

Influences of Customers' Nostalgic Proneness on Their Brand Cognition Based on the ABC Model of Attitude

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Abstract: As the economic environment and social culture change dramatically, nowadays there are numerous opportunities for the nostalgic brand in China to regain competitive advantages. Grounded on the affective, behavior, and cognition (ABC) model of attitude, this paper aims to clarify the relationship between customers' nostalgic proneness, purchase intention, and brand cognition to explain the mechanism of nostalgic consumption. Taking the big white rabbit brand as an example, a structural equation model was used after the constructs were empirically confirmed by reliability and validity tests. Customers' nostalgic proneness is found to be positively correlated with their brand cognition and the nostalgic brand is advised to fully exert its potential.

Keywords: Nostalgic brand; the ABC model of attitude; structural equation model.

1. Introduction

1.1. A Subsection Sample

In the past decades, the world has witnessed violent environmental deterioration, social resolutions, and disease outbreaks, which bring strong nostalgic emotions to the public. On the one hand, the nostalgic brand is in dilemma. In the 1950s there were 16000 time-honored enterprises in China, but as of December 2019, only 10% of the 1128 Chinese time-honored enterprises have a prospective development trend. With the development of social emotions, the development of nostalgic brands has triggered the attention of the public. On the other hand, the nostalgic brand itself embodies national characteristics, obtains a good reputation, and has high cultural values. When exploited effectively, Nostalgia can produce competitive advantages [1], and nostalgic brand positioning can create brand equity for time-honored enterprises [2]. Therefore, how can nostalgic brands make better use of nostalgia to regain growth momentum is a fatal question to be solved.

Anchoring on the affective, behavior, and cognition (ABC) model of attitude, this paper tries to apply the experiential hierarchy of the ABC model of attitude in the context of the Chinese market and explain how customers' nostalgic proneness affects their brand cognition. Although there are plenty of distinguished studies, the relevant empirical research on customer behavior mainly focuses on influencing factor analysis [2-5]. One more step should be made in the field of mechanism explanation. To fill the gap, this study applies the ABC model of attitude to explain customers' behavior in nostalgic consumption and attempts to figure out the relationship between customers' nostalgic proneness, purchase intention, and brand cognition. By adopting the structural equation

model to analyze, our findings may add a new perspective for thousands of nostalgic brands to better understand the behavior of the target customer so as to survive in the competitive market and fully play their due social roles. Besides, taking the Big White Rabbit brand as an example, our research which focuses on nostalgic brands in the Chinese market enriches the present literature.

The structure of the study is as follows. The ABC model of attitude is introduced in the literature review of section 2 which also elaborates on the premise. Section 3 describes the methodology's adoption process. The practice and scholarly ramifications of the findings as well as the results are discussed in Section 4. The conclusion, Section 5, analyzes some of its constraints and highlights the research's future directions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Affective, Behavior, and Cognition (ABC) Model of Attitude

Affect, behavior, and cognition are distinguishable components of attitude and the concept of attitude is cleared only when the three components are specified [6]. Conscious experience, emotion, individual feelings, and mood are all considered affective components. Knowledge, beliefs, perceptual reactions, comprehension, and relational systems are all considered to constitute cognitive components. Behavior components include the action or behavior tendency that people want to take towards a certain attitude object [7]. According to the relation between the three components, the ABC model has three levels – high-involvement decisions(C-A-B), low involvement decisions(C-B-A), and experiential hierarchy(A-B-C) to reflect how much information the customer has when making purchase decisions [8]. Experiential hierarchy (emotion-behavior-cognition) mainly applies to perceptual consumption. It is an attitude level dominated by emotion, and cognition is formed after taking purchase action. In the experiential hierarchy, consumers are easy to be guided by symbols of symbolic meaning and pay more attention to the spiritual attributes of products [9]. To this point, it is believed that customers' affective tendency and purchase intention will direct the information process and influence their brand cognition of time-honored enterprises in China.

2.2. Nostalgic Proneness

Drawing on the rich nostalgic elements of brands, stimulating consumers' nostalgic proneness, and improving brand cognition, nostalgia has become a new idea for promotion [10]. The relationship between nostalgic proneness and brand preference is examined by many scholars. Schindler and Holbroo [11] found that styles popular during a consumer's youth can influence the consumer's lifelong preferences. Wang, Keh, and Chao [12] conducted four studies and found that highly nostalgic consumers have a greater preference for indulgent foods.

2.3. Brand Cognition

Brand plays an important role in promoting the long-term development of enterprises. Many scholars have examined the relationship between brand cognition and purchase intention. Lefa and Michel [13] extended the dual mediation model, the research shows that consumers' brand cognitions influence their confidence in evaluating the brand which further affects their purchase intentions. Wang [14] built a theoretical model of tea brand cognition and found that brand cognition has a significant impact on purchase intention. Brand emotion plays an intermediary role between brand cognition and purchase intention.

