Self-congruity mediates the relation

between nostalgia proneness and brand loyalty

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Abstract

Previous research found that nostalgia has an effect on (attitudinal) brand loyalty. The aim of this study was to expand the scientific knowledge on brand loyalty and how brand loyalty is affected by nostalgia proneness. It provides insights that can be used by brands and stores to increase their sales volume and customer loyalty. In this research it was examined if there is an effect from nostalgia proneness on attitudinal brand loyalty and if this effect is mediated through self-congruity. The first hypothesis was that there is a positive effect from nostalgia proneness on attitudinal brand loyalty. The second hypothesis was that this direct effect from nostalgia proneness on attitudinal brand loyalty will disappear when self-congruity is added as a mediator between these two variables. Participants ($N = 206$) completed the Southampton Nostalgia Scale, a Self-Image Congruence scale, and a brand loyalty measure. With the use of a mediation analysis, it was found that nostalgia proneness has a direct positive effect on attitudinal brand loyalty. Furthermore, nostalgia proneness has a positive effect on self-congruity, and self-congruity has a positive effect on attitudinal brand loyalty. A partial mediation effect through self-congruity was found on the relation between nostalgia proneness and attitudinal brand loyalty. These results indicate that nostalgia proneness indeed positively affects attitudinal brand loyalty, which suggests that if marketeers could increase customer's proneness to nostalgia, this would lead to a more loyal customer base.

Keywords: Attitudinal brand loyalty, Behavioral brand loyalty, Cognitive brand loyalty, Nostalgia proneness, Self-congruity, mediation

The link between nostalgia proneness and brand loyalty with the mediation self-congruity

Everybody would probably recognize it, the feeling of happiness you get when retrieving a pleasant memory of the past. You recognize a certain smell or taste, and it instantly brings back childhood memories. Or you see a certain game you always played, and you remember playing it with your friends and think of all the good times you had. These memories make you want to experience these tastes, smells, or games again. According to Pearsall (1998), nostalgia can be defined as "a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past". These memories concern either small casual events in life, but also more important happenings from the past. Casual life events or situations can be defined as events that happen without planning or happen by chance (Collins dictionary. n.d). Sedikides et al. (2015) describes nostalgia as a bittersweet, but primarily positive emotion. As long as these memories are experienced as good and pleasant in one way or another, and it makes you want to go back to that particular moment in life, it can be called nostalgia (Batcho, 1995). Often these nostalgic memories are triggered by a sensory impulse, such as a specific sound, taste or smell that you experience (Barrett et al., 2010; Reid et al., 2014). According to Sedikides et al. (2015) nostalgia is an emotion that is experienced by people of all ages and descents. Although all people can feel nostalgic, nostalgia proneness can differ between individuals and is thought to be influenced by genetic and environmental factors (Johnson et al., 2011). Nostalgia proneness can be described as the extent of which a person prefers items of the past, in comparison to items of the future or present (Holbrook & Schindler, 1991). Nostalgia proneness is also believed to be a personality trait (Juhl et al., 2010; Routledge et al., 2008). The thought that experiencing nostalgia is universal, makes it interesting to examine which impact this experience can have on casual life events. Leunissen et al. (2021) found evidence that nostalgia has a positive effect on happiness and that it also functions as a strategy

for coping with stress. A recent study from Özhan and Akkaya (2021) also found a significant effect from nostalgia on consumer's purchase behavior. Furthermore, this consumer behavior is an important subject in examining brand loyalty (Obiegbu et al., 2019).

Brand loyalty can be defined as a pattern of repeated purchasing of a brand that someone has bought before (Selnes, 1993). However, research has shown that this concept is a little too simple (Obiegbu et al., 2019). There is a clear distinction between three different kinds of brand loyalty. Brand loyalty consists of an attitudinal component, a behavioral component, and a cognitive component (Oliver, 1997). However, both the attitudinal and the behavioral form of brand loyalty depend on the presence of the cognitive component of brand loyalty. This cognitive component includes the brand awareness that a consumer must have, prior to possibly developing loyalty to that particular brand (Oliver, 1997). An individual must be acquainted with a brand, and this brand must come to that person's mind, in order to establish loyalty to that brand.

