

## When Memories Drive Actions: Nostalgic Advertising Impacts on Brand Admiration and Advocacy in Fast-Food Restaurants

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### Abstract

In saturated service markets, brands use emotionally resonant strategies, such as nostalgic advertising, to strengthen consumer relationships and encourage advocacy. This study builds on the Brand Admiration Model (BAM). It examines how nostalgic advertising affects brand admiration and advocacy. The study also considers emotional customer engagement as a mediator and brand prominence as a moderator. The research uses a quantitative design and collects data from a convenience sample of 374 fast-food restaurant customers in Egypt. Structural equation modeling was used to test the proposed relations. The findings show that nostalgic advertising predicts brand admiration, emotional engagement, and advocacy. Emotional engagement partly mediates the effects of nostalgic advertising on brand admiration and advocacy, showing nostalgia-driven emotions are key to favorable brand outcomes. Brand admiration strongly drives advocacy, underscoring its role in motivating consumers to promote brands. The analysis finds that brand prominence only strengthens the link between brand admiration and advocacy, so admired brands gain more from advocacy if they are top of mind with consumers. This study advances the BAM by introducing nostalgia as a strategic cue in hospitality and foodservice. Findings show that nostalgic campaigns foster engagement and admiration, particularly for prominent brands seeking greater word of mouth and advocacy. By empirically testing nostalgic advertising in the Brand Admiration Model in an emerging hospitality market, the study reveals how emotion-based strategies enhance brand admiration in quick-service restaurants. These findings guide hospitality and fast-food managers to apply nostalgic marketing to build brand advantages.

**Key Words:** brand admiration model, nostalgic advertising, brand advocacy, emotional engagement, brand prominence, fast- food restaurants.

**JEL Classification:** M15- M54

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## 1. Introduction

In increasingly saturated service markets, hospitality brands aim to distinguish themselves by using emotionally differentiated strategies that deepen customer relationships and nurture long-term advocacy. This shift is driven by recent tourism and service marketing research, which highlights the effectiveness of emotion-based branding approaches that create identity-relevant, memory-driven experiences rather than relying solely on functional value (e.g., Wang *et al.*, 2026; Rehman *et al.*, 2026; Imran *et al.*, 2026). One particularly influential emotion-based technique is nostalgic advertising, which evokes personal memories, reinforces identity continuity, and fosters strong relational attachment to hospitality brands (Huang *et al.*, 2024; Kim *et al.*, 2024).

According to Li *et al.* (2019), nostalgia comes in two types: historical nostalgia is triggered by a historical time or era that was indirectly experienced, whereas personal nostalgia is triggered by an individual's experience. Food, atmosphere, and service received are among the factors that can arouse nostalgia (Chen *et al.*, 2020). Nostalgia, accordingly, is a sentimental longing for the past, often triggered by symbolic cues in marketing. In the hospitality sector, nostalgia is a powerful tool for brand and advertising imagery (Hunt & Johns, 2013). Advertising fosters customer emotions, and ads with nostalgic themes or nostalgic cues can provoke nostalgia (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2025; Su *et al.*, 2024). Restaurant marketers use nostalgia-themed ads (Huang *et al.*, 2024) to achieve optimal customer outcomes (Wen *et al.*, 2019). Nostalgia in restaurants stems from service personnel, interior and exterior decor, furnishings, tableware, local cuisine, and ambiance (Kim *et al.*, 2024). Marketers can evoke nostalgia by reoffering traditional products or revitalizing old habits.

Scholars study nostalgia in the hospitality arena because it can affect human behavior (Huang *et al.*, 2024). Understanding how nostalgia influences consumer intentions aids in integrating outdated or antiquated products into business marketing campaigns (Chen *et al.*, 2014; Gu *et al.*, 2021) and in recognizing how customers feel when a service provider brings their intangible, appreciated memories to current life (Abdulmawla *et al.*, 2019; Song *et al.*, 2021). An increasing number of studies in hospitality, such as those on nostalgic-themed restaurants (Chen *et al.*, 2014; Gu *et al.*, 2021; Kim *et al.*, 2024), time-honoured restaurants (Song *et al.*, 2021), retailing (Shin & Parker, 2017), traditional restaurants (Chen *et al.*, 2020), and local cuisine (Chang *et al.*, 2022), assert that evoking nostalgia boosts both customer intentions and favourable sentiments toward the brand. Specifically, compared to non-nostalgic advertisements, restaurant nostalgic ads increase the visit intention of individual and group customers (Huang *et al.*, 2024).

Unlike previous works, this study deals with a gap that can be summarized in three aspects: first, although nostalgia-inducing stimuli are frequently used in restaurant service, there is a dearth of research on this topic (Kim *et al.*, 2024). As a result, little is known about the cognitive processes that evoke nostalgia and how these processes influence customer intentions (Kim *et al.*, 2024). Su *et al.* (2024) proposed that further investigation is needed to highlight nostalgic ads in the food service industry. Therefore, subsequent research is required to develop models across various scenarios and examine the significance of the factors that define nostalgia (Gu *et al.*, 2021).

Second, further research is required to identify mediators and moderators in quantitative models of customer engagement in Hospitality and Tourism (H&T) research (Hao, 2020). Bastiaansen *et al.* (2022) noted a gap in the continuous measurement of emotional engagement, which is important for evaluating customer experiences and related outcomes. Thus, examining psychological variables such as customer engagement and modeling their influence in nostalgia research are necessary steps (Kim *et al.*, 2024).

Third, while scholars have examined some moderating variables between nostalgic ads and customer responses, such as consumption context, crowding, destination type, and gender (Huang *et al.*, 2024; Su *et al.*, 2024; Singh *et al.*, 2021), many potential moderators, including demographic and situational variables, have yet to be systematically explored. For example, Chen *et al.* (2020) noted that nostalgia,

perceived value, and loyalty intention are moderated by gender and age, but more research is needed to uncover other moderators of the relationship between nostalgia and customer outcomes (Huang *et al.*, 2024).

Given the importance of expanding nostalgia marketing research to more hospitality sectors (Wen *et al.*, 2019), such as fast-food restaurants, this study builds on the Brand Admiration Model (BAM) by Park *et al.* (2016) to address these gaps. It examines how nostalgic ads influence emotional engagement, brand admiration, and advocacy among fast-food customers. We extend BAM using a mediated–moderated framework, investigating emotional engagement as a mediator and brand prominence as a moderator. Data from 374 customers of international fast-food restaurants in Cairo and Giza were collected via a structured survey. The model was tested using PLS-SEM, suitable for analyzing predictive relationships involving mediation and moderation (Hair *et al.*, 2021).

Previous studies provide initial evidence for the use of nostalgic advertising in hospitality and tourism (Wang *et al.*, 2026; Huang *et al.*, 2026). However, few studies have examined its effects using a mediated–moderated framework. The joint roles of emotional engagement as a mediator and brand prominence as a boundary remain underexplored. Past research shows nostalgia leads to post-purchase, revisit, and loyalty intentions, often in developed countries (Gu *et al.*, 2021; Song *et al.*, 2021; Chen *et al.*, 2022). However, to date, limited empirical attention has been devoted to examining how nostalgic ads enhance customer-brand outcomes, such as admiration and advocacy, in developing Eastern environments. Finally, we offer what we believe is a pioneering attempt to address nostalgic ads using the BAM framework of Park *et al.* (2016).

Beyond the literature that highlights nostalgia from a Western perspective, this study examines Egyptian fast-food restaurants that attract young people. We chose this context to: a) understand how customers in eastern cultures respond to nostalgic ads, and b) compare results with prior research reporting no significant link between age and nostalgic reactions (Muehling *et al.*, 2014). Thus, nostalgia resonates with people of all ages by triggering personal associations and sentiments (Hunt & Johns, 2013). Hospitality practitioners should improve their services to ensure guests have a pleasant nostalgic experience (Tsai *et al.*, 2020).

This paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews theory and develops hypotheses. Section 3 outlines methodology. Section 4 presents results. Section 5 discusses findings and contributions. Section 6 concludes with implications, limitations, and future research.

