

## Nostalgia Marketing: A Systematic Literature Review Using the Research Onion Framework

**Benni Ahdiyana Pamungkas\***, **Cristian Hadi Pranata**  
LSPR Institute of Communication and Business, Indonesia  
Email: [benni.ap@lspr.edu](mailto:benni.ap@lspr.edu)\*, [crristian.hadi@gmail.com](mailto:crristian.hadi@gmail.com)

---

### Abstract

This study aims to identify future research directions and opportunities in nostalgia marketing through the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) using the *Research Onion* framework. A total of 22 Scopus-indexed articles were screened following PRISMA guidelines, of which 11 articles were selected for in-depth analysis based on research philosophy, approaches, methods, strategies, time horizons, and data analysis techniques. The findings indicate that nostalgia marketing is grounded in two paradigms, *interpretivism* and *positivism*, with a relatively balanced use of inductive and deductive approaches. They employ qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method designs, utilizing diverse strategies such as literature reviews, case studies, surveys, and experiments. Cross-sectional designs are found to be the most commonly adopted time horizon. This study provides a comprehensive overview of the methodological landscape of nostalgia marketing and highlights key directions for future inquiry. The findings offer valuable implications for both researchers and practitioners by demonstrating how nostalgia-driven strategies can be effectively leveraged across industries. Furthermore, this study lays an initial foundation for the development of theoretical models of nostalgia marketing, particularly in the Indonesian context.

**Keywords:** Nostalgia; SLR; PRISMA; Research Onion

---

### INTRODUCTION

Nostalgia marketing is closely embedded in everyday life, whether consciously recognized or not. It has been widely applied across various industries, including the music, tourism, film industries. In the music industry, for example, nostalgia marketing is reflected in the reunion of iconic 80's band, such as Guns N' Roses, the resurgence of cassettes and vinyl records, and the rise of artists like Adele and Sam Smith who adopt retro styles (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019). In Indonesia context, films such as *Rangga & Cinta* and the emergence of 1990's-themed festivals further illustrate the growing of nostalgia marketing.

In marketing literature, nostalgia is generally associated with three categories: heritage, vintage, and retro. Heritage marketing focuses on cross-generational offerings with enduring market presence, such as Coc-Cola, where emphasis lies on established brand trust. Vintage marketing, in contrast, centers on discontinued products that retain significant economic value, such as collectible items like Vespa Congo. Retro products refer to previously existing offerings that are refurbished or reintroduced according to contemporary standards, as exemplified by the re-release of the Nokia 3310 (Dam et al., 2024).

The concept of nostalgia originates from Greek words *nostos* (going home) and *algos* (pain), referring to the distress caused by separation from one's homeland (El-Bassiouny & Zahran, 2018). This notion can be traced back to Greek mythology, particularly in Homer's *Odyssey*, which tells the story of Odysseus, a hero of Trojan War, wandering at sea. Despite being offered immortality by Calypso, Odysseus refuses, driven by his longing to his return home to his wife, Penelope (Hepper et al., 2012).

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Johannes Hofer conceptualized nostalgia as a medical condition caused by homesickness, with symptoms such as anorexia, insomnia, high fever and even death. This perception persisted until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after which nostalgia gradually evolved into a psychological and emotional construct associated with longing for the past (Rana et al., 2022). Longing may be triggered by various sensory and contextual cues, such as objects, sounds and smells Chae et al. (2021).

Since the mid-1990s, nostalgia has gained increasing attention in marketing, initially within the context of tourism. Over the subsequent decades, the body of literature has grown significantly, with approximately 139 nostalgia-related studies published by April 2023 (Mukhopadhyay, 2024). Nostalgia marketing refers to marketing activities that evoke a romanticized past and generate positive emotions (Dam et al., 2024). It can take the form of personal nostalgia, based on direct individual experience, or collective nostalgia, which is constructed without direct personal involvement (El-Bassiouny & Zahran, 2018; Chae et al., 2021).

