




Designing a Paradigmatic Model of Nostalgic Emotions and Preferences of Sports Consumers with a Grounded Theory Approach

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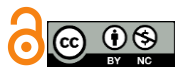
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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this research was to design a model of nostalgic emotions and preferences of sports consumers using the grounded theory approach.

Methodology: This research is qualitative in nature and applied-developmental in its aim. The participants in the study included academic experts in the field of sports marketing management, managers and executive marketers of sports organizations, and 22 relevant scientific articles, selected for interviews through theoretical sampling. Data analysis was conducted over more than three rounds of interviews until reaching theoretical saturation and consensus on identifying constructs, categories, concepts, and indicators within six constructs: causal conditions, the central and core phenomenon, strategies, contextual and intervening conditions, and outcomes, following the systematic model of Strauss and Corbin.

Findings: At the open coding stage, 180 indicators (initial concepts) were identified. In axial coding, considering the semantic proximity of the identified concepts, 160 secondary concepts and 31 categories were classified into four main axes (drivers, barriers, stimulants, and requirements) through selective coding, within the six constructs of the Strauss and Corbin paradigmatic model.

Conclusion: The results of the study can enhance the awareness of sports marketing managers regarding the optimal development of nostalgic dimensions of sports products and the preferences of sports consumers.

Keywords: *Experiential marketing, sports marketing, nostalgic emotions, consumer preferences, sports consumers.*

1 Introduction

Until recently, psychologists argued that we should not dwell on the past or focus excessively on it. However, it has now become clear that the desire to reflect on the past, known as nostalgia, is not only a useful tool for individuals coping with depression and anxiety but can also help increase sales through its influence on consumers in marketing. The concept of nostalgic marketing, which has its roots in experiential marketing, stimulates the senses and emotions of consumers (Hungenberg et al., 2020). Fans enjoy sports games for socialization and supporting their teams (Cho et al., 2021). According to Cho and Chiu (2020), these characteristics of sports create a suitable environment for nostalgia, which is an important factor in the behavior of sports enthusiasts (Cho & Chiu, 2020). Sporting events provide a collection of experiences, each of which can be transformed into a different type of sports nostalgia. This has led researchers to conceptualize two different types of nostalgia in sports contexts: object-based nostalgia and experience-based nostalgia (Gammon, 2002). Object-based sports nostalgia occurs when individuals feel nostalgic about their favorite teams or athletes from the past, recalling them by visiting historical sports venues (Gammon, 2002). On the other hand, individuals may cherish memories of socializing with others at past sports events and seek similar experiences at future sporting events (i.e., experience-based nostalgia) (Fairley, 2003).

The key to nostalgic marketing is to create a mental return to the past for the consumer, which can be done in two ways: through the product itself or through commercial messages and advertisements (Ju et al., 2016). According to Barakos et al. (2009), traditional marketers emphasize the rational choices of customers, while experiential marketers focus on the customer's experience. In fact, customers, by having pleasant experiences with products, incorporate the preferences formed in their minds about that particular brand's products into their decision-making and purchasing processes (Brakus et al., 2009). In the researcher's view, today's marketing managers face the challenge of better understanding the preferences of consumers regarding their products to ensure sales while satisfying consumer needs. Developing nostalgic emotions is one of the tools managers can use to give products historical value and prevent them from appearing outdated. In reality, the key to maintaining successful and sustainable sales in the future lies in this very topic. Due to the abundance of product choices, today's marketing landscape requires strong nostalgic associations

with the product to stimulate consumer preferences and avoid imitation. The consumer preference index indicates the extent to which a consumer prefers a particular product over other similar products in the same category or service (Sehat & Asadi, 2016). A consumer's preferred personality reflects how they perceive their needs, search for products, identify and review them, and make purchase decisions in a way that, in addition to meeting the primary need, provides additional value (Gheysari et al., 2021).

