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Nostalgia-Based Co-Branding Strategy Influencing Consumer Decisions in Kinder Joy Products

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Abstract. Nostalgia has become an increasingly relevant marketing strategy for influencing consumer decisions through emotional memory and symbolic brand associations. However, limited empirical evidence explains how nostalgia-based co-branding strategies affect purchase intention, especially in confectionery products. This study investigates the influence of nostalgia-based collaboration on consumer decisions toward Kinder Joy products, focusing on emotional motivation, purchase intention, and the role of social media awareness. This study employed a quantitative explanatory design using primary data collected through an online questionnaire. A total of 234 respondents participated in the survey. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, regression analysis, and chi-square testing to examine the relationship between nostalgia appeal, co-branding collaboration, consumer awareness, and purchase behavior. The results show that 41.1% of respondents expressed likely or very likely purchase intention toward nostalgia-based collaboration products. Emotional nostalgia related to Kinder Joy childhood memories (32.5%) and attachment to the Harry Potter franchise (29.9%) were stronger purchase drivers than advertising (23.1%). Social media was identified as the dominant awareness channel, with 54.5% of respondents first discovering the product through digital platforms. Regression analysis confirmed a statistically significant positive effect of nostalgia-based collaboration on purchase intention ($p < 0.001$). The study concludes that nostalgia-based co-branding is an effective strategy for increasing consumer interest by combining emotional memory, franchise popularity, and digital amplification. Firms are encouraged to integrate nostalgic storytelling with strategic partnerships and social media engagement to strengthen market performance. Future research should explore broader markets, comparative product categories, and mediating psychological variables.

Keywords: Nostalgia marketing; Co-branding strategy; Consumer decisions; Purchase intention; Kinder Joy; Social media marketing

1. Introduction

Brands are required to develop innovative strategies that go beyond functional value and price competition (Haudi et al., 2022; Tahir et al., 2024; Zha et al., 2025). Contemporary consumers often seek products that provide emotional meaning, symbolic

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identity, and memorable experiences. One of the most effective approaches in this context is nostalgia marketing, where brands evoke positive memories from the past to create stronger emotional attachment in the present. Nostalgia has been recognized as a powerful psychological resource associated with social connectedness, self-continuity, and positive affective states (Sedikides *et al.*, 2015). From a marketing perspective, nostalgic cues can strengthen brand preference, improve consumer attitudes, and stimulate purchase intention by reconnecting individuals with meaningful life experiences (Daszkiewicz, 2024). Therefore, nostalgia-based branding ideally serves not only as a communication tactic but also as a strategic mechanism for long-term customer engagement.

The growing relevance of nostalgia has become more visible in the era of co-branding and franchise collaboration. Many companies collaborate with iconic entertainment properties, legacy brands, or cultural symbols to combine market reach with emotional resonance. Co-branding allows firms to transfer symbolic meanings from one brand to another while attracting multiple audience segments simultaneously. According to Helmig *et al.* (2008), co-branding enhances perceived product quality, differentiation, and consumer trust when managed strategically. In practice, nostalgia-based collaborations between food brands and popular franchises have become common because they generate excitement, collectability, and social media conversations. This trend indicates that consumers no longer purchase products solely for utility, but also for identity expression, emotional pleasure, and participation in popular culture.

Previous studies have consistently shown that nostalgia positively influences consumer behavior. Zhou *et al.* (2012) found that nostalgia increases optimism and psychological comfort, which can indirectly affect consumption choices. In a branding context, Heinberg *et al.* (2020) demonstrated that nostalgic brand positioning significantly strengthens brand equity in both emerging and developed markets. Similarly, Saraniyan (2023) reported that nostalgia-based marketing positively shapes consumer perception and emotional attachment toward brands. These findings suggest that nostalgic stimuli can create favorable responses by transforming personal memories into commercial value. However, most prior research has focused on general brand contexts, tourism, fashion, or heritage products rather than fast-moving confectionery products targeting younger consumers.

At the factual market level, Kinder Joy has adopted a nostalgia-based co-branding strategy through collaborations with globally recognized franchises such as Harry Potter, Barbie, and Hot Wheels. Such collaborations combine the childhood familiarity of Kinder Joy with the emotional memory associated with entertainment franchises. This strategy is particularly relevant in contemporary markets where consumers actively share unboxing experiences, collectible items, and limited-edition purchases on social media platforms. User-generated content has become an important amplifier of brand narratives because consumers themselves participate in disseminating emotional experiences. According to Kapoor *et al.* (2018), social media engagement significantly affects brand awareness, community interaction, and purchase intention through peer influence mechanisms. Thus, the Kinder Joy case provides an important real-world example of how nostalgia, collaboration, and digital visibility interact in shaping consumer decisions.