Based on the above discussion, the hypotheses are proposed as follows.

H1: nostalgic proneness has a positive influence on purchase intention

H2: purchase intention has a positive influence on brand cognition

H3: nostalgic proneness has a positive influence on brand cognition

3. Methodology

3.1. Survey Sampling Method

The questionnaire includes four parts, basic information, brand cognition, customers' nostalgia proneness, and purchase intention. The relevant questions come from authoritative journal articles shown in Table 1. The Likert five-level scale is used for scoring and the range is from "completely agree" to "completely disagree".

The questionnaire survey was conducted among the consumers in the selected shopping centers in some southern cities by using the convenient sampling method of random interview. A total of 313 questionnaires were distributed and 284 were recovered, with an effective recovery rate of 90.73%.

Table 1: Operating variables and survey questionnaire.

Construct	ID	Measurement item	Adapted source
Nostalgic Proneness (Affective Attitude)	NP1	I think the Big White Rabbit brand makes me feel a little nostalgic	Heinberg, M. et al [2]; Chen[3]
	NP2	I think the Big White Rabbit brand reminds me of the good old days	
	NP3	I am proud of the development of the time-honored domestic brands	
	NP4	Under the same quality, I will give priority to domestic brands that I am familiar	
Purchase Intention (Customer Behavior)	PI1	I think the Big White Rabbit brand has a high popularity	Chen [3]; Yu [4]
	PI2	I trust and understand the Big White Rabbit brand well	
	PI3	I am willing to buy products of the Big White Rabbit brand	
Brand Cognition (Cognitive Attitude)	BC1	I think the product of the Big White Rabbit brand is of good quality	Li [5]; Chen [6]
	BC2	I think the product of the Big White Rabbit brand is affordable	
	BC3	I think the products of the Big White Rabbit brand are very novel in appearance design	

3.2. Reliability and Validity Tests

After the data collection, the validity and reliability of the measuring items were investigated using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The data of all questionnaires were standardized, and then the reliability was analyzed by spss20.0. The results are presented in Table 2. KMO test (Kaiser Meyer Olkin) and Bartlett's test of sphericity are required before factor analysis which is commonly used for structural validity evaluation. The results are presented in Table 3. Table 4 shows the sum of the square's load extracted from the constructs.

Cronbach of each part of the questionnaire is greater than 0.7, so it can be inferred that the reliability of this questionnaire is high. The KMO value of the questionnaire data is 0.916, and passed Bartlett's sphericity test with a significance level of 0.05, indicating that the questionnaire data is very suitable for factor analysis. The explanatory variance accounts for nearly 58.432%, so the extracted three common factors can explain the information of the original variables, which shows that the stability of the questionnaire is high and the questionnaire is effective.

Table 2: Reliability analysis.

Construct	Cronbach α	Number of questions
cognitive attitude	.744	3
affective attitude	.822	4
purchase intention	.777	3

Table 3: Bartlett's test of sphericity.

Kaiser Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		.916
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approximate chi-square	4117.893
	df	276
	Sig	0.000

Table 4: Factor analysis.

Extract the sum of the square's load		
Total	% of Variance	Cumulative%
9.924	41.348	41.348
2.458	10.241	51.589
1.642	6.843	58.432

3.3. Descriptive Statistics

There are 313 total samples and 284 effective samples, in terms of the age structure of the samples, the samples aged 18-25 and over 40 are the main ones, accounting for 36.3% and 33.5% respectively. In terms of monthly income, the proportion of income below 2000, 2000-5000, 5000-8000, and above 8000 is 27.1%, 25.0%, 21.5%, and 26.4% respectively, which is evenly distributed, indicating that the questionnaire survey covers people at all income levels.

3.4. Structural equation model

After reliability and validity tests, the SEM analysis is conducted by Amos 24. The structural equation model's path estimates are displayed in Fig. 1. All paths are significant at the confidence interval of 95%. The model fit indices are CFI = 0.901, NFI = 0.0875, IFI = 0.903. Although the value of NFI was slightly lower than the cutoff value of 0.09, all the other indices indicated an acceptable model fit. All paths are significant ($p < 0.05$). Again, the direct effect of nostalgic proneness on brand cognition was significant. Additionally, the relationship between nostalgic proneness and purchase intention as well as the relationship between purchase intention and brand cognition was also significant. The direct effect of nostalgia proneness on brand cognition was 0.424, while the indirect effect of nostalgic proneness on brand cognition was 0.426 (0.835×0.510), indicating purchase intentions partially mediated the relationship between nostalgic proneness and brand cognition. The results are shown in Table 5.