In marketing, nostalgia has captured the attention of researchers, particularly its impact on consumer behavior regarding brands and products. For example, previous studies have shown a connection between nostalgia and the intention to purchase a brand's products (Cho et al., 2021). Another way researchers have examined nostalgia is through the preference for past things (Scola, 2019). This means that instead of actual purchasing behavior, the individual's intention to buy something is considered. Purchase intention has been used to predict actual buying behavior and is often a reliable indicator. Purchase intention has been used as a final variable in research on sports goods, nostalgia in advertisements, online clothing purchases, and often as an outcome variable. Although consumer behavior is the result of consumer preferences, purchase intention is often reported as an acceptable substitute for behavior. Purchase intention has been used as the final construct in many sports marketing studies and has been successfully utilized as an outcome variable in numerous sports marketing literature (Drayer et al., 2018). Some research has also reported the implications of nostalgia in the sports field regarding future behavior and perceived value (Cho & Chiu, 2020); the intention to purchase sponsor products (Cho et al., 2021); emotional, behavioral, and psychological reactions (Hungenberg et al., 2020); sports consumer behavior (Cho et al., 2021); and sports consumer preferences (Scola, 2019).

From the perspective of Ahmadizadeh et al. (2022), nostalgic advertisements have a significant direct effect on the nostalgic capability and the desire of national football team fans to attend stadiums (Ahmadizadeh et al., 2022). Khademi Gerashi and Rostami (2021) stated that nostalgia, through the mediating role of experiential value (including consumer investment return and perceived service superiority), influences consumers' behavioral intentions (Khademi Gerashi & Rostami, 2021). Azima et al. (2021) showed that nostalgic advertisements generate more positive emotions, a more favorable attitude towards the brand, and greater purchase intent compared to non-nostalgic advertisements (Azima et al., 2021). According to Gheysari

et al. (2021), the factors influencing brand preferences across all stages of their lifecycle include psychological, organizational (organizational behavior, physical, financial, and technological factors), consumer-related factors (individual and non-individual), strategic factors, and brand-related factors (Gheysari et al., 2021). Zare et al. (2020) believe that nostalgia and its components have a significant relationship and impact on spectators' attitudes and behavioral intentions at the individual level (Zare et al., 2020). According to Cho et al. (2021), nostalgia has a positive correlation with recalling experiences and impulsive purchasing behavior. Given the results of previous studies, nostalgic marketing and consumer preferences in sports increase mental engagement and perception, having both positive and negative effects. Additionally, nostalgia has a meaningful causal relationship with fans' purchase intentions (Cho et al., 2021). However, it seems that sports consumer preferences in the field of sports marketing in Iran experience an academic gap, and in fact, the role of nostalgia in sports consumer preferences has been overlooked in the Iranian sports marketing literature. Considering the discussed points and the importance of sports marketing in the development of sports, the lack of sufficient research in this field, the absence of necessary policies and strategies, and, most importantly, the lack of an indigenous and knowledge-based model, the researcher aims to answer the following question: What is the paradigmatic model for developing nostalgic emotions and the preferences of sports consumers in Iran?

2 Methods and Materials

This research is qualitative and exploratory in nature, employing the grounded theory methodology with a systematic approach based on Strauss and Corbin. The study aims to identify and develop a paradigmatic model of nostalgic emotions and preferences of sports consumers through open, axial, and selective coding of documents, previous studies, and semi-structured interviews with an academic population consisting of sports marketing management experts, marketing managers of sports organizations, and active sports marketing practitioners. An inductive approach was used until theoretical saturation was achieved, identifying the core phenomenon, causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and outcomes of developing scientific productions in this field through more than three rounds of interviews.

The research design followed a systematic plan, with data analysis conducted through open, axial, and selective coding. The logical paradigm or visual representation of the emerging theory was developed into six constructs. Through the coding process, concepts emerged from the codes, categories from the concepts, and theories from the categories.

The number of experts participating in the study was 15, with theoretical saturation reached through semi-structured interviews and 22 research documents. From the 15th expert, the data began to repeat, and for further assurance, interviews continued until the 18th expert, but no new open codes (indicators) were added. Sampling for selecting experts, scholars, and research documents was conducted purposefully using theoretical (judgmental) sampling. This method was chosen because the research group determined that these individuals and documents were best positioned to provide the necessary information. When a portion of a population is selected based on the judgment of specific individuals or the researcher, it is referred to as theoretical or judgmental sampling. This method is mainly used when expert samples are needed.

The data collection tools included semi-structured questions and coding sheets based on a researcher-developed guideline for open, axial, and selective coding in library studies and interviews with the experts. The interviews were analyzed and categorized in more than three rounds of consultation and reflection within the six constructs of the Strauss and Corbin paradigmatic model. Based on the study of records and documentation, theoretical foundations and literature, books, articles, dissertations, and consultations with experts, the research was conducted qualitatively in three steps:

Step 1: Library studies and formulation of research interview questions; Step 2: Data collection through interviews; and Step 3: After theoretical saturation, qualitative data analysis and consensus.