Despite the growing popularity of nostalgia campaigns, several research gaps remain unresolved. First, limited studies specifically examine nostalgia-based co-branding in low-involvement consumer goods such as chocolates or snack products. Second, previous literature often analyzes nostalgia as an independent emotional construct without



integrating collaboration effects and social media exposure in one model. Third, there is insufficient evidence from emerging markets, particularly Asian urban consumers, where youthful demographics and digital consumption behavior may create unique responses. Li et al. (2025), in their bibliometric review of media convergence and communication trends, emphasized the need for more context-specific studies that connect emotional branding strategies with digital interaction environments. Therefore, empirical investigation into Kinder Joy products offers a timely opportunity to address these limitations.

This study is significant both theoretically and managerially. Theoretically, it extends consumer behavior literature by integrating nostalgia marketing with co-branding strategy and consumer decision-making in a single framework. It also contributes to emotional branding discussions by showing how childhood memory and franchise symbolism jointly influence contemporary consumption. From a managerial perspective, the findings can help firms design more effective limited-edition campaigns, partnership strategies, and digital promotions. As noted by Kotler & Keller Lane (2016), successful marketing increasingly depends on creating customer experiences that generate emotional relevance rather than merely communicating product attributes. Hence, understanding nostalgia-based collaboration becomes strategically valuable for firms operating in saturated markets.

Based on these considerations, the purpose of this study is to examine how nostalgia-based co-branding strategies influence consumer decisions in Kinder Joy products. Specifically, this research investigates the role of nostalgia in shaping purchase intention, analyzes the impact of franchise collaboration on brand perception, and explores how social media functions as a source of awareness for nostalgic campaigns. By doing so, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on whether emotional memory combined with strategic partnerships can effectively enhance consumer response in modern product markets.

2. Methods

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to examine how a nostalgia-based co-branding strategy influences consumer decisions toward Kinder Joy products (Charli et al., 2022; Takona, 2024; Weyant, 2022). A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to test relationships among measurable variables such as nostalgia perception, brand collaboration appeal, social media awareness, brand perception, and purchase intention. According to Creswell (2003), quantitative methods are effective for identifying patterns, measuring associations, and generating empirical generalizations from consumer data.

The research was conducted in Hyderabad, India, where Kinder Joy products and limited-edition collaborations have shown strong market visibility. The target population consisted of consumers who were familiar with Kinder Joy products, particularly the Harry Potter limited edition. Respondents included young adults and middle-aged consumers who had exposure to digital marketing campaigns or prior purchase experience. To capture relevant consumer perceptions efficiently, this study used a non-probability convenience sampling technique, in which respondents were selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate.

A total of 234 valid respondents participated in the survey. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed through online platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: (1)



demographic profile (age, gender, familiarity with Kinder Joy), and (2) measurement items related to nostalgia, collaboration attractiveness, awareness sources, perceived brand value, and purchase decisions. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The operational variables of the study included: independent variable = nostalgia-based co-branding strategy (X), and dependent variable = consumer decision/purchase intention (Y). Supporting variables included social media awareness and perceived brand value. Nostalgia-based co-branding refers to the extent to which collaboration with iconic franchises creates emotional memories and attractiveness for consumers. Consumer decision refers to the tendency of respondents to purchase, recommend, or prefer Kinder Joy products after exposure to the campaign.

All statistical analyses were performed using spreadsheet software and statistical packages. The significance level applied in this study was 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$). Results were interpreted to determine whether nostalgia-based co-branding significantly influences consumer decisions regarding Kinder Joy products.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Nostalgia-based co-branding significantly increases consumer purchase

Nostalgia-based co-branding has emerged as an effective contemporary marketing strategy because it combines two powerful psychological triggers: emotional memory and symbolic brand association. In the case of Kinder Joy (Arshiya Sultana *et al.*, 2022; Hernández Londoño *et al.*, 2024), collaboration with globally recognized franchises such as Harry Potter creates a bridge between childhood consumption memories and popular cultural identity. Consumers do not merely purchase chocolate products, but also buy the emotional experience attached to familiar stories, characters, and collectible value. This transformation from functional consumption into emotional consumption explains why co-branded products often generate stronger market attention than regular product variants.

