

Sensory Marketing Model Based on Consumer Nostalgic Preferences in the Retail Industry

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this study is to design a sensory marketing model based on consumer nostalgic preferences in the retail industry.

Methodology: To achieve this, a qualitative research method, specifically grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin), was employed. The research population consists of experts and faculty members in business and management (e.g., branding, marketing, and management), from whom interviews were conducted. To collect data, in-depth interviews were utilized.

Findings: The findings of the research revealed five main dimensions: 1) Developing lasting shopping experiences (designing retail spaces based on nostalgic symbols, using retro products and packaging, creating interactive experiences based on nostalgic symbols, maintaining fairness and respect toward consumers in an old-fashioned manner, and connecting with customers through storytelling), 2) Utilizing nostalgic elements (using old and nostalgic images and videos, incorporating nostalgic styles, leveraging old experiences and events, combining old technologies with nostalgic feelings, and using nostalgic sounds and music), 3) Rebuilding brands and products based on nostalgic behaviors (producing digital content to evoke nostalgic feelings, designing and packaging products in a nostalgic manner, reconstructing advertising and marketing based on nostalgic feelings, collaborating with influencers based on nostalgic feelings, and committing to product quality and sustainability), 4) Creating a deep connection between the brand and customer memories (maintaining continuous relationships with customers based on past attachments, organizing participatory events based on past promotions, enhancing customer experience through nostalgic behavior reflections, providing differentiated after-sales services, and obtaining active feedback and interaction from customers based on nostalgic behaviors), and 5) Developing creative nostalgic approaches (offering special products based on nostalgic elements, organizing nostalgic-themed raffles, creating interactive and nostalgic campaigns on social media, developing

competitive pricing based on consumers' nostalgic preferences, and strengthening emotional connections with nostalgic symbols).

Conclusion: In conclusion, this study highlights the significant role of nostalgic elements in shaping sensory marketing strategies in the retail industry. By identifying key dimensions such as the development of sustainable shopping experiences and brand revitalization based on nostalgic behaviors, the research underscores the importance of creating deep emotional connections with consumers.

Keywords: *Sensory marketing, nostalgia, retail industry.*

1 Introduction

The competitive environment, the increase in brand names, and the growth of customer expectations have challenged companies in the realm of customer orientation and customer retention. One of the new approaches that has emerged in marketing, which many well-known global brands use to sell products, attract, and retain customers, is sensory marketing (Beyari et al., 2024; Ghazvini et al., 2024). Sensory marketing engages the senses of consumers and influences their behavior. It provides clear information about a method in which customers are able to determine the quality level of some abstract properties such as color, taste, smell, and shape (Ghaedy et al., 2023). The purpose of inventing this technique is to influence the emotions, perceptions, memories, preferences, and consumer choices by offering or selling a product in a pleasant environment (Kabiri et al., 2020). Sensory marketing is the process of identifying and meeting customer needs and interests in a profitable manner to engage them in two-way communication that brings brand personalities to life and creates added value for target customers. When searching for the most effective marketing approaches, there is no doubt that sensory marketing should be at the top of the list of choices. This strategy is the future of successful marketing communications (Garrido, 2019). Today, consumer experience and emotions have become a paradigm in marketing. By using sensory marketing, marketers can create an unconscious desire in customers so that there is no need to persuade them actively. Sensory stimuli influence customer buying behavior, which leads to increased sales and profitability for the company. On the other hand, every decision made by a consumer involves a phenomenon that psychologists refer to as attitude. As a result, studying consumer motivation allows us to understand how their behaviors begin, strengthen, and guide, as motivation is the reason behind behavior and a powerful, lasting inner drive that organizes actions. Therefore, to examine consumer attitudes toward products, understanding and exploring the motivations behind these preferences is crucial (Ashouri &