To ensure the validity (credibility) of the research data, methods such as member checking, auditing, participatory research, and pluralism were employed. The reliability (accuracy) was controlled by preparing and using a structured framework for interviews, with inter-coder agreement (Scott's Pi coefficient) measured. Randomly, four interviews were coded according to the researcher-developed coding sheets by two experienced coders (PhD students in sports management), and their agreement coefficient was calculated at 0.90.

3 Findings and Results

The consolidation and summary of the interviews (the outcome of the responses approved by the research group and interviewees) after consensus and theoretical saturation are presented in the following. Following the systematic guide provided by Corbin and Strauss for conducting open and axial coding, the process began by breaking down the interview text into message-bearing elements within the lines or paragraphs. Open codes were then extracted according to the coding sheets' guidelines. In the next stage, these concepts were grouped into larger categories, and finally, these categories were classified into broader conceptual clusters. In the second stage, axial coding (1.

Barriers, 2. Drivers (propellants), 3. Motivators (stimuli), 4. Main requirements (attractions) for the development of nostalgic emotions and the preferences of sports consumers) was conducted inductively (from specific to general) to determine the main category. Subsequently, the other categories were classified into six main constructs: causal conditions, central phenomenon, strategies, contextual conditions, environmental intervening conditions, and outcomes. Finally, in the selective coding stage, the relationships between the categories became evident, and the paradigmatic model and theories were developed. Due to the vast number of open codes, only the concepts, number of open codes, axial, and selective codes are mentioned in the following.

Figure 1

The Paradigmatic Model of Developing Nostalgic Emotions and Sports Consumers' Preferences in Iran

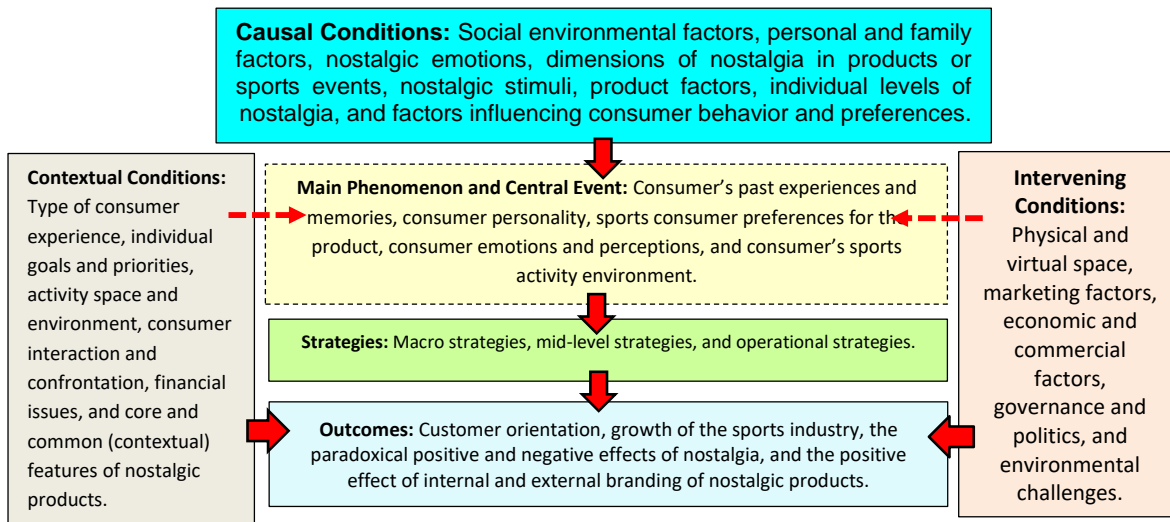


Table 1

Consensus of the Research Group's Opinions on "The Model for Developing Nostalgic Emotions and Sports Consumers' Preferences in Iran"

Row	Concepts and Number of Indicators	Categories	Axes
Main Phenomenon			
1	1. Individual experiences, 2. Personal memories. (2 concepts, 6 indicators).	Consumer's experiences and memories.	past and Drivers, requirements, stimuli, barriers.
2	1. Consumer's personality (introverted and extroverted), 2. Consumer's psychological development. (2 concepts, 4 indicators).	Consumer's personality.	
3	1. Interest in the past and personal experiences, 2. Association with an old feeling, 3. Attitude and purchase intention. (3 concepts, 3 indicators).	Sports consumer preferences for the product.	
4	1. Personal emotions, 2. Dimensions of nostalgic emotion, 3. Emotional and sentimental connection, 4. Perceived self-continuity, 5. Inner attachment, 6. Sense of belonging, 7. Senses, 8. Social connection. (8 concepts, 9 indicators).	Consumer's emotions and perceptions.	
5	1. Related to sports events, 2. Related to sports brands, 3. Related to sports stakeholders and audience. (3 concepts, 3 indicators).	Consumer's sports activity environment.	

