

Nostalgia, autobiographical memories and brand communication: a semiotic analysis

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Based on a semiotic analysis, this paper contributes to a better understanding of how to use nostalgia in brand communication. The study is based on three series of interviews with the same sample. First, twenty subjects were asked to discuss the products and brands connected with a pleasant moment in their lives as a way to grasp nostalgic association without mentioning it. Then, a year after, sixteen out of the original twenty were interviewed again and shown the pictures of the nostalgic brands previously mentioned. They associated what came to mind when they saw these visuals. Finally, thirteen of these participants discussed the autobiographical memories they associated with four photographic forms representing four important stages in life. Forty-nine individual face-to-face interviews in all made up the corpus of a semiotic analysis. This methodology of using three interview stages of the same population reduced the bias attributed to faulty memory and made it possible to deepen the understanding of nostalgic products and brand meaning in consumer behaviour and brand management. The study defined a classification of four profiles of nostalgic consumers ("kidult", traditional, transitional and transgenerational). It identified four possible nostalgia applications for brand communication that are related to the above moments and profiles. More research is needed to validate, in a larger study, the semiotic typology that presents the nostalgic relationships linking consumers with their nostalgic brands. The paper proposes four applications of nostalgia in brand communication corresponding to different managerial logics: segmentation, differentiation, quality, brand image. The interest for management is to therefore to associate its brand with a certain moment, thus influencing consumer attitudes and behaviour.



This seminar was a tremendous opportunity to interact with other participants on recent research on consumer behavior.

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