

A Study of Hedonistic Marketing Strategies Driven by Nostalgia among Adult Consumers

Bokun Zhang

Department of Economics and
Management, Hebei University
of Environment Engineering
Qinhuangdao, 066102, China

*Corresponding author:
zbk15532460515@Outlook.com

Abstract:

With the upgrading of consumption and Generation Z becoming the main consumer force, the market for pleasure products has grown rapidly. Hedonic products focus on satisfying consumers' emotional, aesthetic and psychological pleasure needs. However, existing research does not adequately explore the emotional attachment mechanisms of adult consumer groups in the context of hedonistic consumption. Based on marketing theory, this study, using questionnaires, in-depth interviews and behavioral observations, analyzed the behavior of adult consumers in purchasing hedonic goods and concluded that adults' purchase of such goods was driven by nostalgia. The study found that nostalgia did play an important role in promoting adult consumers' purchase of hedonic goods. Marketing strategies that use nostalgic elements can significantly boost consumers' willingness to purchase and brand identity. In addition, the triggers of nostalgia mainly include the appearance, color, material and elements of the era. Based on this, the study suggests that enterprises should delve deeper into nostalgic elements to create distinctive products; creating nostalgic scenes serves to enhance consumer experience, while simultaneously utilizing social media enables expanded marketing communication. These strategies, when effectively implemented, can evoke profound emotional resonance in consumers, ultimately reinforcing their connection to and loyalty toward the brand.

Keywords: Hedonics, marketing, physical validation, nostalgia.

1. Introduction

With the upgrading of consumption and Generation

Z becoming the main force of consumption, the pleasure market in China is experiencing explosive growth [1] hedonic products usually refer to products

or services that give people pleasant feelings such as emotional and sensory enjoyment of beauty, such as flowers, movies, chocolates, ice cream, massage vacations [2, 3]. In contrast to practical products, they are those that do not focus on functional utility but on satisfying consumers' non-functional needs such as emotional, aesthetic and psychological pleasure [4].

In recent years, adult consumers in the hedonistic market, represented by hedonistic products, have accounted for more than 50 percent. The figures fully demonstrate that the core value of hedonistic products is not "functional practicality", but "emotional companionship" and "identity symbol". The deep transformation of this consumption logic reveals that consumers are no longer paying for "products", but for "emotional experiences" [5,6].

In this context, this project takes the marketing of hedonic products as the research object. Starting from the consumption motives of adult consumers for hedonic products, it analyzes the consumption of this type of product through questionnaires and interviews, and conducts research on the marketing strategies of this type of product. On the one hand, it helps enterprises accurately grasp the emotional needs of adult consumers, optimize product design and marketing strategies, and achieve differentiated development; On the other hand, it can explore business models that better meet the emotional needs of contemporary consumers and promote the innovative development of the hedonic consumption industry.

2. Relevant Concepts and Literature Review

2.1 Related Concepts

Nostalgia refers to the emotional state of mind in which an individual gains psychological comfort by recalling the good things in the past, generating memories and yearnings that are subjectively processed by the individual and incorporated into the current emotions and perceptions. A series of emotional fluctuations and behavioral tendencies triggered by knowledge and values [7].

2.2 Literature Review

Research on hedonic products has long focused on consumer purchase motives, product attributes, and marketing strategies. Chen Rui et al. verified through experiments that nostalgia has a significant impact on consumption decisions for both hedonistic and practical goods [8]. Zhang Mengrong et al. studied the impact of online live-streaming shopping characteristics on consumers' purchase of hedonistic products based on the moderated orientation theory, and the promotion of consumers' purchase of practical products by authenticity and visibility [9]. Xu Ying

and Xi Guowen focused on blind box marketing and applied the hedony-practical dual shopping value theory. This study explores the bidirectional effect of uncertainty on consumers' hedonic and practical values when purchasing products [10]. However, existing research is insufficient in exploring the emotional attachment mechanism of adult consumer groups in hedonic consumption scenarios, and there is still a lack of systematic research on the emotional attachment drivers behind it and the marketing strategies that match it.