Causal Conditions			
1	1. Media, 2. Cultural-social factors. (2 concepts, 7 indicators).	Social environmental factors.	Drivers, stimuli, requirements, barriers.
2	1. Individual factors, 2. Personal experiences, 3. Psychological patterns, 4. Lifestyle, 5. Personal habits, 6. Personal brand or endorsement, 7. Family status. (7 concepts, 9 indicators).	Personal and family factors.	
3	1. Positive life memories, 2. Nostalgic emotions, 3. Success and failure experiences. (3 concepts, 4 indicators).	Nostalgic emotions.	
4	1. Nostalgic experience, 2. Nostalgia socialization, 3. Consumer identity in nostalgia, 4. Group identity in nostalgia. (4 concepts, 4 indicators).	Dimensions of nostalgia in products or sports events.	
5	1. Internal or mental stimuli, 2. Environmental stimuli, 3. Emotional reactions, 4. Historical, geographical, or event-related factors, 5. Recollection of memories. (5 concepts, 5 indicators).	Nostalgic stimuli.	
6	1. Product features, 2. Product capability, 3. Economic (budgetary) factors, 4. Product and service quality. (4 concepts, 4 indicators).	Product factors.	
7	1. Intensity of evoked nostalgia, 2. Consumer's attitude, 3. Psychological disconnection. (3 concepts, 3 indicators).	Individual levels of nostalgia.	
8	1. Fan behavior and consumer loyalty, 2. Branding factors, 3. Level of attachment and individual preference, 4. Factors affecting consumer brand preferences. (4 concepts, 4 indicators).	Factors affecting consumer behavior and preferences.	
Contextual Conditions			
1	1. Consumer's previous experience with similar sports products, 2. Others' experiences, 3. New nostalgic experiences, 4. Accurate and comprehensive information, 5. Level of experience. (5 concepts, 5 indicators).	Consumer's experience type.	Drivers, stimuli, requirements, barriers.
2	1. Purpose of sports, 2. Personal conditions, 3. Personal priorities. (3 concepts, 3 indicators).	Individual goals and priorities.	
3	1. Context and environment, 2. Sports internal environment, 3. Activity space and geographical context of the individual's living area. (3 concepts, 3 indicators).	Context and space for activity.	
4	1. Emerging customer needs, 2. Influence of individuals on each other. (2 concepts, 2 indicators).	Interaction and confrontation of consumers.	
5	1. Experiential value, 2. Costs. (2 concepts, 2 indicators).	Financial issues.	
6	1. Memorability, 2. Meaningfulness, 3. Lovability, 4. Transferability, 5. Adaptability, 6. Protectability. (6 concepts, 6 indicators).	Core and common (contextual) features of nostalgic products.	
Intervening Conditions			
1	1. Use of meeting space, 2. Use of social media, 3. Use of nostalgic images. (3 concepts, 3 indicators).	Physical and virtual space.	Drivers, stimuli, requirements, barriers.
2	1. Marketing mix, 2. Product design, 3. Customer service and respect, 4. Advertising (type and method). (4 concepts, 5 indicators).	Marketing factors.	
3	1. Economic situation change, 2. National currency value, 3. Economic and banking sanctions, 4. Inflation rate, 5. Presence of sponsors. (5 concepts, 5 indicators).	Economic and commercial factors.	
4	1. Political structures, 2. Direct and indirect involvement, 3. Current political and social conditions. (3 concepts, 3 indicators).	Governance and political factors.	
5	1. Sports socialization, 2. External sports environment, 3. Negative factors, 4. National and satellite media coverage, 5. Cultural framework of the society, 6. General issues, 7. Sports culture of society. (7 concepts, 7 indicators).	Environmental challenges.	
Strategies			
1	1. Design of a quick response model, 2. Design of optimal strategies in sports, 3. Development of a general vision for sports growth, 4. Design of content related to sports, 5. Cultural diversity attention, 6. Deep understanding and better recognition, 7. Support for sports culture in society. (8 concepts, 8 indicators).	Macro strategies.	Drivers, stimuli, requirements for nostalgic emotions and consumer preferences.
2	1. Brand trust-building strategies, 2. Optimization of new technology use, 3. Systematic and accurate planning, 4. Creation and sharing of content related to nostalgic sports events and products, 5. Providing suitable sports spaces, 6. Focusing on old and popular sports, 7. Creating unique experiences, 8. Identifying and addressing customer needs. (9 concepts, 9 indicators).	Mid-level strategies.	
3	1. Establishment of nostalgic stores, 2. Use of nostalgic elements, 3. Engaging activities, 4. Use of social networks, 5. Nostalgic advertising, 6. Old events, 7. Use of nostalgic products, 8. Offering special discounts, 9. Use of nostalgic images, 10. Personal experiences, 11. Music, 12. Development of nostalgic products, 13. Inner desire stimulation, 14. Prioritizing sports product marketing solutions, 15. Strengthening nostalgic emotions, 16. Intelligent sports product design, 17. Product design for the market, 18. Nostalgic sports campaigns, 19. Impressive experience creation, 20. Use of modern marketing methods, 21. Use of technology. (21 concepts, 21 indicators).	Operational strategies.	
Outcomes			
1	1. Increased consumer satisfaction, 2. Increased reliability, 3. Attracting new audiences, 4. Increased satisfaction with the sports brand, 5. Customer retention, 6. Tool for customer engagement, 7. Meeting customer expectations, 8. Customer orientation, 9. Increased customer loyalty, 10. Creation of two-way communication and attachment, 11. Control over	Customer orientation.	Stimuli, drivers, requirements, barriers.

