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The Study of Nostalgia-Oriented Strategy Aimed at Millennials on The Example of The Lego Group

ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this paper was to examine the effect that nostalgia-oriented strategy has on the Millennials' perception of the LEGO brand.

Methodology: The methodology was based on past research in the field and used a modified version of a questionnaire developed by Pascal et al. (2002).

Findings: The research was conducted among 203 young respondents in the second quarter of 2019. During the realization of research, the indirect method of gathering information, using a survey technique was applied. The survey was conducted with the application of the techniques of electronic survey. The research methodology was based on past research in the field and a modified version of a questionnaire developed by Pascal et al. (2002) was used.

Value Added: This paper is the first to have found that companies operating in the toy industry are using nostalgia with aim of sustaining the brand loyalty.

Recommendations: The toy industry has become pretty much an unfair place to do business these days, as the biggest toymakers are involved in a fierce fight for the next generations of kids enamoured with the latest high-tech wonders. This paper demonstrates how LEGO®'s efforts reaped dividends as they have begun to address Millennials. It can be said, then, that the future of marketing in the following months would involve nostalgia as a major tool accelerating all the strategic endeavours in this clash of brands as the trend described hereinafter does not seem to slow down.

Key words: LEGO, Nostalgia, Brand Management, Toys, Millennials

JEL codes: M31, M37

Introduction

Marketing a brand is a daunting task in the realms of the 21st century's capitalism. An average customer is literally flooded with advertising material of all kinds. The challenge now is to deliver a message that will make one's company stand out from the crowd. And when they believed they can go no further; the advertisers have found a new approach – selling nostalgia.

Advertisers owe a great deal to Walter Benjamin's breakthrough writings demonstrating that "new ideas often come wrapped in old packaging" (Brown et al., 2003). In his perhaps most prominent and unfinished work "Arcades Project", Benjamin draws on four elements that are full of references to contemporary marketing. Together they represent the so-called "4As" which can help managers determine whether a company may be able to evoke nostalgic feelings (Brown et al., 2003). Since the marketers have

acknowledged that when they reconsider Aaker's brand equity model in the light of the aforementioned theories, nostalgia can serve as a powerful tool affecting the way a brand is perceived, thereby making it even more appealing to customers (Grębosz-Krawczyk & Pointet, 2018) – at least on the paper.

What we know about the use of nostalgia in marketing is largely based upon empirical studies from the 1990s that investigated how the attitudes about the past may affect a consumer behaviour (e.g. Belk, 1988; Stern, 1992; Holbrook, 1993). For example, exposure to nostalgic imagery in magazines has been shown to be related to the perception of a brand image (Havlena & Holak, 1996). Burger & Kapeliani (1997) reported that when used as stimuli in advertising, nostalgia can cause positive emotions towards such an advertisement. More recent research such as that conducted by Pascal et al. (2002) found that ad-evoked feelings generate more favourable perception of both the advertisement and the advertised brand. These and other studies in the field have been large enough to provide reliable estimates that consumers can filter out all the negative associations surrounding a particular brand when are exposed to maudlin memories (Rousseau & Venter, 2000).

Although the literature recognized the influence of nostalgia on consumer behaviour, research has yet to systematically investigate how a company may benefit from adopting such a strategy (Pascal et al., 2002). Are nostalgic companies generating more profits than non-nostalgic ones? It might be suggested that all of what has been thus said on the subject is mere a theoretical foundation without studying the actual examples from the world. Therefore, investigating nostalgia-oriented strategies in branding is a continuing concern within the field.

There is nowhere where the advertising industry's latest preoccupation with nostalgia is so evident as in the toy industry. However, the thrust of advertising in this field is no longer towards the traditional toys. Advertisers acknowledge that with the immense development of the technology and virtual entertainment, children are no longer interested in toys – at least not to such extent as the previous generations were. Millennials in this regard

are said to be the last generation that remembers the times of childhood unspoiled with computers and smartphones. Contrary to the Gen Z kids, they would do without the inauthentic digitalized world. Millennials on the other hand prefer tangible objects and real experience; they desire authenticity. Particularly it was Benjamin who wrote about "Aura" as the essence of brand – a powerful sense of "authenticity" (Brown et al., 2003). With this in mind, advertisers have come to realise that if Millennials can successfully buy a nostalgic toy, referring to the sweet times of their own childhood, then they can also influence their own children's choices, so that the children are again being targeted, but backwards.