Saeednia, 2022). Additionally, nostalgia is used in marketing, whereby marketers encourage consumers to make purchases by taking them back to the past. In marketing, nostalgia is heavily employed using sensory elements such as taste, smell, sound, and touch. Methods such as listening to old music, watching a vintage movie, or visiting places where a person previously lived can evoke nostalgic feelings (Young et al., 2022). Considering that sensory marketing is one of the modern marketing methods that attracts target market customers by creating a distinct experience and influencing buyers' perceptions and decision-making behavior, it is believed that the emotional and sentimental aspects of products will be the key differentiator in the final choice of product and price that consumers are willing to pay. The main emphasis is on developing and promoting products with brands that meet consumers' emotional and sentimental needs. Nowadays, most brands focus on the future in their marketing campaigns and advertisements, which includes emphasizing the new features of their products in the near future and outlining their business outlook for the coming decade (Ghaedi et al., 2022).

On the other hand, the retail industry has experienced significant growth in recent years. Apart from chain stores like Refah, Shahrvand, Etkā, Hyperstar, and Ofogh Kourosh, many other brands have also made valuable contributions in this sector. Some manufacturers and importers have also experienced retailing independently, with brands like "Aftab Safir," "Dorsa Leather," "Shirin Asal," and "Hakopian" among them. In the past, retailers had significant influence over ordering decisions. Based on their knowledge of customers and the experience they had gained from sales over months and years, they would decide on orders and communicate to higher levels of the supply chain about the market demand for each product or the level of investment they were willing to make in offering a product (Bahrami et al., 2023). Since the retail industry is one of the most influential factors in the supply chain of any industrial or manufacturing company, it is essential to employ effective mechanisms for maintaining and enhancing customer

satisfaction and, consequently, sales. This can be achieved by improving services and creating value for customers, using tools that go beyond traditional advertising, attractions, and tactics, and are designed creatively to deliver unique experiences for consumers (Ashfaq et al., 2019).

Few studies have demonstrated the extent to which nostalgia in marketing can influence consumer buying intentions by evoking past memories and creating positive feelings. In this regard, marketers have often leveraged consumers' interest in the past in nostalgic marketing. In other words, to evoke happy memories of the past, marketers frequently use nostalgic elements in product design and advertising campaigns. Undoubtedly, in such contexts, referencing past happy memories in the form of nostalgia requires considerable boldness. The assumption among most marketers regarding the focus on the future is that the past holds little importance in today's rapidly changing world. As a result, modern achievements and technological advances quickly erase individuals' past memories. This perspective is in direct contrast to nostalgic marketing. Therefore, in recent years, several nostalgic-themed campaigns have successfully captured the attention of a wide range of audiences. Given the importance of the research topic, the main research question is: How to design effective sensory marketing factors based on consumer nostalgic preferences in the retail industry?

2 Methods and Materials

The research method, based on the nature of the data, is a mixed-methods approach (qualitative-quantitative). The study is also descriptive-survey in nature and method. In the exploratory section, the researcher identifies and discovers the components and indicators of the research variables. Finally, by using data description, the relationships in the designed model are tested through inferential statistical tests. The approach to conducting the research is in two phases: qualitative and quantitative. The components and indicators of the model variables are extracted through semi-structured interviews with experts, and then the qualitative data are analyzed and examined using thematic analysis and coding. In this study, documents, records, and texts related to sensory marketing based on nostalgic preferences, articles, theses, and dissertations on retail stores, sensory marketing, and semi-structured interviews were used as data collection tools. These sources were published between 2017 and 2022 (for English articles) and between 2010 and 2023 (for Persian articles) in reputable databases. For English articles,

international databases such as Elsevier, Emerald, ScienceDirect, Springer, SAGE Journals, Taylor and Francis, and JSTOR were used. For Persian articles, domestic databases such as the Comprehensive Portal of Humanities, the Scientific Information Center of Jihad University, and the Noor Specialized Journals database were utilized.

This research, in terms of purpose, is applied research. The quantitative part of the study uses the descriptive survey method. Descriptive surveys are methods through which collected data can be organized and summarized. The survey method is used to gather information about the viewpoints, beliefs, opinions, behaviors, motivations, or characteristics of a group of members of a community. This method is statistical and made possible through scientific research. In fact, a survey can be seen as both a tool used to collect data and the processes involved when employing that tool. Fathi et al. (2022) utilized both descriptive and inferential statistical methods in the current study. Descriptive statistics were used to interpret the data results and calculate frequency tables for the data, broken down by each demographic variable and questionnaire questions. Furthermore, inferential statistics and factor analysis were used in this study for model validation.