The study found that consumer responses toward the Kinder Joy collaboration were dominantly positive. A total of 41.1% of respondents stated they were likely or very likely to purchase Kinder Joy products when the brand collaborated with nostalgic franchises. This figure indicates that nearly half of the sampled consumers perceived the collaboration as attractive enough to trigger buying intention. By contrast, only 23.9% reported unlikely or very unlikely intentions, while 33.8% remained neutral. The large neutral segment suggests that although nostalgia is influential, some consumers still consider additional factors such as price, product taste, or purchasing necessity before making final decisions.

From a behavioral perspective, nostalgia works as an emotional shortcut in decision-making. When consumers encounter a product associated with meaningful memories, they experience familiarity, comfort, and positive feelings that reduce hesitation during purchase evaluation. In Kinder Joy's case, many young adults grew up consuming the product, while Harry Potter represents a widely shared childhood entertainment memory. When these two symbols are combined, consumers may perceive the product as more exciting, emotionally valuable, and socially relevant. This emotional resonance often increases impulse buying, trial purchases, and repeat attention toward the brand.

The statistical results further strengthen this interpretation. Regression analysis showed a significant positive relationship between nostalgia-based collaboration appeal and purchase intention ($p < 0.001$). This means that the stronger consumers perceived



the collaboration as emotionally meaningful or attractive, the higher their likelihood of purchasing the product. In managerial terms, nostalgia is not simply a creative communication theme; it functions as a measurable determinant of consumer decisions. Companies can therefore strategically design collaborations that connect with generational memories, fandom culture, and symbolic identity to increase conversion rates.

Another important implication lies in market differentiation. In highly competitive confectionery markets, products often compete on similar dimensions such as price, sweetness, packaging size, or availability. Through nostalgia-based co-branding, Kinder Joy created a distinctive competitive advantage difficult for ordinary competitors to imitate quickly. Limited-edition franchise partnerships generate scarcity, urgency, and collectability, encouraging consumers to purchase not only for consumption but also for emotional ownership. As a result, co-branding can shift the product from a routine snack item into a culturally desirable object.

However, the findings also imply that nostalgia should be applied selectively. Since one-third of respondents remained neutral, not all consumers respond equally to emotional collaboration strategies. Some segments may prioritize affordability, nutritional concerns, or lack emotional attachment to the franchise. Therefore, nostalgia-based co-branding is most effective when combined with strong product quality, accessible pricing, and digital promotional support. In short, nostalgia creates the initial attraction, but long-term consumer retention still depends on overall customer value delivered by the brand.

Table 1 Consumer Purchase Intention toward Nostalgia-Based Co-Branding

Purchase Intention Category	Percentage
Very Likely	13.2%
Likely	28.2%
Neutral	33.8%
Unlikely	11.5%
Very Unlikely	12.4%
Total Positive Response (Likely + Very Likely)	41.1%

Source: Research findings (2026)

Table 1 shows that positive consumer responses dominated purchase intention toward Kinder Joy's nostalgia-based collaboration products, with 41.1% of respondents expressing likely or very likely intentions to purchase. Meanwhile, 33.8% remained neutral, indicating an undecided segment that may still be influenced by pricing, accessibility, or promotional exposure. Negative responses accounted for 23.9%, suggesting that nostalgia is impactful but not universal across all consumers. Overall, the data confirms that combining emotional nostalgia with iconic franchise partnerships can substantially improve product attractiveness and stimulate market demand.

3.2. Emotional nostalgia is a stronger purchase driver than conventional advertising

The findings of this study indicate that emotional nostalgia functions as a more powerful purchase driver than conventional advertising in influencing consumer decisions toward Kinder Joy products. In contemporary markets, consumers are increasingly exposed to thousands of advertisements every day, causing many promotional messages to lose persuasive power. Traditional advertising may create



awareness, but awareness alone does not always translate into emotional attachment or purchase action. By contrast, nostalgia appeals directly to consumers' memories, identity, and emotional experiences, making it more personally meaningful and psychologically persuasive.