No previous study has investigated the emergence of nostalgia in the toy industry, and yet there is an aberration – a Danish toy company that has attempted to apply such strategy. It is LEGO®, a company which had been on the verge of bankruptcy, that is now being conceded as the most powerful brand operating in the global toy market. In less than a decade, the company has managed to quadruple its financial results like never before (Robertson, 2013). After spending years pursuing a new innovative solution, LEGO®, righted its course; aided by a new management team and the basic strength of its legacy. Namely, the majority of its revenue still comes from the revived classic lines such as "LEGO® City". Hence, it could conceivably be hypothesised that it must have been the encapsulation of nostalgia that has led to this marvellous moment of triumph. All too often one may see a wave of new sets on the store shelves featuring attractive, yet somewhat familiar design of the older ones (Lubiński, 2019).

The present research explores, for the first time, the effect of adopting a nostalgia-oriented strategy aimed at Millennials on the example of the LEGO Group. The study was based on previous research on the field and used a modified version of a questionnaire developed by Pascal et al. (2002). However, the author recognized that some statements in the Pascal's scale would have confused the participants as they sounded alike. Therefore, he has chosen only three that were the most significant to the research. The

reader should also bear in mind that the study is based on the sample of 203 consumers representing the millennial generation, many of whom were Polish. To get more comprehensive insight on this phenomena, additional research involving other nationalities is necessary.

While a variety of definitions of the term “nostalgia” have been suggested in the field of marketing, this paper will use the definition first suggested by Holbrook and Schindler (1991) who saw it as “a preference towards objects that were more common when one was younger”.

Literature Review

Nostalgia – Understanding the notion

The term “nostalgia”, in a form we know from dictionaries, was coined by Hofer in 1688 (Hepper et al., 2012). Given the roots of Greek words *nostos* and *algos*, nostalgia was meant to describe an innate pain caused by passionate longing for a homeland (Anspach, 1934). However, none of these words conveyed much from its etymological ancestor, apart from emphasizing the act of reminiscing a vernacular place. *Nostimon*, as portrayed by Homer, had by no means been associated with sorrow and suffering. It had encapsulated an extraordinary human ability to draw strength and motivation from feelings surrounding the closest ones (Hepper et al., 2012). Particularly, this theme was well depicted in “The Odyssey” in which the protagonist evokes indelible memories of his beloved wife Penelope and the home island of Ithaca. He longs for “nostimon emar” – the day of return from his ten-years voyage. Linguistically speaking, it is undeniable that the concept of nostalgia is ambiguous as it provides incoherent definitions surrounding two opposite feelings (Higson, 2014). Unfortunately, many inept researchers do not pay attention to these tiny details as they usually confuse Hofer’s *nostalgos* with Homer’s *nostimon*. It could be the reason why nostalgia through history has gained as many supporters as opponents (Brown, 2018).

And some things that should not have been forgotten were lost. The poetic heritage of nostalgia imploded as a student of medicine, Johannes Hofer, threw caution to the wind with his medical explanation (Turner, 1987). *Nostalgos* was considered to be a sickness of the mind, or more specifically “a homesickness” (Boym, 2001). Though his dissertation lacked novelty values, as it had already been of common knowledge that exiles were susceptible to utter confusion in alien environment, it has leapt from hunch delivering a fully formed psychological phenomenon (Starobinski, 1966).

Perhaps it was the timespan that worked to his advantage. Baroque, which dates back to the 17th century, was a period particularly turbulent as Europe has seen several pre-romantic liberating movements (e.g. Catalonia 1640, Vienna 1683). Many soldiers were taken away from their homes with no idea of the unimaginable horrors they were letting themselves in for. Hofer, in this regard, was interested in obtaining concrete symptoms of homesickness. He conducted a clinical trial on Swiss army men who had become mercenaries. The most interesting finding was that longing for home deflated the human soul manifesting signs of aversion and retaliation (e.g. Starobinski, 1966; Turner, 1987; Boym, 2001). Had it not been for the fact that Hofer placed too much reliance on probing battle-scarred minds of the ex-soldiers, the researchers would have not felt discouraged from further investigations of nostalgia. And for the next three hundred years, the notion passed out of knowledge (Hepper et al., 2012).

