

## 1. Introduction

America has no now. We are reluctant to acknowledge the present. It is too embarrassing. Instead we reach into the past. Our culture is composed of sequels, reruns, remakes, revivals, reissues, re-releases, re-creations, re-enactments, adaptations, anniversaries, memorabilia, oldies radio and nostalgia record collections [1]. At least in this way the American comedian George Carlin commented on a surge of brands, products and themes from the past. This statement can surely be applied to the facts of Europe and the Slovak Republic as well.

People have a long-time need to remember their past, to discuss with their family or acquaintances their common memories of events. Nostalgia is a feeling we experience in returning to the past, and a sentimental desire for something or someone who has played an important role in our lives. Marketers were able to see and feel the opportunity in this sense and promoted it to a powerful marketing tool. Studies suggest that nostalgia encourages consumers to spend their money by promising an immediate return in the form of happy memories. The reason why retro marketing has become increasingly popular in recent years is the linking of the brand and the customer at a deeper, emotional level.

Basically, there is no definition of what exactly the term retro marketing means. However, attempts to identify the content can be found. Retro marketing is about using nostalgia for the past to make modern products more attractive. Retro marketing involves creating a brand identity, based on legacy or nostalgia for past products that the company has offered [2, 3]. Braggs adds that the task of retro marketing is finding new customers for old or styled old products and exploiting the brand's story [4]. The concept of retro marketing can be defined as a way of reconciling all sales aspects with things that can evoke the emotions, associated with the past. It is known, that emotional marketing or love brand marketing has the power to easily persuade customers to act as companies imagine and defend their favourite brands. It is likely that strong memories are one of the most decisive ways, in which emotions can be evoked.

A large part of the authors focus on consumer behaviour and marketing communication, when studying retro marketing. Brown tries to look at the issue comprehensively and in his work he analyses a number of otherwise commonly neglected aspects [5]. He tries to discover the reasons, why retro marketing is beneficial for companies. He states that emphasizing the brand's heritage is quite natural, because in terms of quality and performance, the situation between individual manufacturers is often quite balanced today. However, the longevity of the brand

## RETRO MARKETING – A PHENOMENON OF MODERN TIMES

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**Abstract:** Currently, consumer behaviour is influenced by trends that are clearly noticeable at different levels. Some organizations monitor changes in consumption and, on this basis, point to the general tendencies that are typical of today's consumers. The reason why retro marketing has become increasingly popular in recent years is the linking of the brand and the customer at a deeper, emotional level. It is designed to create a positive emotion that is favourable to the brand as well as to remember its message. The main aim of the paper is to find out, through secondary data and questionnaire research, how the young generation reacts to the elements and effects of retro marketing, compared to the older population, and what differences can be observed in its impact on the sample of male and female respondents. Subsequently according the results, the possibilities of applying a new trend of communication on the food market – retro marketing, also called nostalgia marketing, were suggested. The questionnaire survey was conducted only in the presence of a geographically limited population, namely Slovak customers. This may represent a certain limit to this paper, as the recommendations are proposed in terms of this limitation. It can be removed, if the research is considered to be relevant for the solution and the results achieved are subject to subsequent verification in an international environment. If these barriers were removed, more accurate results could be achieved.

**Keywords:** retro marketing, brand, customer behaviour, marketing research, food and beverage market.

adds credibility to the product and, conversely, says about the competition that it lacks this quality and that its reputation is weaker [6]. Retro orientation also softens the hard-sell approach to sales. Retro communication uses the past to humanize the present [7]. Of course, another reason that comes from the fact that marketing is a customer-oriented activity and its needs are customer preferences [8]. Perhaps the most serious impact of the retro approach, however, is to reduce risks and gain a competitive edge [9]. The idea is that if a concept worked in the past, it can work again. Using a retro brand almost automatically guarantees product awareness among consumers. A brand with an inheritance carries with it a certain story, a mechanism that evokes associations in memory. At the same time, the story of the brand and its authenticity is key to the success of current marketing [10]. Brand heritage can even serve as a representative of the consumer experience with a product.

Brown et al. try to list the factors behind the large return of retro products [11]. According to them, the first is the demographic development and the influence of a large generation

of baby boomers. A survey by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research revealed that the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s are the most missing period [12]. This generation, already at the time of adolescence, stood out against its surroundings and thus became a well distinguishable cohort [13]. Thus, current nostalgic tendencies are part of the effort to return the world to the form it was in, when they tried to change it. Gradually, however, Generation X is beginning to take the floor on retro trends. Thanks to the survey, we can point out that up to 75 % of Generation X respondents regularly watch YouTube videos that are related to events or people from the past [14].