The data revealed that 32.5% of respondents were motivated by nostalgia for Kinder Joy products, while 29.9% were influenced by emotional memories associated with the Harry Potter franchise. These two nostalgia-based motivations exceeded the impact of advertising exposure (23.1%). This pattern suggests that consumers were more strongly attracted by feelings of reconnecting with childhood moments and beloved fictional worlds than by standard promotional communication. Emotional memory therefore becomes a stronger stimulus than informational persuasion.

From a consumer psychology perspective, nostalgia creates what marketers often call warm emotional recall. When people remember positive experiences from childhood, they tend to experience comfort, happiness, and familiarity. These emotional states reduce resistance to purchasing decisions because the product is no longer evaluated solely through rational criteria such as price or necessity. In the Kinder Joy case, consumers may remember the excitement of opening surprise toys, while Harry Potter evokes imagination, friendship, and youthful entertainment experiences. Together, these memories generate emotional value beyond the product's functional use.

Conventional advertising, on the other hand, often relies on repetition, persuasive claims, visual attraction, or promotional incentives. While these methods remain useful for brand visibility, they may not always generate deep emotional responses. Consumers frequently ignore ads, skip digital commercials, or distrust persuasive messaging. This explains why advertising in the study produced a lower motivational effect than nostalgia. It is not that advertising is ineffective, but rather that emotional storytelling rooted in memory appears more capable of stimulating authentic consumer engagement and purchase desire.

Another important implication is that nostalgia can convert passive audiences into active consumers. A standard advertisement may simply remind people that a product exists, whereas nostalgia invites them to relive part of their personal history. In business terms, this means brands that successfully trigger emotional memory can generate stronger trial purchases, social sharing, word-of-mouth recommendations, and collectible demand. Kinder Joy's collaboration strategy transformed a simple confectionery item into a symbolic product representing childhood joy and cultural fandom.

However, nostalgia should not replace advertising entirely. Instead, the most effective strategy is integration. Advertising can provide reach and visibility, while nostalgia provides emotional depth and purchase motivation. Brands should therefore combine media promotion with emotionally rich narratives, legacy symbols, and limited-edition experiences. In highly saturated markets, consumers may forget advertisements quickly, but they tend to remember products that reconnect them with meaningful moments from their past.

Table 2 Main Purchase Motivators toward Kinder Joy Harry Potter Edition

Purchase Motivator	Percentage
Nostalgia for Kinder Joy Products	32.5%
Memories of Harry Potter Franchise	29.9%
Special Edition Collectability	26.1%
Advertising Exposure	23.1%



Never Purchased It	32.5%
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Source: Research findings (2026)

Table 2 demonstrates that nostalgia-related factors were the strongest motivations influencing consumer interest in the Kinder Joy Harry Potter edition. Nostalgia for Kinder Joy childhood memories ranked highest at 32.5%, followed by emotional attachment to the Harry Potter franchise at 29.9%, both exceeding the influence of advertising exposure at 23.1%. This indicates that consumers responded more positively to emotionally meaningful experiences than to conventional promotional messages. The findings confirm that emotional branding strategies rooted in memory and identity are more effective in driving consumer behavior than standard advertising alone.

3.3. Social Media as the Primary Catalyst for Amplifying Nostalgia Campaigns and Shaping Consumer Awareness

The findings of this study demonstrate that social media has become the most dominant channel in amplifying nostalgia-based marketing campaigns and building consumer awareness toward Kinder Joy limited-edition products. A total of 54.5% of respondents stated that they first learned about the Kinder Joy Harry Potter edition through social media, exceeding television advertisements, online ads, family recommendations, and peer communication. This indicates that in the contemporary digital marketplace, consumer awareness is increasingly shaped by interactive platforms rather than one-way traditional media. Social media has transformed the way brands communicate by allowing messages to spread rapidly, visually, and socially across networks.

This phenomenon can be explained through the Uses and Gratifications Theory proposed by Katz et al. (1973), which argues that audiences actively choose media channels that satisfy their needs for information, entertainment, identity, and social interaction. Consumers today prefer platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook because these media provide not only product information but also entertainment and community participation. In the context of Kinder Joy, users do not simply receive advertising messages; they actively watch unboxing videos, explore collectible content, and interact with other fans. Therefore, social media fulfills emotional and participatory needs that conventional advertising often cannot provide.