The research population in this study, considering the goal and nature of the research, employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The strategy used in this research combines qualitative and quantitative methods in a study that applies mixed research approaches. The main feature of this research is that the researcher, by reviewing the different aspects of both qualitative and quantitative methods, and combining them with an exploratory strategy, aims to identify components, sub-components, variables, and indicators and assess them. In the qualitative phase of the research, a grounded theory approach is applied. The research population for this phase includes managers and experts in the field of sensory marketing who are employed in the retail stores under study.

The sampling method used in this study is purposive, criterion-based sampling. Purposive sampling, also known as non-probability, goal-directed, or qualitative sampling, involves selecting research units purposefully to gain knowledge or information. It includes selecting research units or cases based on the research objectives, rather than using random sampling, which is typically used in qualitative research. The sample size is increased until data saturation is achieved, meaning that data collection ends once no new information is being added to the theory.

Theoretical saturation occurs when additional data no longer contribute to the development, modification, or expansion of the existing theory.

The research population consists of managers and experts in retail stores who were identified and interviewed using purposive sampling, which is a qualitative sampling technique. A total of 15 experts were selected for the study.

There are various approaches to thematic analysis. In this study, a network of themes approach was used. This type of analysis moves from more explicit and basic themes to more abstract and generalized themes in order to uncover the main themes of the text. As discussed, the Atrey-Stringer approach emphasizes the depiction of a network of themes. This approach has several stages:

1. Preliminary evident points in the text (basic themes)
2. Categorization of basic themes that are grouped to summarize abstract principles (organizing themes)
3. Overarching themes that encompass the main metaphors of the text (overarching themes)

These themes are then depicted as maps of prominent themes from each of the three levels, showing the relationships between them. In this research, the themes and components affecting sensory marketing for nostalgic products were extracted and analyzed in the interviews.

3 Findings and Results

The analysis of the average age of the experts interviewed revealed that the experts have an average age of 43.20 years. Regarding their work experience, it was found that the experts have an average of 15.93 years of professional experience. Among the participants in the current study, 7 had doctoral degrees, and 8 had master's degrees.

After conducting the interviews, the main concepts were directly extracted from the interviews. Then, the concepts and themes related to the statements of each interview were extracted and reported in the corresponding tables. It is important to note that the letter "P" in front of the word "Point" and the subsequent letters A, B, C, etc., indicate each of the interviewed experts. Secondary codes in thematic analysis refer to the concepts and patterns used in the texts to express and describe the themes and patterns present. These codes act as markers that researchers use in the thematic analysis process to identify and categorize similar patterns. In thematic analysis, researchers first carefully read the text and then extract secondary codes from it. These codes can be words, phrases, verbs, concepts, or symbols that the researcher considers appropriate to represent a theme or meaning. In general, secondary codes must be relevant and linked to the main themes of the text. After extracting the secondary codes, researchers can use these codes to aggregate and analyze the data. They can categorize the codes, identify patterns and relationships between them, and perform a deeper analysis of the text. The advantage of using secondary codes in thematic analysis is that they help researchers identify common and recurring patterns in the text and systematically analyze the data. These codes can play an essential role in extracting and interpreting the hidden and conceptual meanings of the text. In summary, secondary codes in thematic analysis are used as markers that help researchers identify patterns and similar themes in the text, leading to a more comprehensive analysis of the data.

The secondary codes derived from the primary and re-extracted codes from the interviews conducted in the current research are reported in [Table 1](#).

