revealed that past childhood experience has a strong correlation with nostalgia sentiment sensitivity, recording a high  $r$  value of 0.547. Independent variables ageing effect and event repetition frequency reports a moderate strength of relationship with nostalgia sentiment sensitivity, recording an  $r$  value of 0.373 and 0.457 respectively. On the other hand gender variation and event last encountered reports weak correlation with nostalgia sentiment sensitivity, with  $r$  values of 0.102 and -0.017 respectively. On the subject of correlation significance level, independent variables ageing effect, past childhood experience and event repetition frequency attained significant levels of correlation with nostalgia sentiment sensitivity at the 0.01 level ( $P$ -value = 0.000 each) reporting  $r$  values of 0.373, 0.547 and 0.457 each. The remaining independent variables, gender variation and event last encountered, however did not record any significant values of correlation towards nostalgia sentiment sensitivity ( $P$ -value = 0.314 and 0.867 respectively).

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation full result

The results with regards to coefficient of determination, is illustrated in Table 3 where qualified variables for coefficient of determination are ageing effect, past childhood experience and event repetition frequency as there are the only variables that has significant levels of correlation. It is revealed that past childhood experience has the highest coefficient of determination, followed by event repetition frequency and lastly ageing effect. Guided by the results from Table 3, it can be interpreted that past childhood experience explains 29.9% of the total variance in the respondents score on nostalgia sentiment sensitivity. Event repetition frequency on the other hand explains 20.8% of the total variance in the scores of nostalgia sentiment sensitivity by respondents and finally ageing effect explains 13.9% of the total variance in the respondent's scores on nostalgia sentiment sensitivity.

Table 3: Coefficient of Determination (Significant Correlations)

In order to learn more about the relationship between multiple independent variables in this research (ageing effect, gender variation, past childhood experience, event repetition frequency in the past and time lag duration of event last encountered) and the dependent variable (nostalgia sentiment sensitivity), multiple regressions were conducted using SPSS 20.0 and the results are as displayed in Table 4 and 5.

Table 4: Model Summary

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis

Observing Table 4, the  $R$  value is illustrated as 0.694 and the  $R^2$  is valued at 0.482; thus from the  $R^2$  value information garnered, it therefore can be interpreted that 48.2% of nostalgia sentiment sensitivity can be explained by five different independent variables. As depicted in Table 5, multiple regression results reports that ageing effect, gender variation, past childhood experience and event repetition frequency in the past are significantly correlated with nostalgia sentiment sensitivity. In reporting the independent variables, ageing effect recorded a beta coefficient of 0.287 with  $P$ -value less than 0.01, gender variation reported a beta coefficient of

0.190 with P-value less than 0.05, past childhood experience recorded beta coefficients of 0.438 with P-value less than 0.001 and event repetition frequency on the other hand reported a beta coefficient of 0.251 with P-value less than 0.01. Event last encountered was the only independent variable that did not report any significant relationship, recording a beta coefficient of -0.087 with P-value more than 0.05. Taking into account significance values which were conducted previously in the Pearson's correlation analysis, it was therefore affirmed that Hypothesis H1, H3 and H4 were statistically supported whereas Hypothesis H2 and H5 were not supported. Recalling values that were garnered in the conducted multiple regression analysis, the linear regression equation for this research therefore can be formulated as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 - Linear Regression Equation

### **DISCUSSIONS**

The findings from this research have indicated three specific factors that influence the sensitivity towards nostalgia sentiment among consumers. First discovery revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between ageing effect and nostalgia sentiment sensitivity of consumers when exposed to nostalgic driven advertisement. Older respondents seem to score highly in the nostalgia sensitivity mean compared to the younger respondents. This result was in line with the findings discovered by Davis (1979) as well as Havlena and Holak (1991) in where the intensity of nostalgia sensitivities increases over an individual's life cycle. This phenomena can be explained through the instances where in middle age, humans generally goes through "mid-life crisis" in situations such as reassessment of their careers making them particularly more sensitive towards nostalgia, and is intensified in the much older years where events such as coping with divorce, reaching retirement age or losing loved ones are more prevalent. Nostalgia gives human ability in maintaining their identity in major face of transitions which ultimately serves as discontinuities in life such as the identity change from childhood to pubescence, adolescence to adulthood, from a single status to living a married life and from a spouse to a parent.