3. Research Hypotheses

Based on the aforementioned literature review and theoretical background, this study suggests that when adult consumers purchase pleasure products, the classic designs, familiar patterns and styles contained in the products can evoke specific life experiences and emotional experiences of adult consumers, and exposure to such products can bring back the good old days. Satisfying their nostalgia and emotional attachment to the past, and with the nostalgic elements carried by the hedonistic products, it provides adult consumers with a way of emotional release and self-identity, making them willing to consume for emotional satisfaction and psychological comfort. In the marketing activities of hedonics, if the elements of nostalgia are skillfully utilized and the consumers' nostalgia is successfully stimulated, the frequency and amount of consumers' purchases of such hedonics will increase significantly, and their willingness to purchase and brand recognition will be stronger, compared with not using the elements of nostalgia (only using conventional marketing methods such as simple product function introduction, ordinary promotional information display.) As a result, nostalgia can significantly influence adult consumers' purchase decisions for pleasure products.

Based on the above inferences, this study presents the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis: For hedonics, the use of nostalgic elements (vs. no nostalgic elements) can boost consumers' willingness to purchase and brand identity.

4. Research Methods and Processes

This study comprehensively employed questionnaire surveys and interviews to conduct an in-depth analysis of the consumption motives of adult hedonic products.

4.1 Questionnaire Survey

Given that hedonics themselves focus on satisfying consumers' non-functional needs such as emotional, aesthetic and psychological pleasure, and often evoke nostalgia, they have become typical subjects for studying the consumption behavior driven by nostalgia. This study takes

adult consumers' purchase of hedonics as an example and combines marketing theory with previous literature research. From consumer basic information, purchase behavior (involving purchase frequency, consumption amount, purchase channel, influencing factors of decision-making.), emotional state (centering on nostalgia, companionship needs, psychological support.) Construct a questionnaire framework based on dimensions (including emotional experience, narrative scenarios, UGC activities), conduct questionnaire surveys using Wenjuanxing, set the age range of 18-45 years, and cover consumers of different occupations, income levels, and regions to comprehensively obtain behavioral characteristics, emotional needs, and influencing factors of adult consumers' purchase of hedonic products[11,12]. The questionnaire used the Likert five-point scale, with options ranging from „strongly disagree“ to „strongly agree“, to quantify consumers' emotional connection to hedonic products and their acceptance of different marketing methods.

A total of 206 questionnaires were distributed in the survey, and 206 were retrieved. After excluding 4 invalid questionnaires with incomplete or regular responses, 202 valid questionnaires were retrieved, with an effective recovery rate of 98.02%.

In the data analysis stage, SPSS 26.0 software was used for processing, and the Cronbach's α coefficient for the reliability and validity test of the questionnaire data was 0.852, indicating that the questionnaire had good internal consistency reliability. The KMO value was 0.821, and the significance level of Bartlett's sphericity test was less than 0.001, indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis and the questionnaire was valid. Subsequently, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the basic characteristics of consumers and the distribution of purchasing behavior; Correlation analysis, regression analysis and other methods were used to explore the relationship between nostalgia and purchasing behavior, marketing strategy preferences, and to identify potential influencing factors.

4.2 In-depth Interviews

Based on the questionnaire survey, this study conducted in-depth interviews with 30 adult consumers of hedonic products in physical stores, aiming to obtain qualitative research data and provide case support. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, with the outline closely centered around the core element of nostalgia, focusing on key questions such as the trigger points of nostalgia, the emotional interaction process between nostalgia and hedonic products, consumption decision-making

psychology based on nostalgia, views and expectations on the application effect of nostalgic elements in existing marketing strategies, and open-ended questions guiding respondents to express themselves freely. For example, „When you purchase this hedonic, does it bring back some past memories? How did those memories influence your purchase decision?“ „Among all the pleasures, is there any one that prompted you to purchase because it reminded you of a scene, a person, or a time in the past?“ „Would you buy a hedonic because of an IP story or brand event that incorporates nostalgic elements, such as reproducing a classic image or recreating a scene from a past event? How did you feel at that time, „ensure the depth and richness of the interview content [13].

5. Physical Validation Results

5.1 Questionnaire Survey Results

The following results were obtained through the questionnaire survey.

