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How young consumers use retro brands and retro products to mediate and express discontent towards the present

- **A Qualitative Study describing Young Consumers' Sense making of Retro Consumption**

Abstract

This thesis investigates how young consumers make sense of their retro consumption. We argue that young consumers' view of contemporary society is an underlying cause for their retro consumption. We explore and illustrate how young consumers make sense of retro consumption through in-depth interviews with young consumers in the respondents' home to ensure a natural setting. Our research contributes to theory by combining nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity to explain how young consumers make sense of their retro consumption. Our findings suggest that young consumers make sense of retro consumption by using retro brands and retro aesthetics to mediate and express discontent towards contemporary society. Young consumers do this by consuming retro brands and products since they are considered as authentic, credible and expressive, to take distance to what is perceived as modern and fake. We argue that young consumers express discontent towards contemporary society by being enchanted by time and nature, seeking long lasting quality and being nostalgic about a romanticized past.

Key words: Retrofication, retro brands, retro products, nostalgia, enchantment, authenticity

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1.0 Introduction

The consumption of retro products in the 21st century gains a lot of attention by marketing researchers and it is a billion-dollar industry. Selling the past has indeed become a useful strategy among marketers and the phenomena of retro consumption is widely spread in the landscape of marketing. Retro is to be experienced in many different product categories across different markets (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003; Brunk, Giesler & Hartmann, 2016, Brown, 2018). Marketers have commercialized the idea of the past and use brands as a bridge to a prior historical period. There are various explanations to why consumers buy retro products. Some say that nostalgia is important (Brown, 1999; Brown, 2018; Reynolds, 2011; Higson, 2014; Lowenthal, 2015; Routledge, 2016), other say authenticity (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003; Jense, 2004; Leigh, Peters & Shelton, 2006; Gilmore & Pine, 2007) and on the other hand some say enchantment is important (Benjamin, 1999; Ritzer, 2004; Ritzer, 2005; Ritzer, 2010; Hartmann & Ostberg, 2013).

However, we still do not know much about how young consumers (age 20-29) make sense of consuming retro brands and retro products. Earlier literature has discussed the importance of authenticity for young consumers, which is used as a tool in constructing identities through consumer behavior (Jense, 2004). Others argue that consumption of retro brands can also be seen as identity building by providing historical value to identify with (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli and Mueller, 2012). As Hemetsberger et.al (2012) state, nostalgia seems to be a counterintuitive explanation for retro brand consumption among young consumers with no experience of the original counterpart. As young consumers are strongly determined by a search for identity and building personal values (Adamson, Hartman & Lyxell, 1999), a study on how young consumers make sense of retro consumption might provide another explanation to young consumers' liking of retro brands and products.

1.1 Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and illustrate how young consumers make sense of retro consumption through the lens of nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity. We undertake this task by drawing on main theoretical areas in the research field of retro marketing, that is enchantment, authenticity and nostalgia. Furthermore, we analyze 10 in-depth interviews to explain how young consumers make sense of their retro consumption. To spare you the thought of what is considered as young consumers, we focus on the age span of 20-29 years old consumers, which we will discuss later on in the method.

So, how do young consumers make sense of their retro consumption?

This thesis is structured as follows. In the next section we will introduce the notions of retro branding and retrofication, but also provide an explanation for why marketers use retrofication and retro branding. Thereafter, we introduce our theoretical framework, which is built on the most influenced research fields in retro marketing, that is nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity. Moreover, we will present our methodology and discuss our data collection process, but also discuss how we interpreted the data. Furthermore, we will discuss and provide an explanation for the gathered material, which will be followed by a concluding discussion with marketing implications and future research propositions.

1.2 Understanding Retro

What is retro branding and retrofication? Retro branding is the revival or re-launch of product and service brands from a prior historical period, usually with updated features such as performance and functioning (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003; Kral, 2012). Similarly, Fons Van Dyck (2014) describes retro brands as mix of old-fashion design with modern functionality. Marketers usually take successful old brands, updating them, and re-launching the products with hope of creating consumer nostalgia (Kardes, Cronley & Cline, 2011) Therefore, they could be viewed as old-fashioned offerings (Brown, et.al, 2003) However, it is important to distinct retro brands from the retro phenomena, which is more or less that we have a fetish for retro.

In order to understand the retro consumption, it is necessary to juxtapose ‘new and old’ and ‘special and ordinary’. Drawing on the notion of discourse, the contemporary marketing discourse among consumers is that new is good and we tend to dislike the old. For example, we want the new iPhone and we tend to dislike the old iPhone. However, old is also good, especially the really old, such as old cars for example. Consequently, we do not always want the latest, which is obviously paradoxical in relation to the fact that we tend to dislike the old. For example, consumers buy vinyl records despite the fact we have Spotify. Similarly, calligraphy has recently gained popularity even though we have computers as a writing tool. Moreover, we do like special things and we tend to not like the ordinary, the ordinary is bad. As a result, marketers can offer consumers old stuff that is new, which becomes a clever strategy of making something that is special, unique, old and new, all at the same time.

Why retro branding? The use of retro branding in the landscape of marketing has turned out to be a short-cut strategy for marketers to enter the mind of the consumer, to what they already know. Usually, the consumer already knows and is familiar with the brand or the product. Therefore,

marketers can sell the past and use brands as a commercialized representation of the past. Since consumers have a desire for an unbridgeable gap between the present and the past, it is the marketers job to cultivate this unattainable desire, and to open consumer to invest emotionally into mass-produced products (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003). This means that marketers are not only trying to bridge a gap between the present and the past, they also have to re-enchant the consumer and bring something unique and authentic. In other words, marketers have to make the ordinary special by offering myths, magic and wonders, but also to convince the consumer that it is the real deal. Through brands we are rediscovering the past, another era, for example Nintendo recently re-launched the old video game console 'NES' to allow the consumers to revisit Nintendo's original system. Other interesting example includes the fact that relatively new brands use retro marketing to appeal to consumers, as in the case of Spotify's advertisement of 'The NeverEnding 80s', which used the soundtrack and front figures from the 80's hit movie 'The NeverEnding Story'.

2.0 Literature Review

Earlier research by Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli and Mueller (2012) address the question why young consumers favor retro brands although they had no prior consumption experience with the original counterpart. They show us that young consumers perceive retro brands as special possessions which help them to cope with ambiguities in their search for identity. Although nostalgia seem to be quite counterintuitive to explain why young consumers favor retro brands although they had no prior consumption experience with the original counterpart, Hemetsberger et.al (2012) show us that retro brands are perceived as nostalgic and authentic objects reflecting continuity and discontinuity. However, they also find that young consumers use retro brands as fashion icons to aspire for social acceptance and non-conformism. This means that retro brands help young consumers in their search for individual identity and belongingness.

Authenticity can be a powerful force in selling goods. Heike Jenss (2004) discuss retro styles and the construction of authenticity in youth culture. Jenss (2004) means that authenticity is important for young consumers to construct identity through consumption, and retro brands are used as certificate of being authentic. Furthermore, the author draws on the example of the famous brand Adidas, which actively promotes authenticity in its product lines. Instead of finding an authentic self, Jenss (2004) suggest that young consumers work on producing an authentic self by consuming retro-style and we need to understand how authenticity is invested with meaning in different social and cultural contexts.

Retro-style communication can create a fantasy universe, which bring an atmosphere and a refreshing positive effect. Grebosz and Pointet (2015) explore the implementation of retro-style into global brand

communication towards young consumers. Furthermore, they show us that young consumers assessed retro-ads as stylish and they have a desire for something classy, surprising and original. In addition, the researchers stated that young consumers do not perceive retro-ads as boring and conventional, instead, retro aesthetics which evoke the past make young consumers feel emotional. Moreover, they also concluded that young consumers view retro style as an authentic differentiator and retro-ads can re-enchant disenchanted young consumers. Similarly, Güzel and Okan (2016) use a survey method to examine the effectiveness of nostalgia advertisement. Their findings suggest, similar to Grebosz and Pointet (2015), that nostalgia ads are effective in triggering young consumers' emotions, rather than directing consumers' behavior.

3.0 Theoretical framework

In the follow section we will describe our main theoretical framework. Since our purpose is to explore and illustrate how young consumers make sense of their retro consumption, we have to define sense making and we interpret the meaning as Weick (1993, p.635) argued, "The basic idea of sense making is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs". This means that we undertake this task by drawing on main theoretical areas in the research field of retro marketing, that is nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity, to explain how consumers make sense of their retro consumption. We use these three concepts as a foundation for our theoretical framework. There are certainly other important concepts that are relevant in retro marketing. However, we argue that these three are prominent and will help us make sense of young consumers' retro consumption.

3.1 Nostalgia

Nostalgia has been discussed frequently in the field of retro marketing and prominent scholars have tried to explain the essence of nostalgia. In the simplest form, nostalgia is a kind of longing for the past, a reminder of "the good old days" (Brown 1999, 2001). However, the contemporary research of nostalgia states that it can take many different forms and have different meanings. So, there is much more to it than just a reminisce of the past. A quote from Pickering & Keightley (2006; 919) testify the different opinions in the field of nostalgia; "*Nostalgia is certainly a response to the experience of loss endemic in modernity and late modernity, but the authors argue that it has numerous manifestations and cannot be reduced to a singular or absolute definition*". We will mainly focus on Davis' (1979) work on nostalgia, but also with some ideas from other scholars. We find that Davis' (1979) work is frequently used by other scholars and has made significant contributions to the field of nostalgia. Since Davis work on nostalgia is a cornerstone in the subject, we will use this framework in order to

achieve the purpose with this paper. However, it is important to note that his ideas are not completely unified, there are those scholars and academics that has opposite views on nostalgia.