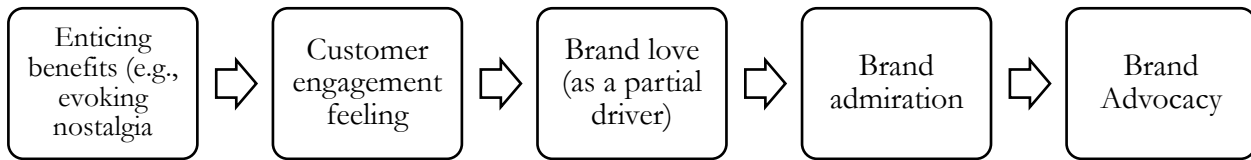
## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Brand admiration model

This study extends and integrates the "*Brand Admiration Model*" (BAM) of Park *et al.* (2016), p. 42. From the authors' perspective, the brand admiration system comprises three sequential phases: *enabling*, *enticing*, and *enriching* customer benefits. The authors clarified how the dimensions of each phase can improve various customer feelings. These improvements drive brand admiration and increase its benefits. This study emphasizes phase two in Park *et al.*'s perspective: *the enticing benefits* that reveal the business's actions to invigorate customers' senses and minds. Evoking nostalgia (nostalgic ads—the exogenous variable in this study) appears to be a marketing policy that increases brand success, specifically engagement, admiration, and advocacy. In a different vein, brand admiration resulting from enticing and other customer responses is expected to enhance brand advocacy, the endogenous variable of this study. We also integrate BAM by examining how brand prominence can moderate several relationships. Specifically, we explore how brand prominence affects the links between nostalgic ads and both brand admiration and brand advocacy, as well as between brand admiration and brand advocacy. Similarly, the study expands BAM by highlighting the mediating effect of emotional engagement. Thus, the five

variables were extracted and incorporated into the study's proposed model, as shown in the framework in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Nostalgia-advocacy sequence



Source: adapted from Park *et al.*, 2016

## 2.2 Nostalgic ads and customer outcomes in hospitality

While nostalgia has been extensively examined in general consumer behavior and advertising contexts (Wang *et al.*, 2026; Huang *et al.*, 2026), its application within hospitality and restaurant settings remains comparatively underdeveloped. In service environments such as fast-food restaurants, nostalgic cues may operate differently due to the experiential and relational nature of consumption (Su *et al.*, 2025). Restaurants are not merely product-delivery platforms but experiential spaces where sensory stimuli, social interactions, and symbolic meanings converge. Consequently, nostalgic advertising in hospitality may activate not only personal autobiographical memories but also collective cultural narratives tied to food, family traditions, and shared social rituals (Rehman *et al.*, 2026; Sharma *et al.*, 2026). Expanding the literature in this domain allows for a more contextualized understanding of how nostalgic appeals function within experiential service ecosystems.

Nostalgia plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in the fast-food industry, where brands leverage nostalgic cues to affect brand perceptions and drive purchasing decisions (Renko & Bucar, 2014). Nostalgic advertising triggers emotional and cognitive responses that foster brand admiration and advocacy. Specifically, "ad-evoked nostalgia" refers to how idealized memories of the past, induced by such ads, elicit positive consumer responses (Singh *et al.*, 2021). Empirical studies show nostalgia increases intentions to consume restaurant products (Chen *et al.*, 2014) and can elevate visit intention by evoking either a sense of history or, in the case of non-nostalgic ads, a sense of fashion (Su *et al.*, 2024). Accordingly, both nostalgic ads and consumers' intensity of nostalgic feelings toward ads reliably predict purchase intentions (Singh *et al.*, 2021).

Brand admiration arises from deep emotional connections, including trust, love, and respect, and is strongly influenced by a brand's fulfillment of functional, emotional, and symbolic needs (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Park *et al.*, 2016; Trivedi & Sama, 2020). The main argument is that nostalgic advertising enhances this admiration by activating customers' fond memories and social bonds (Singh *et al.*, 2021; Zhou *et al.*, 2012). Such ads not only increase consumption value and shape post-purchase intentions but also strengthen loyalty, trust, attachment, and premium perceptions across generational cohorts (Al-Adwan *et al.*, 2025; Gu *et al.*, 2021; Chen *et al.*, 2022; Song *et al.*, 2021; Wen *et al.*, 2019; Tsai *et al.*, 2020; Puspitasari *et al.*, 2024). Thus, we argue that:

H1: Nostalgic advertising has a significant influence on brand admiration among fast-food customers.

According to Batcho (2013), nostalgia enhances engagement by triggering positive memories and reducing loneliness or anxiety. Hollebeek *et al.* (2019) state that emotionally engaged customers are more likely to show brand loyalty and positive word of mouth. Similarly, Gu *et al.* (2021) suggest customers can spiritually connect with tradition, history, or ethnic belonging through nostalgia. Perceived nostalgia toward a restaurant or meal enhances the value of the dining experience (Chen *et al.*, 2020). Fast-food brands often use nostalgic ads to foster a sense of belonging and comfort. For example, McDonald's "I

am Lovin' It" campaign uses retro packaging and jingles to connect emotionally with customers (Smith, 2021). Likewise, Burger King's "Keep It Real Meals" campaign featured 1990s characters, boosting customer engagement. Shen *et al.* (2022) argue that marketing channels are tools for fostering customers' emotional engagement with hospitality brands and thereby increasing sales. A holistic brand perspective includes perceived utilitarian, hedonic, and symbolic aspects (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). Nostalgia can particularly stimulate hedonic values (Chang *et al.*, 2022), leading to stronger brand engagement (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019).

H2: Nostalgic advertising significantly influences the emotional engagement of fast-food customers.

Consumers actively endorse and defend brands through word of mouth, recommendations, and social media engagement (Han *et al.*, 2014). Brand advocacy is considered a key indicator of brand success because it leads to positive perceptions, increased customer trust, and the attraction of new consumers (Park *et al.*, 2016; Tsai *et al.*, 2020). Previous research has shown that emotional engagement, trust, and satisfaction drive brand advocacy. Marketing strategies, particularly those leveraging nostalgia, can influence these drivers (Dandis *et al.*, 2023; Tsai *et al.*, 2020).

Nostalgic advertisements play a vital role in strengthening brand advocacy by fostering emotional connections, brand appreciation, and attachment to a brand's heritage and values (Muehling *et al.*, 2014). Since nostalgia has been linked to increased perceived brand authenticity, it can enhance consumer trust, thereby motivating customers to actively promote the brand. Additionally, nostalgia-driven marketing strategies create a unique and meaningful customer experience, reinforcing emotional bonds and encouraging consumers to share their positive sentiments through advocacy behaviors (Tynan & McKechnie, 2009).

Empirical studies show that nostalgia-driven marketing generates more favorable consumer responses than non-nostalgic approaches (Muehling *et al.*, 2014). This effect primarily occurs because nostalgia shapes customer preferences through hedonic values rather than through direct persuasion (Chang *et al.*, 2022). In the hospitality industry, marketers rely on various marketing channels to enhance emotional engagement with brands, thereby increasing customer loyalty and sales (Shen *et al.*, 2022). When nostalgic ads are used, emotional attachments to brands become stronger, and advocacy behaviors are more likely to emerge.

Despite the potential of nostalgic ads, consumption value and brand familiarity mediate their influence on loyalty and advocacy (Kim *et al.*, 2024). When consumers have personal connections to a brand, they tend to advocate more strongly after seeing nostalgic messaging (Muehling *et al.*, 2014). The degree to which nostalgia shapes brand advocacy, then, hinges on both the consumer's brand relationship and their emotional response to nostalgic content. As previous research indicates, advertising can foster positive anticipated emotions (Al-Madadha *et al.*, 2026), which, in turn, prompt greater impulse and intentions to engage in favorable brand-related behaviors (Han *et al.*, 2014).

H3: Nostalgic advertising significantly influences brand advocacy among fast-food customers.