Table 1

Extracted Secondary Codes

Row	Extracted Secondary Codes	Primary and Re-extracted Codes
1	Design of the shopping space based on nostalgic symbols	Design of the shopping space based on nostalgic symbols - Creating a deeper connection between the consumer and the product - Using symbols, colors, designs, and other elements related to the past - Creating sensory experiences like sounds, smells, touches, and tastes from the past - Designing shopping spaces to promote a return to the past - Using advertising content, stories, and narratives related to the past - Creating a unique and nostalgic shopping experience for the consumer
2	Use of retro products and packaging	Use of retro (classic and nostalgic) products and packaging - Using retro-inspired designs - Retro packaging and the use of old materials and components - Using old and classic materials, fibers, and components in product production - Creating a nostalgic shopping experience with music, scents, and colors from the past - Advertising and marketing with a retro approach
3	Creation of interactive experiences based on nostalgic symbols	Creation of interactive experiences based on nostalgic symbols - Creating spaces or opportunities for direct interaction with nostalgic products - Applying interactive technologies like augmented reality, virtual reality, touchscreens - Creating multisensory nostalgic experiences - Creating games, competitions, or interactive activities based on nostalgic symbols - Organizing events and interactive activities based on nostalgic symbols

4	Fairness and respect for the consumer in the style of the past	Fairness and respect for the consumer in the style of the past - Offering personalized services and providing exclusive experiences for each customer in the style of the past - Adhering to ethical principles and fairness in interactions with customers - Establishing direct and transparent communication with customers - Listening to customer feedback and responding to it - Offering products at fair and just prices to customers - Maintaining product quality and providing high-quality services to customers
5	Communication with customers through storytelling	Using storytelling to connect with customers - Creating nostalgic stories - Using nostalgic characters and environments - Integrating nostalgic characters, environments, and elements into stories presented to customers - Using amazing stories - Creating interactive stories - Using stories to establish direct interactions with customers
6	Use of old and nostalgic images and videos	Use of old images and videos - Using old images and videos in advertising - Using memorable films - Displaying old images in the store environment - Using old films in events and activities - Creating interactive experiences based on old images and videos
7	Use of nostalgic styles	Use of nostalgic styles - Using old colors and patterns - Using old fonts - Using old design elements - Using old images and photos - Creating interactive experiences based on nostalgic styles
8	Use of old experiences and events	Use of old experiences and events - Showing films and images related to past memories - Using old music or sounds associated with past experiences - Organizing old events or nostalgic experiences - Using old elements in the store environment - Holding festivals and special events related to the past - Using nostalgic decoration, music, or special elements
9	Combining old technologies with nostalgic emotions	Use of old technologies - Combining old technologies with nostalgic emotions - Integrating old design elements like fonts, colors, and patterns from the past - Using old technologies to connect with customers - Using old audio and visual technologies - Using old technologies in customer experiences - Using old technologies in online stores
10	Use of nostalgic sounds and music	Use of nostalgic sounds and music - Evoking nostalgic emotions through nostalgic sounds and music - Creating a deep connection with customers through nostalgic sounds and music - Enhancing the shopping experience by adding nostalgic music to the shopping space - Influencing purchase decisions through nostalgic sounds and music - Stimulating old memories with nostalgic sounds and music
11	Producing digital content to create nostalgic feelings	Producing digital content to create nostalgic feelings - Sharing old and nostalgic images and videos - Using past design patterns, such as fonts, colors, and graphic styles - Nostalgic storytelling and personal memories - Using nostalgic music and sounds - Creating interaction with audiences based on nostalgic symbols - Interactive advertising and online games based on nostalgic elements
12	Designing and packaging products in a nostalgic manner	Designing and packaging products in a nostalgic manner - Using elements from the past in designing and packaging products - Using old images and patterns in product design and packaging - Improving the touch and sensory experience with appropriate packaging materials - Using classic packaging or nostalgic designs - Combining design and packaging elements in harmony - Paying attention to small details such as labels, jars, and packaging boxes
13	Rebuilding advertising and marketing based on nostalgic feelings	Rebuilding advertising and marketing based on nostalgic feelings - Using old and successful advertising campaigns - Using old images and videos related to the brand or product - Using old slogans and advertisements - Creating interactive experiences based on customers' nostalgic preferences - Recounting stories and memories related to the past and nostalgic experiences - Engaging customers through social media to strengthen the nostalgic feeling
14	Collaborating with influencers based on nostalgic emotions	Collaborating with influencers based on nostalgic emotions - Selecting influencers closely connected to nostalgic emotions - Producing nostalgic content and products in collaboration with influencers - Organizing nostalgic events - Creating joint advertisements between the brand and influencers focusing on nostalgic emotions - Collaborating with influencers to share nostalgic content through social media - Creating interactive experiences based on nostalgic feelings with influencers
15	Commitment to the quality and sustainability of products	Commitment to the quality and sustainability of products - Presenting the history and traditions of the product - Using nostalgic packaging and design - Offering effective and timely after-sales services - Guaranteeing the quality and sustainability of products - Listening to customer feedback on product quality and needed improvements - Paying attention to small details and added values - Offering added value to customers, such as special services
16	Maintaining continuous communication with customers based on past attachments	Maintaining continuous communication with customers based on past attachments - Keeping consistent and personal communication with customers based on past experiences - Offering personalized services and products based on customers' past experiences - Updating customers on changes, discounts, and new events - Using modern communication tools such as social media, messengers, and emails to convey past memories - Holding special events or meetings for customers and revisiting past memories - Offering added values to customers based on past attachments
17	Organizing participatory events based on past advertising	Organizing participatory events based on past advertising campaigns - Creating multisensory experiences based on nostalgic emotions - Using visual and auditory elements to recall past advertisements - Allowing direct participation of customers in events - Utilizing modern technology to create exciting and nostalgic experiences - Using augmented reality or virtual reality to create engaging and nostalgic experiences - Connecting past brand advertisements with current participatory events
18	Enhancing the customer experience based on the reflection of nostalgic behavior	Enhancing the customer experience based on the reflection of nostalgic behavior - Creating nostalgic environments - Using visual elements - Offering nostalgic products - Providing personalized experiences - Using nostalgic stories
19	Providing distinctive after-sales services	Providing highly personalized after-sales services - Using elements related to the past of the brand or products - Offering unique after-sales experiences - Providing personal notes from the brand to customers - Continuously improving the quality of after-sales services - Conveying a sense of value to customers
20	Active feedback and interaction from customers based on nostalgic behaviors	Responding quickly and effectively to customer feedback on products and services - Offering suggestions related to customers' nostalgic preferences - Providing personalized experiences - Collecting feedback from customers regarding their shopping experiences and the use of products and services