5.1.1 Basic characteristics of consumers

Female consumers accounted for more than 71% of the 202 valid responses, significantly higher than male consumers (29%), indicating that women dominate the adult consumer group of hedonics. In terms of age distribution, the 18-22 age group accounted for 42%, the 26-33 age group accounted for 33%, and the 33-40 age group accounted for 21%, showing the characteristics of being young, which is largely in line with market trends. In terms of occupation distribution, students accounted for 51%, corporate employees 28%, freelancers 11%, and other occupations 10%.

5.1.2 Purchase behavior distribution results

The survey data showed that about 36 percent of consumers said they would purchase pleasure items frequently, at least once a month; Forty-one percent buy it occasionally, once or twice a quarter; The remaining 23 percent make purchases less frequently, no more than three times a year. As figure 1. People spend less than 100 yuan each time they purchase pleasure items; Twenty-five percent of consumers spend 100 yuan each time -500 yuan; Only 15 percent of consumers spend more than 500 yuan each time. As figure 2. In terms of purchasing channels, online e-commerce is flat Taiwan (such as Taobao, JD.com.) is the main purchasing channel, accounting for 70%; The proportion of brick-and-mortar stores 25%; The remaining 5% of consumers will purchase through second-hand trading platforms or overseas purchasing agents, as figure 3.