The second finding revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between past childhood experience and the sensitivity towards nostalgia sentiment among consumers when exposed to nostalgic driven advertisement. Respondents who reported as having experienced happier years of childhood seem to be highly sensitive towards nostalgia sentiment compared to the respondents who reported experiencing a rather sad or normal childhood. This instance is also supported by Batcho et al., (2011) as well as (Hong & Zinkhan, 1992) where their study emphasized the significance of past childhood experience and its role towards nostalgia sensitivity predispositions. This finding can be further explained by the mechanism of nostalgia which works as nostalgic reminiscence that helps protect identity continuity of a person by reminding themselves of one's own facade of their past (Sedikides et al., 2008) and enabling them to assess personal changes over time (Batcho et al., 2008). A happy childhood soothes the personality of a person and the effect is carried on throughout the entire life of a person; thus many of whom experiencing happy growing up years were more susceptible and sensitive towards emotional appeals particularly nostalgic appeals used in advertisements mainly

because of a strong desire by them to relieve the joyful memories and experience of the days that had gone by; this is in line with the fundamental definition of nostalgia itself which is a yearning to return home to the past.

The third discovery revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between event repetition frequency in the past and the sensitivity towards nostalgia sentiment among consumers when exposed to nostalgic driven advertisement. Respondents who reported as having going through an event more frequently in the past seem to be highly sensitive towards nostalgia sentiment compared to the respondents who gone through an event less frequently. This result is in parallel with the study done by Zajonc (1968), Holbrook and Schindler (1992) and Kusumi et al., (2010). The findings occurrence can be explained mainly through the “familiarity principle” or the mere exposure effect first coined by Zajonc (1968) where increased frequency of use or encounter to a stimulus ultimately helps amplify preference towards it. As stated by Holbrook and Schindler (1992) mere exposure to a stimulus or event will eventually lead towards liking them; this phenomenon is amplified when a particular phase of an individual’s life is associated with an elevated number of exposure to certain events or products where this amount of exposure concentration would ultimately result in a lifetime preference towards the mentioned stimulus that were popular during that particular phase. This instance is further supported by Sultan et al., (2010) that the effect of nostalgia is the greatest for individuals who are frequent users of a brand especially during their young childhood years; which is also concerned with segments of sensitive periods in an individual’s life phase especially in the younger years. The sensitive period coupled with high frequencies of repetition , usages or exposures during that specific time has the power to garner a lifelong nostalgic remembrance and preference and over an object, brand or stimuli.

Although various literatures revealed that males are traditionally more nostalgic compared to females which were less prone towards nostalgia (Davis 1979; Holbrook & Schindler 1989; Kusumi et al. 2010) however differing findings were revealed in this research. Results analyzed through graph plot comparisons failed to display any significant difference between the two genders in where both genders projected an almost similar level of sensitivity towards nostalgia with females scoring slightly higher in terms of nostalgic sensitivity; where this result contradicts with many past findings. This phenomenon can be explained by the evolving working patterns of females today; where increasing rates of women joining organizational workforce presently are on the rise (Domenico & Jones, 2006). As explained in the literature review previously, there is no such fallacy in the present world today as to whether women will join the workforce; instead of being considered a deviation from the norm, rather working women today are the norm (Rainey & Borders, 1997). These evolving working patterns in females have led towards women today in also experiencing higher amounts of changes in their life; leading towards them going through transitional discontinuities of status and sharper roles in workplace, thus this leads towards women having the same amounts of life experiences similar to men. Also, although it may seem rational that the longer time lag a person has gone through a nostalgic inducing event in the past would make them feel more nostalgic when encountering the event again nostalgically evoked in the present, however findings from this

result found out otherwise; this also contradicts with many findings from past literatures. This occurrence might have been caused by subjective reasons in the process of respondents associating and perceiving the most personal picture through their own observation in the nostalgic stimuli that was used.

### **CONCLUSION**

Few research limitations might have dampened the nature of this study which ought to be highlighted. First, the study deployed printed advertisement method to be used as the research stimulus; however not every product or brand can be adequately advertised in a printed based media. Thus, future researches are highly encouraged to explore the various technologies, sensory and multimedia channels in deploying a more graphic and effective advertisement. The second limitation would be the small sample size of 100 respondents participating in the survey which would still be considered small. Therefore, future researches should attempt in utilizing a larger sample size; which could possibly yield a different result to those garnered from this research as doing so would be more representative to the Malaysian population as well as harvesting more conclusive links between the determinants of sensitivity towards nostalgia of the nation's population.