### 2.3 Brand admiration and brand advocacy

Brand admiration is pivotal in shaping customer-brand relationships. In this context, brand admiration refers to feelings of awe (a sense of wonder or inspiration), approval (a positive evaluation), and respect (regard for the brand's qualities or achievements) toward a brand (Park *et al.*, 2016; Tosun & Tavşan, 2024). This concept is relatively new in consumer behavior studies, reflecting the emotional and cognitive bonds customers form with admired brands (Tosun & Tavşan, 2024). Customers who admire a brand often seek affiliation, drawn by its prestigious status (widely recognized reputation) and symbolic value (representative meaning) (Lee & Kim, 2020). The multidimensional nature of brand admiration—including brand love (affection for a brand), trust (belief in brand reliability), and respect—directly shapes

consumer preferences, purchase intentions, and brand commitment (Park *et al.*, 2016; Trivedi & Sama, 2020).

Admired brands foster deeper emotional connections. This leads to stronger brand attachment, forgiveness, and lasting loyalty (Joo & Kim, 2021). These factors promote customer advocacy, in which individuals voluntarily promote the brand, recommend its products, and defend it against criticism (Castro-González *et al.*, 2019). Brand advocacy creates non-transactional benefits, such as resilience against negative information and increased word of mouth (Bilro *et al.*, 2019). Research shows that brand admiration predicts advocacy; consumers who admire a brand are more likely to discuss it positively, endorse it publicly, and remain committed to its success (Park *et al.*, 2016). Admired brands use customer loyalty to strengthen advocacy and improve their competitive market position (Castro-González *et al.*, 2019). Hence, we posit:

H4: Brand admiration significantly influences brand advocacy among fast-food customers.

## 2.4 The mediating role of emotional engagement

Emotions play a crucial role in shaping customer experiences (Bastiaansen *et al.*, 2022). Fredricks *et al.* (2004) conceptualized engagement as a three-dimensional psychological state encompassing behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects. Notably, Fredricks *et al.* (2004) highlighted that "emotional engagement encompasses positive and negative reactions" (p. 60), influencing an individual's willingness to interact. In contrast, Hollebeek *et al.* (2014) define the affective component of customer brand engagement more narrowly as "a consumer's degree of positive brand-related affect in a particular consumer/brand interaction" (p. 154). Thus, Fredricks *et al.*'s emotional engagement can include both positive and negative reactions, whereas Hollebeek *et al.*'s affective engagement pertains only to positive feelings during brand interactions. This affective engagement can range from a superficial fondness to a deep sense of appreciation or belonging to the brand (Fredricks *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore, Rather (2019) described customer engagement as an emotional bond emerging between a brand and its customers through accumulated brand-related experiences, fostering a proactive and positive psychological state.

Similarly, Brodie *et al.* (2011) defined customer engagement through cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dimensions, with the emotional aspect referring to a sense of dedication and belonging to a brand or service provider. Engagement is proposed to influence outcomes such as commitment, trust, loyalty, and emotional attachment, and a customer's engagement level shapes their evaluation of services or products (Rather, 2019). Positive experiences and emotions from interactions strengthen the customer-brand relationship (Bilro *et al.*, 2019; France *et al.*, 2016).

A highly engaged customer's emotional connection influences their intentions (France *et al.*, 2016), and such engagement predicts outcomes like satisfaction, commitment, trust, and loyalty (Rather, 2019). Emotional interaction enhances brand engagement, for example, in tourism (Fang *et al.*, 2023), and advocacy supports strong market performance (Brodie *et al.*, 2011).

Given the immersive nature of hospitality, an excellent customer experience is crucial (Ben Lahouel & Montargot, 2020). People's relationships with each other and with objects are strongly influenced by their emotions (Hosany *et al.*, 2020). Johns (2012) also notes that emotional engagement significantly shapes behavior. In contrast, Bilro *et al.* (2019) argue that brand advocacy is only conditionally linked to engagement. Engaged customers are more likely to advocate for a company, but may not give it another chance or try new products if it fails to deliver (Bilro *et al.*, 2019).

Additionally, several studies have shown that emotional engagement mediates. For example, emotional engagement mediates the relationship between customers' parasocial interaction and purchase intention (Shen *et al.*, 2022). Tourist emotions also mediate the correlation between tourist interaction and engagement (Fang *et al.*, 2023). Elgarhy *et al.* (2024) examined how emotional engagement mediates the relationship between gamification, intrinsic motivation, and customers' repurchase intentions. Building on these findings, Chang *et al.* (2022) suggested that engagement is a meaningful extension of

the research on nostalgia. Since CE is context- and stakeholder-dependent (Brodie *et al.*, 2011), this study examines how fast-food customers' emotional engagement mediates between nostalgic ads, brand admiration, and brand advocacy. The following hypotheses are proposed.

H5: Emotional engagement mediates the relationship between nostalgic advertising and brand admiration.

H6: Emotional engagement mediates the relationship between nostalgic advertising and brand advocacy.

## 2.5 The moderating effect of brand prominence

Han *et al.* (2010) define brand prominence as a marketing variable that indicates how noticeable a brand's logo is. They defined it as 'the extent to which a product has visible markings that help ensure observers recognize the brand' (p. 15). Brand prominence is part of brand attachment and increases customer citizenship behavior, including brand advocacy (Lee & Kim, 2022).

Several research attempts have shed light on brand prominence in the H&T arena over the last decade. For instance, Deb and Lomo-David (2020) found that low brand prominence moderates the relationship between hedonic message appeal and brand love. Additionally, Rather *et al.* (2024) found that brand prominence moderates the relationship between social media interaction and brand co-creation, as well as between self-brand congruence and revisit intention. Furthermore, brand prominence appears in two forms: textual and visual; both aid marketing success (Zihagh *et al.*, 2024). Similarly, Li *et al.* (2019) noted a serial relationship among nostalgia, positive emotions, brand prominence, and willingness to pay. In summary, these studies indicate that brand prominence is positively associated with customers' willingness to pay (Li *et al.*, 2019).

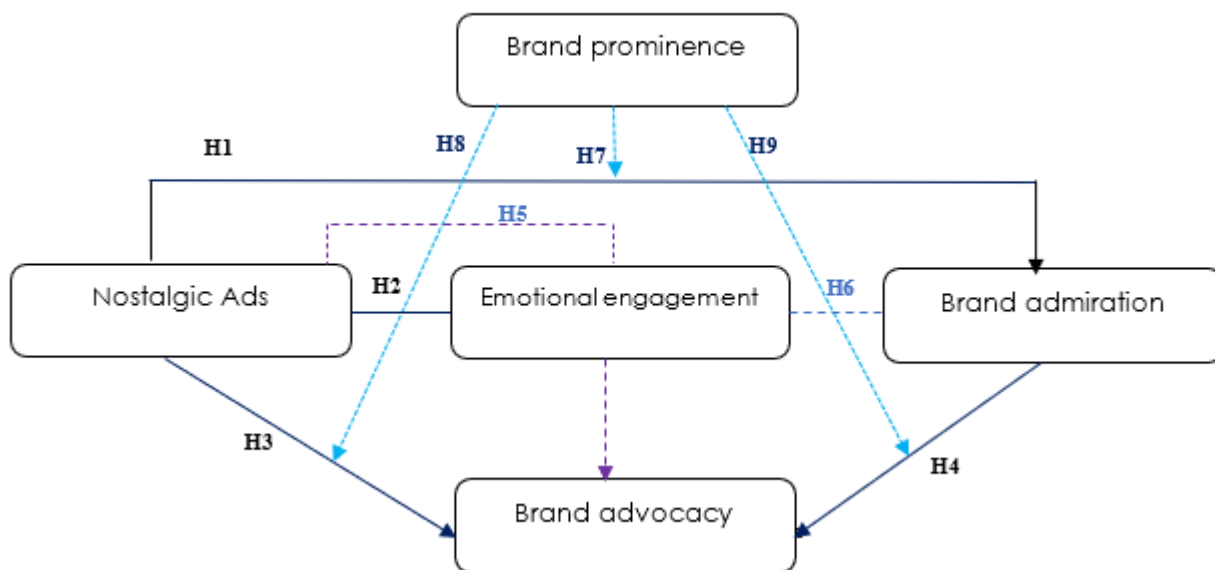
Prominence is important for a customer segment with intrinsic consumption motivations and no desire to show off (Deb & Lomo-David, 2020). In advertising, brand prominence in meme ads drives high customer engagement and favorable attitudes toward the ads (Razzaq *et al.*, 2024). However, Xiao *et al.* (2024) suggested that the negative relationship between brand prominence and social media engagement is moderated by perceived role overload and self-brand connection, and mediated by avoidance. Moreover, brand prominence negatively influences the authenticity and coolness of luxury brands, thereby reducing purchase intentions, particularly among customers with high self-brand connection (Shukla *et al.*, 2024). In addition, the timing of brand prominence controls followers' persuasion knowledge, sharing behavior, and visual attention toward branded video content (Choi *et al.*, 2018). Thus, we propose that:

H7: Brand prominence moderates the relationship between nostalgic advertising and brand admiration.