	purchasing behavior, 12. Increased consumer connection with the brand. (12 concepts, 12 indicators).
2	1. Increased competitiveness, 2. Gaining a competitive advantage, 3. Increased sports income and consumer numbers, 4. Effective advertising tool, 5. Increased sales, 6. Higher brand value, 7. Increased consumption, 8. Effective sports marketing, 9. Reviving and maintaining old brands, 10. Increased competition. (10 concepts, 10

Ultimately, after extensive review and consultation with university professors and other experts, the consensus of the research group and interviews, with over 85% agreement, resulted in the identification of 4 axes, 31 categories, 160 concepts, and 180 open codes (indicators). These were placed within the six constructs of the systematic paradigmatic model as follows: causal conditions (4 axes, 8 categories, 32 concepts, and 40 indicators); the main phenomenon and central event, the development of nostalgic emotions and sports consumer preferences (4 axes, 5 categories, 18 concepts, and 25 open codes); strategies (3 axes, 3 categories, 38 concepts, and 38 open codes); contextual conditions (4 axes, 6 categories, 21 concepts, and 21 open codes); intervening conditions (4 axes, 5 categories, 22 concepts, and 23 open codes); and the outcomes of strategy implementation (4 axes, 4 categories, 29 concepts, and 33 open codes).

In this section, based on the process of axial coding, the research propositions or statements were developed. These propositions highlight the relationships between the categories:

Proposition 1: The categories "consumer's past experiences and memories," "consumer's personality," "sports consumer preferences for the product," "consumer emotions and perceptions," and "consumer's sports activity environment" are identified as the main phenomenon and central event in the "Model for Developing Nostalgic Emotions and Sports Consumer Preferences."

Proposition 2: The categories "social environmental factors," "personal and family factors," "nostalgic emotions," "dimensions of nostalgia in products or sports events," "nostalgic stimuli," "product factors," "individual levels of nostalgia," and "factors affecting consumer behavior and preferences" act as causal factors in the "Model for Developing Nostalgic Emotions and Sports Consumer Preferences."

Proposition 3: The "macro," "mid-level," and "operational" strategies are actions aimed at realizing the "Model for Developing Nostalgic Emotions and Sports Consumer Preferences" in Iran.

Proposition 4: The internal (domestic) environment, as the contextual conditions for nostalgic emotions and sports consumer preferences in Iran, includes "consumer's

experience type," "individual goals and priorities," "context and space for activity," "interaction and confrontation of consumers," "financial issues," and "core and common (contextual) features of nostalgic products," providing a specific foundation for implementing the "Model for Developing Nostalgic Emotions and Sports Consumer Preferences."

