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## **IDENTIFICATION OF NOSTALGIC BRANDS EXISTING ON THE POLISH MARKET IN THE LIGHT OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH<sup>1</sup>**

**Summary:** The concept of nostalgia generates the growing interest of scientists, who analyses this phenomenon in marketing in different contexts. Nostalgic brand is a brand, which is associated with close or far, own or historical past. One can distinguish two main categories of nostalgic brands: generational brand (based on a real nostalgia, having the individual or collective character) and transgenerational brands (based on a real nostalgia or a simulated nostalgia, referring indirectly to the individual and collective experiences or memories of other people). The aim of this article is to identify nostalgic brands operating on the Polish market on a basis of the results of own empirical research. As a result of the studies, a list of 24 nostalgic brands, both generational and transgenerational, representing 6 product categories, was created.

**Keywords:** nostalgia, brand management, consumers attitudes.

**JEL Classification:** M31.

### **Introduction**

In period of anxiety connected with economic recessions, political crisis, national conflicts, but also personal insecurity, and social pressure, consumers search for the brands, that deliver additional value connected with feeling of security and calm. The higher the level of insecurity that consumers experience

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in their current life, the more likely they revert to the past [Baker and Kennedy, 1994]. According to S. Elliott [2009], consuming nostalgic products will soothe consumers' nerves and nostalgic brands can revive feelings about the good past. Thus, consumers' insecurity, which is a generalized sense of uncertainty, vulnerability and fear, may result in consumer preference for nostalgic brands [Zhou et al., 2013]. Consequently, as environment instability increases, people tend to look for security and emotional support in the past [Stern, 1992], and therefore their nostalgic feelings would increase. Nostalgic brands can help create a tangible link to the past, by providing the positive nostalgic thoughts [Loveland, Smeesters and Mandel, 2010]. Also A.R. Hirsch [1992] suggested, that the more dissatisfied consumers are with their current life, the more they want to revert to nostalgic brands.

The observation of current trends in marketing management proves, that the concept of nostalgia inspires scientists, who analyse this phenomenon in marketing in different research contexts. The results of research conducted by foreign researchers confirm the positive impact of nostalgia on the attitudes and behaviours of consumers. In Polish literature, there is no complex approach of the issues of nostalgia in brand management, which would give a holistic view on the concept. It should be also emphasized that the issues of nostalgia in marketing management is often perceived in Poland, only through the prism of a return to the culture of socialist realism, which is very limited approach. The main source of information is, therefore, world literature, which in this area, however, focuses on selected areas of nostalgia in management. The aim of the article is to identify nostalgic brands operating on the Polish market on a basis of the results of own empirical research.

## **1. Nostalgia construct in marketing**

The nostalgia as a theoretical construct in the consumer psychological context was prompted by F. Davis [1979]. According to F. Davis [1979, p. 18], nostalgia is a "positively toned evocation of a lived past in the context of some negative feeling toward the present or impending circumstance". He makes reference to the source of the positive emotion evoked by the past and explained that "the nostalgic feeling is infused with imputations of past beauty, pleasure, joy, satisfaction, goodness, happiness, love, and the like, in sum, any or several of the positive affects of being" [Davis, 1979, p. 18]. He postulated also that nostalgia usually occurs in the context of fear, discontent, anxiety, and uncertainty, and it aims at alleviating negative feelings. Several definitions and de-

scriptions of nostalgia have emerged also in the marketing literature over the past decades. R.W. Belk [1990], R. Divard and P. Robert-Demontrond [1997] include some reference to actual stimuli (objects, scenes, smells etc.), that may prompt a nostalgic response. M.B. Holbrook and R.M. Schindler [1991, p. 108], described nostalgia as a time-based preference, more specifically, as a preference (general liking, positive attitude, or favourable affect) toward objects (people, places, or things) that were common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated), when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood, or even before birth). Despite some differences, most conceptualizations of nostalgia view it as an affective state, mood, or emotion that is somehow triggered by one's thoughts of the past.