The first form of brand loyalty is behavioral brand loyalty. This concept of brand loyalty considers repeated purchase of the same brand as being loyal to that brand, and thus this can be described as the most real-life example (Tucker, 1964). It provides simple evidence of consumers actually behaving brand loyal (Tucker, 1964). According to Oliver (1997), behavioral brand loyalty also includes the sincere intention of a customer to repeatedly purchase the same brand. The downside of this behavioral approach is that repeated purchasing of products from one particular brand gets linked directly to the thought of those customers being loyal to that brand. Of course, this consumer behavior can be the result of a purchase motivation driven by brand loyalty. However, other possible factors which might also explain the consumer's choice for that particular purchase could be overlooked (Obiegbu et al., 2019). According to Rondán-

Cataluña et al. (2006), brand choice is affected by price, and consumers are less likely to purchase a brand if the price is relatively high. Furthermore, price consciousness contributes to both attitudinal and behavioral brand loyalty (Ferreira & Coelho, 2015). The repeated purchase pattern of a product brand might actually be the result of the price of that brand being lower than the price of a competitor's brand (Rondán-Cataluña et al., 2006). These kinds of additional factors are not taken into account when brand loyalty is measured only through repeated purchase patterns (Obiegbu et al., 2019).

The second form of brand loyalty is attitudinal brand loyalty. This form is slightly different from the behavioral kind of brand loyalty, as the main focus is not on the presence of an actual repeated purchase pattern of a certain brand (Odin et al., 2001). In fact, it is all about the attitude people have towards their own consumer behavior, and if they are willing to make a certain commitment to stay loyal to one particular brand (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2002). This commitment could for example be expressed by a person stating that he or she is only willing to buy the Pepsi brand of cola, or the LG brand for purchasing a new mobile phone. This commitment is solely psychological (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2002). The most important factor in measuring the customer's attitude towards a brand, is the amount of positive feelings a person experiences when thinking of that particular brand in comparison to a competitive brand. Another important part of measuring a person's attitude towards a brand is the extent of claiming a certain level of commitment to be loyal to a single brand (Uncles et al., 2003). Although according to Obiegbu et al. (2019), attitudinal brand loyalty in comparison to behavioral brand loyalty, seems to have more explanatory power and gives better insights into consumer behavior, it has one slight disadvantage. As people's thoughts cannot be observed directly, they can only be measured via introspection (Odin et al., 2001). Due to this, outcomes are based on people's

own subjective expressions of their thoughts and feelings, instead of on their objective actual behavior. In addition to that, some consumers might not even have the opportunity to experience or purchase other brands as very large companies often have such market dominance that it is the only brand easily available (Chioveanu, 2008; Schmalensee, 1974). This could be problematic, as it is hard to determine if consumers have a genuine preference for that large brand or if they only feel a strong connection to it. It could be that consumers were not given the opportunity to experience any other brands and to compare these brands, to see which brand they prefer.

Creating a strong bond between customers and brands or stores is the primary focus in marketing (Hiscock, 2001). One way to create such a bond is by establishing a certain brand image and this will result in a strong brand identity (Kapferer, 2000). As this bond relies for a large part on brand identity, it is important that customers can identify with that particular brand identity. The concept of brand identity itself is rather abstract and maybe a little vague to most consumers. To make this brand identity more accessible and easier to notice, it is supported by a created 'image of the typical user' of that brand. This way, brands can also aim their marketing at a specific group in the population and adjust their 'typical user image' to match the self-image of the group of customers they are trying to attract (Sirgy et al., 1997). To identify themselves with the existing brand identity, people need to compare their own self-image with that brand identity. This process of determining if the brand identity forms a match with their own self-image is called 'self-congruity' (Sirgy, 1986). If someone scores high on self-congruity, it means there is a good match between the persons own self-image and the brand image or identity, and if someone scores low on self-congruity, it means that that person can't identify with the brand image or identity.