But it was not until the 1970s when nostalgia has made its precipitated comeback. Confronted with economic downturns that had occurred in previous decades (e.g. 1907, 1929), millions of skilled labourers have been either made redundant or lost the means to live as hundreds of banks had collapsed. Those who had believed they would have made money through the margin loans, have been taken for a ride (Bierman, Jr, 2013). It was inevitable, therefore, that these disappointed people, who were imposed to adapt to humble life, would reminisce the sweet times of innocence and stability (Brown et al., 2003). Following Zwingmann (1959), the nostalgic wave of the

70s, seen as yearning for "the good old days", was an inner resistance to impending changes (Davis, 1977). This marked shift in perception of nostalgia formed the basis of a ground-breaking book by Fred Davis (1979). Davis' argument here is that taking a walk down memory lane is evident during unstable economic periods. As the people's conservative (hereby meaning "established") sense of identity is being violated by social affronts, nostalgia offers a preservation of one's world order (Davis, 1977; 1979).

So, who has got it right, Hofer or the Davis? It is interesting to note that Hofer's definition of nostalgia has by no means vanished, since there is a tiny detail of the notion that has remained intact. This is the past; desirable in itself (Davis, 1977). In other words, today's "longing for homeland" may be reinterpreted as a throwback to an idealised, almost utopian, version of one's past (e.g. Davis, 1979; Stern, 1992; Higson, 2014). An act of imaginative escape from the unsatisfactory present, yet one in which the projected past correlates with the present (e.g. Davis, 1979; Boym, 2001; Higson, 2014). In these circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that nostimon no longer refers to "homecoming" in modern Greek. Today, it is used to describe something pleasurable (Matei, 2017).

Nostalgia in Brand Management

The major role of advertising in marketing has been to communicate a message concerning a product or service to potential consumers. However, with a mature economy and, consequently, high levels of competitive intensity in most merchandise areas, advertisers are forced to deliver messages that must stand out from the crowd in the postmodern marketplace (Reisenwitz et al., 2004). At the same time, they need to grab a customer's attention. Aggressive advertising is a problem that has grown worse in recent years and will probably continue to grow (Brown, 2018). It is no surprise then that one of the successful techniques to cast a spell on a consumer is nostalgia. There is an increasing number of companies that are using nostalgia to po-

sition their products in the marketplace in order to differentiate themselves from the competitors, thereby creating emotional attachment to brands and influencing preferences for brands by connecting people to previous experiences (e.g. Stern, 1992; Kessous & Roux, 2008).

In modern terms, product managers are banking on nostalgia to rejuvenate products, but they may also succeed in the introduction of the new products (Reisenwitz et al., 2004). Recent research has reported that for a nostalgic brand a tension between past and present and even the future also defines brand meanings (Brown et al., 2003). That is, recreated old products seem different than they had been to address a core paradox at the heart of brand management. However, the basic rule for launching the nostalgic brand is a strong brand heritage. For a company to revive a product it is necessary to remain true to its developed brand values and achievements of the past. In order to succeed, the cultural element evoking maudlin memories should be included to the top quality and innovative solutions. Therefore, a conclusion may be drawn that brand's positioning should be based on its founding legacy and identity (Grębosz-Krawczyk & Pointet, 2018).

A question has been raised which certain types of products are likely to be intertwined with nostalgia advertising effects thereby increasing the effectiveness of marketing communication. Although some significant contributions have been made to the current literature addressing this problem, none of them has managed to hint a satisfactory answer (Reisenwitz et al., 2004).

The empirical findings in Kessous' & Reoux's qualitative research (2004) have attempted to find a scientific understanding of consumers' proneness to nostalgic brands. Their objective thereof was to identify the invariants of nostalgic meanings that structure the general reception of the brand. It is interesting to note that the obtained results have structured four moments that might trigger nostalgic feelings:

- 1) Everyday past;
- 2) Tradition;
- 3) Uniqueness;

4) Transition.

It is believed that the interest for a company is to associate its brand or product with one or more of the following nostalgic moments. This appears to establish four possible marketing strategies rooted in nostalgic connections, thus creating a genuine attachment to a product and/or a brand.