H8: Brand prominence moderates the relationship between nostalgic advertising and brand advocacy.

H9: Brand prominence moderates the relationship between brand admiration and brand advocacy.

Figure 2. Theoretical model



Source: Authors' preparation

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Sample and data collection

To conduct the fieldwork, we first targeted customers of international chain restaurants operating in Egypt. Egypt represents a culturally rich and memory-oriented market where food consumption is strongly embedded in social traditions and collective identity (Mostafa *et al.*, 2019). This context provides a theoretically meaningful setting for examining nostalgia-based advertising effects. We included these restaurants in the sample because of their significant market share and reputation. They can also run high-quality marketing campaigns featuring nostalgic ads. The survey was distributed across 35 restaurants in Cairo and Giza. Participants could choose not to participate, so we used convenience sampling. We ensured all participants had experienced nostalgic ads from these restaurants.

We needed 45 days, from August to September 2025, to collect 405 questionnaires. Of these, 374 were valid for analysis; thirty-one were incomplete or had straight-line answers (Abdulmawla *et al.*, 2024). We used a self-administered survey while customers waited for their orders (Kim *et al.*, 2024), which allowed us to address their questions and assess the instrument's face and content validity. We adapted survey indicators from prior research (see Table 1). Each indicator was rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). We used a five-point Likert scale for its simplicity, respondent familiarity, and reduced cognitive fatigue, which improves response quality and reliability in hospitality surveys (Abdulmawla *et al.*, 2025).

Given the context-specific design of this study, control variables (age, gender, visit frequency, and advertising exposure channel) were excluded from the structural model. The sample is homogeneous, as all respondents were customers of international chain restaurants in Egypt with prior exposure to nostalgic advertising, reducing variability from contextual and demographic factors (Elshaer *et al.*, 2022). The study follows a theory-driven approach, focusing on the psychological mechanisms of nostalgia-based advertising. Consistent with prior PLS-SEM research, adding control variables without a strong theoretical justification may increase model complexity and reduce parsimony (Hair *et al.*, 2017).

### 3.2 Pre-test procedures

A pilot study validated and tested the questionnaire's reliability before the main survey distribution. Back translation and cultural adaptation were part of extensive efforts to ensure the linguistic accuracy and cross-cultural validity of the tool's Arabic version (Abdulmawla *et al.*, 2025). First, a bilingual academic translated the questionnaire from English to Arabic. Then another bilingual professional who had not seen the original document back-translated this Arabic version into English. The research team compared the original English questionnaire with its back-translated version to identify any differences that would establish semantic equivalence. Three panels of Arab hospitality management experts evaluated questionnaires in a single round for adequacy and conceptual equivalence of the translated items. It judged how clear the items were in terms of cultural fit and how well the translated items kept the psychological meanings intended in the original scale.

Cross-language validation was conducted by calculating inter-rater reliability. Content validity was determined using CVI. I-CVIs ranged from 0.810 to 0.940, whereas the S-CVI was 0.92, reflecting strong agreement and excellent content validity. Minor amendments were also recommended by experts to increase contextual accuracy; thus, the final questionnaire became both linguistically and culturally appropriate for the Egyptian restaurant context (Alsetoohy *et al.*, 2026a).

A pre-test was conducted with 60 guests, resulting in 46 valid responses. Based on their comments, some questions were revised to increase clarity and remove overlaps. For reliability analysis, Cronbach's alpha—a statistic that measures how closely related a set of items is as a group—was above the minimum acceptable value of 0.707. Therefore, the survey instrument demonstrated adequate internal consistency, meaning the survey items worked well together.

The descriptive results show nearly equal representation of males and females: 184 males (49.2%) and 190 females (50.8%). 162 respondents (43.3%) were aged 18–25, followed by 92 (24.6%) aged 26–34 years. This age distribution reflects the fast-food business's tendency to attract younger customers. Regarding education, 191 (51%) were high-degree holders and 101 (27%) were university students. We asked participants where they saw nostalgic ads and what formats they were in (video, picture, or post). Social media advertising (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok) gained about half of the customers' attention. TV advertising attracted 135 (36.1%) respondents.

### 3.3 Data robustness and analysis

WarpPLS-SEM V.8 was used to analyse the research data and test the hypotheses, highlighting the significant role of PLS-SEM in hospitality research for complex relationship analyses among the research constructs (Alsetoohy *et al.*, 2026b). PLS-SEM is more flexible and robust when the data do not fulfil the assumptions of multivariate normality. Also, this technique is suitable for small-sample studies, as it produces stable, consistent parameter estimates even with many indicators, thereby strengthening the study's credibility and the validity of its findings (Hair *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, WarpPLS was employed. Although PLS-SEM excels at complex models and non-normal data, its key contribution lies in its ability to accommodate this analytical complexity (Hair *et al.*, 2021). Covariance-based SEM is primarily confirmatory. However, since our data are cross-sectional, this study does not aim to provide strict confirmation of the theory. Instead, PLS-SEM assesses predictive and theoretically grounded relationships (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, findings should be interpreted with this limitation in mind. A two-stage PLS-SEM analysis was performed (Abdulmawla *et al.*, 2024). In the first stage, a measurement model assessment of indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity was conducted to assess the construct's reliability and validity. In the second stage, a structural model was assessed to examine the proposed relationships among latent variables and the explained variance in the endogenous construct.

As shown in Table 1, the measurement model's constructs are reliable and valid. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  ranged from 0.750 to 0.926, and Composite Reliability (CR) from 0.842 to 0.948; both exceeded the 0.70 threshold (Hair *et al.*, 2021). All items loaded above 0.70, except BADV5, which was excluded due to lower loadings (Hair *et al.*, 2021).

All Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were above 0.5. These metrics indicate high construct reliability and convergent validity (Hair *et al.*, 2021). Also, the square roots of the AVEs for each scale construct were greater than the correlations between constructs (see Table 2). HTMT ratios were below the 0.90 threshold. These results satisfy the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Henseler *et al.* (2016) guidelines, confirming discriminant validity, as shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Loadings, descriptive statistics, reliabilities, AVEs, and VIFs for the items