Although nostalgia marketing has been widely applied across industries, academic research in this area remains relatively fragmented and methodologically diverse. This indicates a research gap in systematically understanding how nostalgia marketing has been developed and where future directions may lie. In particular, limited studies have mapped the methodological approaches used in this field through a structured methodological framework such as Research Onion.

Research Onion framework, developed by Mark Saunders et al. (2023), provides a systematic approach to research design through six layers: research philosophy, approach, strategy, methods, time horizon, and data collection and analysis techniques. This framework enables a structured analysis of methodological trends in nostalgia marketing research.

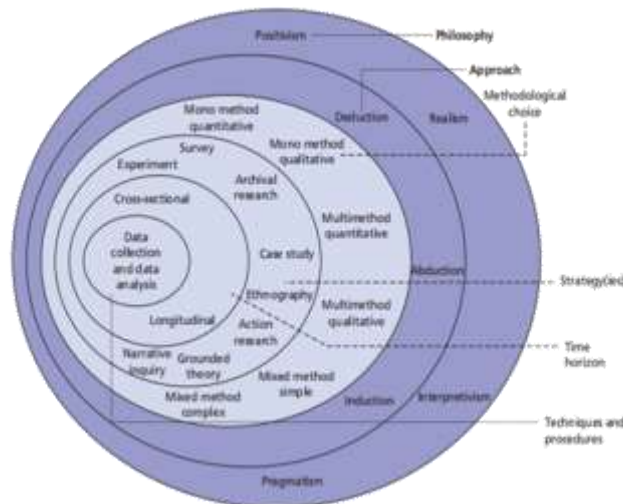
Based on this background, this study aims to identify, analyze, and map the development of nostalgia marketing research through the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) using the Research Onion framework. This study contributes both theoretically, by enriching the methodological understanding of nostalgia marketing research, and practically, by providing insights for academics and practitioners in designing more effective nostalgia-based strategies, particularly within the Indonesian context.

## **RESEARCH ONION**

Research Onion is a conceptual framework that guides researchers in developing a coherent and rigorous research design. As proposed by Saunders et al. (2023), it comprises six interconnected layers that assist researchers in systematically structuring a study to ensure methodological robustness. Analogous to peeling the layers of the onion, researchers are required to progressively unpack each layer of research design. These layers include research philosophy, approach, strategy, methods, time horizon, and data collection and analysis techniques (see Figure 1)

The Research Onion begins with the outermost layer, namely research philosophy. Research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about how knowledge is generated and what is considered valid knowledge in research. These assumptions inevitably shape the formulation of research questions, the selection of methods, and the interpretation of findings.

Research philosophy is commonly grounded in three fundamental dimensions: ontology, epistemology and axiology. Ontology concerns assumptions about the nature of reality, what exist and how reality is understood in a research context. Epistemology relates to assumptions about knowledge itself, particularly how knowledge is acquired, justified, and what counts as legitimate knowledge. Axiology refers to the role of values in research, including the ethical considerations and value judgments that guide the research process (Melnikovas, 2019).



**Figure 1. Research Onion**  
Source: Saunders et al. (2023)

Ontology affirms that reality can be understood as both objective and subjective. An objective ontology assumes that reality exists independently of social actors; it is stable, external, and can be observed as something that “is” (being). In contrast, a subjective ontology assumes that reality is socially constructed, dependent on interactions among social actors, and continuously evolving as a process of “becoming”.

Epistemology, on the other hand, concerns the nature and sources of knowledge. It distinguishes between knowledge derived from ‘data’ and knowledge derived from ‘taste’. A data-oriented epistemology assumes that truth can be established through observable and measurable evidence. In contrast, a taste-oriented epistemology acknowledges that knowledge can also emerge from intuition, perception, and subjective interpretation, where feelings and personal experience play a role in understanding phenomena.

Axiology emphasizes the role of values and ethics in the research process. It highlights two contrasting positions: value-free research, which seeks to minimize or eliminate the influence of the researcher’s values, and value-laden research, which acknowledges the researchers inevitably bring their values, beliefs, and ethical considerations into the research process (Saunders et al., 2023).