The current state of knowledge shows that nostalgia might be a difficult reaction for marketing specialists to guess. For instance, the inextricable combination of positive and negative feelings means that the profound influence of a nostalgic episode may be unclear (Lambert-Pandraud & Laurent, 2010). Whereas the feelings of tenderness and elation may encourage positive attitudes towards a message and a product, the sense of loss may encourage unfavourable evaluations due to adverse associations and negative mood effects.

Hypotheses

Hypotheses were formed hereunder amid the effect that nostalgia-oriented strategy is believed to have on the Millennials' perception of the LEGO® brand. Considering the fact this is the first study in the field to address the use of nostalgia in the toy industry, additional investigations of the subject will be indispensable.

Because the notion of nostalgia has been reconceptualised from a disease of the mind (Hofer) into some sort of "homesickness" (Jameson), yet one in which an individual is longing for sometimes an idealised past time period that once was (or not), the nostalgic experience has, therefore, been acknowledged as a source of "enormous pleasure" (Brown, 2018). Accordingly, LEGO® had restructured its entire management board and has adopted a completely new strategy, referred to as "the backward innovation" (Robertson, 2013). Since Jørgen Knudstorp has reigned the Danish company, it is becoming evident that throughout the years consumers have experienced a massive awash of revived versions of their beloved, most desired brick sets (Lubiński, 2019). It is possible, therefore, that:

- H₁: "LEGO BRICKS HELP EVOKE PLEASANT MEMORIES".

Age has been thus far disputable to be regarded as a determinant influencing consumer's propensity towards nostalgia. The previous study such as that conducted by Holak & Havlena (1992) hypothesised that those are the older people (hereby meaning "Baby Boomers" and "Generation X") that are reminiscing the past more often than the younger ones, and can be hence targeted by the advertisers. But if this is the case, then why recent articles as the one featured in "Forbes" (Friedman, 2016) puts an argument on "why Millennials are the most nostalgic generation"? Moreover, the author of this article has further observed the 2015 boom of nostalgia-based products, revivals and recreations is targeted largely to Millennials. As stated in the introduction, if the Millennials can successfully buy a nostalgic toy, referring to the sweet times of their own childhood, then they can also influence their own children's choices, so that the children are again being targeted, hence:

- H₂: "LEGO® IS A BRAND IN WHICH MILLENNIALS EXPRESS NOSTALGIC FEELINGS".

As a brand, LEGO® represents a timeless adventure for children showing them how the ordinary becomes extraordinary. In certain respects, for many LEGO® consumers, the sense of nostalgia they derive from the brand also derives from the personal attachment to the brand since childhood. It could be hypothesised that finding an old box with the familiar interlocking bricks in the attic may bring back pleasant memories from the past immediately. As Brown et al. (2003) have already suggested, it is as if the brand has some unnatural abilities to distort the reality, thereby, taking consumers back in time. It is possible, therefore, that...

- H₃: "LEGO® EVOKES MEMORIES OF THE YEARS GONE".

In recent years, a few authors have begun to notice a relationship between nostalgia and a burning desire to possess. Preliminary work on "the fire of desire" was undertaken by Russel Belk (2003). He defines desire as the motivating force behind contemporary consumption. Accordingly, consumers see their desire as a passionate emotion differing much from simple

fulfilling the wants and needs. I have noted that multiple revivals and recreations of the once-popular LEGO® sets is not just a matter of coincidence. If there was a particular set one wanted so badly yet he has never owned it, he would eventually buy it in the event of its possible revival to fulfil an inner child's desire. Hence, it could conceivably be hypothesized that:

- H_4 : "AN UNFULFILLED DESIRE IN CHILDHOOD INFLUENCES CONSUMER TO BUY A REVIVED OR RECREATED LEGO® SET".

Research Methodology

Overview

This study represents a conceptual replication of Pascal et. al (2002), determining whether nostalgia affects the way consumers perceive a brand. Unlike the original study, which used a ten-item nostalgia scale, the present study will feature only three items that were the most significant to the research. The author recognized that some statements in the Pascal's scale would have confused the participants as they sounded alike in Polish language. A survey instrument was utilized in this study, because it could be distributed across a broad sample and be self-administered.