In the article, authors assume that nostalgic brand is associated with close or far, own or historical past. The implementation of the phenomenon of nostalgia in brand management can create the emotions associated with sensations and experiences important for buyers, often making reference to their own, or an idealized historical past.

## **2. Classification of nostalgic brands**

Several authors have tried to categorize nostalgia into different sub-categories. W.J. Havlena and S.L. Holak [1991] and B. Stern [1992] have clarified this conceptualization by proposing that nostalgic thoughts may be generated from either a personally remembered past (personal nostalgia) or from a time in history before one was born (historical/communal nostalgia). S.M. Baker and P.F. Kennedy [1994] proposed three additional types of nostalgia: real, simulated and collective nostalgia.

As a consequence on the basis of the various classifications of the phenomenon of nostalgia made, among others, by S.M. Baker and P.F. Kennedy [1994], J. Brée [1999], B. Heilbrunn [1999], P. Robert-Demontrond and G. Boulbry [2003], A. Kessous and E. Roux [2008], we can distinguish two basic categories of nostalgic brands:

- generational brands, based on a real nostalgia (relating to the own direct and personal memories), having the individual or collective character,
- transgenerational brands, based on a real nostalgia (relating to the own direct and personal memories) or simulated nostalgia (referring indirectly to the individual experiences or memories of other people, e.g. parents, grandparents, as well as to the collective experiences and memories in case of historical nostalgia) having the individual or collective character.

### 3. Research methodology

The main objective of the first stage of research was to identify the nostalgic brands, taking into account the brand category, as well as demographic consumers characteristics.

The scientific problem indicates many research questions related to the nostalgic brand:

- If the Polish market is dominated by nostalgic generational or transgenerational brands?
- If the Polish market is dominated by local or global nostalgic brands?
- Does in the Polish reality – having regard to the political and economic changes in the nineties of the last century – transgenerational nostalgic brand with a strong capital exist?

The research questions were developed through the formulation of following hypothesis: Regardless of demographic characteristics, consumers indicate as the nostalgic brands, both generational and transgenerational brands.

In order to test the hypothesis, the following empirical research was conducted to identify nostalgic brands existing on the Polish market, depending on their category (generational brands and transgenerational brands).

The research included identification of generational and transgenerational nostalgic brands and non-nostalgic brands. One hundred respondents representing diverse demographic characteristics (age, sex, education) participated in this study. This empirical study regarding consumers opinions about nostalgic brands were conducted among respondents in the Łódź Province in the fourth quarter of 2016. A method of the quota sampling, which is based on the knowledge of the structure of general population, was used. Respondents answered open-ended question: “Please indicate the brands associated with your life that evokes some memories”. Among the answers, only the brands indicated at least 5 times were selected. After the list of brands was reduced by researchers to 24 brands, representing 6 categories of products, taking into account such criteria as generational/transgenerational character of the brand and the level of brand awareness. The brands selected to the main study are targeted both on women and men. The condition for the classification of the brand was her present existence on the market.

After, the researchers created a similar list of 24 non-nostalgic brands that did not appear in the answers of respondents, representing 6 selected categories of products, characterized by an equivalent level of brand awareness and addressed both to women and to men.

List of 48 brands were verified through the realisation of an survey in a group of 100 consumers, representing different demographic characteristics (age, sex, education). Each brand was evaluated in 5-item scale. On the basis of selected brands, the brand equity of nostalgic and non-nostalgic brands was analysed. The aim was to determine also the degree of nostalgia.

In the next step (scheduled for 2017), the identification and assessment of Polish consumers' attitudes towards generational and transgenerational nostalgic brands, taking into account their selected demographic characteristics (age, gender, education) will be executed (based on the measurement scales designed to assess brands, among others, by D.A. Aaker [1991], C. Cristau [2006], G.S. Haberland and P.A. Dacin [1992], V.J. Pascal, Sprott and Muehling [2002]). A quantitative research will be conducted among 1,000 Polish respondents. The indirect method of gathering information, using an online survey technique will be applied.