Variable	Loadings	Mean	SD	Skweness	CR	$\alpha$	AVE	VIF
<b>Nostalgic ads (NA)</b>	(Su <i>et al.</i> , 2024).							1.556
NA1. The ad brings back pleasant memories of the past.	0.854	3.128	1.418	-0.092	0.887	0.826	0.666	
NA2. The ad evokes my nostalgia.	0.902	3.398	1.385	-0.374				
NA3. The ad helps me remember events from a previous time.	0.857	3.564	1.298	-0.584				
NA4. The ad reminds me of my earlier years.	0.702	3.128	1.455	-0.114				
<b>Emotional engagement (EE)</b>	(Shen <i>et al.</i> , 2022).				0.875	0.808	0.638	2.993
EE1. When X's ads mention something good, I quote it.	0.850	3.513	1.358	-0.501				
EE2. I express my positive feelings about X's ads.	0.816	3.013	1.451	0.008				
EE3. When X's ads mention good things, I use an emoter for them.	0.710	3.064	1.424	-0.002				
EE4. I feel emotionally connected to other customers when I share X's ads.	0.837	3.115	1.488	-0.119				
<b>Brand admiration (BADM)</b>	(Joo and Kim, 2021 & Trivedi and Sama, 2020)				0.934	0.911	0.738	2.899
BADM1. When I interact with brand X, I feel proud.	0.882	3.078	1.517	-0.058				
BADM2. When I interact with brand X, I feel admiration.	0.901	3.008	1.530	0.004				
BADM3. I trust brand X.	0.871	3.061	1.477	-0.046				
BADM4. I love brand X	0.856	2.987	1.464	0.039				
BADM5. I respect brand X.	0.782	3.388	1.423	-0.390				
<b>Brand prominence (BP)</b>	(Li <i>et al.</i> , 2019)				0.842	0.75	0.572	1.05
BP1. I believe I have many thoughts about brand X.	0.731	4.422	0.670	-0.735				

BP2. Feelings and thoughts toward Brand X often come to mind automatically.	0.794	4.463	0.653	-0.816
BP3. Feelings and thoughts toward brand X come to my mind naturally and promptly.	0.760	4.433	0.679	-0.787
BP4. I am not very in control of how I feel and think about brand X.	0.739	4.473	0.611	-0.710
<b>Brand advocacy (BADV)</b>	<b>(Park <i>et al.</i>, 2016)</b>			
	0.948	0.926	0.819	3.023
BADV1. I recommend brand X to others.	0.885	3.195	1.449	-0.163
BADV2. I defend brand X.	0.912	3.235	1.440	-0.227
BADV3. I denigrate competitors of brand X.	0.923	3.195	1.474	-0.178
BADV4. I publicly showcase brand X.	0.900	3.334	1.419	-0.338

Source: Authors' preparation

Table 2. Results of the discriminant validity

Fornell-Larcker criterion						HTMT ratios			
Construct	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4
1- Nostalgic	<b>0.816</b>								
2- Engagement	0.541	<b>0.799</b>				0.67			
3- Admiration	0.499	0.759	<b>0.859</b>			0.588	0.882		
4- Prominence	0.015	0.082	0.122	<b>0.756</b>		0.067	0.108	0.147	
5- Advocacy	0.564	0.755	0.751	0.102	<b>0.905</b>	0.646	0.866	0.819	0.125

Source: Authors' preparation

### 3.4 Ethical consideration

The highest ethical standards were adhered to throughout this study. A research protocol outlining the objectives of the study, sampling techniques, and the questionnaire used was approved by the university ethics committee to which the authors are affiliated. Participation was voluntary, and all participants provided informed consent. Before filling out the questionnaire, participants were informed of the study's purpose, their right to participate and to withdraw at any time without consequences, and how long it would take to complete the questionnaire. To avoid exerting any pressure or coercion, material or financial incentives were not provided. The privacy and confidentiality of participants were ensured by not collecting any personal identity information, such as names, phone numbers, or email addresses. There were no intrusive or sensitive questions in this survey that could be used only for academic research. Questionnaires, once completed, were securely collected and kept, accessible only by the research team. The fast-food setup allowed customer waiting time to be used, after obtaining consent from branch managers, for fieldwork. There is less risk of social interaction with customers in a social setting; however, precautionary measures were put in place to avoid disturbing patrons while eating. Respondents were at liberty to decline to respond or ignore the survey request without any ramifications for their restaurant service. Such ethical considerations serve to ensure respect for the rights, dignity, and welfare of all participants.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Common method bias (CMB)

The data for this research were gathered using a single questionnaire, administered to all participants at the same time and in the same setting, which creates a potential for methodological bias. To address CMB and measurement inaccuracies, we used various procedural and statistical methods (Alsetoohy et al., 2025; Podsakoff et al., 2003). These included keeping responses anonymous, giving clear instructions, and randomizing survey questions to prevent predictable patterns.

After data collection, we conducted a principal component analysis in SPSS version 25 on a dataset with 5 variables and 21 items. Harman's single-factor test showed that no single factor accounted for more than 43.62% of the total variance, well below the 50% benchmark for significant CMB (Alsetoohy et al., 2026a). We then used an alternative model with a randomly generated variable to check for common bias that might distort results. As shown in Table 2, collinearity diagnostics indicate that all variance inflation factor (VIF) values were well below the critical limit of 3.3; the highest VIF value for brand advocacy is 3.02, confirming the absence of multicollinearity and easing concerns about CMB (Kock, 2017). These careful analyses established the dataset's reliability and validity, enhancing the study's methodological rigor and credibility.

### 4.2 Structural model

#### 4.2.1 Direct relationships

Using previous research (Alsetoohy *et al.*, 2026a; Abdulmawla *et al.*, 2024), the study rigorously assessed the constructs' predictive validity and reliability with  $R^2$ ,  $Q^2$ , and  $F^2$ . The  $R^2$  values ranged from 0.29 to 0.70. These values showed strong explanatory power for the dependent variables and met Chin's (2009) thresholds. For example, 70% of the variance in brand advocacy was explained by the independent variables in the research, as shown in Figure 2.

The  $Q^2$  values ranged from 0.30 to 0.68, further supporting the model's predictive validity. These values matched the criteria set by Hair *et al.* (2021). To check the reliability of the internal structural model, the study performed 5,000 bootstrap iterations. Bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals confirmed the absence of observable sign changes. For more details about the model fit, see Appendix A.

The statistical analysis showed significant links between nostalgic ads and brand admiration ( $\beta = 0.134$ ;  $t = 2.643$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ,  $f^2 = 0.188$ ), emotional engagement ( $\beta = 0.542$ ,  $t = 11.307$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ,  $f^2 = 0.294$ ), and brand advocacy ( $\beta = 0.182$ ,  $t = 3.604$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ,  $f^2 = 0.068$ ). These results validated H1, H2, and H3. The results also showed that brand admiration had a significant effect on brand advocacy ( $\beta = 0.351$ ,  $t = 7.134$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ,  $f^2 = 0.265$ ), supporting H4. Figure 2 illustrates these findings, and Table 3 provides details.

Table 3. Hypotheses test results

Hypo	Path	$\beta$	T-value	P-value	CI		F2	SE	Result
H1	Nostalgic ads $\rightarrow$ brand admiration	0.134	2.643	0.004	0.035	0.234	0.188	0.051	Supported
H2	Nostalgic ads $\rightarrow$ emotional engagement	0.542	11.307	0.001	0.448	0.636	0.294	0.048	Supported

H3	Nostalgic ads → brand advocacy	0.182	3.604	0.001	0.083	0.280	0.068	0.050	Supported
H4	Brand admiration → brand advocacy	0.351	7.134	0.001	0.255	0.448	0.265	0.049	Supported
H5	Nostalgic ads → emotional engagement → brand admiration	0.369	10.546	0.001	0.301	0.438	0.188	0.035	Supported
H6	Nostalgic ads → emotional engagement → brand advocacy.	0.208	5.931	0.001	0.139	0.276	0.181	0.050	Supported
H7	Brand prominence → nostalgic ads*brand admiration.	0.05	1.054	0.15	-0.046	0.155	0.011	0.051	Not supported
H8	Brand prominence → nostalgic ads*brand advocacy.	0.06	1.85	0.12	-0.040	0.161	0.013	0.051	Not supported
H9	Brand prominence → brand admiration * brand advocacy.	0.11	2.182	0.01	0.011	0.211	0.033	0.051	Supported

Source: Authors' preparation

#### 4.2.2. Indirect relationships

##### Mediation analysis

Based on Hayes's criteria, we assessed the mediation effects of customer emotional engagement within the research model. We used 5,000 bootstrap samples with 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) in WarpPLS 8. In the bootstrapping procedure, the significance of mediation is established when the lower boundary (CI<sub>LL</sub>) and upper boundary (CI<sub>UL</sub>) of the CI remain distinct from zero. When this occurs, we can infer with 95% certainty that the mediation effect is statistically significant. This outcome corroborates the alternative hypothesis (Hayes, 2017).