In the same way that nostalgia is not clearly defined in the field of marketing, scholars and academics are not settled whether nostalgia is something positive or negative. Pickering & Keightley (2006) problematize this and argues that it can both be negative and positive and does not has to only be the one or other. For example, it can be a nice thing to get nostalgic over positive experiences from past times. It can be a reminder of nice things that one has experienced. But nostalgia can also be seen as something negative, a sense of times that is now lost and will never come again.

The word nostalgia originates from the Greek words “natos” and “algia” which together can be translated as “*a painful yearning to return home*”. The word “nostalgia” was first coined in the 17th century by a Swiss doctor named Johannes Hofer (Davis, 1977; Boym, 2001). Nostalgia was long seen as a disease, in some cases even deadly, and it was not until the second half of the 20th century that it was more seen as a melancholic emotion rather than a disease.

Davis (1979) distinct different forms of nostalgia, personal, collective and mediated. Personal nostalgia is a form of reminisce of the good old days when one was younger. It is on a personal level and draws from one's own memories. Hemetsberger et.al (2012) address the obvious paradox that young consumers can be nostalgic over retro brands and products which original counterpart they have not experienced themselves. Hemetsberger et.al (2012) argues that young consumers can feel nostalgic through stories and narratives experienced from their childhood. For example, if you have heard stories of certain products or seen a specific brand when little, then you can be nostalgic towards these products. You have not consumed the products or brands but can be nostalgic towards them anyway (Hemetsberger et.al. 2012). So, it is a different kind of personal nostalgia in a sense. It is not a longing for one's childhood but rather memories from this period that give a familiarity effect to the retro product or brand.

In contrast to personal nostalgia, collective/communal nostalgia, is on a larger scale and can affect a whole population and society. Collective/communal nostalgia is prominent in times of turmoil and turbulence (Davis 1977; Hartman et.al 2017). Davis (1977) states that the nostalgia wave of the 1970's in USA was a result of the turmoil and chaos of the 1960's. Hartman et.al (2017) further strengthen this by arguing that many citizens of East Germany felt nostalgic after the wall was demolished in 1990. It was turbulence in society which made people remember a more stable time. Furthermore, Hemetsberger et.al (2012) argues that communal nostalgia and retro brands goes hand in hand and can give consumers a sense of stability and be an opposite of stressful times in contemporary society.

Mediated nostalgia is a form of nostalgia that is created from the media (Davis 1979; Pickering & Keightley, 2006). Through media, consumers get exposed to past event that can create nostalgic feelings. Take for example historic periods such as the Viking era or the wild west, consumers can feel somewhat nostalgic towards these periods although they were not alive back then. Though Davis ideas on mediated nostalgia have almost have 40 years to it, it is still relevant. Sure, the media platforms has changed from mainly TV and billboards to social media and other internet medias. Though Davis (1979) is one of the more prominent scholars on nostalgia, it is valuable to note that there are critics of his work. For example, Pickering & Keightley (2006) argues that Davis (1979) does not explain *how* media creates nostalgic emotions to the audience but solely contributes it to pre-existing psychological frames.

Boym (2001; 13) describes modern nostalgia somewhat poetically as “*Modern nostalgia is a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values; it could be a secular expression of a spiritual longing, a nostalgia for an absolute, a home that is both physical and spiritual, the edenic unity of time and space before entry into history*”. This description blurs the border of enchantment and nostalgia and show that they are closely related. Kitson & McHugh (2014) further discuss the relationship between enchantment and nostalgia, they argue that nostalgia is a form enchantment. More specifically, Kitson & McHugh (2014) argues that nostalgia is enchantment of past times.

As laid forward, nostalgia can take many forms and be viewed from different perspectives. However, one common thing most of them have is that when people feel nostalgic over the past, they often romanticize it and believe it was better than was really the case (Davis, 1977; Brown et.al, 2003). In our analysis we interpret nostalgia specifically from the Davis (1979) point of view with personal, collective and mediated nostalgia. This means that we depict the empirical data through Davis (1979) explanation of nostalgia. The underlying reason why we use nostalgia in our theoretical framework is because it is one of the most researched areas in retro marketing, therefore nostalgia might contribute to explain how young consumers make sense of their retro consumption.

3.2 Enchantment

Enchantment is also a relevant concept in *retro marketing* although we find that it is not discussed to the same extent as nostalgia. Enchantment is a sort of mystification and wow-feeling. Furthermore, enchantment is a sense of wonder and being amazed by something (Ostergaard, Fitchett & Jantzen, 2013). For example, imagine the time when the first car was introduced, certainly people were amazed

by this invention that used a motor for power instead of a horse. Disenchantment is the opposite experience of enchantment. Often when innovative products have been around for a while the wow-feeling fades away and if everyone has the product it can lead to disenchantment. Then there is nothing special or mystical with the product anymore (Ostergaard et.al 2013). However, after a time the product may be seen as something special again, it becomes a retro product which once again is enchanting.

One cornerstone in the discourse of enchantment is the work of George Ritzer. Specifically, the book “Enchanting a disenchanted world” has provided lot of insights of the subject. Ritzer (2005) states that the rationalization of the world leads to disenchantment. Many products and services is getting more and more standardized which makes the enchanting experience weaker. Take the iPhone for example, when first released, it was seen as a revolutionary product, but since then the enchanting experience has faded, it has become more of a commodity. As consumers, we want to be enchanted by the products and services we buy. We do not want to lose the mystical feeling and wow-feeling of enchantment (Ostergaard et.al 2013). So, companies try to satisfy this strive of enchantment but at the same time rationalize and standardize as much as possible. Therefore, the enchanting experience is short lived (Hartman & Ostberg, 2013). Ritzer (2004) calls this the “McDonaldization” of society. McDonald is a company that early on worked hard with rationalize and standardize their restaurants. This proved to be a successful strategy that give customers a kind of guarantee of what to expect when visiting a McDonald. There are no surprises, all restaurants are more or less the same. However, it also makes it disenchanted in the way that there is nothing special or unique.

The work of German philosopher and cultural theorist, Walter Benjamin (1999), also discuss how something that once was enchanted can become disenchanted with time. Although he does not explicitly name it “enchantment”, he touches on the same meanings. In his unfinished work, “the arcades project”, he studies arcades in France and describes that people have lost their sense of wonder of the arcades. According to Benjamin (1999), the arcades were once this amazing and lively place but lost its charm over time.

The disenchantment of the world has made consumers look for ways to be enchanted once more, or rather re-enchanted, as Ritzer (2005) calls it. Consumers look for things that will amaze them again and find original products which is not rationalized to a point where there is nothing unique or special to it. Hartman and Ostberg (2013) argues that authenticity can work as way for retro products and brands to re-enchant themselves. It can be a way to lift the brand or product from being disenchanted. Certainly this is not case of all products and brands but Hartman and Ostberg (2013) show how the guitar brand “Hagström” work with authenticity to create re-enchantment.

In this text, we will interpret the notion of enchantment and disenchant as described above. In the analysis, it will help us to analyze the empirical material and pay attention to and to identify explanations of excitement, wow-feeling or a general sense of amazement. Similarly, it will also help us to identify signs of disenchantment, feelings expressed with disappointment and negative feelings. In order to understand how young consumers make sense of their retro consumption, we argue that it is necessary to understand the juxtapositioning of enchantment and disenchantment. This means that it is important to understand why the consumer gets enchanted and disenchanted, because it might reveal the underlying cause to their consumer behavior.

3.3 Authenticity

Another important aspect of retro marketing is authenticity. The strive for authenticity and the “real” is not a new phenomenon but certainly a prominent one in the field of retro marketing. Consumers want authentic products and brands, something that can be more genuine in a society where most products is mass produced and seen as inauthentic by consumers (Beverland & Farrelly, 2009; Brown, Sherry, & Kozinets, 2003). Furthermore, consumers desire authentic products because it can give them meaning and help to create an identity (Beverland & Farrelly, 2009). According to Beverland & Farrelly (2009) and Arnould & Price (2000), the postmodern society has left many consumers with a sense of lost meaning and identity which has caused them to search for authentic products that can reclaim these traits.

Authenticity is difficult to define. Yet, consumers have a quest for authenticity (Beverland, 2005, 2006, 2009; Gilmore & Pine, 2007). Moreover, authenticity is rather problematic, because what is really authentic? And what is the real deal? There is nothing inherent in retro brands or products that makes them authentic or inauthentic, it is a social and cultural construction (Peterson, 1997). Therefore, we investigate how young consumer makes sense of their retro consumption by bringing the perspective of authenticity. Furthermore, the perspective of authenticity will help us to understand why young consumers have a quest for authenticity and what it means to them, and also how authenticity interplays with their sense making of retro consumption.