Authors hope that the realisation of the research project will allow to identify and assess Polish consumers' attitudes towards nostalgic brands (taking into account the brand category, as well as demographic and geographic consumers characteristics).

#### **4. Results and discussion**

The list of 24 nostalgic brands representing 6 categories of products (food, cosmetics, clothing, sport, automotive and household goods), indicated by respondents during the first stage of research as well as a list of 24 non-nostalgic brands, characterized by an equivalent level of brand awareness and addressed both to women and to men are presented in table 1.

Among the identified nostalgic brands, 8 brands represent food industry, 4 clothing sector, 4 brands are the brands of cosmetics, 2 brands represent household goods, 3 brands belong to automotive industry, 1 to the sport industry and 2 represent both sport and clothing sector.

Among brands the most frequently cited by respondents, we can distinguish 11 transgenerational brands (indicated by respondents that represent different age groups) and 13 generational brands. It confirms the hypothesis that regardless of demographic characteristics, consumers indicate as nostalgic brands, both generational and transgenerational brands.

The transgenerational nostalgic brands, the most frequently cited by respondents include Fiat, Wedel, Wawel, Romet, Nivea, Coca-Cola Bambino, Adidas, Volkswagen and Nike.

In the case of nostalgic generational brands, the youngest, but the adult respondents, indicated among others Frugo, EB and Milky Way, the generation of their parents, the brands like Polar, Riffle, Levi's, Relax, Wrangler or Zelmer, and generation of grandparents, the brands such as Biały Jeleń, Pani Walewska, Syrenka or Krakus.

Among 24 nostalgic brands identified during realisation of the study, 11 brands have the global character with the international presence and 13 can be classified as local brands. Only the group of the oldest respondents (65+), indicated in majority the local brands. Among others groups, there were no preferences of local or global brands.

In the next step of research, each brand was evaluated on a basis of D.A. Aaker [1991] and V.J. Pascal, D.E. Sprott and D.D. Muehling [2002] tools using 5-item scale. The equity of nostalgic and non-nostalgic brands as well as the degree of nostalgia were analysed. The results confirmed that all selected nostalgic brands cause nostalgic attitudes and in case of chosen non-nostalgic brands, the level of nostalgia is none or very low. In the same time the chosen couples of brands represent similar level of brand equities that will help in realisation of the third stage of research. Only two brands, among non-nostalgic ones, were changed after realisation of the second stage of research (because they represented too high level of the brand awareness in comparison with nostalgic brands).

**Table 1.** Nostalgic brands identified during research and their corresponding non-nostalgic brands

Nb.	Nostalgic brand	Sector	Brand category (G-generational, TG-transgenerational)	Non-nostalgic brand
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Fiat	automotive	TG	Opel
2.	Wedel	food	TG	Lindt
3.	Wawel	food	TG	Milka
4.	Romet	sport	TG	Giant
5.	Nivea	cosmetics	TG	Ziaja
6.	Coca-Cola	food	TG	Sprite
7.	Bambino-ice cream	food	TG	Algida
8.	Bambino-olive	cosmetics	TG	Jonhson&Jonhson
9.	Adidas	sport /clothing	TG	Puma
10.	VW	automotive	TG	Toyota
11.	Nike	sport /clothing	TG	4F
12.	EB	food	G	Żubr
13.	Frugo	food	G	Tymbark
14.	Milky-way	food	G	Mars
15.	Polar	household goods	G	Bosch
16.	Riffle	clothing	G	Americanos
17.	Levi's	clothing	G	Lee
18.	Wrangler	clothing	G	Big Star

**Table 1 cont.**

<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
19.	Zelmer	household goods	G	Electrolux
20.	Relax	clothing	G	CCC
21.	Syrenka	automotive	G	Dacia
22.	Pani Walewska	cosmetics	G	Gabriella Sabatini
23.	Krakus	food	G	Sokolów
24.	Biały Jeleń	cosmetics	G	Palmolive

Source: Based on the own research results.

