



Nostalgic emotion, experiential value, brand image, and consumption intentions of customers of nostalgic-themed restaurants[☆]



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ABSTRACT

During the last few years, nostalgia has become a fashion in Taiwan. “Nostalgic” restaurants are becoming common in Taiwan. A nostalgic restaurant can be a hot pot restaurant decorated with furnishing relating to the origin or earlier use of the “hot pot” in Taiwan. The study here uses SEM to test the hypotheses relating to nostalgia affecting consumption. The results indicate that (1) nostalgia has both direct and indirect impacts on consumption intention; (2) consumption affected by nostalgia varies depending on the individual; and (3) younger customers' predisposition to want cheap prices is an important consideration in marketing nostalgia to younger customers.

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1. Introduction

Nostalgia derives from the Greek words “νόστος (nóstos)” and “ἄλγος (álgos)”, which refer to a painful yearning to return home. The word “nostalgia” has been used by a Swiss physician to describe a medical condition of soldiers away from home (Davis, 1979). The meaning of the word has broadened to encompass more than just homesickness. As Davis (1979) describes it, “nostalgia has been fully demilitarized and demedicalized.” “Nostalgia” is used to describe emotional reminiscence of a familiar entity or environment. In other words, nostalgia refers to a psychological phenomenon triggered by both objective and subjective perceptions. Furthermore, nostalgia, albeit often triggered by a negative mood such as loneliness, helps people to generate positive affect and self-esteem and fosters social connectedness (Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2008).

These assertions made about nostalgia indicate its importance for people and its ability to influence human behaviors. Therefore, understanding the role of nostalgia in consumption behaviors can be important when incorporating something old or obsolete into the operation or marketing of an economically viable business.

Some service-brand executives recognize the potential to use nostalgia to enhance business revenues and profits. Taiwan has undergone a

trend involving many businesses incorporating items eliciting nostalgia in their atmosphere. Many magazine articles about restaurants pertain to restaurants that feature specific past decades (e.g., Liu, 2003). Some of the owners of restaurants are actually antique collectors who successfully turn their hobby into profits in a business (Hwuang, Hong, Yang, Chang, & Lian, 2007).

Nostalgic restaurant settings being an interesting topic of discussion helped prompt this study. The aim of this study is to understand nostalgia-related factors affecting the success of restaurants that use nostalgia as an important aspect of their image. Researchers (Baker & Kennedy, 1994; Fairley, 2003; Schindler & Holbrook, 2003) assert that nostalgia can be used to explain consumer preference of certain products. Based on the works of these researchers, the study proposes a model and uses the model to investigate nostalgia affecting restaurant success.

2. Literature review

Nostalgia is a type of psychological need (Davis, 1979). Based on being a need, nostalgia is an emotional state, which by definition is highly subjective. The source of nostalgia is not limited to things that an individual experienced in his/her past (Boym, 2002; Yeh, Chen, & Liu, 2012), but also things for which a felt longing exists. For example, in a tourism context, a feeling of nostalgia is not necessarily triggered by an individual's personal visit to the place. Nostalgia may arise because a person sees the place as connecting him/her to a different time period. Understanding how people react to a source by feeling nostalgia can thus help explain their consumer behavior. This is why nostalgia has been considered in studies of tourism destinations (e.g. Russell, 2008) and automobile preference (Schindler & Holbrook, 2003). Holbrook and Schindler

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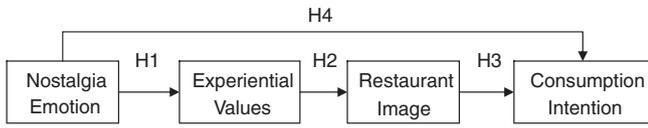


Fig. 1. Research model.

(2006) indicate that nostalgia shapes consumption experiences by positively affecting respondents' experiential values. Thus, the nostalgia perspective in the consumer literature supports the theoretical view that nostalgia nurtures experiential values (see H1 below).

Once an individual visits a service-place and purchases a product or service, the consumption experiences are incorporated into his/her decision-making process for future choices, such as tourism destination choice (Birgit, 2001). This incorporation process is due to the fact that memorable experiences often help form a destination's image in a person's mind (Gibson, Qi, & Zhang, 2008), and that image may be crucial in affecting post-visit behavior (Bigné, Sánchez, & Sánchez, 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007). This study builds on the work of Fakeye and Crompton (1991) and subsequent research that applies their model to a restaurant context. Therefore, the study here proposes that "experiential value positively contributes to restaurant image."

