



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

Master's degree Project in Marketing and Consumption

**Enlightening the Present with the Past – Consumer's Yearning
for a Past Ethos: The Meaning Construction of Vintage Objects**

Carl-Fredrik Hansson

Supervisor: Benjamin Hartmann

Master's degree Project

Graduate School

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CARL-FREDRIK HANSSON

School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg

2020

Past themed market resources through nostalgia marketing are recognised to be charged with a romantic, emotional, imaginary and mythical relationship to the mundane everyday life. Explaining marketers targeting of consumers who have not lived during the time which the objects ordinate from or allude to and their consumption of past themed market resources with nostalgia may seem counterintuitive since they have not lived in the time which the objects ordinate from. This study investigates consumer’s meaning creation process of past themed market resources and identifies how consumers construct meanings in vintage objects through an imaginative and interpretative process. The process this study analyses more in detail is constructed by different interpretation practices of the past, where consumers interpret the past through different interactions with narratives of the time, blurring them together by imagination and then connecting the object to their romanticised past. Turning objects to symbolical entities charged with values and atmospheres from the past enable them to enact these in the present and by that loading experiences in the present with meaning and nostalgia.

C onsumers are increasingly rediscovering market resources from the past for its aesthetics and functions, which have gone out of time and have been deemed by many as unstylish for decades. Examples of the trend of rediscovering past objects and styles range from the revival of the LP player, 70/80/90s fashion trends becoming popular again, new music with the 80s themed new wave synth-pop sound

to graphic and filmographic styles from the past, which increasingly appear in marketplaces. This trend can also be seen in how the growing number of second-hand markets and how the consumption of vintage objects is becoming more popular. These two aspects both serve as a prosperous tool in rediscovering styles from the past and facilitate nostalgic consumption of objects. Simultaneously,

brands and media are co-creating this trend, by reviving brands, clotheslines, styles, products, filmographic styles, films, music sounds: that all play on a past ethos. This notion has been coined in consumer research as nostalgia marketing - offering past-themed products or brands - actual or fabricated (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019) and as retro marketing: old design with new updated functions (Hallegatte, Ertz & Marticotte, 2018). Past themed market resources through nostalgia marketing are recognised to be charged with a romantic, emotional, imaginary and mythical relationship to the mundane every day (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019). Marketers accentuate the nostalgic elements of objects by reviving designs which have linkages to the past and in many cases bear valuable meanings for consumers (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011). This, in turn, allow the consumers to retroject themselves into a romanticised past (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019; Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011), to use it as reactive means to the present cultural condition (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019) as well as social developments (Brown 2018; Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011) and to play with styles of the past to add sparkle and style to the present as a ludic way of nostalgic consumption (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019).

What may seem counterintuitive in this context is young consumer's nostalgic relationship to the past and their consumption of past themed market resources, since that they have not lived during the time which the market resources allude to (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011). Hartmann and Brunk (2019) argue that the consumer's, who have not lived to experience the time of which the market resources originate from, consumption is characterised as a

hedonic, ludic playful and ironic engagement with the past. Expanding on this Hartmann & Brunk (2019) further claim that this type of the nostalgic consumption is not rooted in bringing past moralities or values back from the past but rather serves merely as a ludic playground for consumers: to play with styles from the past to add excitement to consumption of objects in the present. In contrast, Hemetsberger et al (2011) on the other hand note that consumers which have not lived during the time which they experience nostalgia for, use consumption as a means to bring back the romanticised past, its idealised values and ethos. The nostalgia for past times derives from their parents, older acquaintances and grandparents' narratives together with lived childhood memories (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011). Further, Hemetsberger et al. (2011) claim that the nostalgic consumption serves as a critique of the current societal developments, such as materialisation, globalisation as well as to fake and artificial market offerings. Further, they note that it serves as a source of identity creation and expression in the social context (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011). The part of those consumers who have no lived experiences of the past can retrieve romanticised past and values through nostalgic consumption, Hartmann and Brunk (2019) on the other hand neglect. They claim that these consumer's consumption of past themed market resources is mere a ludic and hipsterian interpretation of the time, a playground for accessing ironic and extravagant styles which touch upon a lost time and place.

Thus, the state of the research on this kind of consumption is contested. This study takes that research collision as a starting point and aims to contribute to the understanding of consumers' nostalgic

consumption of objects from a time which they have not experienced.

Even though these two studies by Hartmann and Brunk (2019) and Hemetsberger et al. (2011) tackle the consumer's nostalgic consumption of a time which they have not lived to experience, the topic has been given relatively little attention in consumer research. Further, even though the state of research explains young consumers nostalgic consumption as being an identity creation means, a critique to the current societal developments (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011) and a way to bring sparkle to the present by consuming objects from the past in a ludic and hipsterian manner (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019), they do not however explain how the meaning creation process takes place: how consumers are creating meaning for objects and pasts which they have not lived to experience. Which in hand lets them experience nostalgia for the pasts (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011; Hartmann & Brunk, 2019), enables them to “retroject” to a past and its values as Hemetsberger et al. (2011) recognised and opens up for a hedonic playground as Hartmann and Brunk (2019) identified. The process beforehand the experience of nostalgia, which is referred to as the meaning creation process is as of yet not largely investigated in consumer research. Deriving from this, this study aims to answer questions in regard to how young consumers may experience nostalgia for pasts which they have not experienced and further explore the meaning creation process behind it. As illustrated above the state of research is contested, thus this study aims to broaden the spectre and make a contribution to the discussion of young consumers nostalgic consumption and further provide insights that may serve marketers to tap into.

This study's findings help to explain how consumers make sense of vintage objects and create romanticised pasts for

times which they have not experienced, by identifying and demonstrating that the meaning creation processes for objects of that past are characterised by an imaginative process, where consumers are blending fantasy with reality. Through ethnographic and in-depth interviews this study identified that the informants were found to construct meanings for objects and times through reading cues, interpreting media and creating symbolical values. By blending these, the informants were found to create fantasised narratives of past times and the object's history. The study's findings also demonstrate how the identified meaning creation process enables consumers to ascribe meanings to experiences in the present, by bridging values and atmospheres from the past to the present through the constructed symbolical meaning of the objects.

In doing so, the study's findings demonstrate the consumer as a creative and active producer of meanings for objects. By identifying the meaning creation process as an imaginative process characterised by puzzling together and interpreting bits of pieces of information which derives from the objects themselves, historical facts, marketing activities, movies and symbolical meanings deriving from that mix, the study contributes to the research of how the elements of fiction and reality can coexist in the same consumer experience. Further, this study's findings bridge the gap in understanding how consumers may experience nostalgia for times and objects, from a past which they have not experienced by investigating and mapping the imaginative meaning creation process. By doing so, this study also contributes to the understanding of how meanings for objects are created and how consumers, media and marketers influence that meaning construction.