As a conclusion, this research has catered to a considerably large gap in present literatures regarding nostalgia and its application in marketing. This study has contributed in such a way that: (1) through observations in literatures, many present studies conducted in the areas of nostalgia seem to focus solely on the impacts of nostalgia where this instance has led towards knowledge of the more fundamental mechanism on other half of this area remaining scarce and neglected; however the present study has addressed this gap by empirically investigating the aforementioned other half mechanism of nostalgia particularly in the models of nostalgia antecedents and determinants. (2) It is well known that nostalgia is conceptualized as a highly complex subject that deals with feelings and emotions which reacts to differing personal elements in general, invoked by reflections on things (objects, persons, experiences, ideas) which are associated with the past. Thus, the endeavour in understanding the fundamentals of nostalgia as done in this research is highly valuable for marketing managers in mastering the mechanisms of nostalgia by emotionally segmenting consumers in communicating the values of products and services more effectively. The result of this study has shown that ageing effect, past childhood experience and event repetition frequency in the past are significant influencers of nostalgia sentiment sensitivity. On the other hand, gender variation and time lag duration of event last encounter was not an important predictor influencing consumer's sensitivity towards nostalgia. This study is imperative in accordance to understand the highly complex nature of nostalgia; it is hoped that the model proposed in this research would be of benefit to other researchers seeking to understand the factors that influence the nostalgia sensitivity of consumers. Given the colossal importance of businesses in understanding their consumer's behavior, it is also hoped that this study would act as a stepping stone in stimulating in more researches to be carried out in the future regarding the applications of nostalgia with regards to the areas of marketing and advertising.



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Table 1 - Background of the Research Respondents

Background	Frequency (N=100)	Percentage (%)	Background	Frequency (N=100)	Percentage (%)
<b>Respondents By Gender</b>			<b>Respondents By Age Group</b>		
Male	36	36%	15-21 years old	11	11%
Female	64	64%	22-32 years old	59	59%
			33-43 years old	15	15%
			44-54 years old	2	2%
			> 55 years old	13	13%
<b>Respondents By Ethnicity</b>			<b>Respondents By Marital Status</b>		
Malay	22	22%	Single	63	63%
Chinese	23	23%	Married	37	37%
Indian	11	11%	Divorced	-	-
Sabahan Native	27	27%			
Sarawakian Native	1	1%			
Others/ International	16	16%			
<b>Respondents By Employment Status</b>					
Employed Full Time	37	37%			
Self Employed	3	3%			
Retired	4	4%			
Not Working	9	9%			
Student	47	47%			

Table 2 - Pearson's Correlation full result

	Ageing Effect	Gender Variation	Past Childhood Experience	Event Repetition Frequency	Event Last Encountered	<b>Nostalgia Sentiment Sensitivity</b>
Ageing Effect	1					
Gender Variation	-.222*	1				
Past Childhood Experience	.123	-.014	1			
Event Repetition Frequency	.226*	-.039	.367**	1		
Event Last Encountered	-.213*	.105	.179	.129	1	
<b>Nostalgia Sentiment Sensitivity</b>	.373**	.102	.547**	.457**	-.017	1

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 - Coefficient of Determination (Significant Correlations)

		<b>Nostalgia Sentiment Sensitivity</b>
<b>Ageing Effect</b>	Variance [(0.373 x 0.373) x 100%]	13.9%
<b>Past Childhood Experience</b>	Variance [(0.547 x 0.547) x 100%]	29.9%
<b>Event Repetition Frequency</b>	Variance [(0.457 x 0.457) x 100%]	20.9%

Table 4 - Model Summary (Multiple Regression)

<b>Model Summary</b>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.694 <sup>a</sup>	.482	.454	.40103
a. Predictors: (Constant), Event Last Encountered, Gender Variation, Event Repetition Frequency, Ageing Effect, Past Childhood Experience				

Table 5 - Multiple Regression

Multiple Regression Analysis						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.444	.266		5.434	.000
	Ageing Effect	.136	.038	.287	3.558	.001**
	Gender Variation	.214	.086	.190	2.491	.014*
	Past Childhood Experience	.277	.051	.438	5.408	.000***
	Event Repetition Frequency	.126	.041	.251	3.060	.003**
	Event Last Encountered	-.037	.034	-.087	-1.103	.273
a. Dependent Variable: NOSTSENSITIVITY						
b. *. p < 0.05 (two tailed). **. p < 0.01 (two tailed). ***. p < 0.001 (two tailed).						