As shown in Tables 3 and 4, nostalgic advertisements have a significant direct effect on brand admiration ( $\beta = 0.134$ ,  $t = 2.643$ ,  $p = 0.004$ , 95% CI = 0.035: 0.234). The indirect effect, via emotional engagement, is also significant ( $\beta = 0.369$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , CI = 0.301: 0.438). Since both direct and indirect effects are significant and the confidence intervals for the indirect effect do not include zero, emotional engagement acts as a partial mediator between nostalgic advertisements and brand admiration. These findings support H5.

Similarly, nostalgic advertisements have a significant direct effect on brand advocacy ( $\beta = 0.182$ ,  $t = 3.604$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , 95% CI = 0.083: 0.280), and also exert a significant indirect effect through emotional engagement ( $\beta = 0.208$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , 95% CI = 0.139: 0.2276). The confidence intervals for these indirect effects exclude zero, indicating partial mediation of the relationship between nostalgic advertisements and brand advocacy by emotional engagement. This result supports hypothesis H6. The positive indirect effects on brand admiration and advocacy highlight that increasing emotional engagement strengthens both, emphasizing its mediating role.

To further clarify the mediation effects, mediation strength was assessed using the Variance Accounted For (VAF). A VAF value of approximately 73% indicates that emotional engagement partially mediates the effect of nostalgic ads on brand admiration. Similarly, a VAF of approximately 53% shows

partial mediation regarding brand advocacy. Both values suggest considerable partial mediation in each case (Hair *et al.*, 2022).

Table 4. The mediation analysis results

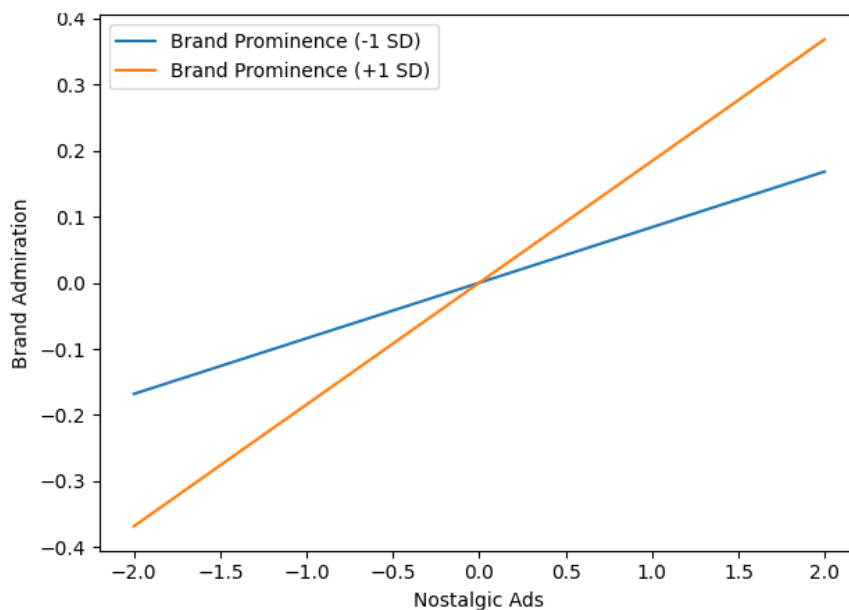
Hypotheses	Path a	Path b	Indirect Effect	SE	t-value	CI 95%		Decision
						LL	UL	
Nostalgic ads → emotional engagement → brand admiration	0.542	0.681	0.369	0.035	10.546	0.301	0.438	Mediation
Nostalgic ads → emotional engagement → brand Advocacy	0.542	0.383	0.208	0.035	5.931	0.139	0.276	Mediation

Source: Authors' preparation

*Moderation analysis*

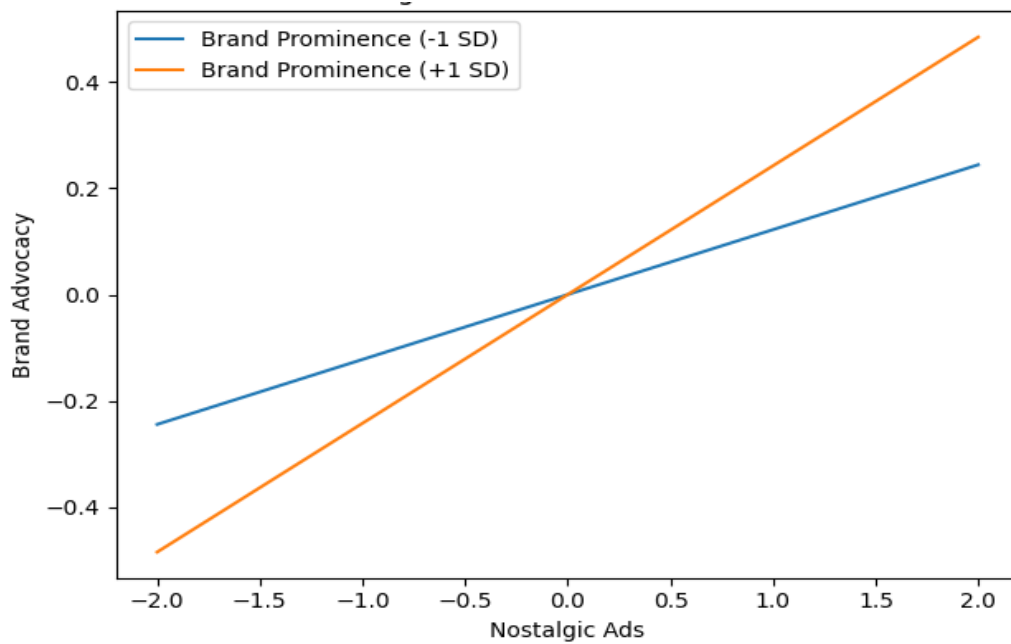
The results showed that brand prominence does not significantly moderate the link between nostalgic ads and brand admiration ( $\beta = 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.15$ ; CILL = -0.046, CIUL = 0.155,  $t = 1.054$ ,  $f2 = 0.011$ ) or brand advocacy ( $\beta = 0.06$ ,  $p = 0.12$ ; CILL = -0.040, CIUL = 0.161,  $t = 1.85$ ,  $f2 = 0.013$ ). The interaction term was also not significant ( $p > 0.12$ ) because the 95% confidence interval included zero, and the t-value was too low, see Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3. The moderating effects of brand prominence on nostalgic ads and brand admiration



Source: Authors' preparation

Figure 4. The moderating effects of brand prominence on nostalgic ads and brand advocacy

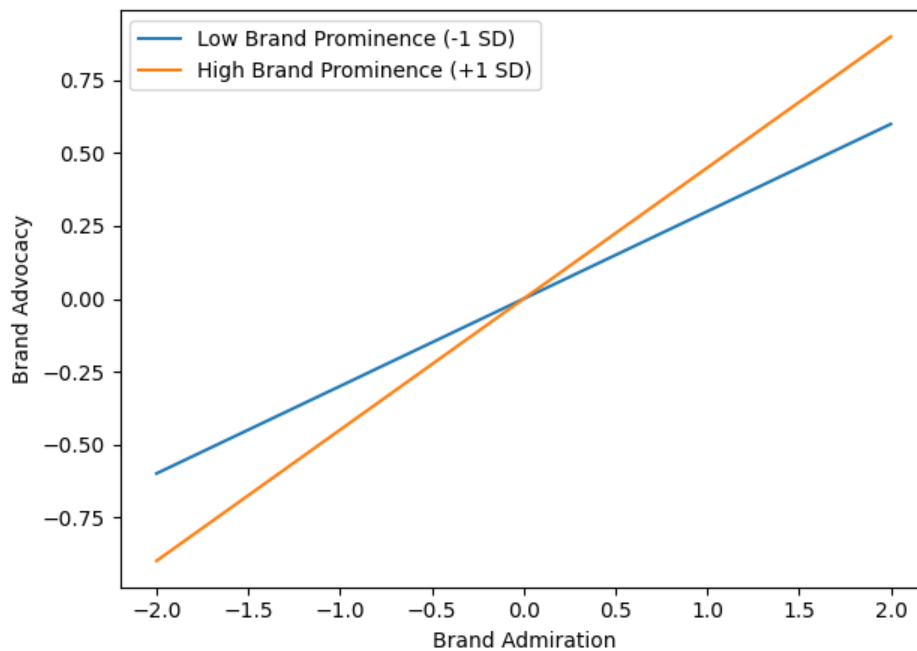


Source: Authors' preparation

The simple slope plots (Figures 3 and 4) support these findings. At both low ( $-1$  SD) and high ( $+1$  SD) levels of brand prominence, the slopes for nostalgic advertisements, brand admiration, and brand advocacy are similar, with no meaningful divergence. This shows that these relationships are consistent across levels of brand prominence. Thus, Hypotheses H7 and H8 are not supported.