The thesis is outlined as followed; After this brief introduction to the research area and the study's findings, the theoretical framework will be presented. Relevant literature will be discussed to guide and introduce the reader to the research topic and present literature more closely that serve as the premises for the analysis. Then, the chosen method's justifications and limitations will be presented together with describing the process of the data material collection and analysis. Following this, the results of the study will be presented in the next part which in turn are discussed with previous research. A concluding discussion is presented, where the results of this study are discussed, relating to meaning creation of objects, what contribution this study have in research and what the findings may mean for marketers concerned with past themed products.

Theoretical framework

In this section of the study relevant definitions, concepts and previous research interrelated with nostalgic consumption and meaning creation will be discussed, beginning with the origins of nostalgia and then moving on to present studies within contemporary nostalgic consumption, authenticity, meaning creation, media and subcultures.

1. Nostalgia

The term nostalgia is in constant flux, ever-changing: Coined by a medical student, Johannes Hoefler in 1688, the term initially described a physical state of tears, silence and suicidal tendencies deriving from homesickness experienced by soldiers (Brown, 2018; Niemeyer, 2015). From this the term gradually was altered and increasingly understood as a psychological state rather than a physical and described as a powerful emotion, containing

melancholic memories of a romanticised past rather than a homeland (Brown, 2018). Simultaneously the term entered into politics and popular culture and was often associated with negative connotations from most contemporary commentators (Brown, 2018; Niemeyer, 2015). For decades this notion of the term endured until the meaning was altered to something more complex (Brown 2018; Niemeyer, 2015). Today, rather than seeing nostalgia as a passive state it is merely a thing to actively engage with, and implied notions circulate more around belonging, identity and family (Niemeyer, 2015). Nostalgia in some instances can be used to belong in the present (May, 2017). May (2017) puts light on one dimension of nostalgia where individuals' longs for an era where their youth flourished. Nostalgia is in this regard characterised by picking out desirable bits and pieces of an era which foster the nostalgic belonging to that era (May 2017), hence creating a tendentious and idealised picture of that era, which may not be coherent with the real one. May (2017) also challenges the view of feeling nostalgic for an era prevents the individual to experience belonging in the present, by opposing: Having a disengagement with the present does not hinder the individual to experience a sense of belonging in the present. In that sense, nostalgia can be used to fill the gap between the past and the present. The connection to the past and belonging can be used as a strategy to give life to the bleak present (May, 2017). When the present does not offer a source for belonging, the past through nostalgia can be used to feel connected with the present (May, 2017).

2. Nostalgic consumption

Based on this definition, nostalgia is something that can be experienced, where the perceiver picks out desirable bits from a past. Consumers are rediscovering styles

and designs from the past, where vintage markets and second-hand markets serve as a prosperous space to rediscover objects and style from the past. At the same time are brands, media and consumers co-creating this trend, by reviving brands, styles, products, filmographic styles, films, music sounds: that all play on a past ethos. This notion has been coined as nostalgia marketing - offering past-themed products or brands - actual or fabricated (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019) and as retro marketing: old design with new updated functions (Hallegatte, Ertz & Marticotte 2018). The phenomenon can be viewed as a cultural movement, induced and accentuated by brands and consumers. Brands, films, tv-series and products produce nostalgic content and narratives (Niemeyer, 2015; Hartmann & Brunk, 2019; Brown, 2018; Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011). The examples range from tv-shows like *Mad Men* (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019; Brown, 2018; Niemeyer, 2015), *Stranger Things* (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019) and *Better Call Saul* (Niemeyer, 2015). They are capping the past where the narratives take place by incorporating objects, fashion, styles, brands, songs and technicality from the lost time and place. Media and brands are also creating nostalgic narratives by using new techniques to fabricate digital media to look old or by the use of techniques from the past. This can also be the form of manipulating the media so that it resembles the technicality of a certain former time period. Examples of this range from *Better Call Saul's* opening title, which simulates the typographic style of the '90s but is produced with new technique (Niemeyer, 2015) to Robert Eggers horror movie *The LightHouse*, starring Willem Dafoe and Robert Pattinson, shot with filmographic lenses from the '30s and using the typical stum cinematic square format film ration

(1.19.1) (Robinson, 2018, Oct 18). Further, there is also the dimension of old brands and marketing practices which can also be characterised as being nostalgic. Examples of retro brand practices are numerous. Examples of successful retro branding include the relaunch of VW Beetle, Converse, Mini Cooper and of the Star Wars franchise.

Nostalgia is recognised to be part of consumers experience in rediscovering and coming back to styles, objects and brands from the past. Hartmann and Brunk (2019) developed May's (2017) notion of how nostalgia can bridge the gap between a romanticised past and a bleak present. They found that past themed market resources and brands can represent the consumers longing for pasts, where their life was better and happier, but now is lost. By consuming brands from the era which they long for, it enables them to symbolically return to idealised pasts and bring it to play in the present (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019). Hartmann and Brunk (2019) write that consumers are enchanted by nostalgia marketing, in which they regard market resources from the past as special, exciting, magical and emotionally charged. They identify three different routes to enchantment by nostalgia marketing; re-instantiation, re-enactment and re-appropriation. The two first mentioned routes concern how nostalgia marketing can bring enchantment for consumers that have lived to experience the time which the nostalgia marketing alludes to. The re-enchantment root of re-instantiation enables the consumer to retroject themselves symbolically into a past cultural condition and re-instantiate it to the present. Here individual memories of brands and products come into play and create a melancholic nostalgia. Within the second route to enchantment by nostalgia marketing, re-enactment, consumers return

symbolically to a time and place, that they long for and value selected moral aspects of this period. Brands and practices from these valued cultural conditions are used to form the present and future. The third route, in which nostalgia marketing can create enchantment, Hartmann and Brunk (2019) coined as re-appropriation, which is described as a hedonic, creative, ludic, ironic, hipsterian way of using and consuming market resources from the past to give life to that time and place again. This route, in contrast to the two other identified re-enchantment roots, enables consumers to connect with a time and place which they have not lived or experienced. The route of appropriation is described to be linked to the ironic and ludic nostalgia where nostalgic dimensions involving retrieving morals, melancholia and dimensions of shaping the future or present with the consumption is neglected. The consumption that these consumers indulge in, are purely described by Hartmann and Brunk (2019) to be a playground for accessing ironic and extravagant styles which touch upon a lost time and place.

Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller (2011) mean that explaining younger individuals' consumption of retro brands with nostalgia may seem counterintuitive since they have no experience with the original brand during the time which the retro brand alludes from. However, Hemetsberger et al. (2011) remark that young consumers may be prone to experiencing nostalgia related to retro objects since they may build on older relative's stories and narratives together with their lived childhood memories.