Analysis

Table 6 - Linear Regression Equation

$$Y_{\text{(Nostalgia Sentiment Sensitivity)}} = 1.444 + 0.136x_1 \text{ (Ageing Effect)} + 0.214x_2 \text{ (Gender Variation)} + 0.277x_3 \text{ (Past Childhood Experience)} + 0.126x_4 \text{ (Event Repetition Frequency in the Past)} - 0.037x_5 \text{ (Time Lag Duration of Event Last Encountered)} + \varepsilon$$

$$Y = 1.444 + 0.136x_1 + 0.214x_2 + 0.277x_3 + 0.126x_4 - 0.037x_5$$

Figure 1 - Research Framework



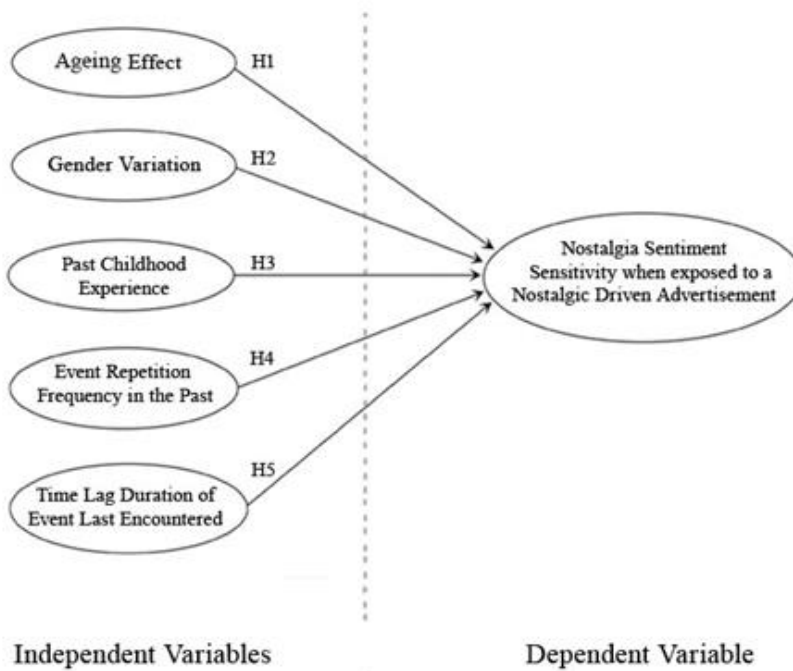
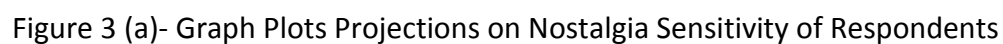


Figure 2 - The Research Stimulus (Nostalgic Advertisement)