As stated by Sedikides et al. (2015), nostalgia can be seen as an emotion. Emotions are strong enough to influence people's consumer behavior, even when the kind of emotion itself has nothing to do with the decision that has to be made (Achar et al., 2016). This indicates that emotions have a big impact on ordinary life decisions. Nostalgia is used in marketing to make consumers feel more positive about a brand and it helps to create a brand's image, to which consumers can bond (Muehling & Pascal, 2011). It can be used by integrating it into marketing strategies through recognizable products or themes of the past (Jones, 2015). A second way of using nostalgia is by using a method that is often referred to as 'retro marketing'. Old characteristic designs are being reused and adapted to fit new products (Broučková et al., 2019). A good example of the use of this strategy is a brand's 'heritage line', which reuses iconic styles of the brand. The use of nostalgia in marketing leads to more positive feelings by customers and those customers are more willing to make a purchase when feeling nostalgic (Holak & Havlena, 1998; Lasaleta et al., 2014). A study from Kang et al. (2015) showed a significant effect from self-congruity on attitudinal brand loyalty. Another study also found that brand loyalty in general is correlated with self-congruity in a context of tourism bureaus (Liu et al., 2019). This evidence is strengthened by a study of McCracken (1986), that showed a significant effect from brand identity on brand loyalty. Brand identity can be partly created by using nostalgia to create a brand image (Muehling & Pascal, 2011), and this identity then needs to be compared by a consumer's self-image. This results in a certain level of self-congruity (Sirgy, 1986). Thus, brand identity has been found to affect brand loyalty, and this brand identity can be partly created by nostalgia. This suggests that there is a positive relation between a person's level of proneness to nostalgia, and the extent to which that person experiences self-congruity. Furthermore, high levels of self-congruity suggest more brand loyal attitudes.

As brands are increasingly using nostalgia in their marketing strategies, they start to notice the benefits of it. The bond between customer and brand becomes stronger and brands improve the interaction with their customers by communicating on a more emotional level (Harvey, 2020). This current study will attempt to answer the following question: is there an effect from nostalgia proneness on attitudinal brand loyalty, and is this effect mediated through self-congruity. This will help to understand how nostalgia in marketing functions and how it can be used to make customers stay more loyal to a brand. This could be beneficial in terms of sales, as marketing strategies can become more efficient and generate more profit with less effort. If consumers are loyal to one brand, that brand will have to invest less in attracting new customers, as more customers would be returning customers. There are two hypotheses in this current study. The first hypothesis predicts a positive effect from nostalgia proneness on attitudinal brand loyalty. The idea is that if people score high on nostalgia proneness, they will also score high on attitudinal brand loyalty. Previous research supports this hypothesis, as multiple studies have shown that attitudinal brand loyalty and brand loyalty as a whole, are positively affected by the use of nostalgia in different marketing strategies. The second hypothesis predicts that this direct effect from nostalgia proneness on attitudinal brand loyalty will disappear when self-congruity is included as a mediating variable in this research model. As previous studies have shown, brand image is positively affected by nostalgia, and self-congruity, which includes the comparison of brand image to the self-image, is positively related to brand loyalty. Therefore, it is likely that self-congruity mediates the relation between nostalgia proneness and attitudinal brand loyalty. It was a bit unclear what the effect from nostalgia proneness on behavioral would be. Also, little research exists on the effect from nostalgia proneness on cognitive brand loyalty. Therefore, the effect on these two components of brand loyalty were explored in an explorative analysis.

Methods

Participants

The survey was conducted online and recruited a convenience sample via multiple channels. All questionnaires were created in Qualtrics and distributed on social media channels like WhatsApp, Facebook and LinkedIn. Additionally, SurveySwap and SurveyCircle were used to distribute the questionnaire and recruit participants. A total of $N = 275$ people participated in this study. The data of $n = 61$ participants were incomplete and thus excluded from the analyses. Furthermore, $n = 1$ participant indicated an age below 18 and was removed from the data, and $n = 7$ outliers were removed from the data. This resulted in a final sample of $N = 206$ participants, consisting of $n = 54$ men (26.2%), $n = 146$ (70.9%) women, $n = 4$ participants with non-binary gender identities (1.9%), and $n = 2$ participants who preferred not to indicate their gender (1.0%). The mean age of the sample was 27.6 years ($SD = 11.29$), with a minimum age of 18 years and a maximum age of 72 years. The number of participants needed in this research was calculated with the software program G*power 3.1.9.4 in an a priori analyze with a power of .95, an alpha of .05 and an effect size of .15. This resulted in a minimum of 107 participants needed in this study. This research has been approved by the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences Ethics Review Board from Tilburg University.

Material

Nostalgia Proneness

The Southampton Nostalgia Scale (SNS; Routledge et al. 2008; used 7-item scale from Barrett et al. 2010) was used to measure nostalgia proneness. There are different types of questions asked in this scale, such as 'How valuable is nostalgia for you?' and 'How often do you experience nostalgia?'. The questionnaire has 7 items. The items 1 – 4 used a 7-point scale,

anchored by (1) = *not at all* to (7) = *very much*. The items 5 and 6 also used a 7-point scale, anchored by (1) = *very rarely* to (7) = *very frequently*. For item 7 there was a frequency given for how often it occurs. The minimum score is 7 and the maximum score is 49. The higher the score, the higher nostalgia proneness is. A Cronbach's alpha is good when it is equal or higher than .70 (Furr, 2017). The SNS is a highly reliable measure of nostalgia proneness that has been used in previous research (Sedikides et al., 2008). In this study, the reliability of SNS was again good (Cronbach's α = .89).