There are different ways that retro products/brands can be authentic. In some cases, a retro design of a product can be enough to make consumers view it as authentic but in other cases it has to have more of a story behind it or be crafted in a certain way or have a meaning (Brown 1999; Brown 2003). For example, in the case of furniture, design may be enough to make it seem authentic while if a brand is being re-launched, it may have to focus on the meaning of the brand. Brown, Sherry, & Kozinets,

(2003) builds on the work of Benjamin (1999) to create a framework on the authentication of retro brands. This framework is called the 4As of retro marketing and consists of; *Allegory* (Brand story, symbolic stories), *Arcadia* (idealizing the past), *Aura* (the authenticity of a brand) and lastly *Antimony* (a sort of paradox between innovation and authenticity).

According to Beverland & Farrelly (2009) consumers want the pure, true, real and genuine, with other words the authentic. Retro products and brands can be a way for consumers to experience something authentic, something that is the opposite of the inauthentic contemporary society (Brown, Sherry, & Kozinets, 2003). However, something that is authentic for some may be inauthentic for others. Depending on what goals and standards consumers have, their view of what is authentic and not may differ (Beverland & Farrelly, 2009).

To conclude, consumers enjoy nostalgia and have a desire to bridge the gap between the present and the past. Consumers are also seeking enchantment and want special and unique things, consumers want to be amazed by magic and wonders. Furthermore, consumers want authenticity and have a quest for the real and pure - consumers want the real deal. So far, we have presented the main theoretical areas in the retro marketing research field and also presented how they are going to help us to fulfil the purpose of this paper. In the following section, we will explore and illustrate our empirical findings and simultaneously comment and analyze the material before we move on the main discussion.

4.0 Methodology

In the following section we will present our research design and how we conducted this study. First we present how we gathered our data through in-depth interviews and discuss this in relation to our methodological perspective. Furthermore, we describe our population and the process of how we selected our population. After that, we discuss methodological limitations and ethical considerations in this study. Lastly, we will shortly explain how we interpret our theoretical framework to make it easy for the reader to follow our arguments and thought process.

4.1 Research Design

We use a qualitative and inductive approach to explore and illustrate how young consumers make sense of retro consumption through the lens of nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity. There are several reasons why this was preferred instead of a quantitative method. We have looked closely on earlier research and articles in the field of retro marketing and we have been influenced how they

conduct their studies. In several articles a qualitative method has been used (Goulding, 2000; Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli and Mueller, 2012; Hartmann & Ostberg, 2012; Higson, 2014; Jenss, 2004; Kitson & McHugh, 2014; Ratnayake & Andrews, 2016). We find that the tradition in the field of retro marketing is to conduct qualitative studies and has chose to follow this tradition. Certainly, this does not mean that everyone in the field of retro marketing must use this method. A qualitative method is useful in order to get a broader understanding of an issue and view it from different perspectives (Berg, 2001). Since we want to understand how young consumers make sense of retro consumption, a qualitative method is fitting, because it allows us to understand underlying reasons, opinions and motivations regarding young consumers' consumption of retro brands and products. In order to answer our research question, we need in-depth and detailed explanations. Furthermore, we anticipated that our research questions would give us ambiguous answers and that an interview would allow us to clarify those kind of answers. Whereas, a quantitative method is more suitable when testing a theory and using measurements (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

4.2 Data collection

4.2.1 Interviews

In this study we conducted 10 interviews which took place at the respondents' homes to ensure a natural setting. Earlier research by Hemetsberger et.al (2012) choose to conduct narrative interviews in order to understand retro consumption by young consumers. Similarly, we choose to conduct in-depth interviews, however, our interviews are probably more similar to phenomenological interviews. Whereas narrative focus on a person's life from a chronological perspective which has led the respondent to the current state, phenomenological interviews focus on uncovering the meaning of experiences (Groenewald, 2004; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). Although the two different terms for the interviews are a bit fuzzy, we choose to conduct in-depth interviews which remind of phenomenological interviews as described. Since Hemetsberger et.al (2012) studies the meaning of retro consumption among consumers by focusing on identity, narrative interviews works well to understand the respondents chronological process to understand the process of identity building. However, we focus on explaining how young consumers make sense of retro consumption and therefore phenomenological interviews are preferred.

We use this method because it gives us room to be adaptable with follow up questions when we felt that the interview headed in a certain direction. We had some topics that we wanted to cover but apart from that the interviews were conducted in a way which gave room for different directions that the interview could take. By using phenomenological interviews, we can get a story behind how young

consumers make sense of retro consumption, that is to know how they bought a retro product, why they bought it and how the respondents derive meaning from it.

The questions in our interviews followed an open guideline which helped the interviewees to elaborate on what they thought was important. So, questions like “Tell me what you think about retro products” or “describe how you view the past” and so on. The open questions were a way for us to make the interviewees share their experiences and stories behind retro consumption without us steering them too much.

We conducted two types of interviews, pilot and final interviews, in order to get a sense of how to structure the interviews. We did five pilot interviews and ten final interviews. Our pilot interviews were done early in the work process with friends and family. They helped us get a sense of how we could structure our final interviews and what to focus on. All of our interviewees agreed to be recorded. We recorded all of our interviews to be able to get back after the interview and listen to it afterwards in order to deeply analyze the material. The pilot studies were around 15-30 minutes long while our final interviews were between 30-60 minutes long. The final interviews were conducted in the participant's' home to ensure a natural setting where they could feel safe. Furthermore, this allowed us and the respondents to be near the retro object which we believe would intensify and stimulate the narratives and reveal how the respondents make sense of retro consumption.

The use of nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity provided us with a departure point from which to begin data collection. We used unstructured interviews with general guidelines such as “Tell us about your feelings when you first encountered the product...”, “Do you have any memories connected to the product...?”, “Tell us about your experience with the product...”, “Tell us about your view of retro and modern products...”. The interviews vary in terms of questions suitable to the specific interview, however, in all interviews we used the general guideline described above, which is inspired by our theoretical concepts, in this case, nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity. The general guideline give respondents more room to answer in terms of what is important to them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We used all these answers and compared them among respondents in order to evolve the concept of young consumers' discontent towards contemporary society.

This study is inspired by Goulding (2000) and Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli and Mueller (2012) to use a grounded theory method. Since we draw upon the methodological perspective of grounded theory, it is important that we ask ourselves: how grounded are we really? In our research, we have read extensive literature regarding nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity, this means that we are not totally grounded, we have three major theoretical concepts that we use to describe how young

consumes make sense of retro consumption. However, it is virtually impossible to conduct research completely inductive, therefore we had to provide our research with some theoretical concepts to explain the phenomenon of retro consumption among young consumers. The process of our research is inspired by Hemetsberger et.al (2012) and can be referred to as ‘theoretical sampling’ which is described in grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). More specifically, we used ‘open coding sampling’ which is “The analytic process through which *concepts* are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.101). In this sense, concepts are defined as the building blocks of theory, as in our case; enchantment, nostalgia and authenticity.

Open coded sampling means that we have to be open to all possibilities during interviews and take advantage of every opportunity (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This means that we have to ensure openness by not structuring the interviews too much and touch upon our chosen theoretical concepts. When using open coded sampling it is essential to not rush all the interviews, therefore we sat down after every second interview and analyzed our gathered data. By doing this we ensured to not miss opportunities to sample on the basis of emerging concepts. This means that we adjusted the interviews on the basis of emergent and relevant concepts. The difficult part of open coded sampling is that it requires a lot of observational skills, although we are research beginners, after every second interview we collected more rich data by asking the respondents to develop interesting answers connected to retro consumption. When we asked respondents to “Tell me more about that...”, we were careful so that the respondent did not reply in expected ways. From our own perspective, the respondents were rather excited to tell us more, therefore we conclude that the respondents were honest to the question and did not reply in expected ways (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

4.2.2 Selection of population

The sampling was conducted openly and the participating respondents in our interviews have different backgrounds, social class and occupations. The participants are between 20-29 years old. Eight of our participants are students with part-time jobs while two participants are full-time workers. Since our study is focused on young consumers, we argue that the occupation of the participants is not important to focus on. Of course, we can not eliminate all possibility that consumer behaviour differ, depending on if one is a student or work full time. However, we choose to mainly focus on the age of the consumer in this study but further research could be done to compare students and full time workers. Of the ten people we interviewed, five are females and five are males. This was not anything we did deliberately but when finding our participants this became the ratio of the genders. Similar to the occupation of our participants, differences between genders was not anything we focused on in this study but could be a subject for further research.

We created a questionnaire that potential participants had to answer in order to qualify for the interviews. This was made to select people who met certain criteria that we had set up which would make the interviews relevant to our purpose. Firstly, we defined retro products and retro brands in the questionnaire to give the participants necessary information and make them aware of how we interpret retro brands and products. The definition of retro brands and products in the questionnaire was; “Retro brands are brands from a prior historical period, usually with updated product or service features such as performance and functioning. Retro products is a mix of old-fashion design with modern functionality, a product that combines the old and the new, a relative new product but with old design.”. Moreover, we had a total of three questions in our questionnaire that gave us some basic background on the participants.

“Do you have more than one retro product?”

“Are you between 20-29 years old”?

“How much would you say that you like retro brands on a 10-point scale, 10 is very much and 0 is not at all?”