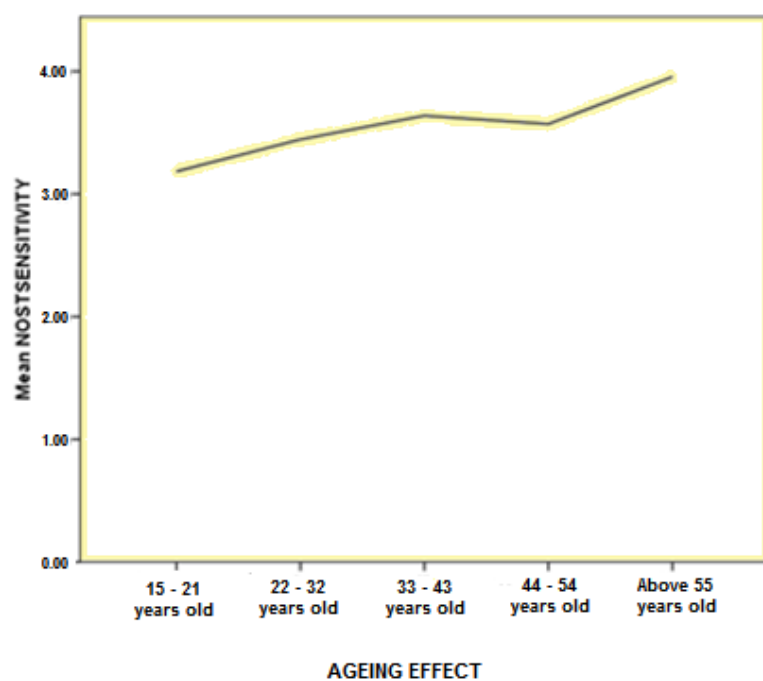


Figure 3 (b)- Graph Plots Projections on Nostalgia Sensitivity of Respondents

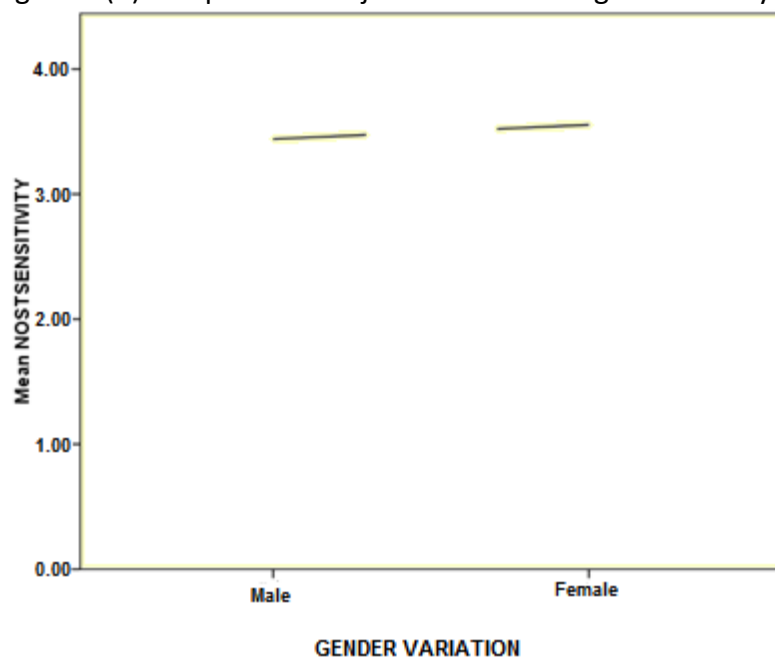


Figure 3 (c)- Graph Plots Projections on Nostalgia Sensitivity of Respondents

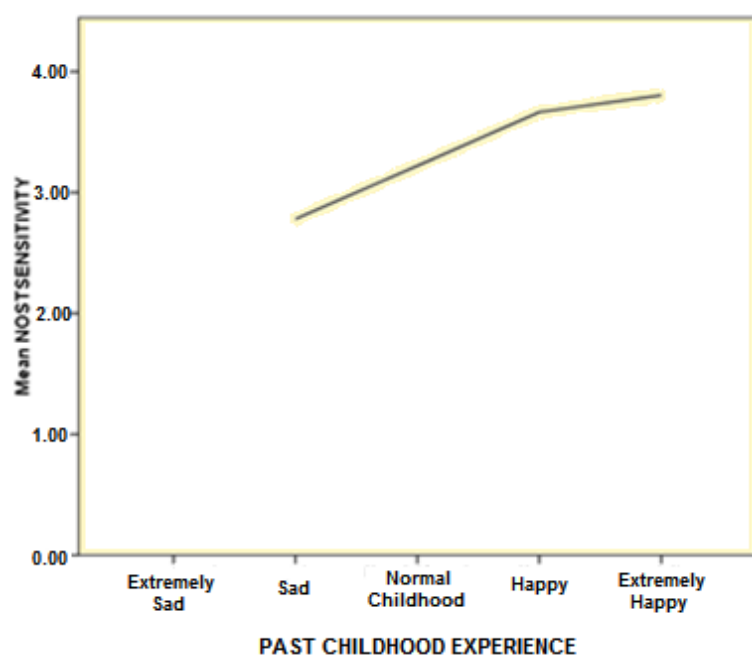


Figure 3 (d)- Graph Plots Projections on Nostalgia Sensitivity of Respondents

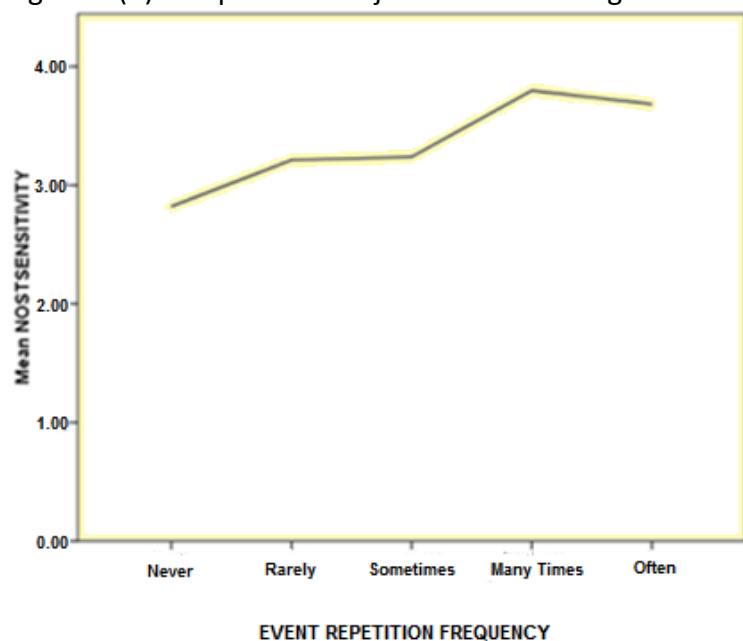


Figure 3 (e)- Graph Plots Projections on Nostalgia Sensitivity of Respondents