Differences between other demographic segments may also partly explain the retro boom. For example, Samuel states that women adopt retro trends more easily than men, and the current emancipation of women and shifts of their position in society may be a significant factor [7]. Another factor behind the return of retro products is the stress, caused by modern society. Everyone is under pressure to move forward, to continually progress and evolve. As a reactionary force, there is a need to look back into the past, which, at least according to memory, was calm and happier and to stop at least for a moment. Products from these times add authenticity as well as confidence to this look back. The introduction of the retro product is especially in times of recession, when customers often cannot afford to experiment by buying unknown brands and trying new products. The familiarity and provenance of the retro brand thus significantly reduces the perceived risk, associated

with the purchase, and can thus convince the customer. Even large-scale political or socio-economic events activate desires for things past [15]. The current wave of retro product inflows may be due to the economic downturn and financial crisis, the constant emphasis on the risks, posed by climate change, the increasing importance of environmental organizations, and more. Thus, it is clear, that there are so many trends and events, representing social change that it is difficult for a person to deal with them all at once.

The main aim of the research is to find out, through secondary data and primary data as well, how the young generation reacts to the elements and effects of retro marketing, compared to the older population and what differences can be observed in its impact on the sample of male and female respondents. Subsequently according the results, the possibilities of applying a new trend of communication

## 2. Materials and Methods

For centuries, retailers have been trying to attract the general public by offering innovative solutions that bring customers the fulfilment of their needs and a set rate of profit. However, many of these consumers are inclined to believe that what has been proven for years can be described as good quality and are sceptical of modern solutions. With such an attitude, the use of the concept of retro marketing, which has found its place and application in the territory of the Slovak Republic, may seem to be a suitably chosen solution. The main aim of the paper is to find out, through available information, statistical methods and our questionnaire, how the young generation reacts to the elements and effects of retro marketing, compared to the older population and what differences can be observed in its impact on the sample of male and female respondents.

The survey was conducted in December 2019 by the CAWI method, on a representative sample of the Slovak population of 370 respondents. The structure of the surveyed sample was socio-demographically representative. The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions, related to retro marketing and 4 classification questions. The aim of the questionnaire was to assess the level of consumer awareness of the marketing of nostalgia and to determine whether its elements influence him/her so much that the consumer responds by buying retro-style food or beverages. Another task of the questionnaire survey was to obtain the necessary data for the evaluation of hypotheses. The method of statistical hypothesis testing was chosen for the research. It is one of the most important statistical inference procedures. The role of statistical inference is to decide on the basis of information on the available choices whether to accept or reject certain hypotheses with respect to the basic sample set. In order to do so, we proceeded in accordance with the methodology of statistical hypothesis testing. The variables examined are of nominal and ordinal character, therefore Kendall tau C and Kruskal wallis test were chosen as suitable measures of associations [16].

## 3. Results

The results of all established statistical hypotheses are shown in Fig. 1. To calculate the test statistic for the hypothesis, IBM SPSS Statistics software was used.