In order to participate in our interviews, we wanted the participants to own more than one retro brand or retro product. The reason behind this choice is that it made it easier to gather material from the interviews, instead of one product per interview, we could get more information from each interview. With several retro products to ask about we argue that it gave us a broader understanding on each participants’ view on retro products. Furthermore, the question about age was important since our purpose is to understand how young consumers make sense of retro products. Earlier research by Hemetsberger et.al (2012) define young consumers in the age span of 20-29, so we decided to follow their definitions since there is no consensus of young consumers age span. The last question was relevant in our case because we wanted to make sure that the people we interviewed did neither dislike retro products nor find them neutral. We wanted young consumers with positive attitude towards retro products. We argue that it would probably not contribute to our research question if the respondents disliked or have a neutral attitude towards retro brands and products. If they do not like retro products it would arguably be hard to understand how they make sense of retro consumption since they would probably not consume retro products. In the same way, we did not want the respondents to be neutral towards retro products, as neutral means an impartial or unbiased state and not supporting either side of positive or negative attitude towards retro. Similar to Hemetsberger et.al (2012), we searched for respondents with a strongly marked or positive attitude towards retro. Therefore, we do not find it interesting or necessary to deviate from prior research in the perspective of retro consumption among young consumers. So, if they answered the last question with 7 points or more they qualified for the

interviews. We choose number 7 because we think that number 6 indicate a slightly positive attitude towards retro brands and products, whereas 7 indicates a stronger liking of retro brands and products.

4.3 Limitations

We acknowledge that critique against a qualitative approach do exist and that our study has some limitations. For example, it can be difficult to replicate the study and get the exact same result from a qualitative study (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Though we tried to be as neutral as possible during the interviews our interests may have affected the direction that the interview took. If another interviewer would interview the same people as we did, the material would certainly look somewhat different. People have different ways of interviewing and so on, which affect the direction that the interview takes. Furthermore, we have to be humble that we are not trained interviewers which may have affected the outcome of our interviews. However, we did get a lot better after a few interviews and the quality of the interviews improved over time. Generalization is also something to have in mind when conducting a qualitative study. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), generalization is a common criticism of a qualitative approach. It is easy to fall into the trap of drawing conclusions about a population rather than the selection of people that has been interviewed. We are aware that we can not draw generalized conclusions about all young consumers' sense-making towards retro products after ten in-depth interviews. Our findings in this paper should not be viewed as a something that is consistent in all young consumers, but rather a theory that should be further researched. Another common criticism of qualitative research, according to Bryman and Bell (2011), is that this type of research sometimes is too subjective. Of course, our interests and what we thought was important in the interviews had an affect on the direction of the interviews, but as mentioned above, we tried to be as neutral as possible in our interviews and ask a lot of open questions in order to get a fair depiction of how the participants make sense of retro consumption through the lens of nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity. However, we have to be honest with the fact that some subjectivity probably occurs in our study and that it is hard to completely remove all trace of it in qualitative research.

4.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical guidelines are important to have in mind when conducting any sort of qualitative study. Things as consent, anonymity and confidentiality are some examples of ethical concerns to be aware of (Berg, 2001; Bryman & Bell, 2011). During our study, we constantly had the ethical aspects in mind to make sure we conducted the work as good as possible. First of all, we always asked our participants before each interview if we had permission to record and followed up by also asking this after we had started recording. So, we have every participants consent on record that they complied. We thought about also

having the consent in a written contract but we felt it was excessive in our case. As Berg (2001) mentions, written consent is most common when interviewing institutions and companies while implied consent is more frequently used when doing in-depth interviews as we have done. Furthermore, we mentioned before and during the recording that quotes from their interviews would be used in a study that later would be published on the internet. This was done to be as transparent as possible so that no misunderstandings would occur. We also informed the participants that we would make them anonymous and change their name. So, the name that is presented in the findings is not the participants real names.

4.5 Interpretation of theory

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, our study center around the three concepts nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity. In our analysis we will describe how these concepts take form in our empirical data. However, it is important to note that this is our interpretation of how these concepts take form. Others may have different views of how the three concepts manifests in young consumers. Take enchantment for example, our interviewees do not explicitly mention that they feel enchanted by retro products, but by our interpretation of enchantment, we find examples of it in our empirical data. Others may have a different interpretation of what constitutes as enchantment. Since there is no clear consensus in the field of retro marketing on the definitions of nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity, there will undoubtedly be different ways to interpret the empirical data from our interviews. With this in mind, we will describe how we interpret the three concepts in order to be as transparent as possible and make it easy for the reader to follow our reasoning.

4.5.1 Nostalgia

Nostalgia can take many different forms as mentioned earlier. For a long time, nostalgia was seen as a disease but from the later half of the 20th century it was rather viewed as melancholic longing from the past (Davis 1977). We interpret nostalgia in a similar fashion as the theoretical framework states. Drawing mainly from the work of Davis (1979) but also from Boym (2001), Hemetsberger et.al (2012) and Pickering & Keightley (2006). The way we interpret nostalgia in our analysis can shortly be described as a sort of yearning of the romanticized past. Not necessarily a want to live in past times, but a desire to experience the past. In our interviews we find examples of this, even though it is not always explicitly expressed by the participant that they want to experience the past, we find that this is implied by the way the he or she explain the past.

4.5.2 Enchantment

We find that enchantment, similar to nostalgia, is not defined in a clear way which gives room for different interpretations on the concept. The word itself is a synonym to mystification, magic and charm, but enchantment has a deeper meaning to it in the field of retro marketing. Our interpretation of enchantment is a sort of amazement and the wow-feeling that can be evoked by retro products. The timeless design of retro products can create an enchanting experience, at least in our opinion. So, the design is key in generating the enchantment in our interpretation. Enchantment from retro products can manifest in different ways and it is not a singular cause that creates enchantment. As we will show in our analysis, enchantment can for example come from a fascination of nature and a timeless design.

4.5.3 Authenticity

As Beverland and Farrelly (2009) mentions, what is authentic for someone is highly individualistic. It can be authentic for someone but inauthentic for someone else. Our interpretation of authenticity is that it is something pure, true, genuine and special. Authentic products can be perceived as durable and good quality, whereas fake products can be viewed as less durable and bad quality. Therefore, we also seek for respondents explanations of durability and long lasting quality as a reflection of authenticity. Authenticity manifests in different ways in our empirical data but when we analyze it we search for signs of when the interviewee points out that retro products are genuine, pure or special and of good quality. But as mentioned, just because someone finds a retro product authentic does not mean that other people will.

5.0 Findings and analysis

We structure our analysis by looking at each cornerstone separate at first. So, initially we analyze nostalgia, then move on to enchantment and lastly authenticity. After that, we discuss these concepts in relation to how young consumers make sense of their retro consumption.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and illustrate how young consumers make sense of their retro consumption. The purpose is achieved by answering our research question: how do young consumers make sense of their retro consumption? Our findings suggest that consumption of retro brands and retro aesthetics can act as a tool to mediate and express reluctant attitudes towards contemporary society because retro brands and products are considered as authentic and credible. We find that young consumers seek timelessness, natural materials and earthy colors, they desire products that are pure as

nature and will last a long period of time. By using retro brands and products young consumers take distance to what is considered as fake and seek the real, as the real or authentic, is perceived to contribute with long lasting quality. As young consumers seek brands and products that endure a rapidly changing society with exaggerated consumption, we find that young consumers have a romanticized and glamorized view of past times and that media is a driving force. Through TV-series, social media, pop culture and so on, young consumers are enchanted and nostalgic about the times that is portrayed in an attractive way. Our research contributes to theory by combining nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity to explain how young consumers make sense of their retro consumption. From the lens of nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity, we suggest that young consumers use retro brands and products to express and mediate discontent towards the present.

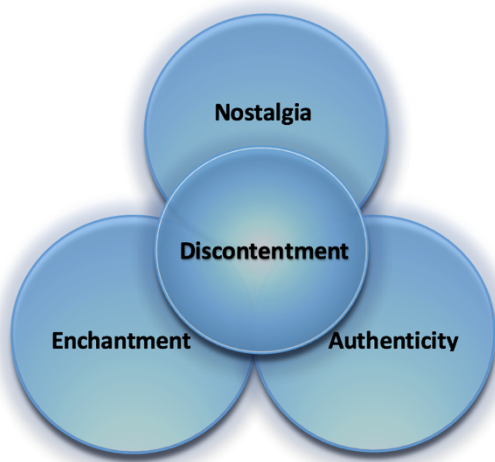


Figure 1. Discontentment expressed through nostalgic, authentic and enchanting experiences.

Earlier studies and research on the subject, mainly Hemetsberger et.al (2012), come to the conclusion that identity plays an important role in young consumers' desire of retro brands and products. While we find that it is rather an expression of discontent towards contemporary society that appears in our empirical data from our interviews. It is the common thread we find that ties with enchantment, nostalgia and authenticity. Discontentment is the link between the three concepts; nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity. Figure 1 sums up the essence of our findings. The figure shows that young consumers' discontentment is expressed through nostalgic, authentic and enchanting experiences by using retro brands and products, as they are considered to be authentic, credible and expressive, to take distance to what is perceived as modern and fake.