From a marketing communication perspective, the role of social media can also be interpreted through Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) Theory. According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), digital consumers are strongly influenced by opinions, reviews, and recommendations shared by other users online. In nostalgia campaigns, peer-generated content becomes especially persuasive because it appears more authentic than paid advertising. When users upload videos showing surprise toys, Harry Potter collectibles, or nostalgic reactions to Kinder Joy, audiences perceive the experience as genuine and relatable. As a result, social media users become secondary marketers who voluntarily amplify brand messages through their own networks.

The effectiveness of social media is also linked to the emotional structure of nostalgia itself. Nostalgia is most powerful when memories are visually stimulated and socially shared. Images of familiar packaging, iconic characters, childhood snacks, and collector items can instantly trigger emotional recall. According to Sedikides & Wildschut (2018), nostalgia strengthens social connectedness and positive self-continuity by reconnecting individuals with meaningful past experiences. Social media platforms are ideal



environments for such emotional triggers because they rely heavily on visual storytelling, short-form video, and public interaction. Thus, digital platforms intensify nostalgic responses more effectively than static promotional channels.

Another theoretical lens relevant to this finding is the AIDA Model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action). Social media is highly efficient in guiding consumers through all four stages simultaneously (Arianto, 2024; Mumtaz, 2019). Eye-catching content generates attention, nostalgic narratives build interest, collectible editions create desire, and embedded purchase links or retail information facilitate action. In the Kinder Joy case, a user may first notice a viral unboxing clip, become interested in the Harry Potter theme, desire the collectible toy, and then purchase the product shortly afterward. This integrated consumer journey explains why social media has become more influential than television or print advertising in product awareness campaigns.

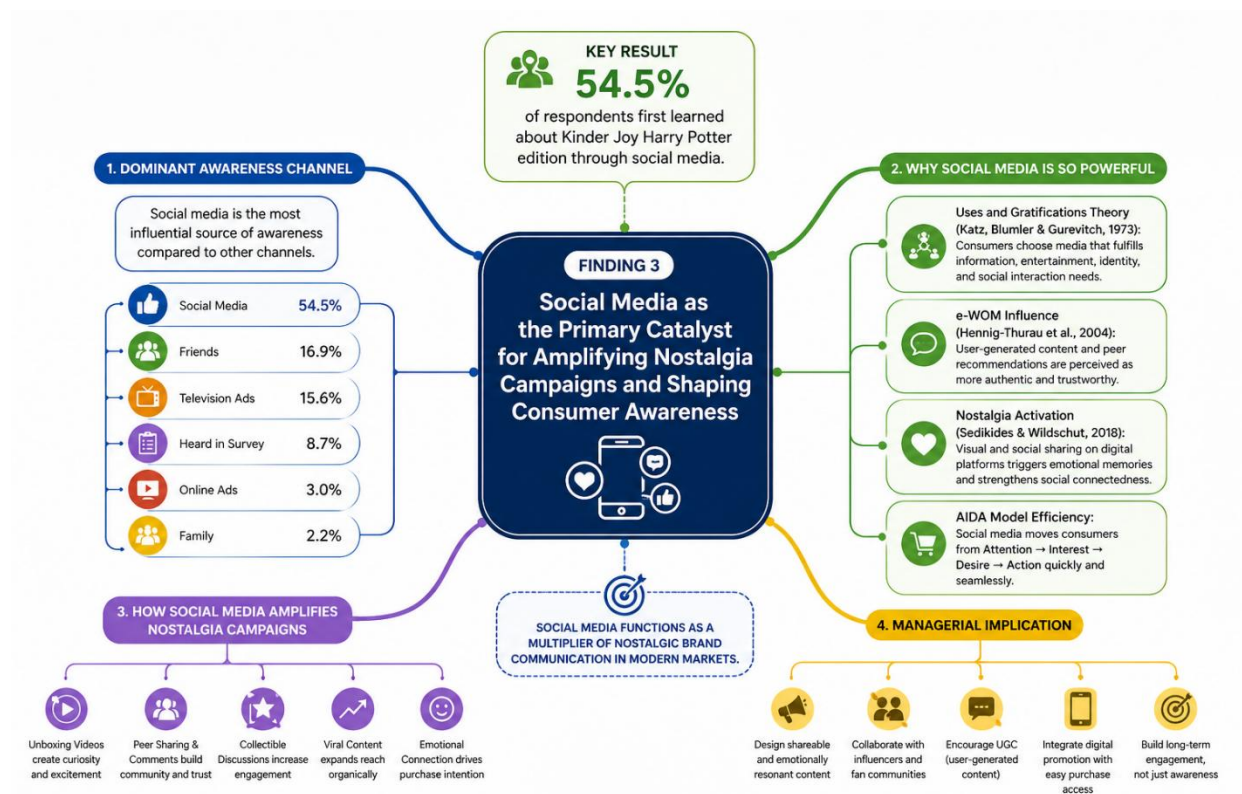


Figure 1 Social Media as the Primary Catalyst for Amplifying Nostalgia Campaigns and Consumer Awareness