The interaction among ontology, epistemology, and axiology gives rise to several philosophies, including positivism, realism, interpretivism, pragmatism, and postmodernism. According to Abdelhakim & Badr (2021), these philosophies can be briefly characterized as follows. Positivism is generally objective, data-driven, and focuses on hypothesis testing through measurable variables. Realism assumes that reality exists independently but can only be imperfectly understood through human perception and scientific inquiry. Interpretivism views researchers as an integral part of the research process, emphasizing the subjective meaning and social construction of reality. Pragmatism prioritizes the research problem and allows the use of multiple paradigms and methods within a single study. Finally, postmodernism challenges the idea of a single universal truth and critically questions dominant narratives and assumptions in knowledge production.

The research approach is divided into three: deductive, inductive, and abductive. The deductive approach moves from general to more specific discussions, or from theory to data. The inductive approach is a constructive process that begins with observation and ends with

generalizations about the phenomenon being studied. The abductive approach involves an iterative movement between theory and data.

The next layer is the research methodology which is divided into three types: mono-method, multi-method and mixed method. The methods referred to here are quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative is designed by incorporating variables and hypotheses and involves testing through the quantification of data. Qualitative research focuses on exploring the 'what', 'why', and 'how' of phenomena in order to gain a deeper understanding.

Mono-method is selected when the research relies exclusively on either quantitative or qualitative data collection. Multi-method is chosen when the researcher applies several methods within the same approach, either quantitative or qualitative. Mixed methods are chosen when the researcher combines both quantitative or qualitative approaches in a single study. These methodological choices involve the use of either qualitative or quantitative techniques, even when the study is primarily focused on one dominant approach.

Time Horizon refers to the timeframe chosen for a study. There are two main options: cross-sectional and longitudinal. A cross-sectional study examines a specific phenomenon at a single point in time. In contrast, a longitudinal study investigates changes in a phenomenon over an extended period of time (Saunders et al., 2023). Procedures and data analysis techniques can vary significantly, ranging from simple descriptive analysis to more advanced methods such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in quantitative research. Similarly, qualitative research offers a wide range of analytical techniques, including TCCM analysis, thematic analysis and many others.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study is positioned within an interpretivism research paradigm, using qualitative inductive approach. The research strategy applied is Systematic Literature Review or SLR. The study employs a cross-sectional design, as it is conducted at a single point in time. The purposes of the SLR is to provide a state-of-the-art overview, identifying future directions and opportunities for systematic literature review research that can enrich understanding in specific fields. This study adopts The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, which consists of four phases: identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion. From 22 articles screened using Watase Uake application, 11 articles were further analysed using the Research Onion framework (Final, 2024). The data analysis technique used is qualitative descriptive analysis with a comparative and thematic approach. Each article is examined to identify its methodological characteristics, then compared to determine similarities, differences, and emerging trends in nostalgia marketing research. The results of this analysis are subsequently used to develop theoretical implications and propose directions for future research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The search was conducted with the keyword 'nostalgia marketing', tier Q1-Q4 with a time range from 1900 to 2025. All selected articles are in English. The findings showed that there were 22 articles. A total of 11 articles were successfully obtained with the proportion of Q1 eight, Q2, Q3, Q4 one article each. A total of 22 articles were then filtered with SLR PRISMA from Watase Uake. The results obtained were 11 articles processed (figure 1.1) with the Research Onion framework. The results of the analysis will answer the purpose of the research problem, which is to reveal the possible themes of nostalgia marketing research in the future.