5.1 Nostalgia

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, nostalgia has been widely discussed by scholars and can take many forms. Though it may seem contradictory that young consumers feel nostalgic, since they have a relative short “time horizon”, we do find multiple examples where different forms of nostalgia is apparent. For example, in our interviews we find that personal, collective/communal and mediated nostalgia are all relevant and visible.

Personal nostalgia, as Davis (1979) mentions, is a form of nostalgia that builds on old memories, a sort of reminisce of the good old days when one was younger and a longing of the past. However, in our interviews we find that there are some examples where the respondents have been affected by memories from the past that may have played a role with their purchase of the retro product. Though this is not a pure form of personal nostalgia that Davis (1979) explain, it still shares some similarities. For example, we find that old memories of the past may affect the consumer, but he or she is not longing for this particular moment in history. So in essence, Hemetsberger et.al (2012) version of personal nostalgia corresponds well with our findings.

“The coffee mug itself evokes no memories for me, but the brand alone evokes some memories. I know my parents used to have this brand, then you know it is good stuff. Although I do not have any specific memories, but I recognize the brand and that is reassuring“ - Martin

This quote is from a person who explain his memories about a mug that is retro. Clearly he has memories about the brand from when he was little, although not specific memories. Furthermore, he indicates that the brand recognition gives him a sense of assurance. This goes in line with Hemetsberger et.al (2012) findings, that the sheer familiarity effect of a retro product or brand make it more attractive to young consumers.

“We had a vinyl player when I grew up so that's how I first came in contact with the product so to say, but back then I didn't reflect on it as a pure way of playing music on but just a funny machine. I used to play with and pretend to be a disc jockey. Of course it brings back memories from when I were little but that wasn't really why I bought it, it was more because it was cool and a pure way to listen to music.” - Daniel

Memories from childhood plays a part in how young consumers view retro products. If they were exposed to the retro brand or product when young, then that can have an impact in how they feel towards that brand or product. We find that a form of personal nostalgia is present in some of our interviews, although not in the same form as Davis (1979) explain it. They do not exactly long for the

past, they rather find reassurance in the fact that they have memories of a certain product. The familiarity of the products is not necessary the sole reason for young consumers to buy retro brands and products, however it might be a partial explanation. This goes in line of what Hemetsberger et.al (2012) argue for, that the sheer familiarity effect of a product gives reassurance for the consumer.

Even though we do find some examples of personal nostalgia, it is not as prominent as the case of collective/communal and mediated nostalgia. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, collective/communal nostalgia is a form of nostalgia that is more on a societal level than personal, it can for example influence a whole population (Davis, 1979). From our interviews we notice that several people hold contemporary society as one reason for retro consumption, a sort of resistance towards modernity. However, it seems that the cause of this resistance is not full blown chaos, as Davis (1979) exemplifies with the 70's in the U.S.A., but rather a world with rapid changes that cause some turbulence. These rapid changes cause the respondents to search for something more stable and timeless, something that the retro products can offer. We find that young consumers, in a way, want to escape modern society and experience the romanticized past. They show their dissatisfaction towards modern society when buying products that reflect the past.

(...) I like retro products, it is almost a way to discover old times that you have not lived to see in some sense. So, say you like a certain period in time and want to feel like you were there. You like what you see design wise, so you want to bring that to your life today. - Jonas

Past times seems to have an appeal to it and is something that our interviewees want to experience. We find that the glamorization of the past in combination with a discontent of contemporary society causes an attraction of retro products at young consumers. The quote above showcase that there is something enticing about the past for Jonas and that retro products is a way for him to “discover” it. Certainly, just because you like the past does not necessarily mean that you dislike the contemporary, but it indicates that there is something that the past can offer that modern society can not do in the same way.

Jonas continues with;

“Everything is so technological today, so I definitely think that retro products can be a way to be unique and in a way stick out from the masses. Like you have your own taste or something like that.” - Jonas

Jonas argues that retro products has something to offer that makes them unique and special comparing to modern technical products. It is sort of a reaction against modernity. Retro products can be something unique, something that makes you stand out as Jonas mentions. From our interviews we discover that young consumers finds contemporary society stressful. Though technical advances have created plentiful of positives, it has also led to a society that is always connected and never rest. For example, social media has meant that one can get in touch with anyone at anytime.

“The modern society feels very stressing and to surround yourself with retro products can give a sort of, I don’t know, false security, it reminds you of a less stressing time. Or at least you think that because you have romanticized this period in history. (...).” – Maria

From the quote above we can discern that Maria feels, or at least say she feels, that today's society is stressful and that retro products give a sort of false security. Something to have in mind is that this person liked retro products and had lots of them. So, even though she thought it was a kind false security, it still was enough for her to buy a lot of retro products. Certainly, this was not the only reason why she bought retro products but arguably one of them.

She continues with;

“(...) It is interesting because it feels like we always wanted the latest things back in time, the latest technology and the latest design and so on... but now it feels like many people want what we had before, me included haha” – Maria

Here, Maria considers that there has been a shift in how consumers perceive modern products. In other words, today's consumers have a different view of modern products than earlier generations. This claim is something we find that several correspondents mentions in their interviews.

“(..) I think retro products can be very cool, since many good designs came very early before all the more trendy stuff came up-to-date when the consumption level started to increase. When the consumption increased the demand to develop new products also increased, then there is not as classic and well-designed products that has been developed. I do not think that it has got to do with fast decisions, rather that you constantly trying to come up with something new and then it rarely gets classic like the things before”– Johan

Johan continues on the same discussion as Maria, although he talks about design rather than products in general. In today's consumption society, where trends come and go rapidly, the classic design of

past times have a certain appeal to it, a stable and timeless design that is not affected by modern trends the same way as contemporary products. So, both Maria and Johan argues that modern society is characterized by rapid changes and trends. Additionally, it sounds on them that they are slightly critical of these characteristics and are somewhat nostalgic of past times. This goes in line with Davis (1979) theory about collective nostalgia, that turbulence times are characterized by a wave of nostalgia. Furthermore, this is something that Hartman et.al (2017) also contends. However, both Davis (1979) and Hartman et.al (2017) describes times in history that are characterized by severe chaos in society, in the case of Maria, it seems like it is a different case of chaos that is described. Chaos in sense of rapid changes but not in the sense of war or social movements that alter the whole society in a severe way.

We also find examples of mediated nostalgia in our interviews. In other words, a sort of nostalgia that is created by different kinds of media (Davis 1979; Pickering & Keightley 2006). Our interviewees mention that media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, blogs and TV-series influence them on how they view retro products and we conclude that it also creates mediated nostalgia in a sense. We find that young consumers have a romanticized view of past times and media has certainly played a role in the way that these times are perceived by young consumers. So, young consumers want to experience the romanticized past that media has created. In other words, they feel nostalgic towards these past times and media is the driving force behind it.

“There are a lot of TV-series and movies that take place in another periods of time and I think that many people get inspired and want to buy similar products despite the fact that they do not have a relation to that period of time” - Ellen

“Firstly, I think I was inspired by popular culture. There is a TV-series called Riverdale and it takes place during the 50s och there you can find similar tablets, so I guess that is how I first encountered the tablet (...)” - Linda

Both of these interviewees indicates that media influences their perception of retro products. For some context, Linda talks about a retro tablet and not a ipad, a kind of tablet where you can put words on it and make your own citations or sentences. It has a similar look to it as old billboards in front of cinemas in the past. She first came in contact with the product through a TV-series that is set in the 50's. Both of these interviewees indicates that media plays a role in how the respondents view retro products. Furthermore, media is a way for young consumers to be introduced to rero products which they otherwise would not know about. Certainly, being introduced to a product through media that is set in a historical period does not automatically cause this person to feel nostalgic towards this period.

“(...) I don’t know, it kind of reminds me of old tablets that was used in front of old coffee shops and restaurants, you know what I mean? Similar to blackboards that shows the menu. I get a French vibe from it by some reason haha...” – Linda

So, in this case, media has likely played a role in creating nostalgia and making Linda associate the tablet with a time in history. She paints a picture with her way to describe the coffee shops and restaurants in France which sounds a lot like a kind of enchantment that is created. In essence, it is a way that nostalgia and enchantment interplay with each other, similar to the way that (Kitson & McHugh, 2014) theorize, that nostalgia is created through enchantment. We can see connections between enchantment and nostalgia when our respondents describe the romanticized past. They describe the past that media has created with a sort of amazement and wonder, they want to experience this glamorized past times. This goes in line with Boym’s (2001) description of modern nostalgia as mentioned in the theoretical framework. To quote Boym (2001; 13); “Modern nostalgia is a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values; it could be a secular expression of a spiritual longing, a nostalgia for an absolute, a home that is both physical and spiritual, the edenic unity of time and space before entry into history”.

“Most of the retro products I have, I bought because of the design. There is something about old design that I really like. I can't really explain what it is, but it is something special about retro design. I like the old design of retro products and the mix between old and new. I have a toaster for example from the brand SMEG and it looks like it is from the 50’s but it is a new product. So like, it is a mix between old and new.” - Theresia

From the quote above we can see that it is not always easy to explain what makes retro products so special. Theresia likes the design of retro products, but there is something underlying that makes it so special. We find that some interviewees have a hard time pinning down what exactly makes retro products special.