Hemetsberger et al. (2011) explain that young consumer's consumption of retro brands serves the means of escaping unwanted present societal and market developments and to retroject themselves

into a romanticised past. Further, Hemetsberger et al. (2011) emphasise that young consumers reflect communal nostalgia in their consumption of retro brands, and that being characterised by romanticising past values. They argue that retro brands are powerful bearers of collective memory from the past time and its values (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011). By consuming retro brands, the consumer gets in contact with the romanticised past. The part of young consumers retro brand consumption is characterised by retrojection into a romanticised past and valorising past values that Hemetsberger et al. (2011) express are similar with Hartmann & Brunk's (2019) route, *re-instantiation*, where consumers can retroject themselves into an idealised past and instantiate it together with its values in the present. The two studies differ however in the sense that Hemetsberger et al. (2011) argues that consumers can engage with this type of retrojection even though they have not lived during the romanticised past, which Hartmann and Brunk (2019) does not recognise. What both studies, however, recognise (Hartmann & Brunk, 2018; Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011) is that consuming retro brands and indulging in nostalgic narratives is a means to cope with the present, to enlighten the present with values and styles from a past.

Further another dimension to the nostalgic dimension is briefly described by Hemetsberger et al. (2011) to be characterised by creating an imaginative and idealised past. This process is as of yet not investigated in the research area of nostalgic consumption. However, looking into other fields of consumer research potential linkages can be made with how consumers are authenticating an object and how that process is dependent on the

consumer's goals (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010) and how imagination influences the perception of authenticity (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Beverland and Farrelly (2010) identified that consumers seek and construct authenticity for objects and experience differently when the goals are dissimilar. There is thus no such thing as a universal authentic object since it is dependent on the judgement of the consumer facing the object (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). One object can be authentic for one consumer but be deemed as inauthentic by another since it is based on the consumers authenticating process. Beverland & Farrelly (2010) demonstrate consumer's production of authenticity, in mapping the hierarchy of meaning and causality of that process. Grayson and Martinec (2004) found that imagination influences the perception of authenticity. In their study, they found that the perception of authenticity for the tourist attraction of Shakespeare's birthplace was higher if the consumer could imagine that a pen in the museum had been used by Shakespeare. The findings demonstrate that fantasy and imagination influence the consumer in perceiving historical facts related to objects, showing the blur of fantasy and relativity consumers enact in consumption experiences. Grayson and Martinec (2004) found that the consumer's belief that a historical person as Shakespeare existed was dependent on their imagination that Shakespeare used the pen. Demonstrating the blur of fantasy and relativity consumers enact in consumption experiences. The consumers did not use imagination to make fiction seem more real but used fiction to make historical facts seem more real (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Further, Grayson and Martinec (2004) call upon more research on how the opposing elements of fantasy and reality can be part

of the same experience, which this study will investigate further.

As noted in the differences between Hartmann and Brunk (2019) and Hemetsberger et al. (2011), in understanding consumer's consumption of past themed market resources and the connection with nostalgia the state of the research is contested. Further, the studies do not investigate the process of how young consumers create meanings for retro brands offerings or vintage objects and the time which they ordinate from. In addressing the objective of this study: investigate consumers nostalgic consumption of objects which ordinate from a time which they have not experienced and the meaning creation behind it: I will look into consumers authenticating process of objects (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Grayson & Martinec, 2004) and turn briefly to Holt's (1997) argumentation of cultural frameworks and the meaning creation of objects.

3. Meaning creation of objects

In understanding meaning creation, Holt's (1997) study becomes fruitful in several ways. In his study, he argues that the meanings behind objects are constructed through the cultural process of intertextuality. This process of constructing meaning to an object by metaphorical, narrative and imagistic ascribing and associating the object with other cultural objects which is part of the historically accumulated resources of collectivity (Holt, 1997). The meanings of objects are unstable since it is dependent on what linkages is made by the consumers (Holt, 1997). The linkages which are attached to the object is in turn dependent on what cultural frameworks the consumers have constructed, which is constructed through the time of interpersonal and mediated interactions within a particular socio-

historical context (Holt, 1997). Holt (1997) describes that consumption objects are thus better understood as polysemic symbolical resources which vary in meaning since it is dependent on the consumer's interpretation. The process of consumers creating meaning for objects which Holt (1997) describes, will be used in understanding how young consumers create meanings for objects which ordinate from a time which they have not lived. The cultural frameworks that Holt (1997) describes, will in this study be understood as every type of media and narratives deriving from the actual past and media and narratives portraying the past which the consumers romanticise.

4. Subcultures, objects and media.

Media's role in nostalgic consumption is a perspective which has given relatively little attention to in consumer research. Thornton (1995) remarked media's role of subcultural capital and argued in order to study a youth subculture, a media review of their media consumption have to be carried out. Connecting it with authenticity being a central role in both nostalgic consumption (Niemeyer, 2015; Grebosz-Krawczyk, 2019) and in subcultures (Beverland, Farrelly & Quester, 2010) it becomes evident that the media consumption in relation to the nostalgic consumption serves as an interesting angle and tool in investigating consumer's consumption of past themed market resources which have not lived the past. What has been seen in this study's literature scan, previous research has not investigated media's role in nostalgic consumption which is one of the reasons why the angle is incorporated in the study.

To address and investigate the meaning creation behind young consumers consumption of past themed items,

subcultural studies will be considered in particular McAlexander and Schouten (1995) and Thornton (1995). The connection between young consumers nostalgic consumption and subcultures lies in how McAlexander and Schouten (1995) identify subculture of consumption.

“A subculture of consumption comes into existence as people identify with certain objects or consumption activities and, through those objects or activities, identify with other people” - McAlexander and Schouten (1995), p 48.

Subculture studies become evident since both subcultures of consumption (McAlexander & Schouten, 1995) and nostalgic consumption are identified to serve identity creation purposes (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011).

What has been created within the subcultures, such as codes of style and meanings of objects and events may find its way out to the broader market and commercialised for mass consumption (Thornton, 1995; McAlexander & Schouten, 1995). Classifying and investigating nostalgic consumption in relation to subcultures is not explicitly dealt with in this study. This study, however, regards nostalgic consumption as an interwoven phenomenon with subcultural consumption, academia of subcultural studies is thus used.

Subcultural studies pay attention to media's mediating role in creating an ethos around the consumption of objects and further how they help to co-create subcultures (Thornton, 1995). Thornton (1995) address the niche media of the subcultures, the often user or organiser generated content such as fanzines, flyers, email-lists together with word-of-mouth

and dismisses the romanisation of these as authentic and self-governed. Thornton (1995) argues that these often are influenced by other media and businesses. By categorisation and labelling of social groups, sounds and clothing, consumer magazines such as style and music press define vague cultural formations and give life to materials which in turn become subcultural homologies (Thornton, 1995). Music and style press then, writes Thornton (1995), do not just write about subcultures, they are co-creating them, by shaping, redefining their borders and identify their core. Thornton (1995) argues in order to understand the connection between a youth subculture and the media two questions have to be posed and differentiated. Firstly, how do the members of the subculture position the media according to the codes of the subculture? And secondly, one also has to consider, how are the media part of the formation of the subculture? Based on this, in investigating young consumers nostalgic consumption, their media consumption will be analysed.