Self-image congruence

To measure self-congruity, the questionnaire *self-image congruence* (Sirgy et al. 1997) was used. In this questionnaire there were 7 items, with questions such as 'People similar to me use or consume this particular brand in casual situations' and 'People who use this particular brand are much more like me than people who use another brand'. This questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale, rated as (1) = *strongly disagree* to (5) = *strongly agree*. The minimum score for this scale is 7 and the maximum score is 35. The higher the score, the higher self-congruity is. A Cronbach's alpha is good when it is equal or higher than .70 (Furr, 2017). The *self-image congruence* is a highly reliable measure of self-congruity that has been used in previous research (Sirgy et al., 1997). For this study, the reliability was again good (Cronbach's α = .86).

Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty was measured with the *brand loyalty measure scale* (Stangor, 1998). In this part of the questionnaire there were 16 items in total, divided into 3 subscales. There were 4 items for the cognitive component, 7 items for the affective/attitudinal component and 5 items for the behavioral component. In this study there will primary be looked at the

affective/attitudinal component. Sample questions are: 'I would be upset if I have to buy another brand, if this particular brand is not available' and 'Although another brand is on sale, I will still buy this particular brand'. The items were measured by a 7-point Likert scale, anchored by (1) = *strongly disagree* to (7) = *strongly agree*. The minimum score for this scale is 16 and the maximum score is 112. For the cognitive component, the score must be between 4 and 28, for the affective/attitudinal component, the score must be between 7 and 49, and for the behavioral component the score must be between 5 and 35. The higher the score, the higher a person's loyalty to a brand is. A Cronbach's alpha is good when it is equal or higher than .70 (Furr, 2017). The *brand loyalty measure scale* is a reliable measure for brand loyalty that has been used in previous research (Stangor, 1998). For this study, the reliability was excellent (Cronbach's α = .92).

Procedure

When the participants opened the questionnaire, they first had to read an informed consent. This told the participants that participating in this study is completely voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any moment. Each question had to be answered in order for the participants to continue to the next question. The questionnaire started with a question, which asked the participants to think of a brand that they strongly remembered from their childhood, and to type it in the presented box in the questionnaire. Then, the participants were told they had to keep that brand in mind, as the survey would contain questions regarding that brand. Then, the survey continued with the brand loyalty measure scale, to measure 3 brand loyalty components. Thereafter, the self-image congruence scale to measure self-congruity. Lastly, nostalgia proneness was measured with The Southampton Nostalgia scale. The questionnaire took approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Statistical analyses

Data was processed with IBM SPSS STATISTISCS 27 (SPSS). Thereafter the Little's MCAR-test (1988) was executed and there were two missing values found in the questionnaire. Because of this result, the values of the two missing variables were replaced by the mean value. Furthermore, correlations between nostalgia, self-image congruence, and the brand loyalty and descriptive statistics (i.e. mean, SD, minimum, maximum and rage) were calculated. To test the hypotheses, a mediation analysis was performed by using PROCESS version 4.0 from Hayes. Nostalgia proneness was used as the independent variable, furthermore, attitudinal brand loyalty was used as the dependent variable and self-congruity was the mediator. First there will be looked at if nostalgia proneness predicts attitudinal brand loyalty, then if self-congruity predicts attitudinal brand loyalty, and if nostalgia predicts self-congruity. After this, nostalgia proneness must be no longer or is lessened predicting attitudinal brand loyalty to have a mediation.