We argue that it is something enchanting about the mythical past that is now lost. Media has certainly played a role in creating this view of the past. Since our interviewees are between 20-29 years old, they have not experienced the 50’s, 60’s or 70’s, but they still like these times and retro products which reflect these past times. From our interviews we find that enchantment and nostalgia are closely related, which goes in similar lines with Boym (2001) and Kitson & McHugh (2014) findings. Our interviewees seem to find the past as something really special, something that is enticing and somewhat mystical.

5.2 Enchantment

5.2.1 The role of Retro Aesthetics and Retro Brands

Retro products usually have attributes or an aesthetic of the past, which in turn can result in a sense of amazement. However, a few respondents reported that they did not know the products actually was retro products. Some of the respondent became aware of this after the purchase.

“(...) I think it is very nice. When I bought this tablet I actually did not it was retro till after I made the purchase. It was the design that tempted me the most. I don’t know, it kind of reminds me of old tablets that was used in front of old coffee shops and restaurants. (...) I get a French vibe from it by some reason haha. (...) It reminds me of tablets that hung in old cafés and restaurants, not that I have been to one, but that is how I imagine it was. (...) I think I was inspired by popular culture. There is a TV-series called Riverdale and it takes place during the 50s and there you can find similar tablets, so I guess that is how I first encountered the tablet. (...) I think you are influenced a lot by popular culture. That you are subconsciously affected by it. I mean, I have only lived in the 90s and onwards, but I still buy retro products, so it is probably a lot of subconscious things that you pick up.” -Linda

Dijksterhuis, Smith, van Baaren & Wigboldus (2005), propose that many consumer choices are strongly affected by the environment and are made rather thoughtlessly in the moment. In the interview, this respondent recall a thought process of being inspired by popular culture, as in this case by a retro inspired TV-serie. Retrospectively, she recalls that she must have been influenced by a TV-serie, hence she did not know that in the purchase situation. Furthermore, the retro aesthetics of the tablet evoked imagination of old cafés and restaurants beyond the respondents’ actual real life experiences. The influence of TV-series and imagination of old cafés and restaurants could be viewed as an interest and motivation towards consuming the past. In other words, the respondent “expresses the desire to retreat from contemporary life by returning to a time in the past viewed as superior to the present.” (Stern, 1992, p13).

“I would say that this is my ideal coffee mug. It retains the warmth very well and I like the robust feeling of it. (...) I was familiar with the brand but not the product (...) I know my parents use to have this brand, then you know it is good stuff, however, when I bought it I did not know it was retro design, I found out later that it was originally designed 1909.” - Martin

“I knew that the brand had a been around for a while, but when I bought it I had no idea that the original design was back from the 80s and specially designed for the military, that is something I learned afterwards. I do not have any earlier experience from the brand, but Breitling has a good

reputation for making good watches. When I think about Breitling I think about exclusive and high quality. (...) All modern design is not bad, but I think it is more rare with really good modern design. (...) I do not like trends, I am not a trendy person. “ - Johan

Mittal (2006) argues that using retro brands can also be an act of criticizing contemporary social value systems, they can also work as tools to educate others of one's personal values (Hemetsberger et.al., 2012). Some respondents reported that they did not think about retro design in the purchase situation, that is something that became obvious afterwards. Although they were familiar with the name of the brand, they were not surprised by the fact that they bought retro products. This means that the retro brands can be a symbolic foundation for values and act as a medium to criticize contemporary social values. As Sirgy (1982) noticed, retro brands tend to work well in expressing characteristics and the self-concept, since retro brands are considered as authentic, credible and expressive. Therefore, consumption of retro aesthetics and retro brands can act as a tool to mediate reluctant attitudes towards contemporary society.

5.2.2 Time and Nature

The respondents show an evident fascination for time and nature. The sense of amazement seems to be connected to a time perspective and attributes of nature. The objects are often referred to as timeless and that they embody the aesthetics of being natural. Timeless design becomes a safe island to stand on in modern western society, which is characterized by fast-fashion and fluctuating trends. Timeless design is thought of being something that will last, something that will endure current trends. By consuming timeless products, the consumer minimize the risk of growing tired of the product, it is also viewed as a safe card which can be used all year around, everyday and be used for a long period of time.

“The first time I saw the coffee mug was a pure happiness, I just felt it when I saw it, and saw this beautiful combination of a ceramic coffee mug on a wooden plate. There are not so many other mugs with this combination as far as I have seen. (...) If I am not suppose to grow tired of a product it has to feel like a true classic, maybe it should be considered as boring, not something clownish, and no special things, then I might grow tired of it after a while, it should be timeless if you say so. For me, a timeless product has neutral forms and neutral colors, possibly earthy colors, but white is also a classic color. My turquoise coffee mug is perhaps on the verge to not be classified as timeless, but I definitely think that my grey mug and possibly my red mug, are two classics. (...) For me it is important that the feeling behind the product has a long history, it can be produced today, but that it strongly reminds me of the old. “ - Martin

In relation to the distaste of trending design, some of the respondents describe a quest for timeless design. The objects are often referred to embody an aesthetic of timelessness, they do not seek 'clownish' design, they want something that will last which they can have when they are older, but it should also be suitable for different occasions all year around and also everyday. As Martin mentioned, "For me it is important that the feeling behind the product has a long history, it can be produced today, but that it strongly reminds me of the old." Consequently, the aesthetics of old and timeless design become a safe island to stand on in modern society, which is characterized by fast-fashion and fluctuating trends. Timeless design is thought of being something that will last, something that will endure current trends, a resistance towards modernity.

"I believe my wow-feeling when I first saw the bag is based in the fact that it is practical, there is no loud colors, it is natural colors, it is simple and timeless, it is earthy colors, it does not stand out too much. (...) I never think I will grow tired of this bag, it will suit me fine even when I am older because it is timeless. In order for me not to grow tired, it has to be practical and useful, and I also should be able to use it in different occasions and seasons, that is what makes it worth all the money, even though it is quite expensive. It should be able to work with a lot of things and in different contexts, both when I want to dress up or dress more casual, that is why it is so important with design. The colours are important too, preferably it should be earthy colours, the colours we have most in nature. " - Amanda

"I think it is timeless because it is made to last during a long time and the look of the watch is also timeless, something I can have during a long period of my life. It is not fast-fashion, it is subtle and timeless. Timeless design is something that does not stand out too much, well designed and suits very much to different occasions all year around and also every day. A watch should be circular in my opinion and it should be in metal with basic colors on the dial so it does not stand out too much, for example black or white." - Johan

In relation to timelessness, respondents show an amazement for natural materials and earthy colors. Due to contemporary 'throw-away' society, the admiration of the 'natural' might be a reflection of respondents values. As William Cronon (1996, p.1.) mentioned, the nature "... stands as the last remaining place where civilization, that all too human disease, has not fully infected the earth. It is an island in the polluted sea of urban-industrial modernity, the one place we can turn for escape from our own too-muchness". From this point of view, the amazement of nature is a reflection of the consumers longing and desires. Perhaps a longing and desire for something stable, something that is pure as nature and will last a long period of time.

5.2.3 Disenchantment and Re-enchantment

The development of technologies has paved the way for globalization of markets which has enabled the flotation of people, technology, media, finance etc. across the globe. This floating phenomena of people and media is also referred to as 'glocalization' (Kjeeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). This process has both led to homogenization and heterogenization of products and services. From one point of view, the globalization process the world has led to homogenization of the world to and this is what some refers to as the 'McDonaldization of the world'. Ritzer (2005) states that the rationalization in society makes everything predictable for the consumer. This makes the feeling of enchantment very short-lived, therefore we get disenchanted. In other words, this means that the world has been standardized to some extent and there is a lack of new exciting products and experiences. Retro brands and products are a way for young consumers to be re-enchanted in a world where companies and organizations continuously tries to rationalize and standardize their operations, as in the case of McDonalds (Ritzer, 2005).

The contrary view is heterogenization. From this perspective, globalization brings an explosion of differences in markets across the globe and it is a counterbalancing effect to the process of rationalization in society (Kjeeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). This means that marketers offers consumers more opportunities than ever in the landscape of consumption. Consequently, homogenization and heterogenization of the world are two contradictory views. The rationalization of society leads to conformity and unsurprising experiences for the consumer. As a result, marketers have to re-enchant the consumer, which means that marketers have to make the ordinary into something special by offering myths, magic, wonder and romance. All marketers struggle with re-enchantment by designing and creating new products and services. However, the process by offering consumers new products and services can lead to a disenchanting experience for the consumer;

"I think retro products can be very cool, since many good designs came very early before all the more trendy stuff came up-to-date when the consumption level started to increase. When the consumption increased the demand to develop new products also increased, then there are not as classic and well-designed products that has been developed. I do not think that it has got to do with fast decisions, rather that you constantly trying to come up with something new and then it rarely gets classic like the things before. But of course, many new products may build on old design that has worked before. All modern design is not bad, but I think it is more rare with really good modern design" - Johan