Method

As this study investigates meaning-based consumption, the methodological process of the hermeneutic circle (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) was applied. Three ethnographic studies were applied in the initial data gathering, the first was carried out on a vintage market and the other two in vintage stores. This was done in order to observe the vintage phenomenon and gain an understanding of the informant's culture (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Several more were intended to be carried out but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they were cancelled. The onsite observations together with two ethnographic interviews gave me understandings of the phenomenon of vintage consumption and further raised questions on dimensions to investigate. The

second phase of the data gathering consisted of eight semi-structured interviews. The participants were located by approaching individuals during the ethnographic study and by publishing an inquiry in two vintage and retro Facebook groups. This was done as a method to allocate informants which had an interest in past objects. This may have affected the results in having very engaged and interested informants of past objects and atmospheres. Every participant who responded to the inquiry and was willing to participate in an interview was then interviewed over video or voice telecommunication applications for approximately an hour. The interviews consisted of circulating around a set of questions about their vintage consumption, their interest in past cultural places, their inner image of the time and their media consumption related to that. The overall aim of the questions in the first interviews was to discover what made the interviewees consume objects and idealise a past which they had not experienced, in trying to gain the emic perspective (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Gradually recurring topics and dimensions were identified which was then read upon in research which influenced the later interviews, in investigating the dimensions deeper by asking questions in relations to these topics, accordingly with the hermeneutic circle (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

The nature of semi-structured interviews allowed the informants to articulate how they made sense of their vintage consumption and the meaning creation. It further allowed me as a researcher to ask further questions about topics and dimensions which the informants themselves brought up (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To facilitate the informants to express complex answers about the meaning creation, the informants were

asked to speak of a particular vintage object which they were especially fond of and what they signified for them. Topics of authenticity was also an issue in the interviews, by asking the informants to elaborate on their view of vintage objects and reproductions. The interviews were transcribed and then coded according to emerging concepts and patterns. The analysis was as Crang and Cook (2007) suggest a process which was characterised by chopping up, change the order, de-contextualise and re-do the piecing together of the data. Emerging themes, patterns and connections were identified after a couple of interviews, which was interpreted with newly introduced literature to the research. The emerging patterns and themes were then investigated further in the later interviews. The analysis and interpretations then, was done throughout the research, which is a typical procedure for ethnographic research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The analytical and interpretative process was characterised by going back and forth with emerging themes, reading more literature and puzzle the data together. The process of interpreting and analysing can be described as a hermeneutic process, a method where I as a researcher was present in conceptualising understandings (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). What should be noted in terms of the issue of quality is that the data was not interpreted in vacuum but I as a researcher with my background and knowledge interpreted and analysed the data, accordingly with the hermeneutic circle (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

Findings and Analysis

YOUNG CONSUMERS NOSTALGIC CONSUMPTION

Consumer research has hitherto investigated how nostalgia marketing can

create enchantment and that consumers may indulge with past themed market resources and experience nostalgia for the times which they derive from (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019) and identified that young consumers' may extract values from the past by consuming retro brands (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011). The process that takes place beforehand has not been investigated however, how consumers are making sense of the past which they have not experienced and create meaning for the objects which allude to those pasts. This study then, by identifying and mapping the meaning creation process that takes place, fills the gap in research by answering how consumers may experience nostalgia through consumption for times which they have not experienced, as previous studies have identified (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019, Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011).

This study shows that young consumers may nostalgically consume objects from a time that they have not experienced by analysing and mapping the meaning creation of vintage objects and the past which they originate from. This study extends the current state of research, by identifying that the meaning creation process of nostalgic consumption is characterised by blending fantasy with reality – a process where the consumers were found to interpret the history of the vintage object in an imaginative manner, fanaticising about who the past owners were, what it had experienced what the cultural time and place were like which the object originated from. This study identifies that the process consists of creating imaginative narratives about the objects, which in turn were built upon interpreting cues of the vintage objects, connecting them with their constructed romanticised past and by that construct symbolical

objects filled with values and atmospheres from the constructed romanticised past which in hand enables them to enact the meanings which they have assigned to the objects.

This study then showcases in-depth how young consumers construct meanings of vintage objects using interpretative strategies to construct a cultural lifeworld which in turn is symbolised in the object. By connecting the object with cultural frameworks, the object becomes a symbol for the cultural lifeworld which in turn serves the consumers to enact in the present. Four stages in the construction of meaning through interpretative strategies were found; first, *interpreting cues of vintage objects*, second, *constructing a romanticised past* and third, linking these two first stages through an imaginative and narrative process which in hand constructs meanings to the object: *Connecting the object with the constructed romanticised past*. And fourth, enacting the meanings in the present, termed as *Bridging the romanticised past and values into the present with symbolic objects*. In the following sections, this study's findings of the meaning creation of vintage objects will be outlined together with the different tools and frameworks used. The four stages constitute the identified meaning creation process of vintage objects which is presented under the heading: *Constructing a fantasised narrative*.

Constructing a fantasised nostalgic narrative

In the informant's accounts of their vintage consumption, cues of the objects were associated with certain ideas and romanticised pictures of the era which the object originated from. The informants connected the cues with their romanticised picture of the era and constructed a fantasised narrative about the vintage

object. By constructing this narrative, it enabled them to retrieve atmospheres and past ethos and at the same time, to use it to enlighten the present. The cues ranged from torn fabric, needlework, design to whole garments which indicated that the objects were made and used in a former past time. The informants interpreted and connected these cues to their inner bank of interpretations and romantic associations of a time that they perceive as lost. This set of individual interpretations was in turn constructed by consuming LP-covers, movies, documentaries, pictures and stories of the time from which the object originates from and the possible owners of the objects lived in, and media portraying that past, all serving to construct a picture of the "lost" time.

To conclude this far, the cues which were actively connected to romantic associations of consumers that in turn are created through media and in some cases, personal stories were together used to construct a narrative of the object. The following section will analyse the outlined meaning construction process and its stages in more detail.

Constructing a fantasised nostalgic narrative: *Interpreting cues of vintage objects*

Several informants gave recollections of how they interpreted cues of the objects. The cues ranged from torn garments, stitches, stories of the past owners to the object's design, which the informants identified as proofs of that the objects had a long history and were worn and used by different people. Thus, the cues were read as signs for the object's long and diverse history.

Consider this account of how the cues such as *production date, silk,*

handcraftsmanship and embroideries are interpreted as small pieces of evidence of the garments' full and diverse history; and how the care and maintenance for the objects are connected with the informant's idea of a romanticised past which in turn serves to construct a fantasised narrative of the object.