Proposition 5: The external environment, as the intervening (mediating) conditions for nostalgic emotions and sports consumer preferences in Iran, includes "physical and virtual space," "marketing factors," "economic and commercial factors," "governance and political factors," and "environmental challenges," providing a general foundation for implementing the strategies of the "Model for Developing Nostalgic Emotions and Sports Consumer Preferences."

Proposition 6: The implementation of the macro, mid-level, and operational strategies of the "Model for Developing Nostalgic Emotions and Sports Consumer Preferences" in Iran will lead to outcomes such as "customer orientation," "growth in the sports industry," "the paradoxical positive and negative effects of nostalgia," and "the positive effects of internal and external branding of nostalgic products."

4 Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of this research was to design a model for developing nostalgic emotions and preferences of sports consumers. Nostalgic phenomena, as an influential factor on consumer preferences, offer numerous advantages, including: 1) Establishing a strong emotional connection with fans, making them more receptive to marketing messages. 2) Reinforcing existing attachment and brand loyalty by recalling a team's rich history, brand, or product, and past successes. 3) Offering intergenerational appeal, potentially repeating across generations. 4) Associating with positive memories, creating a more favorable perception by stimulating emotions. 5) Enhancing fan engagement and brand identity through powerful storytelling. Therefore, interpreting the results of each construct can be done by focusing on the categories, concepts, and exploratory indicators. The development of nostalgic emotions and

sports consumer preferences in Iran, according to the research findings for each construct, includes:

The categories of the main phenomenon and central event include "consumer's past experiences and memories," "consumer personality," "sports consumer product preferences," "consumer emotions and perceptions," and "consumer's sports activity environment." These five key categories drive nostalgic stimuli, as an emotional phenomenon, such as memories of attending games with family or friends, iconic players or moments from a team's past, or even simpler joys from playing sports in childhood or using a sports product (goods or services). These triggers evoke stronger emotional connections to past experiences and serve as tangible links to the past, fostering a sense of community and shared belonging. For instance, a young fan attending games with their grandfather may see a classic jersey (product preference) displayed in the stadium (activity space), triggering a flood of memories (past experiences). This, combined with an emotional personality and the desire to reconnect with those past emotions (emotions and perceptions), leads to a strong sense of nostalgia.

The findings of this study align with those of Scola (2019) regarding the preference for past things, Cho and Chiu (2020) on perceived value, and Cho et al. (2021) on past experiences and positive emotions, as well as Azima et al. (2021) (Azima et al., 2021; Cho & Chiu, 2020; Cho et al., 2021; Scola, 2019). However, this model also emphasizes consumer personality and the sports activity environment. Thus, the following recommendations are made to marketing managers in sports organizations in Iran: To evoke nostalgia among their audiences, they should use elements such as sights, sounds, and smells associated with past experiences, emphasizing their social and cultural value for all ages and employing powerful marketing.

The categories of causal conditions include "social environmental factors," "personal and family factors," "nostalgic emotions," "dimensions of nostalgia in sports products or events," "nostalgic stimuli," "product factors," "individual levels of nostalgia," and "factors influencing consumer behavior and preferences." These factors empirically interact with the challenges related to nostalgic sports marketing, influencing the behavior and preferences of sports consumers in generating nostalgic emotions and preferences. For example, growing up in a sports-centered family (family factors) or belonging to a fan group for a particular team (social environmental factors) fosters a lifelong love of sports and its culture. A natural preference for a particular sport or team from one's city (preference

factor), products like classic jerseys or memorabilia, or even nostalgic-themed marketing campaigns (product factors), attending games with family or friends, witnessing historic moments, or replaying childhood games (personal factors) can evoke powerful nostalgic memories. Consequently, consumer behavior and preferences are shaped by these social and personal factors, which expose them to nostalgic stimuli. These stimuli elicit positive emotions and memories, increasing nostalgia and influencing consumer behavior and preferences in a cycle that reinforces nostalgia and the desire for products and experiences associated with the past. The findings in this construct are consistent with those of Dreyer et al. (2018) and Cho et al. (2021) on purchase intention and experience recall, Hungenberg et al. (2020) on emotional, behavioral, and psychological reactions, and Gheysari et al. (2021) on factors related to consumers (both individual and non-individual) (Cho et al., 2021; Drayer et al., 2018; Gheysari et al., 2021; Hungenberg et al., 2020). However, this study highlights new factors such as the social environment, product nostalgia dimensions, individual levels of nostalgia, and factors affecting consumer behavior and preferences as causal conditions for the development of nostalgic emotions and sports consumer preferences. Therefore, it is recommended that sports marketing managers shape their sales and marketing strategies by utilizing media, personal experiences, psychological patterns, lifestyle, and nostalgic dimensions such as (experience, socialization, individual and group consumer identity). Other suggestions include using social media for advertising and promotion, increasing the intensity of nostalgia invoked, and quantitatively and qualitatively enhancing attitudes towards sports products.