The above discussion of the literature also stresses the ties between destination image and future behavioral intentions (e.g. Bigné et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007). Furthermore, the ability of a place to trigger a nostalgic emotion is also a strong motive for a first-time visitor to choose a place. Therefore, the study postulates that "restaurant image positively impacts consumption intention" and "nostalgia positively impacts consumption intention."

The research model is represented by the following statements corresponding to hypotheses. H1: Nostalgia positively affects respondents' experiential values. H2: Experiential value positively contributes to restaurant image. H3: Restaurant image positively impacts consumption intention. H4: Nostalgia positively impacts consumption intention (Fig. 1).

3. Research method

The subject of this study is a nostalgia-themed restaurant in Chiayi City, Taiwan. The restaurant is decorated with antiques from the late-stage (1930–1945) of the Japanese colonial period of Taiwan which is especially meaningful for the elder generation who lived through that period. The survey was conducted from October to December, 2012. Given the time constraint, the study used random sampling to generate an adequate sample size yielding 302 valid responses.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections: (1) nostalgic emotion, (2) experiential value, (3) restaurant image, (4) consumption intention, and (5) socio-demographic information. Related to the first section of questionnaire, nostalgic emotion, the work of Baker and Kennedy (1994) is the most frequently cited theory even in the newest journal articles (e.g., Muehling & Pascal, 2012). Baker and Kennedy (1994) propose that nostalgic emotion is classifiable into three types, namely, "real nostalgia," "simulated nostalgia," and "collective nostalgia." "Real nostalgia" deals with individuals' personal experience with an era and therefore can arouse feelings the individual experienced in that era under a relevant context. For example, the decorations and setting of a restaurant may be based on something from the customers' childhood. In this study, older respondents often experience such emotions. The other two types of nostalgic emotion deal with circumstances that an individual has not experienced before but are introduced by either fantasy (simulated) or history (collective). In this study, questions relating to simulated or collective nostalgia are directed to younger customers who have no personal experience with life in Taiwan from the 1930s to the 1960s but who have surely heard about it from their elders or from watching television programs or movies.

The second section of the questionnaire is based on the work of Mathwick, Malhotra, and Rigdon (2001) which categorizes experiential value into four sub-parts, namely, consumer return on investment, service excellence, playfulness, and esthetic appeal. The study adopts these four dimensions of experiential value and adds a fifth dimension, convenience. The third section of the questionnaire regarding restaurant image is based on the works of past researchers

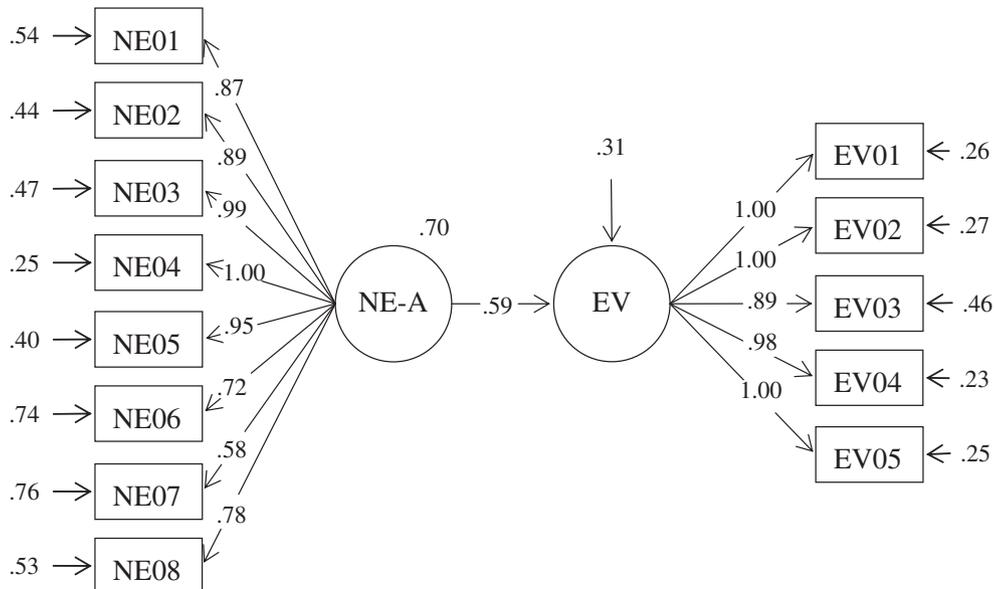


Fig. 2. Testing Hypothesis 1.

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