| Hypothesis   | Level of significance | Test statistics (p-value) | Decision rule        | Result of testing               |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>H<sub>0</sub></i> : There is no statistical dependence between the age and knowledge of retro marketing.  |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <i>H<sub>1</sub></i> : There is statistical dependence between the age and knowledge of retro marketing.   |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <b>Hypothesis A</b>  | <b>0.05</b>           | <b>0.739</b>              | <b>0.05&lt;0.739</b> | <b>H<sub>0</sub> acceptance</b> |
| <i>H<sub>0</sub></i> : There is no statistical dependence between the age and frequency of retro food and beverage purchases.                              |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <i>H<sub>1</sub></i> : There is statistical dependence between the age and frequency of retro food and beverage purchases.                                 |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <b>Hypothesis B</b>  | <b>0.05</b>           | <b>0.000</b>              | <b>0.05&gt;0.000</b> | <b>H<sub>0</sub> rejection</b>  |
| <i>H<sub>0</sub></i> : There is no statistical dependence between the gender and frequency of retro food and beverage purchases.                           |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <i>H<sub>1</sub></i> : There is statistical dependence between the gender and frequency of retro food and beverage purchases.                              |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <b>Hypothesis C</b>  | <b>0.05</b>           | <b>0.000</b>              | <b>0.05&gt;0.000</b> | <b>H<sub>0</sub> rejection</b>  |
| <i>H<sub>0</sub></i> : There is no statistical dependence between the gender and relation to brands of food and beverage that use the retro trend          |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <i>H<sub>1</sub></i> : There is statistical dependence between the gender and relation to brands of food and beverage that use the retro trend             |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <b>Hypothesis D</b>  | <b>0.05</b>           | <b>0.002</b>              | <b>0.05&gt;0.002</b> | <b>H<sub>0</sub> rejection</b>  |
| <i>H<sub>0</sub></i> : There is no statistical dependence between the gender and experiencing a feeling of nostalgia by retro food and beverage purchases. |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <i>H<sub>1</sub></i> : There is no statistical dependence between the gender and experiencing a feeling of nostalgia by retro food and beverage purchases  |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <b>Hypothesis E</b>  | <b>0.05</b>           | <b>0.058</b>              | <b>0.05&lt;0.058</b> | <b>H<sub>0</sub> acceptance</b> |
| <i>H<sub>0</sub></i> : There is no statistical dependence between the gender and perception of the quality and safety of retro food and beverage.          |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <i>H<sub>1</sub></i> : There is statistical dependence between the gender and perception of the quality and safety of retro food and beverage.             |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <b>Hypothesis F</b>  | <b>0.05</b>           | <b>0.000</b>              | <b>0.05&gt;0.000</b> | <b>H<sub>0</sub> rejection</b>  |
| <i>H<sub>0</sub></i> : There is no statistical dependence between the age and perception of the quality and safety of retro food and beverage              |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <i>H<sub>1</sub></i> : There is statistical dependence between the age and perception of the quality and safety of retro food and beverage                 |                       |                           |                      |                                 |
| <b>Hypothesis G</b>  | <b>0.05</b>           | <b>0.913</b>              | <b>0.05&lt;0.913</b> | <b>H<sub>0</sub> acceptance</b> |

Fig. 1. Testing of hypotheses

First of all, we were interested in whether age affects the knowledge and frequency of buying foods that use the retro trend. There was no statistically significant ratio in the relationship between retro marketing knowledge and age. It was interesting, however, that the younger age categories knew the term more than the older ones. The purchase frequency and age dependence was confirmed in this case. This dependence was also confirmed in the case of the respondent's gender. Another confirmed hypothesis was also the hypothesis, verifying the dependence between the relation to food brands that use the retro trend and gender. However, our assumption that women experience nostalgia more strongly than men has not been confirmed. The hypotheses F and G concerned the perception of the quality and safety of retro foods. In this case, it was confirmed, that the perception of the safety and quality of retro food, compared to the novelties on the market, is different in terms of gender, but not the age of the respondent.

## 4. Discussion

Based on the obtained theoretical information and after conducting a marketing survey, we found out several facts in connection with which we propose to companies, interested in using elements of retro marketing for their promotion, the following recommendations. Retro marketing brings the possibility of reviving a marketing campaign, used in the past, which has been a success. This also confirms the profitability of retro marketing – it is relatively easier to re-promote the prod-

uct, using the same technique as was used in the past and thus become a symbol of a certain period. The retro strategy needs to be based on authenticity. Such a strong marketing tool must retain its originality, so if companies are considering using a nostalgic marketing campaign, they must be critical. Most importantly, the brand's identity must be preserved. Therefore, we recommend taking advantage of your own history, reminding people how it all started and where the brand got. Based on the results of the questionnaire survey, it can be stated, that the use of retro marketing is of interest not only to older age categories, but also to younger ones. For this reason, we propose that businesses use social networks with nostalgic hashtags that link to the past. In this way, the young generation will also be able to access information, related to the company's history and thus establish a strong relationship with it that is important for retro

marketing. Connecting the past with the present. It is important to remember that customers are still living in the digital age, so we need to make sure that the campaigns are both exciting and nostalgic so that the right balance is struck. If businesses want to create a nostalgic marketing campaign that has a real impact, attention needs to be paid to details. There are many ways to make a retro campaign more modern and just a small detail can make a difference. Fonts, cover elements, or a word can instantly take people back to the most beautiful moments of childhood.

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