The study involved a total number of two hundred and three individuals (143 males and 60 females). Males (70% of the sample) were agreeably disposed to accept the invitation to participate in the research when told that it addresses LEGO bricks. The sample was obtained from an online survey created with "Google Forms", and the study was conducted via the Internet in a period from May until the beginning of June 2019. Due to the fact that an average length of an education program in Poland is 3 years, the age categories were as follows: 18–21, 22–25, and over 26. By dividing the subjects in such manner, it was possible to obtain a reasonably comprehensive image of the investigated generation. It was the authors' intention to remain



the participants born after the year of 2000 (hereby seen as "Gen Z"). The idea was to see if the nostalgic trend would affect the next generations. Data were analysed using the statistical software SPSS.

Research Results

Hypothesis 1 was expressed in Question number 10 of the survey, based on a five-point agree/disagree Likert scale. The overall response to this question was very positive. As Table 1. shows, an overwhelming majority of the male respondents (119) have agreed that LEGO® bricks indeed help evoke pleasant memories. Further analysis demonstrated that males of the third age bracket in particular hold this view. Out of 75 males aged 26 and older who participated in this study, 63 of them strongly agreed to the statement (at approximately 84%). Similarly, female respondents of exactly the same age group appear to feel the same. For instance, they were the very first generation in Poland to own the Danish bricks. Thus, first LEGO® products entered the Polish market in late 1990s just after the fall of communism. The most striking result to emerge from the data is that none of the respondents between the ages of 18 to 21 have disagreed nor have been undecided. This is rather an interesting outcome. It could be the case that unlike their older colleagues they have been actually growing up together with the already well-known brand, thereby establishing an emotional connection and brand loyalty through the next years to come.

Table 1. Answers frequency report to Q10 “Do you agree that LEGO® bricks help evoke pleasant memories?”

		Female			Male		
		2. Age			2. Age		
		18–21	22–25	26 and older	18-21	22–25	26 and older
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Q10	Strongly agree	6	8	25	40	16	63
	Agree	1	5	8	2	7	9
	Undecided	0	4	1	0	2	1
	Disagree	0	1	1	0	0	2
	Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	1	0

Source: own elaboration.

Hypothesis 2 was expressed in Question number 13 of the survey, again based on a five-point agree/disagree Likert scale. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they feel LEGO® is a brand to which Millennials express nostalgic feelings. As can be seen from the Table 2., almost two-thirds of the participants aged 26 and older (63%) strongly supported this view. The barrage of the nostalgia-induced products have caused a considerable increase in sales. A significant amount of Star Wars and Jurassic Park fan base must have contributed to these astonishing results. Therefore, one would incline a cast of nostalgic glances while wandering through toy stores and seeing the most awe-inspiring sets in the world (meaning the largest, yet the most expensive LEGO® sets they will probably never have). The participants, both males and females, demonstrated on a whole a positive relationship between nostalgia and The LEGO Group. Only 3 male individuals expressed disagreement with this concept (which constitutes approximately 0,015% of the all respondents).

Table 2. Answers frequency report to Q13 "Would you agree that LEGO® is a brand in which we express nostalgic feelings?"

		Female			Male		
		2. Age			2. Age		
		18–21	22–25	26 and older	18-21	22–25	26 and older
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Q13	Strongly agree	4	5	23	29	14	47
	Agree	2	9	9	12	9	23
	Undecided	1	4	3	0	2	3
	Disagree	0	0	0	0	1	2

Source: own elaboration.

Hypothesis 3 was covered in Question number 18 of the survey, following the suit of the previous ones based on a five-point agree/disagree Likert scale. This section of the questionnaire required respondents to consider whether the products branded under the LEGO® name carry the Elysian vision of longing for an idealized past. It is usually seen as the generations age. An old dusty box containing some first Bionicle cans, or a used model of the A-Wing Fighter ("Star Wars") missing some turrets and parts, would unleash memories of the carefree times of childhood. From the data in Table 3., it is apparent that respondents respectively support my view. No difference greater than for H₁ and H₂ was observed. Only trace amounts of disagreement were detected among females aged 22–25. The single most striking observation to emerge from the data comparison was no significant difference in answers among the males from the first age group, thereby supporting the aforementioned thoughts regarding the overdue presence of the LEGO® brand in Poland.

Table 3. Answers frequency report to Q18 "Would you agree that the LEGO® brand evokes memories of the years gone?"