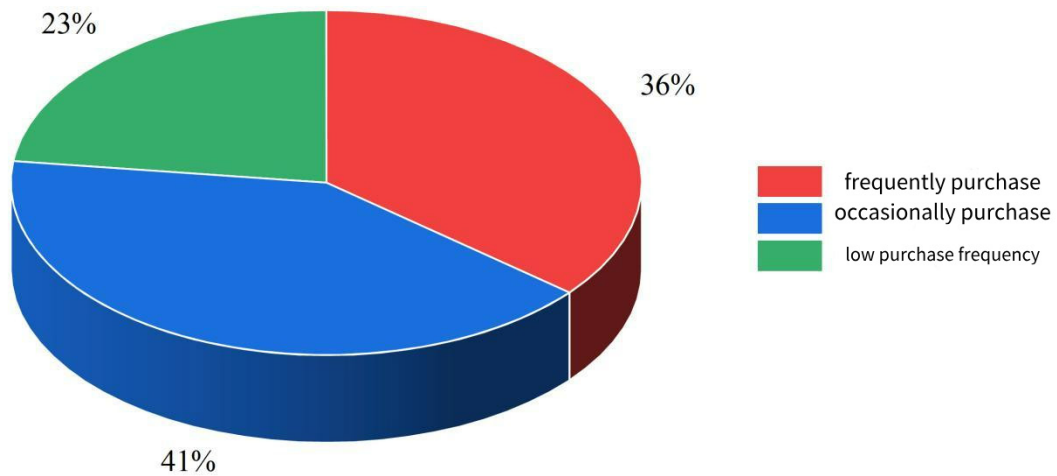


Fig. 1 Consumer purchase frequency

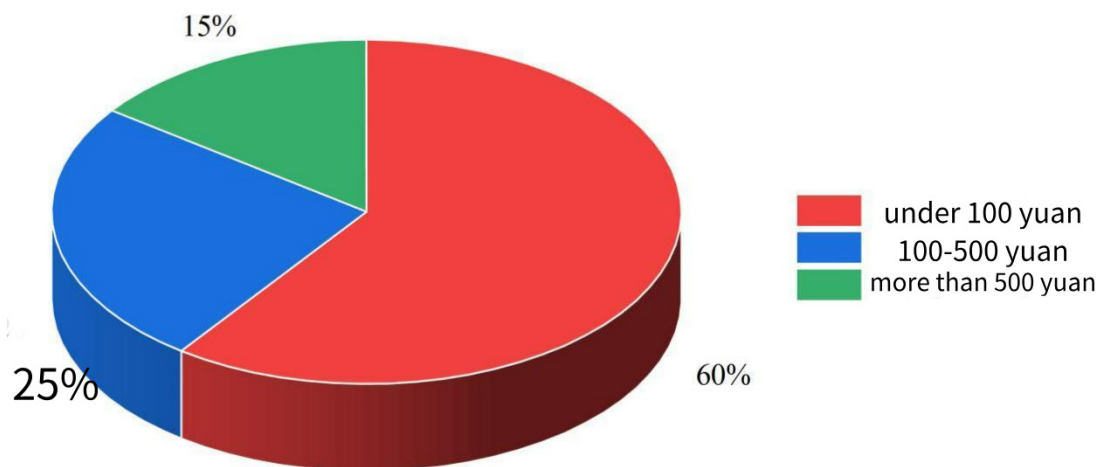


Fig. 2 The amount spent by consumers

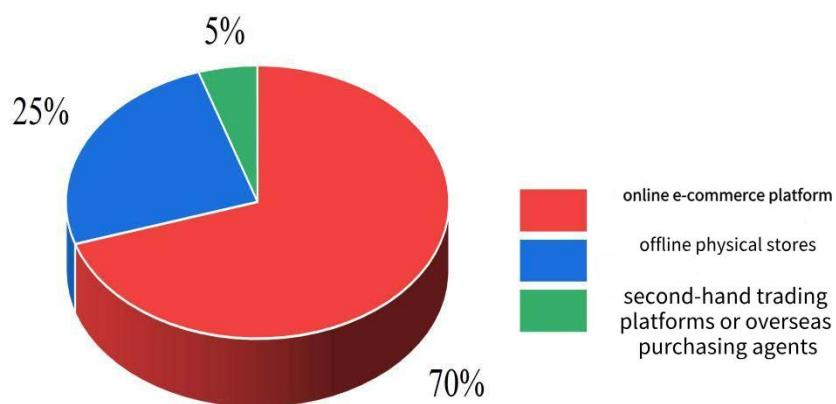


Fig. 3 Consumer purchase channels

5.1.3 The relationship between nostalgia and purchasing behavior

Using SPSS software for correlation analysis, the results showed that purchase frequency and spending amount

were significantly positively correlated with nostalgia. The higher the nostalgia score of adult consumers when purchasing pleasure products, the higher the purchase frequency (correlation coefficient 0.421, $p < 0.01$) and the greater the purchase amount (correlation coefficient 0.387, $p < 0.01$), indicating that nostalgia plays an important role in the purchase of such products by adult consumers.

The relationship between purchase behavior and nostalgia was further explored through regression analysis. With purchase frequency as the dependent variable and nostalgia, discount promotion, and advertising placement as independent variables, the regression analysis showed that purchase frequency was positively affected by nostalgia, and nostalgia had a greater impact than advertising effect and discount promotion. Similarly, when spending amounts were used as the dependent variable and nostalgia, discount promotions, advertising were used as independent variables, nostalgia showed a significant positive effect.

5.1.4 The relationship between nostalgia and marketing preferences

In terms of adult consumers' marketing preferences for hedonic products, research shows that consumers show greater interest and higher acceptance of marketing strategies that incorporate nostalgic elements. About 73 percent of consumers said that stores with a nostalgic atmosphere or nostalgic elements in the enjoyment products themselves would make them want to buy; More than 65 percent of consumers said they would be drawn to pleasure products with nostalgic story backgrounds, such as classic films and TV series they liked before, or anime characters that once touched their hearts. For UGC activities, about 59 percent of consumers are willing to take part in nostalgic themes such as sharing their stories with nostalgic pleasures or participating in photo contests with a retro style. The correlation analysis shows that the adult consumer group has a greater preference for marketing strategies that incorporate nostalgic elements. The more nostalgic the marketing strategy can evoke, the stronger the sentiment will be and the more likely it is to accept the marketing campaign.

5.2 Results of In-depth Interviews

5.2.1 Triggers for nostalgia

More than half of the respondents said that the appearance, color or material of a product that evokes their associations is the first key to triggering nostalgia. „The color and shape of that toy are exactly the same as the ones I played with when I was a child, and it immediately piqued my interest,“ one respondent said. Another respondent said, „The packaging, the logo, reminded me of my childhood.“ In addition, some of the era's characteristics and

personal experiences.

Elements related to the calendar are also important triggers for nostalgia. „This one was something we had in every household when we were kids, and as soon as I saw it, I wanted to buy it right away,“ one respondent shared.