It is worth emphasizing that the international studies concentrate primarily on the impact of nostalgia on consumer's behaviours in the context of demand for products associated with the past. In Poland, such studies have not been conducted. Therefore, it seems important, to conduct the empirical evaluation of consumer's attitudes towards nostalgic brands taking into account the consumer's demographic characteristics and categories of nostalgic brands.

## 5. Limitations and suggestions for future research

It is important to delimit the contributions of this research properly. The recommendations in this study are set forth, with the caveat as to the limitations of the sample. Nonetheless, it is believed that the results of this study will be a first step to identify the attitudes of Polish consumers towards nostalgic brands. To provide a more comprehensive picture of the impacts of nostalgia on brand management, similar studies could be done for other product categories. In particular, future research needs to investigate the active role of enthusiastic consumers in nostalgic brands, generating new stories with positive feelings and emotions on both brands perceptions.

It should be taken into account, that the complexity of the subject thought it prevailed application shortcuts and references to sources used.

## Conclusion

In the conditions of the modern market, the brand has become a source of competitive advantage for companies, being the reference point for the consumer, not only through the distinction of products, but most of all by offering symbolic value. At the same time we can observe the trend of development of the marketing activities that appeal to emotions, experiences and memories of consumers. As a result, the basis of relations between the consumer and the brand

can be nostalgia, which is a positive attitude towards brands that are directly or indirectly related to the consumer past.

The results of the first and second stages of the research project concerning management of nostalgic brands show that even in the area of globalisation, Polish market is not dominated by local or global nostalgic brands, because the respondents indicated both categories. Polish market is not also dominated by nostalgic generational or transgenerational brands. It confirms the hypothesis that regardless of demographic characteristics, consumers indicate as nostalgic brands, both categories of brands. Polish market reality have given the possibility of development of transgenerational nostalgic brand with a strong capital, even taking into account the specificities of the political and economic changes in the nineties of the last century.

The implementation of the phenomenon of nostalgia in brand management can create the emotions associated with sensations and experiences important for buyers, often making reference to their own, or an idealized historical past. This is because a brand is the reflection of the offered symbolic benefits. In consequence, the companies can use the phenomena of nostalgia to reinforce the relations between the consumer and brand and to develop a strong brand image.

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#### IDENTYFIKACJA MAREK NOSTALGICZNYCH FUNKCJONUJĄCYCH NA RYNKU POLSKIM W ŚWIETLE BADAŃ EMPIRYCZNYCH

**Streszczenie:** Koncepcja nostalgii wzbudza zainteresowanie naukowców, którzy analizują to zjawisko w marketingu w różnych kontekstach badawczych. Marka nostalgiczna to marka kojarząca się z bliską lub dalszą, własną lub historyczną przeszłością. Można wyróżnić dwie podstawowe kategorie marek nostalgicznych: marki pokoleniowe (oparte na nostalgii prawdziwej, mającej charakter indywidualny lub zbiorowy) oraz marki międzypokoleniowe (oparte na nostalgii prawdziwej lub na nostalgii symulowanej, odnoszącej się pośrednio do indywidualnych lub zbiorowych doświadczeń lub wspomnień innych osób). Celem artykułu jest identyfikacja marek nostalgicznych funkcjonujących na rynku polskim w oparciu o wyniki badań empirycznych. W wyniku realizacji badań stworzono listę 24 marek nostalgicznych, zarówno o pokoleniowym, jak i międzypokoleniowym charakterze, reprezentujących 6 kategorii produktowych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** nostalgia, zarządzanie marką, postawy konsumentów.