As shown in Figure 5, and in contrast to the previous findings, brand prominence significantly moderated the link between brand admiration and brand advocacy. Specifically, it showed a positive and significant effect ( $\beta = 0.11$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $f^2 = 0.033$ ), with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (CILL = 0.011, CIUL = 0.211) and a  $t$ -value of 2.182. These results indicate that higher brand prominence further strengthens the positive association observed between brand admiration and brand advocacy.

Figure 5. **The moderating effects of brand prominence on brand admiration and brand advocacy**



Source: Authors' preparation

The simple slope analysis in Figure 5 shows that when brand prominence is high (+1 SD), the positive relationship between brand admiration and brand advocacy is stronger and steeper than when it is low (-1 SD). This indicates that consumers who perceive a brand as more prominent are more likely to translate their admiration into advocacy, such as recommending or promoting it to others. Accordingly, Hypothesis H9 is supported.

## 5. Discussion

This study builds on the BAM framework from Park *et al.* (2016) in the fast-food context. We show that nostalgic ads predict favorable customer responses and enhance brand benefits (Wen *et al.*, 2019; Huang *et al.*, 2024). Our findings show that nostalgic ads directly affect emotional engagement, brand admiration, and brand advocacy. Emotional engagement mediates these relationships. Brand prominence significantly moderates the link between brand admiration and brand advocacy.

Our study, consistent with Park *et al.* (2016), found that restaurants benefit when their ads trigger customers' nostalgia, which boosts engagement. This sense of nostalgia also fosters a sense of belonging and spiritual engagement (Gu *et al.*, 2021), supporting the idea that nostalgia enhances both hedonic and utilitarian motivations (Chang *et al.*, 2022), thereby leading to stronger engagement.

Our results also reported a significant association between nostalgic ads and brand admiration, a key brand-customer relationship. We propose that nostalgic ads enrich customers' unique status as brand members (Lee & Kim, 2020) and are a determinant of admiration sub-dimensions—brand love, trust, and respect (Park *et al.*, 2016). This form of advertising also drives outcomes such as brand forgiveness and emotional brand attachment (Joo & Kim, 2021).

This study found that customers are willing to advocate for a brand when it adopts nostalgic ads. Advocacy is a critical post-purchase response (Gu *et al.*, 2021), and our results support that nostalgic ads drive valuable consumption outcomes. The BAM framework prioritizes advocacy as a key strategic response, explaining the importance of nostalgic ads for marketing success. The significant link between

nostalgic ads and advocacy aligns with previous work by Muehling *et al.* (2014) but not with the indirect association reported by Chang *et al.* (2022) and Kim *et al.* (2024).

Moreover, we identify another direct, significant relationship between brand admiration and brand advocacy in the fast-food space. Similar insights are also highlighted by Park *et al.* (2016), Bilro *et al.* (2019), and Castro-González *et al.* (2019). We then argue that a brand's admirers actively advocate for it by being loyal, confronting undesirable information, and disclosing its positive aspects. Accordingly, our study introduces adopting nostalgic ads and perceived brand admiration as two direct predictors of brand advocacy.

In a different vein, this study examined the mediating effect of emotional engagement on the relationship between nostalgic ads (independent variable) and brand admiration and brand advocacy (dependent variables). Results showed a partially significant mediation role for the two connections. That is, the effect of ads on positive customer responses toward a brand will be more noticeable for people who perceive nostalgia for the promoted brand. These results agree with similar conclusions by Muehling *et al.* (2014), Shen *et al.* (2022), and Elgarhy *et al.* (2024).

To enrich contributions, we extended the BAM framework by examining brand prominence as a moderator. Findings reveal that fast-food attributes explain the non-moderate effect of prominence on the link between nostalgic ads and brand admiration. Rather than exclusivity, fast food brands focus on accessibility, affordability, and convenience. Nostalgic ads trigger intrinsic emotional responses that directly influence admiration, independent of brand popularity.

Most fast-food chains target a broad clientele, prioritizing personal preferences over social prestige. Consumers are drawn more to nostalgic ads that resonate with emotions and memories, weakening the moderating influence of such ads. The absence of brand prominence's moderating effect on advocacy likely relates to the emotional drivers behind advocacy, such as attachment and positive experiences, rather than prestige. Nostalgic ads spark advocacy by rekindling memories and fostering brand identification, as Xiao *et al.* (2024) argue.

Brand prominence moderates the link between brand admiration and advocacy. The more prominent the brand, the more admired the brand is, prompting advocacy. Hospitality research supports this effect (Rather *et al.*, 2024; Deb & Lomo-David, 2020).

The present findings align with prior research showing that nostalgic cues boost emotional engagement and positive brand outcomes in service contexts (Su *et al.*, 2025). Previous hospitality studies indicate that emotionally charged marketing strengthens relational bonds and increases customer advocacy (Imran *et al.*, 2026; Wang *et al.*, 2026). Our results extend these findings: we confirm that nostalgic advertising increases emotional engagement and reinforces brand admiration in fast-food settings. Unlike earlier studies focused on Western or East Asian contexts (Kim *et al.*, 2024; Huang *et al.*, 2026), this research draws on evidence from an emerging market, suggesting that the mechanisms underlying nostalgia-based persuasion are cross-culturally robust yet shaped by local dynamics.

When comparing our findings with international research, several key observations emerge. First, Western hospitality studies emphasize the role of nostalgia in maintaining personal identity. In contrast, Asian marketing research highlights collective memory and heritage symbolism (Rehman *et al.*, 2026). Our findings support both perspectives, showing that nostalgic advertising stimulates both individual emotional engagement and collective brand admiration. Additionally, while cross-cultural studies suggest that nostalgia may vary in intensity by cultural orientation, our results indicate that, in the Egyptian fast-food context, nostalgic cues are powerful drivers of advocacy. Thus, while cultural nuances shape nostalgic expression, its core emotional mechanisms seem broadly transferable across service markets.

We systematically contrast our results with leading international studies in tourism and hospitality marketing (Su *et al.*, 2025; Huang *et al.*, 2026). This shows that nostalgic advertising is a culturally adaptable, yet theoretically consistent, emotional tool. Previous studies focused on heritage tourism or destination branding (Wang *et al.*, 2026). Our research extends this work to quick-service restaurant settings. This broadens nostalgia's use within service ecosystems.

Furthermore, while previous tourism studies have primarily examined nostalgia in the contexts of heritage tourism and cultural familiarity (Sharma *et al.*, 2026; Wang *et al.*, 2026), the present study extends this stream of research into quick-service restaurant environments. This demonstrates that nostalgia-driven persuasion mechanisms operate effectively within everyday service consumption settings, thereby broadening the applicability of nostalgia theory beyond destination marketing into routine hospitality interactions.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes notable theoretical contributions to the field of nostalgia marketing. To our knowledge, this is the first attempt to show how nostalgic ads drive fast-food customers' responses using the BAM framework. We examined nostalgia's effect on 'building a business people love' (Park *et al.*, 2016) by integrating antecedents and consequences of brand admiration from the original BAM model. Previous research focused on nostalgia-themed outlets (Chen *et al.*, 2014; Gu *et al.*, 2021; Kim *et al.*, 2024) or traditional food businesses (Chen *et al.*, 2020; Chang *et al.*, 2022). In contrast, we study the influence of nostalgic content within the ad itself, regardless of the business model's traditionality. Our approach aligns with recommendations by Gu *et al.* (2021), Kim *et al.* (2024), and Su *et al.* (2024) to extend nostalgia theory to the fast-food sector, which is modern and scalable. Therefore, we show that nostalgia can be evoked by external factors, such as nostalgic ads, rather than by restaurant atmosphere, food type, age group, or business tradition.