5.2.2 The emotional interaction process between nostalgia and pleasure

A large proportion of respondents said that the enjoyment with nostalgic elements made them feel comforted and fulfilled by purchasing it, saying: „When I hold it in my hand, it feels like I'm back in the past. Those wonderful memories come flooding back and it warms my heart.“ Some respondents also mentioned that owning a hedonic makes them cherish their past more and cherish the product they have purchased more. „This product reminds me of my old home, old friends. Every time I see it, I think of the past times, so I will cherish it especially.

5.2.3 The psychology of consumption decisions based on nostalgia

A considerable proportion of respondents admitted that nostalgia played a significant role in deciding whether to buy or not. „It brings back memories of the good old days. At this price, I basically don't think about it anymore. I think it's worth it no matter how much it is,“ one respondent admitted. Some respondents also mentioned that nostalgia makes them more inclusive of the quality and details of hedonics. „Because it's so much like something from my childhood, it doesn't look very refined, it doesn't matter if the quality is not good, it just wants this flavor.“

5.2.4 Views and expectations on the application effect of nostalgic elements in existing marketing strategies

Respondents have different opinions on the effectiveness of the application of nostalgic elements in existing marketing strategies. Some respondents think that some hedonic products do a good job of nostalgic marketing and can truly touch people's hearts. „Only this brand's products precisely replicate that product from back then. The rest are just a bit off, so even though they are expensive, I still feel willing to buy them.“ But there are also respondents who think that the nostalgic elements of certain enjoyment products are too stiff or lack novelty. „Although the products bear the mark of that era, the patterns are simply piled up and fail to move me.“ The respondents said they would be more willing to spend money if the brand could innovate by combining nostalgic elements with modern aesthetics.

5.3 Hypothesis Testing

Through correlation analysis an regression analysis, it was found that nostalgia had a significant effect on adult consumers' purchasing hedonic behavior, and purchase fre-

quency and spending amount were significantly positively correlated with nostalgia (correlation coefficient 0.421, $p < 0.01$;) The correlation coefficient of spending amount was 0.387, $p < 0.01$. Regression analysis further indicated that nostalgia had a significant positive effect on purchase frequency and spending amount, verifying the hypothesis.

5.4 Entity Synthesis Validates the Conclusion

Through questionnaires and in-depth interviews, this study verified that the main factor in adult consumers' purchase of pleasures such as hedonics is driven by nostalgia rather than functional practicality; And the vast majority of consumers indicated that nostalgic elements are more likely to stimulate purchasing behavior and have better marketing effects than discount promotions and advertising. This study's inference holds true.

6. Marketing Strategy

6.1 Dig Out Nostalgic Elements and Create Distinctive Products

When creating products, it is necessary to dig deep into the growth experiences of adult consumer groups, precisely target toys, food, film and television works, music. from their childhood, refine the nostalgic elements, incorporate them into the design and development of enjoyment products, create distinctive nostalgic theme products, increase consumers' favorability towards the products and brands, and invite users to relive the classics. Share the brand's past experiences and create a „nostalgia kill“.

6.2 Create Nostalgic Scenes to Enhance the Consumption Experience

By creating nostalgic consumption scenarios, adult consumers can be brought back to the good old days in the process of purchasing and enjoying pleasures, thereby enhancing the nostalgic consumption experience. For example, in terms of decoration style, adopt a retro style, use old furniture and ornaments, play classic old songs, create an atmosphere of the past, and feel a strong sense of nostalgia, so as to enjoy the consumption process more. In addition, nostalgic activities such as nostalgic concerts, nostalgic film screenings, and nostalgic game competitions can be held to attract adult consumers to participate, further enhancing the consumption experience and brand identity.

6.3 Use Social Media to Expand Marketing Communication

In the Internet age, social media has become an important channel for business marketing communication. Businesses can leverage social media platforms to publish

nostalgia-themed content, such as retro photos, videos, and articles, capturing the attention of adult consumers and stimulating their engagement. By launching nostalgic topic discussions on platforms like Weibo, Wechat, and Douyin, brands can motivate consumers to share their personal nostalgic stories and memories, fostering user-generated content. This approach not only creates emotional resonance but also strengthens the bond between consumers and the brand through interactive communication, enhancing brand loyalty. They can also collaborate with influencers and bloggers on social media to promote and publicize their products, leveraging their influence and fan base to expand the scope and effectiveness of marketing communication.