		Female			Male		
		2. Age			2. Age		
		18–21	22–25	26 and older	18-21	22–25	26 and older
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Q18	Strongly agree	5	7	24	31	14	56
	Agree	2	8	9	9	10	17
	Undecided	0	0	2	2	2	0
	Disagree	0	1	0	0	0	2
	Strongly disagree	0	2	0	0	0	0

Source: own elaboration.

Hypothesis 4 was hinted in questions 6, 7, 8 and 9 based on Dichotomous Questions. The purpose of this investigation was to analyse the relationship between nostalgia and Belk's "the fire of desire" (Belk et al., 2003). With this purpose in mind, the respondents were asked in Question 6 if there is a LEGO set they wanted so badly, yet they have never owned it. It is believed that such desire for an object (here a LEGO® set), once exposed, will anchor in the consumer's mind until it is fulfilled. Therefore, there is every hope to suggest that the concept of "compulsive consumption" is associated with the intense and powerful emotion of nostalgia. The results, as shown in Table 4., indicate that males in general have had such burning desires.

Accordingly, Question 7 of the survey required respondents to specify which set in particular was an object of their desire. Since it was not an obligatory question to answer, the response rate was 59%. The most surprising aspect of the data is in the answers of females. For example, one interviewee wrote that she has always wanted to get "the legendary Millennium Falcon" for a present. Another interviewee mentioned the NASA Space Shuttle from the LEGO® Creator Expert series. Other responses included: LEGO® Harry

Potter’s Chamber of Secrets, LEGO® City’s Police Station or even a Crane! Surprising as it may seem, girls, who participated in the research usually desired sets one would consider as addressed to boys.

Table 4. Answers frequency report to Q6 “Is there a LEGO® set you wanted so badly, yet you have never owned it?”

		Female			Male		
		2. Age			2. Age		
		18–21	22–25	26 and older	18-21	22–25	26 and older
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Q6	Yes	5	4	17	36	18	64
	No	2	14	18	6	8	11

Source: own elaboration.

Table 5. Answers frequency report to Q8 “Supposing that exactly the same set you had wanted is available in the stores once more in a completely new design. Would you consider buying it?”

		Female			Male		
		2. Age			2. Age		
		18–21	22–25	26 and older	18-21	22–25	26 and older
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Q8	Yes	5	8	23	33	17	60
	No	2	9	8	9	9	14

Source: own elaboration.

The idea behind Question 8 was to see how strong this fire of desire is burning in the young hearts of the respondents. LEGO® is usually reviving or recreating the most successful sets in the company’s history. One of countless examples is perhaps the iconic Star Wars’ spaceship “Millennium Falcon” which was re-released 9 times* (*the latest one refers to the con-

cluding instalment in the Disney's trilogy, "The Rise of Skywalker"). Now, the question is would they eventually buy such set if it came out in a completely new design. These results are consistent with those of the previous questions and hence, suggest that 71,21% of the respondents would decide to buy their dreamed set. Such hypothetical question partially deals with an unconscious longing for a material fulfilment. Therefore, the desire becomes so deeply enrooted, so that the respondents provided not only a full product name of the LEGO® set, but also they have specified the full catalogue's ID number (usually five to six digits), albeit they were not asked to write it.

Table 6. Answers frequency report to Q9 "If you have answered "yes", which of the undermentioned impulses would have the biggest influence on your purchase decision?"

		Female			Male		
		2. Age			2. Age		
		18–21	22–25	26 and older	18-21	22–25	26 and older
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Q10	Fulfilling an inner child's desire	3	6	16	23	16	50
	Attractive price	2	2	7	12	3	13

Source: own elaboration.

Finally, the next question (Q9) asked the respondents which of the two impulses would have the biggest influence on the purchase decision declared the question earlier (Q8). Strong evidence of fulfilling an inner child's desire was found in the 74,5% of the whole answers. One more time those who gave such answer in particular were males. Interestingly, there were also differences in the ratios among women. The results of this study show the support for the view indicated by Stern (1992). Females have different stimuli regarding nostalgia. It is not just a matter of a discounted price or fulfilling a desire, hence the results demonstrate a degree hesitation. On the other hand, an

unanticipated finding was found in the male’s responses. Buying a LEGO® set in order to fulfil the childhood’s dream may be considered as the Western trend of so-called “self-gifts”. Such purchases are defined as “special” and sometimes they may involve reckless feelings (spend-thrifting), so that consumers moralize their consumption decisions in order to justify them.