21	Offering special products based on nostalgic elements	Using packaging inspired by past decades - Offering products with special designs related to the past - Offering products with culture and music related to the past - Offering products and services referring to customers' past memories - Providing personalized shopping experiences based on nostalgic preferences
22	Organizing raffles based on nostalgic elements	Organizing raffles based on nostalgic elements - Choosing raffle items such as prizes, packaging, or content inspired by the past - Selecting prizes or content related to customers' past memories - Allowing for the personalization of raffles based on customers' preferences and needs - Selecting attractive prizes related to customers' nostalgic preferences - Linking the raffle with culture and music related to the past
23	Creating interactive and nostalgic campaigns on social media	Creating interactive and nostalgic campaigns on social media - Creating nostalgic content - Creating interactive spaces for communication with customers based on nostalgic elements - Holding contests and raffles related to nostalgic elements - Connecting campaigns with culture and music related to the past - Creating personalized experiences based on customers' nostalgic preferences
24	Creating competitive pricing based on consumers' nostalgic preferences	Creating competitive pricing based on consumers' nostalgic preferences - Competitive pricing based on connections to past memories - Offering prizes and discounts related to nostalgic elements - Holding contests and interactive activities based on nostalgic elements - Nostalgic pricing based on culture and customs related to the past - Personalized pricing based on consumers' nostalgic preferences
25	Strengthening emotional connections with nostalgic symbols	Using nostalgic symbols - Creating a deep connection with memories using nostalgic symbols - Strengthening emotional connections with nostalgic symbols - Stimulating nostalgic tendencies through nostalgic symbols - Encouraging interaction with nostalgic symbols - Developing the use of nostalgic colors and designs

In this research, five main dimensions were identified: the development of sustainable shopping experiences, use of nostalgic elements, brand and product revitalization based on nostalgic behaviors, creating a deep connection between

the brand and customer memories, and the development of creative nostalgic approaches. Additionally, a total of 162 primary codes were extracted from 15 interviews, from which 25 secondary codes were derived.