Assumptions

Before the mediation analysis can be performed, there must be checked for certain assumptions. The first assumption is the linear relationship and the homoscedasticity. To check for this assumption, the Normal Probability Plot of the Regression Standardized Residual and a scatterplot were calculated. The scatterplot was also used to check for possible outliers. The Mahalanobis, Cook's and leverage distance test was also used to check for outliers. Six outliers were eventually removed from the results. Multicollinearity is another assumption. To check for multicollinearity, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and the tolerance were calculated. The VIF value must be below 5 and the tolerance value must be higher than .20. The VIF value for nostalgia proneness as well as for self-congruity was .97 and the tolerance values were 1.03 for

both nostalgia proneness and self-congruity. As both values were acceptable, this assumption has not been violated. Another assumption was that of normality and this was tested with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and was also calculated with the skewness and kurtosis. The values are normally distributed when it is between -2 and 2 (Field, 2009). In this research the normality has clearly been violated, because of that, bootstrapping ($n = 1.000$) was used to robust estimates of standard errors and to compute confidence intervals. In the 95% confidence interval, the zero is not included when coefficients are significant.

Results

Descriptive statistics

The average total score for nostalgia proneness was 32.84 ($SD = 7.09$). This resulted in an average score on each item of 4.69 on a scale from 1-7. Statistically, the unweighted average score on each item would be 3.50, as the minimum score per item was 1 and the maximum score was 7. Thus, the mean score of 4.69 in this study is considerably higher than the predicted unweighted average of 3.50. Moreover, the lowest total score for nostalgia proneness was 15, which is also considerably higher than the minimum total score of 7. This indicates that the participants probably had a good understanding of the question that asked them to name a brand that they strongly remembered from their childhood, and that they gave a well thought of response.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics

	N	M	SD	Min	Max

Nostalgia	206	32.84	7.09	15	49
Attitudinal brand loyalty	206	30.44	9.80	7	49
Behavioral brand loyalty	206	18.82	7.08	5	33
Cognitive brand loyalty	206	17.05	5.16	4	28
Self-congruity	206	19.35	5.23	7	31

Table 2

Correlations

| Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Nostalgia	-					
Attitudinal brand loyalty	.243**	-				
Behavioral brand loyalty	.129	.778**	-			
Cognitive brand loyalty	.233**	.662**	.635**	-		
Self-congruity	.181**	.512**	.550**	.441**	.563**	-

$N = 206$

$**p < 0.01$

Mediation analysis

A mediation analysis was conducted to examine if self-congruity functions as a mediator between nostalgia proneness and attitudinal brand loyalty. The standardized coefficients of the effect from nostalgia proneness and attitudinal brand loyalty, and from the mediated effect through self-congruity are shown in figure 1. First, 3.3% of the variance in self-congruity was explained by nostalgia proneness in the mediation model, $R^2 = .033$, $F(1, 204) = 6.91$, $p < .001$. The effect of the independent variable (nostalgia proneness) on the mediator (self-congruity) was tested (path *a*). Indeed, nostalgia proneness predicted self-congruity, $a = .133$, $t = (204) = 2.63$, $p < .01$. Then, the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable (attitudinal brand loyalty) was tested (path *c*). The results showed that nostalgia proneness positively effects attitudinal brand loyalty, $c = .336$, $t = (204) = 3.58$, $p < .001$. The variance in attitudinal brand loyalty was 5.9% explained by nostalgia proneness, $R^2 = .059$, $F(1, 204) = 12.84$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, self-congruity was added to the model to test whether this variable mediates the relation between the independent and the dependent variable (path *c'*). The results indicated a partial mediation effect through self-congruity. 28.6% of the variance in attitudinal brand loyalty was explained by the nostalgia proneness, mediated by self-congruity, $R^2 = .286$, $F(2,203) = 40.63$, $p < .001$. However, the direct effect from nostalgia proneness on attitudinal brand loyalty remained significant in the mediation model, $c' = .215$, $t = (203) = 2.58$, $p = .011$. The effect from self-congruity on attitudinal brand loyalty (path *b*) was also significant in the mediation model, $b = .907$, $t = (203) = 8.02$, $p < .001$.

Figure 1

Mediation model
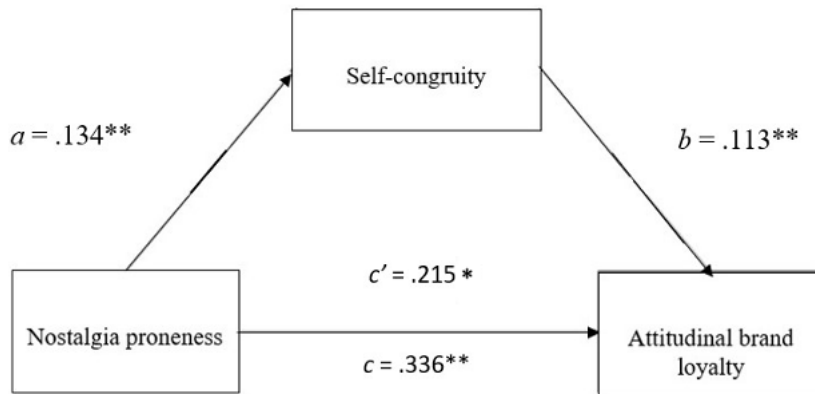
Note. The total, direct and indirect effect from Nostalgia proneness to Attitudinal brand loyalty