The strategy categories include macro strategies with a long-term focus (designing a rapid response model, optimizing strategies in sports marketing, developing a general vision and goal for growth, designing content related to sports, cultural diversity consideration, deep understanding and better recognition of audience emotions and excitement, and supporting sports culture in society), mid-level strategies with a medium-term focus (brand trust-building, formulating guidelines for optimal use of new technology, systematic and accurate planning, creating and sharing content related to nostalgic sports products, maintaining nostalgic sports spaces, offering programs focused on old and popular sports, creating unique and extraordinary experiences, and recognizing sports customer needs), and operational strategies with a short-term focus (establishing nostalgic stores with nostalgic elements, using

social media and nostalgic advertising, organizing old events, using nostalgic products and images, personal experiences, music, and developing nostalgic products, with identifying and prioritizing marketing solutions for sports products, and formulating nostalgic sports campaigns). These strategies are aligned with the findings of Zare et al. (2020) on audience behavioral attitudes and intentions, but new strategies such as sharing common content related to nostalgic sports products and Iranian cultural norms through social media, focusing on the history of Iranian sports and specific nostalgic elements, were also highlighted. Based on the findings, it is recommended that sports product marketing and sales managers in the country strive to implement the following strategies: secure the necessary funding to maintain and develop nostalgic products, organize special festivals and stores for selling nostalgic products, and form NGOs to manage and optimize the planning of local nostalgic events.

The contextual condition categories include factors like "type of consumer experience," "individual goals and priorities," "activity space," "consumer interaction and confrontation," "financial issues," and "core and common (contextual) features of nostalgic products." Products that evoke shared memories of attending games or consuming with family or friends are stronger. Products connected to past sports achievements, priorities, conditions, and goals, or those that foster a sense of community and team loyalty, will be more appealing. Spaces like stadiums or specific playgrounds, as well as products that facilitate the social sharing of nostalgic memories, will also be more attractive, such as sharing old photos and stories or engaging in social media campaigns focused on a team's past moments. Affordable nostalgic products with various pricing options, attention to the economic realities of Iranian consumers, and easy payment options for Iranian consumers, such as local digital payment platforms or cash-on-delivery services, are crucial for realizing the strategies. The core and common enabling features, such as memorability, meaningfulness, lovability, transferability, adaptability, and protectability, are also essential for strategy implementation. These findings align with Gheysari et al. (2021) on factors related to consumers (individual and non-individual) and organizational factors (organizational behavior, physical, financial, and technological), but this study highlights new contextual factors such as type of experience, consumer goals and priorities, and core and common features of nostalgic products (Gheysari et al., 2021). Therefore, sports marketing managers are advised to facilitate consumer

interaction by promoting sports culture in society and creating suitable conditions for offering nostalgic sports products.

The intervening condition categories include factors such as "physical and virtual space," "marketing factors," "economic and commercial factors," "governance and politics," and "environmental challenges." Access to nostalgic products for Iranian consumers in both physical and virtual spaces, customer service, marketing mix and targeted advertising, depreciation of the national currency, economic and banking sanctions, uncontrolled inflation, the overarching intellectual and cultural framework governed by political authorities in selectively showcasing nostalgic sports activities and products in national media, direct and indirect political interference in sports events, and societal division in supporting sports governance all significantly impact the marketing and value of nostalgic sports products and figures. For instance, limited access to memorabilia, sanctions or governance restrictions on imports may limit access to classic jerseys or other nostalgic physical products. Censorship considerations or restrictions on the use of certain social media platforms in accordance with Iranian regulations may limit the advertising and marketing reach of nostalgic products. Political tensions in international relations, inflation, or currency fluctuations affect the affordability of nostalgic products, while environmental challenges, resource shortages, and the use of recycled materials impact the production and distribution methods of nostalgic sports products. These intervening factors can either enhance or reduce consumers' nostalgic emotions. The findings in this construct align with those of Ahmadizadeh et al. (2022) on nostalgic advertising and Khademi Gerashi and Rostami (2021) on experiential value (including consumer investment return and perceived service superiority), but new factors such as environmental challenges, economic factors resulting from governance and political issues, and the impact of filtered social media and media on strategy implementation were added (Ahmadizadeh et al., 2022; Khademi Gerashi & Rostami, 2021). Therefore, it is suggested that sports marketing managers adjust nostalgic marketing approaches to Iran's unique market and governance conditions. They can establish stronger emotional connections with their target sports product marketing audience and strive to integrate global technical knowledge and create sustainable financial resources to support nostalgic marketing by promoting shared social and cultural sports values for both men and women.