Figure 1 illustrates that social media plays a dominant role in strengthening nostalgia-based marketing campaigns and increasing consumer awareness of the Kinder Joy Harry Potter limited edition. The central finding shows that 54.5% of respondents first discovered the product through social media, significantly higher than other channels such as friends, television advertisements, or online ads. The mind map also explains that platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook become effective because they enable unboxing videos, viral sharing, collectible discussions, and peer recommendations, all of which stimulate nostalgia and purchase interest.

However, the dominance of social media also suggests strategic implications for brand managers. Companies should no longer rely solely on traditional advertising to introduce limited-edition products. Instead, they need to design shareable experiences,

influencer collaborations, fan communities, and emotionally resonant storytelling that consumers are willing to circulate organically. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) noted that social media allows firms to co-create brand value together with users rather than merely broadcasting messages. Therefore, in modern nostalgia marketing, social media functions not only as a communication channel but as a multiplier system that transforms consumer memory into viral market awareness.

Table 3 Sources of Consumer Awareness for Kinder Joy Harry Potter Edition

Source of Awareness	Percentage
Social Media	54.5%
Friends	16.9%
Television Ads	15.6%
Heard About It in Survey	8.7%
Online Ads	3.0%
Family	2.2%

Source: Research findings (2026)

Table 3 clearly shows that social media was the most influential source of awareness (54.5%), far surpassing other channels such as friends (16.9%), television advertising (15.6%), and online ads (3.0%). This indicates that consumers were substantially more likely to discover the Kinder Joy limited edition through interactive digital platforms than through conventional promotional media. The findings confirm that social media has become the primary arena for spreading nostalgia campaigns because it combines visibility, peer influence, entertainment, and emotional engagement in a single communication environment.

4. Conclusions

The findings of this study confirm that nostalgia-based co-branding significantly influences consumer decisions toward Kinder Joy products. A total of 41.1% of respondents indicated likely or very likely purchase intention toward collaboration products, while 33.8% remained neutral and 23.9% expressed negative intentions. Emotional nostalgia emerged as a stronger purchase driver than conventional advertising, where 32.5% of respondents were motivated by childhood nostalgia for Kinder Joy and 29.9% by memories associated with the Harry Potter franchise, compared with only 23.1% influenced by advertising exposure. In addition, 54.5% of respondents first learned about the limited edition through social media, making it the most dominant awareness channel. Regression analysis also showed a statistically significant positive relationship between nostalgia-based collaboration appeal and purchase intention ($p < 0.001$).

From a discussion perspective, the study demonstrates that consumer behavior in modern markets is increasingly shaped by emotional branding rather than functional promotion alone. Nostalgia enables brands to transform ordinary products into symbolic consumption experiences by reconnecting consumers with meaningful childhood memories, cultural identity, and fandom attachment. The Kinder Joy collaboration illustrates how co-branding with iconic franchises can enhance perceived value, curiosity, and collectible appeal. Furthermore, social media acts as a multiplier of nostalgic communication by spreading unboxing content, peer recommendations, and viral engagement. These findings imply that firms should integrate emotional storytelling,



strategic partnerships, and digital community interaction to create stronger brand relevance and competitive differentiation.

This study has several limitations. First, the sample was geographically limited and primarily represented younger consumers, which may restrict broader generalization. Second, the use of convenience sampling may reduce representativeness across demographic segments. Third, the study focused on a single product collaboration, limiting cross-brand comparison. Future research is recommended to involve more diverse age groups and countries, apply probability sampling methods, and compare nostalgia-based campaigns across industries such as food, fashion, tourism, or digital products. Further studies should also examine mediating variables such as emotional attachment, brand trust, perceived scarcity, social identity, and online engagement to develop a more comprehensive model of nostalgia-driven consumer behavior.

Declaration of conflicting interests

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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