via Self-congruity

 *P < .05

**p < .001

Explorative analysis

When the effect from nostalgia proneness on behavioral brand loyalty was tested, the results

showed a non-significant effect ($B = .041$, $SE = .09$, $\beta = .039$, $p = .642$). This can be explained by

the findings that showed a non-significant correlation between nostalgia proneness and

behavioral brand loyalty in the first place. In addition, the effect of nostalgia proneness on

cognitive brand loyalty was investigated. The results showed that nostalgia proneness positively

effects cognitive brand loyalty ($B = 0.212$, $SE = 0.109$, $\beta = .146$, $p = .05$). Furthermore, when

self-congruity was added as a mediator between these two variables, the results indicated a

partial mediation effect through self-congruity, $b = .115$, $t = (203) = 2.508$, $p < .01$. This

indicates that nostalgia proneness is indeed processed like the theory of self-congruity suggested,

but the direct effect from nostalgia proneness on cognitive brand loyalty in the mediated model

did not disappear and remained significant.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine if there is an effect from nostalgia proneness on attitudinal brand loyalty, and if this effect is mediated through self-congruity. The first hypothesis predicted a positive effect from nostalgia proneness on attitudinal brand loyalty. This expectation was supported by the results, as a significant effect from nostalgia proneness on attitudinal brand loyalty was found. The second hypothesis predicted that this direct effect between nostalgia proneness and attitudinal brand loyalty would disappear, when self-congruity was added as a mediating variable in the research model. Results showed a significant effect from both the direct effect of nostalgia proneness on attitudinal brand loyalty, and the mediated effect through self-congruity. As the direct effect from nostalgia proneness on attitudinal brand loyalty was still significant when self-congruity was added as a mediator, this indicates that there is merely a partial mediation effect through self-congruity, and not all of the variance can be explained by self-congruity as a mediator. Therefore, the second hypothesis was only partially confirmed. Additionally, the effect from nostalgia proneness on behavioral brand loyalty, mediated through self-congruity was examined in an explorative analysis. No hypothesis was made on this effect, as it was unclear what would happen to this effect. The results showed an insignificant effect from nostalgia proneness on behavioral brand loyalty. Furthermore, the effect from nostalgia proneness on cognitive brand loyalty was explored. Limited research has been done concerning nostalgia proneness in relation to this cognitive component of brand loyalty, so no hypothesis was constructed. The results showed a significant direct positive effect from nostalgia proneness on cognitive brand loyalty. Furthermore, the mediated positive effect through self-congruity was also significant. However, the direct effect from nostalgia proneness on cognitive brand loyalty remained significant as well in the mediation model.

The findings regarding the first hypothesis in this study are in line with previous research, that indicated that nostalgia positively affected customer's feelings and attitudes about a brand (Muehling & Pascal, 2011), and that nostalgia also contributes to the will to purchase (Holak & Havlena, 1998; Lasaleta et al., 2014). Although the effect was significant, it was also rather small. However, it is clear that nostalgia proneness and attitudinal brand loyalty are correlated.

Furthermore, the findings concerning the second hypothesis are also supported by previous research. Kapferer (2000) stated that a strong bond between consumers and brands can be established by creating a recognizable brand image and brand identity. Nostalgia can be integrated in advertising to create this brand image and brand identity (Muehling & Pascal, 2011; Jones, 2015). Furthermore, nostalgia can contribute to the nostalgic brand identity directly through the use in retro products (Broučková et al., 2019). Congruence between brand image and self-image has been found to positively affect attitudinal brand loyalty (Kang et al., 2015), and a well-established brand identity has been found to significantly improve brand loyalty in general as well (McCracken, 1986). This would suggest that proneness to nostalgia positively affects attitudinal brand loyalty, and the results of this study clearly affirms this idea, although only part of the variance could be explained by self-congruity. The fact that not all of the variance could be explained by self-congruity, can be the result of there being more possible variables functioning as a mediator.

