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POSITIONING OF A NOSTALGIC BRAND IN THE TOY INDUSTRY IN THE CONTEXT OF CONSUMERS' MOTIVATIONS AND SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Recent years saw a fast-growing trend of “backward innovation”, as identified in the toy industry, as companies have been offering **a sheer scale of recreated or revived toy products referring explicitly to the collective memory of their consumers**. As the economic practice shows, many enterprises and other organizations focus their attention on undertaking branding activities – and often the scope of these activities is not only related to the size of a given entity – but also to the creativity of the marketing team and decision-makers in the area of marketing. **Nostalgia**, understood for the purposes of the following dissertation as “**a preference toward objects that were common when one was younger**”, can be approached as a tool promising to diversify a brand through nostalgia-oriented positioning aimed to create a more favourable perception of the brand. By taking all of these together, this implies that **the use of nostalgia in the toy industry may lead to increased purchase intentions and strengthening brand loyalty**. The decisive justification for taking up the topic of the impact of nostalgia on brand positioning in the toy industry was **the gap existing both in the area of theoretical studies and empirical research**.

The main objective of this doctoral dissertation, therefore, was **the evaluation of the impact of nostalgia on brand positioning in the toy industry in the context of consumer motivations and social identity theory**. On the basis of the literature review and taking the subject of research into account the following research questions were formulated:

- Q1:** What are the brands of nostalgic toys characteristic for representatives of generations X, Y and Z?
- Q2:** What are the attitudes of consumers – representing particular generations – towards toy brands? Do consumers show nostalgic attitudes towards toy brands known from childhood?
- Q3:** What factors influence the purchase of a toy from a nostalgic brand?
- Q4:** What types of motivation influence the purchase of a toy from a nostalgic brand for yourself and as a gift for a child?
- Q5:** Do nostalgic attitudes influence the purchase of toys?
- Q6:** What is the impact of social identity on attitudes towards nostalgic brands and the purchase of toys?

Q7: How to perform positioning of a nostalgic brand in toy industry?

In order to achieve the research goals, **information derived from primary sources and secondary sources was used**. For the purpose of this dissertation, apart from literature review performed with the use of the method of literature analysis and review, as well as systematic literature review, the Author has conducted his own empirical research based on the concept of **triangulation**, which allowed for the use of **quantitative and qualitative methods**. The study was divided into two stages.

The first stage entailed qualitative research using projecting techniques and in-depth group interview on the focus groups. The research was conducted amongst consumers representing X, Y and Z generations in the second and fourth quarter of 2022. The analyses were performed to determine consumer attitudes towards toy brands, their motivation to buy and to identify the key factors affecting the image of these brands.

In **the second stage** of research, quantitative analyses based on the method of indirect communication with respondents (consumers), using a questionnaire were performed. The scrutiny was performed in the first quarter of the 2023.

Due to the specificity of the toy sector, **consumers representing X (1965-1980), Y (1981-1996) and Z (1997-2012) generations** were selected, as people who purchase toys for their own children as presents or to satisfy their own needs.

The analysis of the material collected during the work allowed **the identification of the brands (i.e., LEGO, Pokémon, Barbie, Power Rangers, My Little Pony, Transformers)** that implement nostalgic positioning as well as identified the factors important to consumer when buying a nostalgic brand toy. The research results became the basis for formulating **cognitive conclusions and recommendations** regarding the positioning of a nostalgic brand in the toy industry. The results of the main study indicated that **Polish consumers are inclined to nostalgic reactions**. Moreover, they are also pragmatic in terms of viewing the toy products as objects for which they want to maximize utility, indicating the functional attributes of the toy as well as its imbued educational values. The results also suggest that **Polish customers expect nostalgic toy brands to introduce new products, which, at first, will have a high degree of innovativeness**, thus answering their utilitarian needs. On the other hand, **such offerings will refer to the personally or collectively experienced past, thereby satisfying the consumers' nostalgic feelings**. The results also indicated that **consumer storytelling conveying the communicated experience with the toy brand is the antecedent of creating tribal communities shared by a commonality of similar consumption activities**. Moreover, it was also found that the significance of membership in such tribes not only does form nostalgic

attitudes, as was reported in the focus groups but also may influence an individual's intention to buy a nostalgic toy referring to that collective memory. Individuals compose these nostalgic narratives as to positively contribute to their social identity, and in turn, they listen to these stories as they are believed to yield positive value connotations regarding self-definition. At this juncture, it is worth stressing that the results of the proposed structural equation model revealed **a positive impact of nostalgic attitudes on the consumer's attitude towards a nostalgic toy.** Finally, the readers are provided with the exemplary positioning strategy, as adopted by LEGO – the only of the six toy brands selected for the main study that was able to yield the word "nostalgic" as an association in focus groups. This way, **the Author gives some practical recommendations for marketing practitioners and managers** to appreciate the findings presented in the entire work.

The conducted considerations, as well as the results of empirical research, may therefore constitute **a certain filling of the existing cognitive gap in the area of the subject.**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kedem Zhi'.