**Story scaping in fashion brand using commitment and nostalgia based on ASMR marketing**

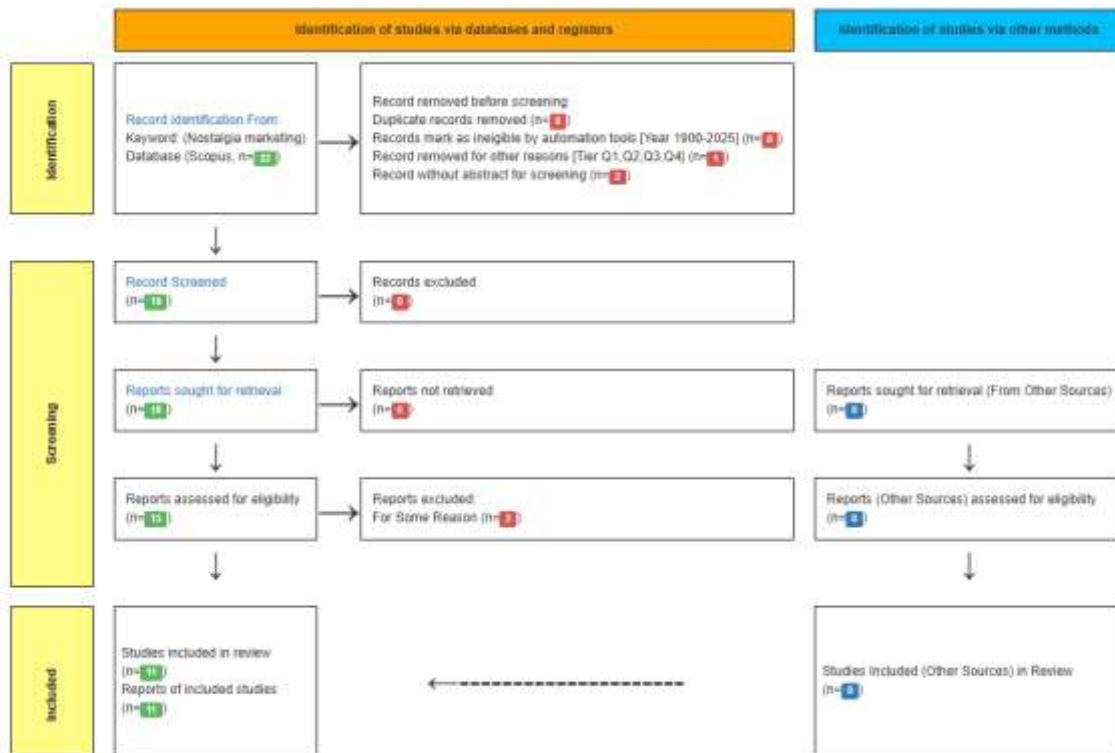
Empirical research Chae et al., (2020) aims to analyze the significance of ASMR in the realm of the sense of hearing in the modern era, identify the marketing characteristics of ASMR

through commitment and nostalgia and investigate the influence of ASMR marketing on consumers. This study adopts positivism research with a deductive approach. The methodology of this study is quantitative with a survey strategy (n=435 respondents) cross-sectional. Data analysis used SEM analysis techniques. The findings show social media and ASMR create strong two-way communication. Commitment (affectional and calculative) has a significant positive influence on personal nostalgia and communal nostalgia. Only communal nostalgia has a significant positive influence on brand attachment and brand awareness. Only brand attachment that positively influences impulse buying and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), while personal nostalgia does not show a significant effect.

### **Marketing the past: a literature review and future directions for researching retro, heritage, nostalgia, and vintage**

Objectives of the research Dam et al. (2024) provides a comprehensive review of the marketing literature concerning themes such as Back to Back, Heritage, Nostalgia, and Vintage. The study aims to synthesize these different streams to offer clear directions for future research. The methodology employed is qualitative, utilizing an interpretivist approach with an inductive reasoning process. The research strategy is a Scoping Review, which involves identifying, mapping, and clarifying existing literature, complemented by a conceptual analysis that explores the underlying ontology, epistemology, and axiology. The study was conducted at a specific point in time, adopting a cross-sectional approach. Data analysis was performed using an analytical framework based on ontology, epistemology, and axiology to interpret the findings effectively.