Accordingly, this study makes a clear theoretical contribution by extending BAM by integrating nostalgic advertising as an antecedent construct. It further refines BAM by explicitly incorporating nostalgic advertising as a stimulus that engages consumer memory, identity, and symbolic consumption. Additionally, emotional engagement and brand prominence are specified as key mediating and moderating mechanisms, clarifying the model's expanded explanatory scope.

By empirically validating a mediated–moderated framework, this study advances BAM from an outcome-focused model toward a more process-oriented structure by showing how mediation and moderation stages shape the effects of nostalgia-driven stimuli on attitudes. It thus clarifies, for the broader tourism and hospitality literature, how such stimuli are interpreted, moderated, and result in admiration and advocacy within experiential service settings. This extension represents a conceptual refinement rather than a mere replication of context.

In addition to these theoretical contributions, our findings provide important empirical insights. First, the study disproves the idea that only older people feel nostalgia, as this does not affect their behavior. The majority of respondents were young people (over two-thirds, aged 18–34), yet nostalgic ads still influenced their behavior toward the chain. This highlights nostalgia's relevance for marketing to younger consumers in restaurant contexts. Second, in line with Hao (2020), our research extends the examination of emotional engagement as a mediator in hospitality and tourism quantitative models, particularly by establishing reliable scales for customer outcomes. This effort enriches understanding of the psychological factors underlying nostalgia in the hospitality industry. Third, given that brand prominence is recognized as a powerful marketing variable (Han *et al.*, 2010), we investigated its moderating effect in our BAM-based model. Unlike previous studies (Huang *et al.*, 2024; Su *et al.*, 2024; Singh *et al.*, 2021) that focused on spatial, social, or typological moderators, we examine the unexplored effect of brand prominence on positive post-purchase responses (Huang *et al.*, 2024).

### 6.2 Practical implications

After establishing these findings, several practical implications emerge for hospitality marketers. Management seeks to optimize post-purchase outcomes. Our findings show nostalgic ads are effective, especially in the short term. Nostalgic content boosts hedonic and utilitarian motivations and enhances engagement—a key factor in consumer experiences. Nostalgia-driven engagement goes beyond surface actions; it creates a genuine sense of brand belonging, leading to brand love and advocacy. Our results confirm that fostering nostalgia among restaurant customers builds a positive psychological bond between customer and brand.

Nostalgia-oriented ads are an effective way for organizations to earn customer admiration and advocacy. Admired brands are more likely to drive customer advocacy, which can lead to unfavorable comparisons with competing brands. These findings support a customer-focused approach when setting marketing policies.

Additionally, our confirmed mediated-moderated model shows that brand prominence moderates the link between admiration and advocacy. Decision-makers should ensure customers have uncontrollable thoughts about the brand that come to mind quickly and automatically. These strategies keep the brand prominent, building trust, respect, and love. Fast-food brands can build prominence by fostering brand attachment. Our findings show that when managers ensure their products or services have easily visible features, they gain more admiration and advocacy through advertising. Prominence matters even to those not interested in showing off or those with utilitarian motivations who still value visible brands. Young people are the main customers of fast food. We recommend promoting trademark components, such as the logo, slogan, and marks, on social media. These tactics make the brand more visible to current and potential customers. In summary, nostalgia-based ads create high emotional engagement, brand admiration, and advocacy. Brands can rely on prominence to strengthen these relationships.

### 6.3 Limitations and future research

This study has limited generalizability for several reasons. First, it is time-bound because it uses cross-sectional data from a specific period. Second, it is context-bound, focusing on one hospitality sector. Third, even within fast food, the study only examined international brands, not local ones. We attempted to include both, but local brands lacked nostalgia perception and did not use nostalgic ads. We encourage further longitudinal research on nostalgia and admiration across the hospitality industry.

Building on these limitations, our proposed model is based on Park *et al.*'s one-dimensional BAM model: "*stimulate the senses and the mind*" (p. 42). We examined how nostalgic ads stimulate positive customer reactions. Accordingly, we recommend extending and validating BAM across more hospitality industries, such as hotels, retailers, resorts, spas, and all types of restaurants. In particular, this extension could clarify how BAM addresses two groups of brand loyalty behaviors: (1) complaint solving and customer resource conservation, and (2) reflecting customer beliefs and fostering belonging and distinctiveness.

To further enhance understanding, more studies are needed on how marketers can increase brand benefits. This could involve including more marketing variables and examining how they shape guests' attitudes and behaviors. We also recommend expanding our model to include unexplored mediating and moderating effects, such as the roles of ethnic groups, psychological states, and brand attachment. These may shape the link between nostalgia and brand benefits.

In line with this, we extend the BAM by explicitly incorporating nostalgic advertising as a mechanism for evoking emotional engagement. This extension allows the inclusion of additional psychological and contextual moderators, further enriching the framework. Future research could examine nostalgia proneness, generational cohort differences, brand heritage strength, or digital advertising channels. Furthermore, one limitation identified in the research was the absence of demographic and behavioral control variables that may influence consumer responses in a more heterogeneous population. Future research may consider integrating these controls or conducting

robustness tests across different customer segments to provide greater assurance to the generalizability of the effects of nostalgia-based advertising.

Additionally, the analysis relies on in-sample predictive assessment using Stone–Geisser’s  $Q^2$  values, as the model was estimated with WarpPLS, which does not provide out-of-sample predictive metrics (e.g., RMSE and MAE) or comparisons with naïve benchmark models (e.g., linear models). Although  $Q^2$  values indicate satisfactory predictive relevance, future research is encouraged to employ PLSpredict procedures to provide a more rigorous evaluation of predictive performance.

Finally, while this study used a quantitative approach, future research could employ qualitative and longitudinal methods to provide deeper insight into how consumers interpret nostalgic cues and incorporate them into identity narratives over time. Though not used here, these methods could help refine the model in this study and offer ways to refine it.

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### Appendix A. Model fit and quality indices

Classic Indices	Additional Indices (Indicator Correlation Matrix Fit)
Average path coefficient (APC) = 0.278, $P < 0.001$	Standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) = 0.077 (acceptable if $\leq 0.10$ )
Average R-squared (ARS) = 0.532, $P < 0.001$	Standardized mean absolute residual (SMAR) = 0.060 (acceptable if $\leq 0.10$ )
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS) = 0.529, $P < 0.001$	Standardized chi-squared (SChS) = 4.097, $df = 209$ , $P < 0.001$
Average block VIF (AVIF) = 1.684 (acceptable if $\leq 5$ , ideally $\leq 3.3$ )	Standardized threshold difference count ratio (STDCR) = 0.990 (acceptable if $\geq 0.70$ , ideally = 1)
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF) = 2.080 (acceptable if $\leq 5$ , ideally $\leq 3.3$ )	Standardized threshold difference sum ratio (STDSR) = 0.967 (acceptable if $\geq 0.70$ , ideally = 1)
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF) = 0.643 (small $\geq 0.10$ , medium $\geq 0.25$ , large $\geq 0.36$ )	—
Simpson's paradox ratio (SPR) = 1.000 (acceptable if $\geq 0.70$ , ideally = 1)	—
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR) = 1.000 (acceptable if $\geq 0.90$ , ideally = 1)	—
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR) = 1.000 (acceptable if $\geq 0.70$ )	—
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR) = 1.000 (acceptable if $\geq 0.70$ )	—