Sara, 30: Pretty recently I bought an old nightdress which is from the '30s. In silk. It is handcrafted and embroidered and totally marvellous. When I found it, it was like my body went into flames since it was so beautiful. And the fact that it is handcrafted, that someone has sat down and knitted it sometime in the 30s makes that the garment is full of history. It is someone who has owned this garment, cared and loved for it and this makes me always crazy only thinking of, that it is full of history.

Similarly consider how Inga-Lill, 34, Sara, 29 and Isac, 30, interpreted cues, and what they signified.

Inga-Lill, 34: you wonder of course by whom the garment has been worn, if you know that it is someone who has made it herself, I might think it was... Often it was someone younger who was useful at home and sewed a lot. Or if you see that a garment is tailor-made, my mind wanders to that it was worn by a person who was better off, not a regular working-class woman... If you can say that a garment has a soul, a garment from the 50s has a soul.

Sara, 29: I have a blouse from about 1910 which is very neat, in its very thin wool fabric and beautiful embroideries. I think it was a garment, which was very precious then since it still exists in such good shape, so I think it was someone's finest blouse... It is nice that I am able to wear such an old and precious garment since it is so beautiful and it gives me an emotion or it has an emotional value to it, both for me but also for the persons who wore it before me.

Isac, 30: Do you see these buttons, I don't know if you can see them, but there are little stars on them which tells you that this

jacket is from the second world war, more specifically from the American side... When you take a vintage garment in your hands, it is something that speaks to you, it tells you a story. (...) This is a pair of '80s/70's shades, they come from the Japanese mafia's storage that was confiscated, so it is something that is cool about them, both the design of the frame but also the history and then it is like I wear different peoples stories on me.

The cues signified to the informants that the objects had been through times and experienced things, worn by people from a past which no longer exists. The informants could read off the cues by whom the garments had been worn, what the past owner's socio-economic background was and what experiences the object might have endured through time. Through reading the cues the consumers were found to imagine the history of the object, by connecting them to their inner interpretation of how the cultural time and people living in that past were. This is an example of how reality and fantasy clashes in a consumption experience. The consumer could read of the cues if it was handknitted or tailormade which told them about the past owner's socio-economic status, this, in turn, sprung associations who they were, what experiences they have been through and what times they have seen. As Grayson and Martinec (2004) pointed out in their study, consumers may indulge with imagination but not to make fiction seem more real, but to make reality seem more real. Through the imaginative process, the consumers realised that the garments and its owners had been through times which they idealised, which they articulated as they were "full of history" or that they had "soul". The consumer's imagination influenced how they perceived the object, that it had been through times which they romanticised, but the imagination was not sprung out of the blue, the imagination helped the consumers to realise the garment's history, to bring the reality to

life. The consumer's interpretation of the cultural time and the imagined individuals living in that past which the cues were connected to that constituted the imaginative process, will be outlined in the following segment.

Constructing a fantasised nostalgic narrative: *Constructing the romanticised past*

The ideas of a romanticised past which the cues were connected to in the construction of the fantasised narrative of the nostalgic object was built upon interpretations of the past cultural time and place from movies, documentaries, music, LP-covers, pictures and stories from grandparents or other relatives who told about their past cultural place and its atmospheres. This last dimension of narratives of grandparents was also identified by Hemetsberger et al. (2011) in the context of retro brands.

Isac, 30, spoke about how his interest in 80s movies and music which he developed as a kid, influences him in his style of fashion, which bears influences of the 70/80s style.

Isac, 30: I've watched a lot on 80s films and movies, and I've seen how all these people dressed which has influenced me unconsciously.

Sara, 29, told about her 40s vintage interest and that reading magazines from that time has influenced her in building an image and understanding of the past.

Sara, 29: There are a lot of fun readings, you get to understand better how the society and the tone were at the time.

Interviewer: Do you feel nostalgic for the time period?

Sara, 29: Yes, it happened a lot during the time, second world war, there were a lot of people having a very tough time and in some way, that time period is a little

bit exciting, that these things [*vintage objects*] have lived through that time and still is in good shape.

Sara, 30, gave recollections of how she was inspired by both the music from the 60/70s and the characters from the time, which made her consume pictures and movies of the time and the certain characters.

Sara, 30: I think it goes hand in hand. That I'm inspired in great extent by the music and the characters from that time. I take for example inspiration from the Rolling Stones and see what they wore and think it is just excellent and then the hunt for similar clothes begin.

The informants consumed a range of different media channels which were produced in the past, such as pictures, magazines, music and movies, together with media which portrayed the past, such as movies and documentaries. Through the consumption of the different types of media which portray a vision of the past in different places, the consumers got inspiration for styles which they could mimic. Moreover, they were especially inspired by how the cultural landscape was back then: how people expressed themselves, what people believed in and overall, what the atmosphere was like during the time. However, it has to be noted, that the informants picked out the aspects of the past which they liked and identified with and which fit their idea of a romantic past. Hence, their image is highly selective and subjective and other aspects were actively disregarded and ignored. May (2017) notes that nostalgia is characterised by picking out the desirable bits from a past and let that speak for the belonging for the era, similarly as the informants did. This is a sign that the consumers experienced nostalgia for the past, though they have not lived to experience that past. That the past which the consumer constructed with

consuming media, however, was idealised picture of how the time was, does not mean that it is different from individuals perceiving nostalgia for past which they have lived. The elements that most of the informants positively referred to from their idealised pasts, ranged from the women's liberation movement, how fast the cultural landscape changed, labour force movements, how people greeted and treated each other, popular music and, of course, how people dressed. Consider this outdraw:

Sara, 30: I would say very progressive, extremely progressive, the whole political atmosphere, even though it sounds banal but to go from a society where the women were housewives to burn the bra. I don't know, it is just like the progressive music and all what it meant for the labour force. (...) It is just something nice and romantic over that time and oh well, everyone wore beautiful clothes.

Similarly, the other informants also formed a view of the cultural landscape of the time and places which they romanticised, by picking out the desirable bits of the time and neglecting the undesirable. This can be linked to communal nostalgia: romanticising a past and its values, similarly Hemetsberger et al. 2011 found that retro brands are powerful bearers of collective memory and values and may facilitate the experience of communal nostalgia by consuming them, which this study also finds in the case of vintage objects. However, Hemetsberger et al. (2011) argues that the nostalgic experience in relation to consumption is rooted from the narratives of grandparents and lived childhood memories and further is a means to escape the current undesirable societal developments. The findings of this study points at that the nostalgic experience derives from the consumers construction of a romanticised past via media consumption and historical narratives first and foremost.

The consumers were found to construct a cultural lifeworld of the past, by interpreting both the media from that time as well as more recent produced media that portray the past. By this exposure of the past from different media channels which they chose to consume they constructed a past, coherent according to their interests and filled it with values and atmospheres from a place in time which they were especially drawn to. Whether this was the Woodstock-hippie movement, the London rock movement during the 60s, the rockabilly culture in 50s America or the civil life during world war II, a cultural place in time with its values and atmospheres was chosen and spoke for the nostalgic belonging of the past. When the consumers spoke about that they were nostalgic for a past, they meant that they were nostalgic for a specific cultural movement or bits of the past that they identified with.