The findings of the study show that the past-themed marketing is divided into two major ones, namely marketing authenticity and marketing management. Marketing authenticity is related to consumers' perception of the authenticity of a product, brand or service. Research related to the contradiction of authenticity that leads to the negotiation of what is considered inauthentic is recommended to be researched. Studies to deepen the understanding of the types of authenticity (indexical, iconic, connective), how authenticity is formed collectively is important. In addition, how consumers respond to retro brands and research that explains what and how the authenticity of heritage brands is important to consumers also needs to be understood in the future.



**Figure 2. PRISMA Output**  
Source: Watase Uake

Research related to marketing management also needs to be considered in the future. Research that examines the decision-making process of consumers for nostalgic products as well as the marketing relaunch strategy of retro brands and their failures needs to be studied. Finally, the discussion of the marketing strategy of heritage products from how the company creates a narrative, the impact on internal branding to when the effective strategy to be executed needs to be discussed in future research.

### **Back to the future: historical nostalgia and the potentials for Islamic marketing research**

Research El-Bassiouny & Zahran (2018) Trying to draw the attention of Islamic marketing researchers to the potential historical nostalgia for Islamic marketing research. The paradigm of This study is interpretivism from the perspective of Islamic philosophy with an inductive approach. The selected research methodology is qualitative mono-method with strategy Conceptual Literature Review by cross-sectional. The data analysis techniques used are thematic synthesis analysis. The findings of this study explain that historical nostalgia is different from nostalgia Personal and historical. The concept of historical nostalgia is important in Islamic marketing. Historical Nostalgia is defined as a longing for the time before an individual's birth ("the way it was"), as opposed to personal nostalgia ("the way I was"). The Islamic philosophy of life and death creates a continuity between the history of the believer in this worldly life and accountability in the hereafter. This study links historical nostalgia and Islamic Marketing which opens up opportunities for marketing research based on the history of Islamic civilization.

### **Nostalgia marketing and (re-enchantment)**

Objectives of the research Hartmann & Brunk (2019) is to analyze Why and how nostalgic marketing creates enchantment (attraction/admiration) for consumers. This study is

an interpretivism research with an inductive approach. The research method used is qualitative Multi method such as introspective essays, in-depth interviews, ethnography and historical secondary data longitudinal. The analysis techniques used are Constant comparison procedure and interpretation Hermeneutics. This study found that three paths to enchantment (attraction/admiration) created by nostalgic marketing, which is based on the nostalgia modality: (1) Re-instantiation (based on nostalgia Reluctant), (2) re-enactment (based on progressive nostalgia), and (3) re-appropriation (based on pleasant nostalgia). This study offers a theorization of how enchantment created between marketing and consumption of past-themed brands.

### **Nostalgia beats the wow-effect: Inspiration, awe and meaningful associations in augmented reality marketing**

Research objectives Hinsch et al. (2020) Described the AR-inspiration relationship and show how psychological inspiration (Inspired by) translated into Behavioral Inspiration (inspired-to). Testing the hypothesis that "wow effect" and nostalgia function as important mediators in the AR-initiated inspiration process. This study adopts a positivist paradigm with a deductive approach. The research methods chosen are Quantitative mono-method with experimental and survey strategies cross-sectional. The data analysis technique chosen is PLS-SEM. Findings show Hedonic and quality augmentation (Increase Quality) positively and significantly related to psychological inspiration (inspired-by). Nostalgia fully mediates the relationship between psychological inspiration (inspired-by) and behavioral inspiration (inspired-to). "Wow effect" (influence) does not significantly mediate the relationship between psychological inspiration and behavioral inspiration. Nostalgia, but not the wow effect, has the ability to mediate psychological inspiration into behavioral changes.