The outcome categories of implementing the macro, mid-level, and operational strategies of the research model include (customer orientation, sports industry growth, the paradoxical positive and negative effects of nostalgia, and the positive effects of internal and external branding of nostalgic products). Understanding customer preferences can lead to the development of more successful nostalgic products, increased sales, and brand loyalty. A thriving sports industry can create more jobs, promote a healthy lifestyle, and contribute to Iran's overall economic growth. It should be noted that nostalgia can be a powerful tool for strengthening emotional connections with fans, leading to greater engagement and increased ticket or product sales. However, over-reliance on nostalgia can result in stagnation. A strong internal brand identity built on a rich history resonates with fans and lays the foundation for effective external marketing campaigns based on nostalgia.

In conclusion, nostalgic sports products in Iran must be a strategic blend of the past and present. Sports teams, organizations, and businesses can develop or create nostalgic products that resonate across multiple generations of Iranian consumers, foster long-term brand loyalty, and contribute to the growth of the sports industry in the country by understanding the causal, mediating, and contextual conditions that influence nostalgia, combined with a customer-centric approach.

Given the exploratory nature of this research and the lack of studies on the outcomes of developing nostalgic emotions and sports consumer preferences, the exclusive outcomes expected from the development of nostalgic emotions and sports consumer preferences, which should be considered by managers, include customer orientation, sports industry growth, the paradoxical effects of nostalgia, and the positive internal and external branding of nostalgic products.

The results of coding research documents and interviews are unique due to the exploratory approach in identifying and designing the paradigmatic model of developing nostalgic emotions and sports consumer preferences using grounded theory with the systematic Strauss and Corbin approach. Based on the identified categories in the central phenomenon of nostalgic emotions and sports consumer preferences, the systematic model for developing nostalgic emotions and sports consumer preferences in Iran was designed. Therefore, sports marketing managers in the country, given the abundant human resources and diverse sports audiences in the public, recreational, educational, championship, and professional sectors, can benefit from this model to develop marketing and organizational goals.

As we know, grounded theory methodology is a method for generating theory, not testing it. The research model does not represent the most validated paradigmatic model for developing nostalgic emotions and sports consumer preferences in Iran. Instead, it reflects the researchers' interpretations from library studies and interviews with experts, as well as their creativity in coding and establishing relationships. This model should undergo model fit testing and serious evaluation by stakeholders in nostalgic marketing at various strategic, mid-level, and operational levels in the country. However, all theoretical-research findings, including this model, require testing and execution in the studied environment (nostalgic sports marketing) to determine their usefulness. Just as a map of a country is not the same as the country itself, these qualitative research findings merely represent probable possibilities of what could occur. The model for developing nostalgic emotions and sports consumer preferences in Iran was designed within the limitations and constraints of the research question, based on existing interviews and research documents, using qualitative methodology. These findings may require revisions when subjected to practical implementation. However, the findings are still necessary for society, and sports marketing managers in the country will need them. Without these clear and transparent research findings, understanding the complexities of the real world concerning nostalgic sports marketing will become even more difficult and complicated.

Finally, it is recommended that marketing managers in sports organizations strive to increase the use and application of nostalgic elements and dimensions in sports marketing and consumer preferences in planning and implementing the developmental model of this research. Clear missions should be defined for implementing the research strategies based on social, cultural, and sports requirements. Overall, the results of this research, based on the structured approach of Strauss and Corbin, demonstrate the antecedents and outcomes of developing nostalgic emotions and sports consumer preferences.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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