Constructing a fantasised nostalgic narrative: *Connecting the object with the constructed romanticised past*

So far, the processes of interpreting the cues and constructing a romanticised past have been outlined, in this section will the procedure of connecting the two to each other and in turn to the vintage object be outlined. The interpretation of cues of the vintage object was then connected with the constructed image of a romanticised past. By doing so, the consumers ascribed symbolical value to the vintage object. The following outdraw of Sara's (30) interview, which was partly already mentioned above, exemplifies how the process of constructing meaning and attributing it to the vintage object unfolds. Consider the imaginative process of how cues are connected to the informant's constructed romanticised past, which in turn gives the object symbolical meaning:

Sara, 30: Pretty recently I bought an old nightdress which is from the 30's. In silk. It is handcrafted and embroidered and totally marvellous. When I found it, it was like my body went into flames since it was so beautiful. And the fact, that it is handcrafted, that someone has sat down and knitted it sometime in the 30s makes that the garment is full of history. It is someone who has owned this garment, cared and loved for it and this makes me always crazy only thinking of, that it is full of history.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about the history of the garment, what do you see in front of you?

Sara, 30: Mm, right, so I see a very beautiful woman, obviously. In the 1930s that maybe had this nightdress under a beautiful dress and then with that the associations just continue to how her whole surroundings looked like. Again, the romanticising of the time comes back, how beautiful and nicely all was and all these clothes and the aesthetics. The entire thing becomes almost like a movie, I see a beautiful place with four meters high ceiling with stuccos, it is smoky in there, you get to smoke cigarettes inside, drink some champagne in those fine coupes. It is a very heavy atmosphere in there, and extremely good music is playing. People are a bit drunk and the mood of the room is a bit liberated, not as bloody uptight as people might think it was during the 30s. But it is like - now we dance, drink and smoke cigarettes in incredibly beautiful clothes.

In the constructed narrative of the night-grown, the cues were associated with how and where the dress was used in the 30s, what the atmosphere was like during that time and how people acted in the surroundings. The example of the night-grown is a good illustration of how the other informants similarly constructed a narrative of vintage objects through interpreting cues and connecting them with a romanticised past. In their accounts the informants constructed a narrative through reading and interpreting the cues and connecting them with their ideas of how the cultural life world and atmosphere was

during the time from which the objects originated. In other words: the vision of a romanticised past with its values and atmosphere was constructed and then concealed in the object, thus serving as a symbol of former times and places with accredited values which the informants could access and incorporate into their present. The meaning construction of vintage objects identified and mapped in this study is what Holt (1997) refers to as the “cultural process of intertextuality”. The term describes the process of constructing meaning of an object by ascribing and associating it with other cultural objects that are part of historical accumulated resources of collectivity. According to Holt (1997), the process is metaphorical and narrative. This study outlines parts of that process in the case of young consumers nostalgic consumption by investigating and identifying in depth how the process of associating an object with other cultural resources that are part of the historical accumulated resources of collectivity serves to create meaning. In the case of the informant's vintage consumption, the collective historical resources of collectivity which were associated with the vintage object, were as pointed out earlier, media and narratives from the past as well as newly produced media portraying that past. The meaning of an individual object was depended on what linkages of cultural frameworks could be drawn to it, as Holt (1997) as well points out in his study. The findings of this study further found that the consumers accredited meanings for the vintage objects according to their constructed romanticised past, which consisted of desirable bits of the past according to their likings and that the process also consists of using imagination and fiction. As described in the previous section these romanticised pasts were assembled by bits of fragments of the past

collected from media from the past or media portraying that past. As Beverland & Farrelly (2010) describes that consumers are authenticating an object dependent on their goals, and that an object or experience can be deemed as authentic by one consumer but be deemed as inauthentic by another. Similarly, the findings of this study demonstrate that the meaning of a vintage object is dependent on the consumers constructed romanticised past according to what they deem as valuable bits from the past together with what media they had interacted with and valued. Which points at the meaning of a vintage object is dependent on the consumers interests and interpretation. The meaning of an object then is dependent, as Holt (1997) describes on what valuable linkages is made. Further this indicates that a vintage object can resemble another meaning, look and be used different from one individual to another since it is dependent on what inner images the consumer at hand ascribes to it. This study finds then, that the meaning creation of a vintage object is characterised by an imaginative process, building a fantasised interpretation of the vintage object's history, by associating and connecting cues with their inner images of their constructed romanticised past. The process can be metaphorical described as bricolage, where the consumer is using the resources at hand to ascribe meaning to the object. The available resources are the bits of pieces of media that the consumer have interacted with and saved to their inner construction of their romanticised past and the consumer's imagination. By blending these together, the consumer created something new, the meaning of a vintage object according to their constructed romanticised past, filled with values and meanings that they had accredited it to.

An interesting dimension was how the process of creating a nostalgic meaning for

an object worked or was hindered when the consumers knew that brands and fashion designers attempted to play on a past ethos which they romanticised with producing new products and market them with allusion to dimensions of popular culture of the past. Termed as retro branding (Hallegatte, Ertz & Marticotte, 2018) by designing new products which aspires to look like they come from a past time, and to market them in a fashion which play on a past ethos. A number of informants articulated how newly produced products did not have soul, indicating that the products did not have experienced the time which they romanticised which hindered the meaning creation process of associating it with other cultural resources of collectivity, as media and the resources which constitutes the romanticised past. Consider these outdraws from the informant's accounts of newly produced products.

Inga-Lill, 34: Well, a dress that actually comes from the 50s have a different feel to it, I don't think you ever can get away from that, that if objects can have soul, objects from the 50's have soul.

Sara, 29: (...) it was a craftsmanship in another way before. So, I would say that reproductions have a responsibility to follow this up. I would never dress myself in something that is reproduced if it does not meet that quality, I would never dress myself in something that is mass produced, if I put it that way. I would like the person who makes the reproduction looks after details, quality and craftsmanship.

If the reproductions and the marketing activities did not meet the informant's standards of what the past stood for, the meaning creation process was hindered. If the reproductions thought and resemblance of the time which they inspired to resemble however was in line with the consumer's romanticised past, the

meaning creation process could take place. Consider this account from Sara, who though realises that a new production loses some of its history, she is being in charge of creating that history through her interpretations and if the retro branding is done in a manner which she can create the meaning, the soul of the reproduction can be successfully created.