### **The ironic marketing of heritage and nostalgia: The branding of Bushels tea**

Research objectives Khamis (2016) is Analysis Branding Bushels Tea using Heritage and Nostalgia during the period 1983-1990. This study includes interpretivism with an inductive approach. The research methods chosen are qualitative mono-method with strategy Historical Case Study by cross-sectional (main) with Archival Research as a supporting strategy. Secondary data collected in the form of advertising archives, materials Branding, media publications, Company documents, historical sources with data analysis techniques using Document Analysis. The findings of this study explain Bushels Proprietary Limited's growth parallels Australia's growth and expansion. Heritage and nostalgia are used to position the Bushels as part of Australia's national identity. The article also describes a general decline in tea consumption as consumers turn to tea bags. There is an irony where nostalgia is used to evoke pride yet the market is moving to modern products (Teabag).

### **When nostalgia marketing backfires: Gender differences in the impact of nostalgia on youthfulness for older consumers**

Research Kim et al. (2018) Aim for Assesst how consumers respond differently to feelings of nostalgia based on age and Gender. Their research paradigm is positivism with deductive approach. The research methodology is Quantitative Multi Method with experimental strategies cross-sectional. The data analysis technique chosen was study one using ANOVA to test the interaction and SEM in study two to examine the mediation mechanism. Findings show nostalgia increases youthfulness for male respondents, on the other hand for female respondents. There is a risk segment in the senior female segment having a negative attitude towards advertising related to the physical ideal self-image when young versus present.

### **Nostalgia marketing - a literature review and future directions**

Research Mukhopadhyay (2024) aims to fill the gap in nostalgic marketing knowledge by examining its theoretical foundations. The research paradigm is interpretivism with an inductive approach. The research method is qualitative Mono-Method. The research strategy

uses Literature Review by cross-sectional. Data analysis techniques using theory-context-characteristics-methodology (TCCM) Framework. One of the findings of this study is that nostalgia is divided into four categories, namely restorative, reflective, anticipatory and *forestalgia*. Restorative is a nostalgia that expects the return of the past. Reflective is nostalgia that is enough to be remembered without having to repeat it. Anticipatory is nostalgia that longs for something before it ends. Lastly, *Forestalgia* is the ideal nostalgia that we want to feel in the future. The study's critical findings are that nostalgia increases optimism, brand attachment, Brand Trust and willingness to spend.

### **The transversal of nostalgia from psychology to marketing: what does it portend for future research?**

Research objectives Rana et al. (2020) explains the development of the concept of nostalgia, the role of nostalgia in consumer behavior, providing a critical review of the literature Marketing Nostalgia, connecting nostalgia with various marketing contexts. This interpretivism research chooses an inductive approach with a qualitative methodology. The research strategy uses Narrative Literature Review by cross-sectional. Data analysis techniques using Document Analysis and Conceptual Synthesis. The findings indicates that nostalgia evokes positive emotions and consumer attachment that drives buying interest. Nostalgia increases Self-esteem, Social Connectedness, and Self-Continuity. Nostalgia connects the past, present and future both individually and collectively.

### **A road less traveled in nostalgia marketing: impact of spiritual well-being on effects of nostalgic advertisements**

Research objectives Singh et al. (2021) to understand how spiritual well-being affects cognitive responses (ad-evoked nostalgia) and affective (Nostalgia Intensity) against nostalgic ads and buying interest. The paradigm of This study is positivism with a deductive approach. Their research methodology is quantitative with a survey strategy cross-sectional. The selected data analysis techniques are covariance-based SEM with AMOS software. The findings of the study prove Spiritual well-being Improve ad-evoked nostalgia and purchase intention However, it only slightly affects the emotions of nostalgia. The effect of gender moderation was only significant on nostalgic ads and not on regular ads.

### **Reconnecting with the past in social media: The moderating role of social influence in nostalgia marketing on Pinterest**

Research Youn & Jin (2017) aims to identify factors that facilitate the impact of nostalgia on consumers' assessment of brands on Pinterest. This positivism research uses a deductive approach. The method chosen in this study is quantitative with a survey strategy cross-sectional. The data analyst technique used is SEM. Research findings reveal a powerful primary effect of nostalgia on consumer attitudes towards Pinterest Boards and brands, purchase intention, willingness to spread branded pins and the quality of the brand-consumer relationship. The study also found a significant moderation role of social influence for all dependent measurements. Nostalgia that is strongly generated elicits a more positive response when social influence is high.