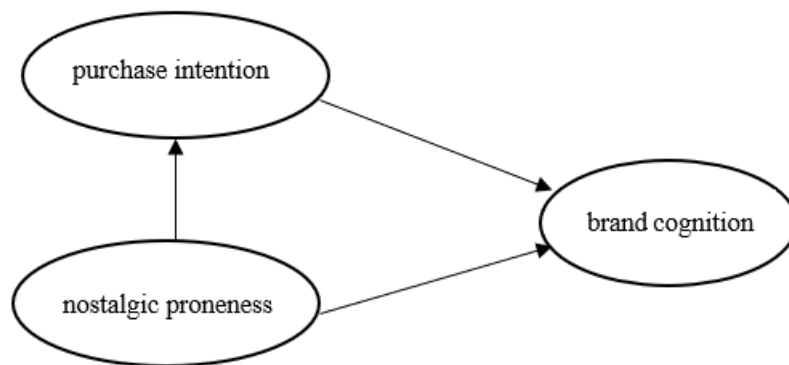


Figure 1: The structural equation model.

Table 5: Supported hypothesis.

hypothesis	relationship	coefficient	P-value
nostalgic proneness has a positive influence on purchase intention	NP→PI	0.835	.000***
purchase intention has a positive influence on brand cognition	PI→BC	0.510	.020*
nostalgic proneness has a positive influence on brand cognition	NP→BC	0.424	.039*

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 ***p<0.001

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Results

The empirical results show that customers' attitudes toward nostalgic consumption followed the experiential hierarchy of the ABC model. The customer first notices the nostalgic element related to the product rather than the powerful function of the product. As the nostalgic element evokes emotional memories and desires to obtain happiness, the customer produces consumption behavior. Finally, after making purchase decisions and completing the nostalgic consumption, the customer will form an all-around image of the product.

4.2. Discussions

First, the average score of nostalgic proneness is 4.195 (more than 3), indicating that the investigated population has a high degree of identification with nostalgia. This is because China is undergoing drastic social changes. In the face of the background of social transformation with rapid development, the public generally has nostalgic feelings [9]. Besides, the correlation coefficient between nostalgic proneness and purchase intention at the level of 0.01 is 0.504, and the coefficient of hypothesis 1 at the level of 0.001 is 0.835, indicating that nostalgic proneness has a positive impact on purchase intention. It's consistent with the former research that nostalgia creates a sense of authenticity, gives legitimacy to our lifestyle, and influences consumer behavior [1,15]. Finally, the coefficient of hypothesis 3 at the level of 0.05 is 0.424, compared to the relationship between nostalgic proneness and purchase intention, nostalgic proneness's effect on brand recognition is a bit lower. This is mainly because consumers' awareness of brand quality and brand image can be obtained in a short time, not necessarily through nostalgia [9].

4.3. Implications

In terms of theoretical implications, through empirical experiments this study not only fills the gap in the field of time-honored brands but also examines the mechanism of experiential hierarchy and hedonic consumption, thus providing a better theoretical understanding of consumer behavior regarding nostalgic products. As for managerial implications, the emphasis should be put on nostalgia first. The key of nostalgic marketing is to awaken the "collective memory". It is connected with a sense of identity and belonging and can awaken collective nostalgia [16]. nostalgic brands are supposed to explore the historical value and talk about brand culture rather than simply depend on advertisements. Besides, nostalgia's direct effect on brand cognition is limited. Besides, to make full use of nostalgia's indirect effect, brands should also try to evoke customers' purchase intention by integrating functional technologies with nostalgic elements.

5. Conclusions

In the past few decades, the world especially China has experienced violent social revolutions. In the context of cultural rejuvenation and national confidence, this study discusses how can national nostalgic brands take advantage of customers' nostalgic proneness to increase brand popularity. Based on the ABC model of attitudes, this study uses empirical data and adopts the structural equation model to explain the effect of customers' nostalgic proneness on their brand cognition. The present study confirmed the findings about the experiential hierarchy of the ABC model. Nostalgic proneness has a positive influence on brand cognition and purchase intention mediates the relationship between nostalgic proneness and brand cognition. Firstly, the results provide some valuable insights into customer behavior and will hopefully serve as useful feedback information for nostalgic brands to further improve their branding marketing strategies by emphasizing nostalgia. In addition, although the aforementioned studies have demonstrated that nostalgia has a positive relationship with brand preference and purchase intention, the present study proposes a possible frame to understand the interaction between the three components (affective attitude, customer behavior, and cognitive attitude) and finds that purchase intention plays a critical role in the mechanism. Finally, the results of this research also reveal the potential value of the ABC model regarding the time-honored enterprises in China and extend the existing literature.

However, there are still certain limitations in our study. First, focusing on explaining the mechanism of customer attitude, this research does not further identify the elements of each component. Future research may further analyze the effect of each nostalgia element on brand cognition and purchase intention. Besides, our sample skewed to the country's southern regions, rather than representing the whole nation. And the study does not take individual differences such as age, sex, and lifestyle into account. Future research may investigate individual differences across diversified demographic to produce a better understanding of customer behavior.

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