Moreover, the explorative analysis showed that behavioral brand loyalty is not affect by nostalgia proneness. This is in line with the idea that behavioral brand loyalty, which includes the actual action of purchase, depends on multiple factors (Obiegbu et al., 2019), such as product pricing, of which higher priced products are less popular and less likely to be purchased (Rondán-Cataluña et al., 2006). There were also significant findings of the explorative analysis.

The effect from nostalgia proneness on cognitive brand loyalty suggests that this variable acts similar to the attitudinal component. This could be the result of the theory stated by Oliver (1997), which presumes that brand loyalty automatically implies the cognitive component, and thus this indicates an overlap between the cognitive component and the attitudinal component of brand loyalty. This suggests that more research is needed on the effect on the cognitive brand loyalty.

Although the study had some notable strengths (e.g., high reliability of all measures, findings in line with previous research using the same measures, etc.), there were also some limitations. As the participants had to name a brand that evoked their personal nostalgic feelings, through childhood memories, the consequence of this is that participants already feel nostalgic, even though in casual life situations they might not be prone to experience nostalgia. Newman et al. (2020) found that evoked nostalgic feelings (as done in this study), generate primarily positive emotions, while people experience primarily negative emotions when nostalgia is experienced in everyday life. Moreover, participants might just give socially desirable responses, as they might be aware of the aim of having to name a brand that made them think of childhood memories, is that they will then feel nostalgic. As a result of these evoked nostalgic feelings, the mean nostalgia proneness level in this study was high, and only few participants scored low on nostalgia proneness. This level of nostalgia proneness might not be realistic in the real world. A possible solution for this problem is creating an experimental research design, with both a group participants that is primed with nostalgic by naming a personal nostalgia evoking brand, and a control group that is offered a certain sample of brand names. This control group will presumably generate lower scores on nostalgia, which might provide more realistic results. Another limitation would be the lack of control for gender, descent, and economic status and

level of education. Controlling for these variables would improve accuracy and generate more specific results.

The aim for this research is to contribute to the existing knowledge about brand loyalty. It gives insights in consumer behavior and purchase decisions, and in what way these actions are influenced by emotional triggers instead of rational considerations. This knowledge can be implemented in methods to improve or newly develop marketing and advertisings strategies. Brands could use their customer's proneness to nostalgia in their advantage. They could implement nostalgia advertisement, or they could use nostalgic themes in their stores. Consequently, customers that are more prone to nostalgia feel stronger connected to the brand's identity and therefore stores and brands could better emotionally engage with their customers. These customers are then more willing to commit to that brand. Any company or brand can benefit from high customer loyalty and this loyalty will improve expansion and sales volume (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Future research on this topic should be done to expand the knowledge on how these variables interact. It should examine in what extent nostalgic prone customers rely on this nostalgia when making a commitment and how robust they are to other factors influencing the behavioral output, such as pricing and availability, compared to those customers that are not prone to experience nostalgia. Furthermore, research should be done on how strong nostalgia is as a predictor of loyalty to a brand, compared to other predictors. Moreover, more research is needed to examine how nostalgia as a predictor for attitudinal brand loyalty can be made more efficient, and how the accessibility could be improved for people that are less prone to experience nostalgia. Additionally, gender differences and the effect from nostalgia on attitudinal brand loyalty should be examined. The research from Leunissen et al. (2020) states that little

research on gender differences in relation to nostalgia proneness exists. However, it is believed that women have higher ambivalence in experiencing nostalgia. Zeng et al. (2019) found that the impact of brand image is significant for men, but insignificant for women. Furthermore, Zeng et al. (2019) found that men care more about behavioral brand loyalty, and women care more about attitudinal brand loyalty. Moreover, the effect from nostalgia proneness regarding different groups of age must also be studied to examine how the effect from nostalgia proneness can be optimized for different groups of customers. Additionally, more research is needed regarding the influence of price on brand loyalty. Jensen and Drozdenko (2008) found that brand loyal consumers are willing to pay more than consumers that are not brand loyal. To improve generalizability of this research, larger groups of participants are needed, including participants of multiple descents, people with different levels of economic status, and people with different levels of educational background.

In summary, this study found that people who experience nostalgia more often and have higher preferences for nostalgic products, tend to be more loyal to their preferred brands and are more willing to commit to these brands. This is important for brands and marketeers, but more research is needed to understand why these effects exists and to implement this knowledge into marketing strategies.

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