Respondents were also asked to choose 3 values that come to mind when asked about LEGO®. The results, as illustrated hereunder, were supposed to illustrate that the Danish brick maker maintains its traditional brand image, the corporate DNA, based on “Childs Promise” (Robertson, 2013). Thus, the company’s brand mission to inspire and develop the creative builders of tomorrow has remained largely intact. Furthermore, a detailed examination of nostalgia by Kessous & Roux (2008) showed that for a brand to be nostalgic it must trigger four elements: everyday past, tradition, uniqueness and transition.

Table 7. Answers frequency report to Q5 “What values come to mind when asked about LEGO? You may choose up to 3 answers”

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
	Uniqueness	50	7,6%	24,4%
	Learning	41	6,2%	20,0%
	Tradition	48	7,3%	23,4%
	Imagination	132	20,0%	64,4%
	Childhood	136	20,6%	66,3%
	Play	126	19,1%	61,5%
	Quality	127	19,2%	62,0%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Source: own elaboration.

In response to Question 5, most of those surveyed indicated that “Childhood” (20,6%), “Imagination” (20%) and “Quality” (19,2%) are the top three values that come to mind when asked about The LEGO Group. Continuing in this vein, childhood represents everyday past, imagination is linked to transition and quality can be associated with both the uniqueness and tradition (which has received only 7,3%).

It can be assumed then, that LEGO® remains true to its brand identity. The company’s legendary values of child’s play and creativity place LEGO® in an unmatched position within the toy industry. It is consistent with Brown’s observations already explained earlier, that the most fascinating thing about the post-modern nostalgia is the desire for authenticity (Brown et al., 2003).

Conclusions

As is common with any research on consumer behaviour, the findings reported hereinabove are subject to certain important limitations and caveats that need to be considered for further investigations. Perhaps the most notable source of weakness of the presented study is that it was based on the sample of 203 consumers purportedly representing the millennial generation, many of which were Polish. To get more comprehensive insight on this phenomena, additional research involving other nationalities and other toy brands is, therefore, as necessary as justifiable.

Because of the method used for indicating consumers’ proneness towards a nostalgic brand (basing on the scale developed by Pascal et al., 2002), the author was limited in the kind of analysis he could make. Furthermore, due to the linguistic ambiguity resulting from the translation of the statements into Polish, for they did sound alike, the author has decided to focus on only the three that were the most significant to the research.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect that nostalgia-oriented strategy has on the Millennials’ perception of the LEGO brand. Before this study, evidence of nostalgia in the toy industry, albeit “toys” had been

identified as the second most purchased “nostalgic product” (Sierra & McQuitty, 2007), has been omitted.

Some conclusions may be drawn from this study:

- Firstly, LEGO® does help evoke pleasant memories (H1 confirmed). That is, those consumers with a higher propensity to be nostalgic will associate the brand with its own childhood, which is consistent with Holbrook & Schindler’s (1991) definition of nostalgia who saw it as “a time period when one was younger”.
- Secondly, LEGO® is a brand in which millennials express nostalgic feelings (H2 confirmed). That is, when we consider the sample of 203 individuals within these three age categories, altogether depicting an image of the millennial generation, and concede the overall response to the question attached, a conclusion may be drawn that nostalgia-oriented strategy has an overwhelming influence on Millennials. This, in turn, contradicts the general view whereby those were the oldest who inclined feelings associated with past more often than the youngest (e.g. Havlena & Holak, 1991; Stern, 1992).
- Thirdly, LEGO® does evoke memories of the years gone (H3 confirmed). In other words, the sense of nostalgia consumers derive from the brand also derives from the personal attachment to the brand since childhood. The author’s view was that an old dusty box containing some first Bionicle cans, or a used model of the A-Wing Fighter (“Star Wars”) missing some turrets and parts, would unleash memories of the carefree times of childhood (Lubiński, 2019).
- Lastly, LEGO® recreates old sets to target those consumers who could not afford one at some point in the past (H4 confirmed). Given the strengths of recent pop culture (e.g. “Star Wars”, “The Avengers”, “Jurassic Park”) and the contemporary consumerism, advertisers are in the enviable position of being able to literally sell people the past. Because these sets contain elements of old (the idea) and new (the design), they are brand new, old-fashioned offerings.

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