7. Conclusion

The main part of this article explores the issue of the adult consumer group being driven by nostalgia when purchasing pleasure products, analyzes the reasons for nostalgia as a core consumption motivation, and puts forward corresponding marketing strategy suggestions. The study points out that adult consumers pay more attention to the emotional experience rather than the product function when purchasing hedonic products, and nostalgia becomes a key factor in driving purchase decisions. This study takes adult consumers of hedonic products as the research subject and focuses on marketing strategies for hedonic products driven by nostalgia. Through methods such as questionnaires and in-depth interviews, it reveals that the core motivation for adult consumers to purchase hedonic products is driven by nostalgia, and proposes marketing strategies such as strengthening the exploration of nostalgic elements, deepening nostalgic narratives, and promoting the viral growth of UGC. This study reveals the underlying logic of hedonic consumption and provides targeted marketing strategy guidance for enterprises. By using nostalgic elements, businesses can effectively evoke emotional resonance among consumers and enhance brand identity. However, this study also has objective limitations, such as a limited sample size, mainly focusing on adult consumers of a specific age group. Future studies could expand the sample size and combine big data and AI technology to further precisely analyze consumers' decision-making mechanisms. In addition, the differences in nostalgia across different cultural backgrounds are also worth further exploration.

References

- [1] Wu Wenhan. Emotional consumption and emotional reengineering: The governance of the emotional space on the Internet. *Journal of Zhengzhou University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2020, 53(05): 112-128.

- [2] Liao Huijun; Ji Xinpeng. Why do we Pay for the „old“ in the all-new era? -A New media Platform ,Nostalgia marketing. *International Brand Watch*, 2022, (23):16-17.
- [3] Jin Xiaotong, Zhang Guijuan. Research on consumer nostalgia psychology and behavior from the perspective of modern marketing. *Economics Perspectives*, 2021, 40 (01): 21-29.
- [4] Chou Yue-hao, Zhou Yixiao, Chen Tianqi. A study on the retroization of content consumption from the perspective of Consumption Nostalgia. *Today Media*, 2024, 32 (06): 125-128.
- [5] Wei Daiwen, Chen Huazhou. The realistic representation, formation causes and guiding strategies of emotional consumption among Gen Z youth. *Journal of Chongqing Three Gorges University*, 2025, (01): 24-37.
- [6] Pecot Fabien, Celhay Franck, Kacha Mathieu, Lombard Gautier. Expressions of the past: A practice-based approach of brand longevity visual translation in advertising. *Journal of Business Research*, 2022, (15): 121-130.
- [7] Zhou Zhimin, Zhang Liangbo, Mo Linlin. A study on the impact of nostalgic advertising types on brand attitudes under different brand perceptions-the mediating role of brand authenticity. *Business Economics and Management*, 2023, (06): 47-60.
- [8] Chen Rui, Chen Huihui, Zheng Yuhuang. The impact of nostalgia on consumption decisions for pleasure and practical goods. *Nankai Business Review*, 2017, 20 (06):140-149.
- [9] Zhang Mengrong, Zhou Bin, Diao Yajing. A study on consumers' hedonistic and practical purchasing behavior in the live-streaming shopping model-based on moderating orientation theory. *Prices in China*, 2022, (01): 108-112.
- [10] Xu Ying, Guo Wenjun. A binary perspective of uncertainty: an exploration based on blind box sales. *Management Science*, 2023, 36 (01): 119-131.
- [11] Shi Meng, Peng Yue. An empirical study on the impact of nostalgic advertising on the purchasing behavior of college student consumers from the perspective of sentiment marketing. *Journal of Sanmenxia Polytechnic*, 2024, 23 (01): 115-122.
- [12] Guo Yanhuai. Research on the marketing strategy of the old cultural market. *Journal of Minjiang University*, 2022, 43 (01): 75-82.
- [13] Qian Yin. The influence of nostalgic advertising types on consumers' brand attitudes-A moderating effect of Brand Perception and a mediating effect of Brand authenticity. *Business Economic Research*, 2024, (18): 85-88.