## **CONCLUSION**

Marketing nostalgia is undeniably applied to many industries. We have analyzed a total of 11 articles with the Research Onion framework. The results showed that there were four systematic literature review studies, one case study and six empirical studies. The research paradigm generally uses interpretivism (6), positivism (5) and inductive (6) and deductive (5) approaches. The methods used are generally qualitative (4), quantitative (3), qualitative multi-method (1) and quantitative multi-method (1). Data collection strategies are highly diverse. Quantitative research generally uses surveys (5). Quantitative research data analysis techniques generally use variance-based SEM (4) and one covariance-based SEM (1). Qualitative research

strategies are generally literature review (4) and case study (1) articles. The study time generally used cross-sectional (10) and only one longitudinal (1). These findings are expected to be an insight for future research, especially related to nostalgia marketing.

## REFERENCES

- Abdelhakim, A. S., & Badr, R. M. (2021). Adopted Research Designs By Tourism And Hospitality Postgraduates In The Light Of Research Onion. *International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 4(2), 98–124.
- Chae, H., Baek, M., Jang, H., & Sung, S. (2020). Storyscaping in fashion brand using commitment and nostalgia based on ASMR marketing. *Journal of Business Research*, January 2019, 0–1. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.01.004>
- Dam, C., Hartmann, B. J., & Brunk, K. H. (2024). Marketing the past : a literature review and future directions for researching retro, heritage, nostalgia and vintage. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 40(9–10), 795–819. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2024.2339454>
- El-Bassiouny, N. M., & Zahran, N. (2018). Back to the future : historical nostalgia and the potentials for Islamic marketing research. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-04-2018-0069>
- Hartmann, B. J., & Brunk, K. H. (2019). Nostalgia marketing and (re-)enchantment. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 36(4), 669–686. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2019.05.002>
- Hepper, E. G., Ritchie, T. D., Sedikides, C., & Wildschut, T. (2012). Odyssey ' s End: Lay Conceptions of Nostalgia Reflect Its Original Homeric Meaning. 12(1), 102–119. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025167>
- Hinsch, C., Felix, R., & Rauschnabel, P. A. (2020). Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services Nostalgia beats the wow-effect : Inspiration, awe and meaningful associations in augmented reality marketing. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53 (November 2019), 101987. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.101987>
- Khamis, S. (2016). The ironic marketing of heritage and nostalgia: The branding of Bushels tea, 1983-c.1990. *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 8(3). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JHRM-06-2014-0015>
- Kim, Y. K., Yi, M., & Yim, C. (2018). When nostalgia marketing backfires : Gender differences in the impact of nostalgia on youthfulness for older consumers. June, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.3459>
- Melnikovas, A. (2019). Towards an Explicit Research Methodology : Adapting Research Onion Model for Futures Studies. 23(January 2018). <https://doi.org/10.6531/JFS.201812>
- Mukhopadhyay, M. (2024). Nostalgia marketing - a literature review and future directions. *Journal of Marketing Communications* 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2024.2306551>
- Scott, B. A. (2024). The role of co-creation in SME: literature. *Journal of Management and Accounting Sciences*, 12(3), 89–101. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3336/ref.v10i2.6502>
- Rana, S., Raut, S. K., Prashar, S., & Quttainah, M. A. (2020). The transversal of nostalgia from psychology to marketing : what does it portend for future research ? <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-03-2020-2097>
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2023). *Research methods for business students* (9th ed.).
- Singh, R., Sharma, Y., & Kumar, J. (2021). A road less traveled in nostalgia marketing : impact of spiritual well-being on effects of nostalgic advertisements. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 29(3), 289–307. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2020.1836975>
- Youn, S., & Jin, S. V. (2017). Reconnecting with the past in social media : The moderating

role of social influence in nostalgia marketing on Pinterest. May 2016, 1–12.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.1655>

..