Sara, 30: Then it loses some of its history if they are brand new, they have not been through something, but then it is up to me to set that history. But I do not know. It becomes a little dead for me if they are new, they do not have this depth, this authenticity. However, these jeans brands as Levi's or Wrangler have made replicas of 40s jeans and 40s denim jackets which looks precisely as they did and by those, I get a different feeling of. They are not quite new despite that they are newly produced, you know that they produced precisely this model and looks exactly the same. They do not have a whit of them being modern in them, and then they become more okay, which is strange but.

In the passage above the informant describes that products from the past lacks the soul which they can find in vintage objects, but however point out that if the retro branding is done in a manner which fits the consumer's retro framework, constructed by different influences of media and narratives identified earlier in the study of constructing a romanticised past, the meaning creation of the vintage object can take place. This points at if the marketing activities regarding a retro brand is in somewhat in line with the consumer's constructed romanticised past and all what it comes with, from values to atmosphere to linkages to popular culture, the consumer with the influence of the imagination can puzzle these together similarly as in the identified process for real vintage objects which derives from the actual past.

Bridging romanticised values and atmospheres into the present with symbolic objects

This study identified that consumers may perceive communal nostalgia for times which they have not experienced through consuming objects from that time. Similarly, Hemetsberger et al. (2011) also found that retro brands reflect communal nostalgia for young consumers, where the consumption of these brands is characterised as a critique to the current societal developments and to bring back past valorised values from the romanticised past. In contrast this study finds that young consumers nostalgic consumption is mere about creating meaningful experiences in the present by incorporating ideas, atmospheres and warm feelings associated with an image of a romanticised past. These dimensions are built upon powerful narratives which the consumers construct themselves about vintage objects through their interpretation on the one hand of cues of the vintage object and on the other hand, movies, pictures, documentaries, narratives and music. Together, both these interpretations are connected to each other and in turn to the vintage object in an imaginative manner. The vintage object can then serve as a gateway for connecting with a romanticised past, which is filled with feelings of warmth, being part of a cultural movement, distinct values and atmospheres. In this process the object serves as a symbolic time capsule, constructed by the consumer, which makes it possible to access the past in the present and charge experiences with meanings deriving from that. This in turn serves the consumer to create and show their own identity, provide a sense of purposefulness and feelings of being part of a cultural movement in the present.

Hartmann and Brunk (2019) argued that the nostalgic consumption carried out by consumers who have no lived experiences of the past which engage with it through consumption is not rooted in shaping the present or future through recovering past morals. Instead, they argue that the nostalgic consumption is mere a site for ludic and extravagant adaptation of the past to enliven the present. This study found that the communal nostalgia perceived by the young consumer works to bring back parts of their image of a romanticised past by picking out desirable values, cultural atmospheres and styles from the past and to incorporate them into the present even though they have not experienced the past. A part where this study's findings is however coherent with Hartmann and Brunk (2019) is that the nostalgic consumption is not rooted as a critique for the current societal developments but a way that consumption opens up to enlighten the present.

A number of informants expressed fondness of some aspects of the time period that they favoured and stated, that they incorporate them in the present by consuming the objects from the past. However, none of the informants wished to live during the time which they romanticised. They partly admitted, that they focus on the positive elements of the past that appealed to them, while consciously or not, ignoring and not problematising other parts of history. Concentrating on the positive aspects, they can incorporate parts of the past into their identity and present by consuming objects to which the consumers ascribe symbolic value. This part is where this study and Hartmann and Brunk's (2019) study somewhat meets. Hartmann and Brunk (2019) writes that marketing and consumption can create enchantment by appropriating a past lifeworld, which is

purified in terms of style and romance, which enable the consumers to engage with a past which they have not experienced in a playful and symbolical way. This study is in line with that train of thought, in the sense that different places in the past opens up for a consumption that lights the present and that marketing activities, media and consumers are setting the frames of that past in an idealised and purified way. As Thornton (1997) writes that media are co-creating subcultures, media and brands are setting the frames of a past place and are facilitating engagement with pasts. At the same time a characteristic of nostalgia is about picking out the desirable bits of pieces from a past while neglecting other pasts and let the favourable speak for the belonging in that past (May, 2017). This points at that the consumer's, who have no lived experiences of a past, nostalgic belonging of that past may not be totally different in nature from consumers who are nostalgic for past which they experienced. Hartmann and Brunk (2019) however argue that consumers who have no lived experiences of the past which they engage with, value items from the past purely as quirky fashion items where the past serves as a site for retrieving peculiar styles to enlighten the present. The findings of this study contradict that notion and instead find that the nostalgic consumption carried out may be characterised as an exciting way to enlighten the present, as Hartmann and Brunk (2019) argue, but is rooted in something deeper than just serving as a way to retrieve bizarre styles. This study finds that consumers renders vintage objects along with pasts to fill the present with meanings deriving from the past and to create a more exciting existence via imagination. The imaginative nature of the meaning creation process as identified in this study may make the playfulness of it apparent but as Grayson and Martinec

(2004) found, consumers are using fiction to make historical facts seem more real. In this process the object serves as a symbolic time capsule, constructed by the consumer, which makes it possible for them to access the past in the present, charging experiences with meaning. This in turn serves the consumer to create and show their own identity, provide a sense of purposefulness and feelings of being part of a cultural movement in the present.

One informant explicitly expressed that by having a historical context to relate and fall back to, was a way to cope with the present. This statement can be seen as an illustrative case and a possible explanation of why consumers are concerned to incorporate objects of a romanticised past into the present. The time and atmosphere we live in now is not yet set since it is always in flux and construction. By looking back at a certain time and its trends and attaching values to that, the informants can deal with the present in a more stable way by using pre-defined frames and consume certain objects and styles which connote to their romanticised vision of past.

Another informant expressed that she and her friends are dressing up in 70s style for parading in the 1st of May demonstrations since it makes the experience more powerful. Hence, they relate to a cultural lifeworld of the past and enact and incorporate certain dimensions of it to make an equal exciting cultural contribution to the imprint of history. Similarly, Hemetsberger et al. (2011) recognised that retro brands can serve as symbols of the collective memory of an era and be used as a critique of the present undesirable societal developments. However, this study's findings contradict this notion by Hemetsberger et al. (2011) and is more aligned with Hartmann and Brunk's (2019) identified route; *re-*

enactment. In their study they identify retro brands being a token for cultural conditions of the past which consumers can access and enact in the present, to shape a better present and future. Hartmann and Brunk (2019) however did not recognise that young consumers may take the nostalgia route, as outlined in this study. This study extends this notion, by showing that consumers who have not lived during the past may also: return and access valued aspects from a past (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019), by constructing a romanticised past with symbolic objects which in turn can be accessed in the present. Further, this study has shown how the meaning of the constructed symbolical object through the process of intertextuality can be enacted in the present, thus charging the consumer's experiences with the values and meanings ascribed to the symbolical object.