Similar to Hartmann & Ostberg's (2012) finding, we find that trajectories of modernity can have disenchanting consequences, but also a dis-authenticating consequences. This means that the rationalization in society leads to conformity and mass-produced products, which lack the feeling of

uniqueness for the consumer. Furthermore, it means that modernization can undermine the feeling of authenticity, a sense of the real deal. For this consumer, the multitude of design offerings have led to a general disappointment regarding the design of products. The respondent mention that modern design rarely gets classic, and we interpret this as it lacks the feeling of authenticity. The design becomes a form of hybridization - a mixing and matching of designs. For example, imagine the Swedish national dish of meatballs with mashed potatoes, brown sauce and lingonberry jam. Now imagine you serve the meatballs with taco sauce. Consequently, it is not the same as the original Swedish dish. As it may become a new dish, it does not necessarily mean that *new* is equal to *enchanting*. This means that the overflow of offerings can cause *disenchantment* and we want to return to what has been;

“There is always a charm about the things that have once been retro, so retro may never really disappear, but maybe it will be not as trendy as it is right now. You want to live in times that have been and have things that you do not have. It is interesting because before it feels like we always wanted the latest things, the latest technology and the latest design and so on... but now it feels like many people want what we had before, me included haha. “ - Maria

“Most of all I favor retro design when it comes to accessories, it gives a nice touch to my outfit. But I also think that it is cool with retro cars... at the same time I like futuristic design, that can be cool too. (...) I do not see any reasons why I should stick to one or the other. I simply take the best out of two worlds.” - Daniel

Retro can be seen as a compensation or consequence of modernization (Jenss, 2004). The respondents show an ambiguity towards consumption of retro products. There is a dialectical tension between the quest for old design and new design. On one hand, we want the past now and on the other hand we want the future now. As the Roman poet Horace would have put it, there is no ‘*carpe diem*’ in the consumption. This means that we do not enjoy, seize or make use of the present. We want to consume what has already been, or we want to consume what is yet to come in the future.

5.3 Authenticity

Retro brands can act as symbols of long lasting quality and historical heritage. Retro brands become a representation of continuity, unlike many contemporary brands which are rather short-lived. This means that young consumers can rely on retro brands as stable anchors and a reflection of something that will last, they offer a backdoor and an escape-route from fast-moving trends.

“Quality is something I strive for. I rather buy few products with really high quality, then to buy a lot of cheap things. I do not like trends, I am not a trendy person. I like minimalism and of course sustainability is important, that you use fewer products rather than buying more and throw them away on a stack and buy new stuff. “- Emil

The consumption of long lasting products acts as a ritual of resistance towards the fluctuating trends of today. There is a willingness to spend more money on things that will last, a form of minimalistic consumption, both as a resistance towards trends but also as a justification by arguing for the sake of the environment and sustainability. Young consumer may be more conscious regarding environmental issues of today, which is manifested in the way young consumers mediate values by performing consumption. Young consumer take distance to fake products and seek the real, as the real or authentic, is perceived to contribute with long lasting quality. This is what Brown et.al. (2003) would call ‘Aura’, a sense of authenticity despite the modern updating. Similar to Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli and Mueller (2012) findings, respondents report a superior quality of those brands they consume. This means that consumption of retro brands can be viewed as a reluctant attitude towards a materialistic world with uninspiring and fake products, but also, that young consumers find retro brands as an assurance of quality.

“Even though retro may be a trend at the moment, I prefer the old, I do not like trends directly. I think it has to do with my personality that I enjoy old classics, I like to buy things that I can enjoy during a long period of time, it does not get that way with trendy things, you will grow tired of it and you do not want to use it. (...) I want things that last, for me it can be an indication of quality, if the first mug from Höganäs was designed in 1909, then it has been around for over 100 years, and the mug has been tested for a long time and then it will obviously have good quality. In general, I think that retro products have better quality... (...) If it was a bad product, they would stop selling it. (...) For me it is important that the feeling behind the product has a long history, it can be produced today, but that it strongly reminds me of the old. “- Martin

“Obviously I do not want a fake Louis Vuitton bag, then I do not get the same quality. After all I bought this bag because of the look, the materials, colors and high quality canvas. (...) I do not like fast-fashion such as H&M and Zara, it is to much weird clothing (...) it makes me want to throw them away after a week. “- Amanda

Similar to Brown, Kozinets and Sherry’s (2003) findings, we find that young consumers use qualities of retro brands to rebel against contemporary developments. Therefore, the expression of buying retro can be seen as a valuation of past ethos, what Brown et.al. (2003) recalls as ‘Arcadia’, an idealizing of

the past, and a resistance towards contemporary values of society. Retro brands with long history offers young consumers an assurance that the product have lasted for a long time and will probably do so in the future. Although the notion of quality is problematic, since the definition of quality often refer to how good or bad something is (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) it can be difficult to know whether something is of good quality or not. In its essence, it becomes a philosophical question of what is good and bad, and the answer that question can in some extent be explained by the reflection of contemporary values in society. In other words, the respondents strive for quality, something they say will last a long period of time, and that is what they value - long lasting is good. It is quite the contrary to what some call 'the fast capitalism' of the western world, with contemporary fast-fashion trends where consumption seem to be the way of life.

Consumers want the real deal, the genuine and true and consumption of retro products is a way to experience this (Beverland & Farrelly, 2009; Brown, Sherry, & Kozinets, 2003). We find examples of this in our interviews. Some participants in our interviews argue that retro products seem more genuine and pure than modern counterparts of the products. In some cases, it is the old design that make it feel more genuine while in other cases it is the usage of the product that create a more genuine feeling.

“When using a vinyl player, it is a kind of a ritual, you have to put the vinyl on and pull the lever and so on, when using Spotify it is just one click and nothing more. It gives more genuine and sort of pureness by doing the ritual. I don't know if the quality is any better or worse with a vinyl player but certainly the feeling is different.” - Daniel

In this particular case the respondent argues that the ritual of using a vinyl player creates a more authentic feeling than streaming services as Spotify do. Even though it is arguable more simple to use Spotify it does not give the same feeling of authenticity. The whole process of putting on a disc and pulling the lever and so on creates value for the consumer, the ritual seems more genuine than just playing music on Spotify.

6.0 Discussion

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and illustrate how young consumers make sense of retro consumption through the lens of nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity. Our research contributes to theory by combining nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity to explain how young consumers make sense of their retro consumption. The purpose is achieved by answering our research question: how do young consumers make sense of their retro consumption? Our findings suggest that consumption of

retro brands and retro aesthetics can act as a tool to mediate and express reluctant attitudes towards contemporary society because retro brands and products are considered as authentic and credible. Moreover, young consumers take distance to fake products and seek the real, as the real or authentic, is perceived to contribute with long lasting quality. We also find that young consumers seek timelessness, natural materials and earthy colors, they desire products that are pure as nature and will last a long period of time. Furthermore, we find that young consumers have a romanticized and glamorized view of past times and that media is a driving force. Through TV-series, social media, pop culture and so on, young consumers are enchanted and nostalgic about the times that is portrayed in an attractive way.

6.1 The paradox of buying retro

Something we find interesting while looking through our data is that there seems to be a looming paradox over young consumers' view on retro products as a way to rebel against modern society. On one hand, young consumers want something authentic, something pure, something that enchant them and retro products can provide this in some sense. On the other hand, many retro products and brands are mass produced and are as popular as ever, so does that not make them exactly the same as modern products apart from the design? However, young consumers justify their consumption by claiming that the products they buy are authentic, they have a deeper meaning, something valuable, in contrary to that of modern products. We suggest that this is an act of resistance towards what is seen as a fast-capitalistic society, which is a perception of a rapidly changing society with exaggerated consumption of mass-produced goods (Grey, 2008). Paradoxically, our findings suggest that young consumers express their resistance towards contemporary society by performing consumption. In other words, young consumers are contributing to what they seem to oppose. This means that young consumers rebelling values towards contemporary society actually contributes to what some call a fast-capitalistic society, by consuming retro brands and retro products.

6.2 Longing for a fictive past

Young consumers want to relive the mediated past and not the "real" past. Retro products is a way for them to take part in the lost enchanted world of past time. Drawing from Davis (1979) ideas of nostalgia we have noticed that young consumers can feel nostalgic towards certain periods of history. Personal, collective/communal and mediated nostalgia are all present in our interviews. However, they appear in a slightly different manner than what Davis (1979) described. We argue that young consumers have a romanticized and glamorized view of past times and that media is a driving force.

Collective/communal nostalgia is apparent in our data but not in the way Davis (1979) explain, instead of full blown chaos in society it is rather stress and rapid changes that causes young consumers to gaze at past times with awe, a time of stability. We propose that the romanticized view that young consumers have towards retro products and brands is a creation of marketers. Through tv-series, social media, pop culture and so on, young consumers get enchanted and nostalgic about the times that is portrayed in an attractive way. This could be a partial explanation to why the respondents feel nostalgic towards a fictive past created by media, it offers young consumers a safe island to stand on in the midst of a rapidly changing society with exaggerated consumption.

6.3 Seeking pureness - nature and natural

The enchanting experience of retro brands and products seems to be connected to a time perspective and attributes of nature. The objects are often referred to as timeless and that they embody the aesthetics of being natural. Due to contemporary society with standardization, rationalization, pollution, stress, mass-production and uninspiring fake products, the admiration of the natural and nature might be a reflection of respondents values. We argue that the enchanting experiences of natural materials and earthy colors might be a longing and desire for something stable, something that is pure as nature and will last a long period of time. As William Cronon (1996, p.1.) mentioned, the nature "...stands as the last remaining place where civilization, that all too human disease, has not fully infected the earth. It is an island in the polluted sea of urban-industrial modernity, the one place we can turn for escape from our own too-muchness". Consequently, the aesthetics of old and natural designs become a safe island to stand on in modern society, which is characterized by fast-fashion and fluctuating trends. Timeless design is thought of being something that will last, something that will endure current trends, a resistance towards modernity.