Concluding discussion and contributions

My findings contribute to the building body of research on nostalgic consumption, in particular, understanding how consumers may experience nostalgia when consuming objects from pasts which they have no lived experiences of. I identify and demonstrate that the meaning creation process of vintage objects is characterised by constructing imaginative narratives and symbolical objects through the execution of interpretive strategies for cues, past cultural places, media, popular culture and marketing activities. By blending and puzzling these together in a bricolage manner, the consumer creates symbolical objects which are filled with past atmospheres which can be retrieved in the present to fill experiences with meanings which derive from the past. By identifying and exploring how the meaning creation

process of vintage objects unfolds and how it facilitates a symbolical return into a romanticised past, the study bridges the gap between previous and future research on the consumption of past themed market resources. In particular, the study helps to understand how consumers may experience nostalgia for times which they have not experienced through consumption experiences, as previous studies have discovered (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019; Hemetsberger et al, 2011) and underlines the consumer's active and creative role in creating valuable consumption experiences which alludes to the past through the process of intertextuality and imagination.

On the one hand, the findings demonstrate that the consumption of vintage objects and indulging in pasts is rooted in something deep, to bridge values and atmospheres from the past to incorporate them in the present to attribute deep meanings into experiences and use them in the search of identity. The study's findings underline May's (2017) argumentation of how nostalgia can be used to belong in the present. This study identifies that nostalgic consumption may be a way to cope with the present. When the present is unstable, the past with its predefined borders may be used to give meaning to the present. Through constructing symbolically charged objects consumers may enact values and atmospheres attached to the objects. By looking back at a cultural place and time, experiences may be charged with meaning. Where the influence of imagination in the meaning creation process serves the means to make sense of historical facts and to retrieve deep meanings from them. On the other hand, the findings illustrate how playful and creative consumers are in escaping the boredom of the present everyday life. Through the consumption of past themed objects and imagination,

consumers can light the present by bridging values and atmospheres from the past into the present and by that charge experiences with authenticity and romance. The study thus positions in between the notions of previous research in describing consumer's consumption who have no lived experiences of the past which the product alludes to (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019; Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli & Mueller, 2011).

By demonstrating the role of fiction and imaginations in the meaning creation process of objects, the findings respond upon Grayson and Martinec's (2004) request on more research on how the two contradicting elements of fiction and reality can be part of the same consumption experience. The findings demonstrate how consumers are blending fiction and reality in the meaning creation process in three different manners, in the process of interpreting and mixing the impressions from different media exposures, in the consumer's construction of imaginative narratives built upon historical facts and imagination's role in finding a deeper meaning in everyday experiences.

In identifying that consumers may enlighten the present by retrieving meanings from the past and media's role in that, the study's findings counter claims by Baudrillard's (1994) notion of hyperreality and that nostalgia assumes reality's full meaning. The problem with this notion is that it is dismantling the consumer as an active and interpreting individual and allocates the power to the media. The findings of this study, on the other hand, illustrate the consumer as a creative and active producer of meaning for objects, using a vast of different tools, interpretative strategies, cultural frameworks and linking those together in an imaginative fashion in interpreting media, the past and the objects.

The findings add support to what Holt (1997) writes about how the meaning of a particular object is inherent and unstable since it is dependent on what meaningful linkages is made by the consumer. Thus, this study's findings counter claims by McCracken (1986) that objects are contained with social meanings, that advertisers and the fashion system move into. The meaning of an object, as Holt (1997) argues, is rather created by the consumer who constructs the meaning through selecting and combining different resources of meanings. This in turn results in implications for brand strategists and marketers concerned with past-themed products, which later will be dealt with. In identifying that imagination play part in this process, referred to as intertextuality by Holt (1997), and that consumers may adjust historical meanings (construct romanticised pasts) according to their preferences, this study adds to the research of meaning construction. However, in recognising that consumers may construct romanticised pasts through media consumption and enlighten the present with it, parts of the notion of hyperreality become considerable. Media's portray of pasts have a role in how the consumers construct their romanticised pasts which they then live through in the present, but as this study indicate the consumers active and creative role has a central role in the creation and the use of the hyperreality.

This study identified how the meaning creation of a retro product may be hindered if the production and marketing activities surrounding it is inherent with the consumers constructed romanticised past which both is used in the meaning creation process. However, the same was identified but the other way around, how reproductions may successfully be nostalgic meaning created if the object was interpreted in a way where valuable cultural

linkages could be made. For marketers and brand strategists, this means, that if the object is produced and branded coherently with the consumer's constructed romanticised past, valuable associations can be made between the branded product and with other cultural objects and references which is part of the consumers constructed romanticised past and in turn facilitate this study's identified meaning creation process. Thus, making the product a valuable and symbolical object which can serve as powerful bearers of past atmospheres and enlighten present experiences with. The identified important role of popular culture and media in the meaning creation process suggests that brand marketers and brand strategist should allude to and tap into popular culture references which are coherent with the consumers romanticised past and situate the marketed product in that sphere. If so, the retro branding can be successfully implemented in the meaning creation process. However, as earlier noted, the meaning of the object would depend on what valuable linkages is made and thus if the retro branding is successful. The findings underline the amount of research and knowledge that have to be carried out by the marketers to be able to signify the right codes to facilitate nostalgic meaning creations of the objects at hand, in targeting consumers which have not lived during the time which they romanticise. Further, the findings demonstrate the implications marketers stand upon in avoiding their product to be viewed as dull market offerings for consumers who valorise past cultural landscapes and authentic market offerings.

This study focusses mostly on one route of creating meaning for nostalgic objects and the process is likely to be determined by several different routes. Hence, further studies are needed to expand

upon the findings. Future research within the field will certainly be able to uncover and cover areas which this study have not investigated. For example, digging deeper in the meaning creation of nostalgic objects by investigating and mapping the cultural frameworks attached to them and investigating how branding activities may shape and spring associations in a way that the meaning creation can take place. Another interesting topic for further research to tackle would be to map the meaning creation process of vintage objects made by consumers who lived through the time which they romanticise. To investigate the presumable tensions between creating meaning for objects with cultural frameworks and from own memory. Further studies could also empirical investigate the differences between the meaning creation process of consumers who have lived to experience the past and those who have not, which the object alludes to. The topic of how imagination and reality are inflicting upon each other in consumer experiences is also a prosperous field for future research to expand upon. Past research has recognised that consumers let imagination and reality coexist in the assessing the authenticity of an object or experience (Grayson & Martinec, 2004) and this study that the two opposingly elements play part in meaning creation processes of objects and experiences. Since the meaning creation processes is somewhat linked to identity creation and the individual's interest further studies can expand upon the findings and investigate how the two coexist in the search and creation of identities.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to direct a sincere thanks for all who have helped this work to be accomplished. To Benjamin Hartmann associate senior lecturer at the School of

Business, Economics and Law, Gothenburg University for inspiration and guidance in the process. To all the informants participating in the interviews giving rich and exciting answers. To the opponent's, thoughts and discussions on the study.

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