6.4 Timeless is good - Trends are bad

We noticed that there seems to be a dialectical tension between the quest for old design and new design. On one hand, young consumers want the past now and on the other hand young consumers want the future now. Young consumer wants to consume what has already been, or what is yet to come in the future. This means that the present is bad, young consumers do not want to associate to the present. Instead, young consumers have a desire for the past or dreaming of future visions, which is perceived as much better than the present. For marketers this means that they have to associate brands and products either with the past or the future, since the present is not good enough to be associated with. While retro brands and products represent continuity, unlike many contemporary brands and products which are rather short-lived, young consumers associate retro brands and

products with long lasting quality and historical heritage. This means that young consumers can rely on retro brands and products as stable anchors and a reflection of something that will last, they offer a backdoor and an escape-route from fast-moving trends.

Marketers are offering a large amount of different mass-produced alternatives, and ironically, consumers become disenchanted although they have more consumption alternatives than previous generations. The huge amount of offerings of new modern products and design can have a disenchanting experience for the consumer. On one hand, this means that marketers will have to go back to previous design methods in order to appeal to retro consumers who oppose to contemporary modern products. On the other hand, it means that marketers have to struggle to re-authenticate brands and products, since some consumers can be disenchanted by brands and products who are perceived as inauthentic. The respondents strive for quality, something they say will last a long period of time, and that is what they value - long lasting is good. It is quite the contrary to what some call 'the fast capitalism' of the western world, with contemporary fast-fashion trends where high level of consumption seems to be the way of life (Grey, 2008). Young consumer take distance to fake products and seek the real, as the real or authentic, is perceived to contribute with long lasting quality.

6.5 Expressing discontent through retro brands

Similar to Brown, Kozinets and Sherry's (2003) and Mittal's (2006) findings, we find that young consumers use qualities of retro brands and products to rebel against contemporary developments, but also to criticize contemporary social value systems. On one hand, this means that retro brands and products can be a symbolic foundation for values and act as a medium to criticize contemporary social values. As Sirgy (1982) noticed, retro brands and products tend to work well in expressing characteristics and the self-concept, since retro brands and products are considered as authentic, credible and expressive. On the other hand, the expression of buying retro can be seen as a valuation of past ethos, what Brown et.al. (2003) recalls as 'Arcadia', an idealizing of the past, and a resistance towards contemporary values of society. As Walter Benjamin (1977) discussed, the rationalization of society with new possibilities of copying and serial production has led to a loss of 'aura', which has led to a fetish of originality and authenticity (Goulding, 2000; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). As stated earlier, authenticity is somewhat problematic, but according to Michel Pastoureau (quoted in Jones 1992 p.7), authenticity, but also falsity, must be seen as cultural constructs, "which have different meanings for different societies and at different times". This means that young consumers' perception of authenticity is a reflection of how they consume. For example, old-style products seem to be widely popular among young consumers and that young consumers find retro brands and products somewhat authentic as opposed to the modern mass-produced, fake and uninspiring products. Due to retro brands

and old-style products containment of past ethos and heritage, it is likely that young consumer favor this in front of modern products, which is most likely perceived as shallow with no deeper meaning and intrinsic value.

7.0 Marketing implications

The underlying paradox that young consumers contribute to what they seem to oppose, becomes an commercialized opportunity for marketers to exploit. The discontent or resistance towards contemporary society, that we find in this study, is information that marketers can use as an advantage in order to advertise retro brands and products. Marketers can push on the stressful and constant change of contemporary society in order to sell a message that retro brands and products can provide a safe haven of stability and calmness. However, the discussion can be made that young consumers' view of contemporary society is caused by marketers. In other words, young consumers' discontent towards the present is the consequence of marketers constant romanticizing and glamorization of past times. It is possible that the overflow of retro products and romanticizing of the past have a negative cause to how young consumers view contemporary society. Now, this may be a far fetched suggestion, however, we argue that by glamorizing the past too much, it may actually lead to harmful consequences in how consumers perceive modern society.

We do not try to claim that all retro marketing and retro consumption is a bad thing. There is nothing wrong with reminiscing about the past with fondness and admiration from time to time, but it has to be done with moderation in our opinion. Certainly, in some cases the phrase "it was better in the good old days" ring some truth to it. However, constantly looking back at history with envy and wanting to relive the past can result in a view that contemporary society can never live up to past times. As Brown (2018) argues, retro consumption is not something new and seems to have no stopping anytime soon. The so called "trend" or "fad" of retro consumption has been around for more than 20 years which makes it more than just a trend (Davis, 1979; Brown, 2018). With a constant exposure of retro products, it is no wonder that young consumers look at contemporary society with discontent. Their whole life they have been exposed to the retro "trend" which romanticize and glamorize the past. We suggest that this romanticizing of the past indirectly indicates that the present is not as good as the past. To borrow the wording of Brown (2001), "the retromania" in western culture has influenced the whole society and various product categories, everything from cars to movies (Brown, Sherry, & Kozinets, 2003). The "retromania" in society can be seen as either something positive or negative. Retro products can be a safe haven from the ever changing contemporary society, but as we argue, the marketing of these retro products can also potentially cause a negative view on contemporary society.

We have above described this study's marketing implications and implications to the society, but what is the implications for individuals? This study can provide an eye opener for individuals to make them reflect on their sense making around retro products. By being aware of retro marketing and the potentially harming effects it can have, individuals can take preventive steps and look at the constant romanticizing of past times more neutral. Awareness that past times are glamorized can maybe shift individuals' perspective on contemporary society, that it is not necessarily worse than past times. For example, if individuals come across retro marketing that romanticize the past, they can reflect on it and assess if it is a fictive representation of past. By doing so, individuals can avoid being subject to romanticizing and longing for a fake past. For example, Jenss (2004) noted that german youths inspired by the sixties tend to exaggerate the hairstyles from the sixties. Compared to sixties images, haircuts have a more natural look and less helmet-like look. Of course, the spotting of misrepresentation or exaggeration of the past takes effort from the individual and is easier said than done. Now, this is of course speculation from our part and the subject requires further research, but we argue that it is an interesting discussion at least.

8.0 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and illustrate how young consumers make sense of retro consumption through the lens of nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity. To achieve our purpose, we answered our research question: how do young consumers make sense of their retro consumption? Our findings suggest that young consumers make sense of retro consumption by using retro brands and retro aesthetics to mediate and express discontent towards contemporary society. Young consumers do this by using retro products since they are considered as authentic, credible and expressive, to take distance to what is perceived as modern and fake. Retro is viewed upon as something real or authentic which is perceived to contribute to long lasting quality, whereas modern products are reflecting bad quality and therefore less durable. In relation to long lasting quality, they seek timelessness as a resistance to contemporary trends in society. This means that retro is viewed as something that will endure and last longer than modern products, both in quality and overall aesthetics. For example, we find that young consumers seek nature, they emphasize natural materials and earthy colors, they have a desire for something that is pure as nature, as opposed to contemporary society. Furthermore, we find that young consumers have a romanticized and glamorized view of past times and that media is a driving force. Through TV-series, social media, pop culture and so on, young consumers are enchanted and nostalgic about the past times that is portrayed in an attractive way. To conclude, we argue that young consumers express discontent towards contemporary society by being enchanted by time and nature, seeking long lasting quality and being nostalgic about a romanticized past.

8.1 Earlier research & Future research

It is important to acknowledge that our study has its limitations and that we can not draw general conclusions from the results. Our aim is not to generalize the results, we rather seek to explain and understand how young consumers make sense of retro consumption. Our findings differ somewhat to that of Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli and Mueller (2012). They take another perspective and focus more on identity rather than using nostalgia, enchantment and authenticity. Hemetsberger et.al (2012) focuses only on retro brands while we look at retro brands and retro products which may be one reason for the different findings. However, we noticed that young consumers manifest and mediate personal values through consumption of retro products, which might indicate that young consumers use retro products in search for individual identity as described by Hemetsberger et.al (2012). Also, this study was conducted in Sweden, whereas Hemetsberger's et.al (2012) did their study in Austria, so there might be some cultural differences among young consumers in the two countries which can be one explanation of the different results.

Future research should focus on the subject but with other methods, such as focus groups and surveys. By using other methods, we can get further understanding regarding how young consumers make sense of retro consumption. Our suggestion that young consumers are discontent with contemporary society is something that a quantitative study could further examine. Furthermore, deeper research can be done in the subject by looking at differences between cultures and genders. For example, maybe there is some distinctions to be made if only looking at attitudes between genders? Future research should also investigate how young consumers make sense of retro consumption although they have no prior experience to the original counterpart of the retro product or brand. Since young consumers sometimes have no prior experience of the original counterpart because of their age, it is important for marketers to understand why young consumers buy retro products although they have no nostalgic connection to the original brand or product. As this might further explain retro consumption among young consumers.

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