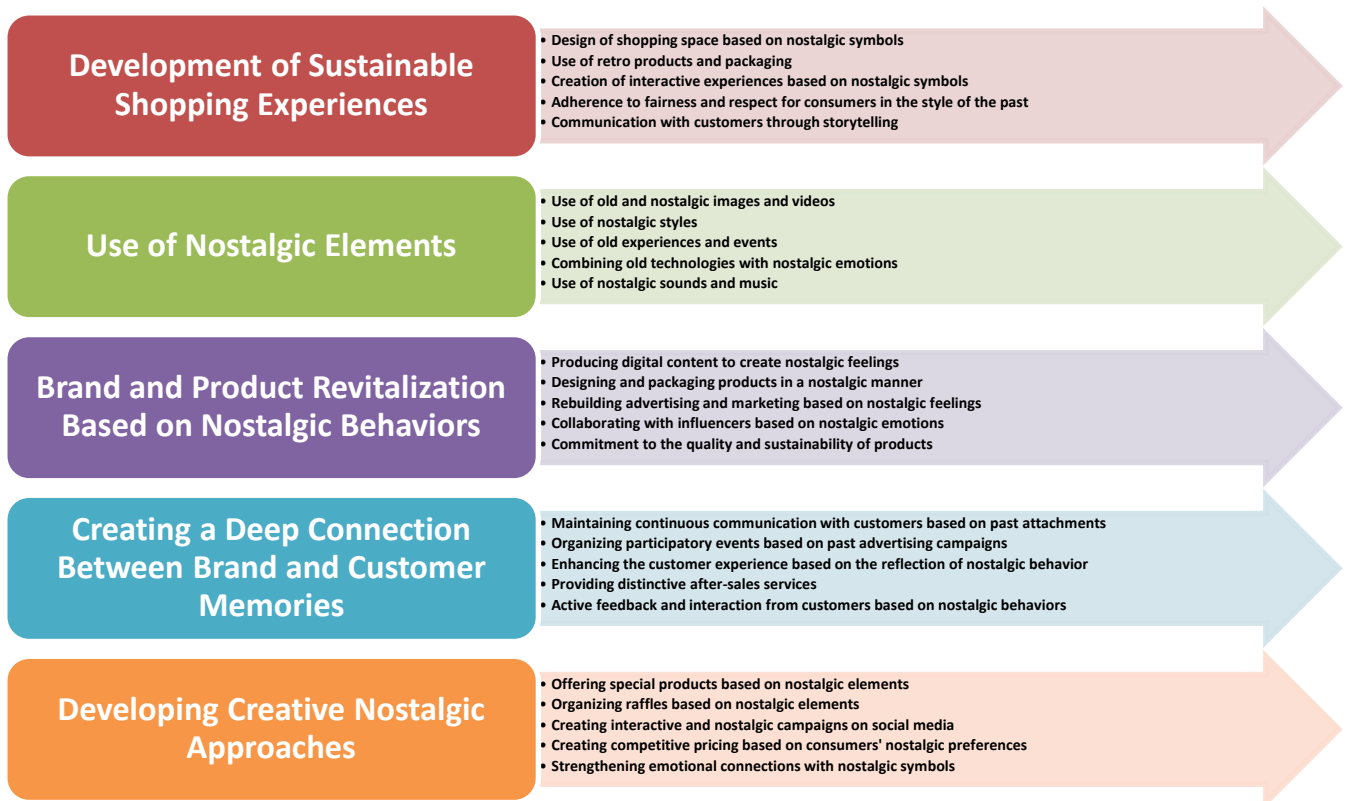
Table 2

Dimensions Derived from Extracted Secondary Codes

Row	Research Dimensions	Extracted Secondary Codes
1	Development of Sustainable Shopping Experiences	Design of shopping space based on nostalgic symbols
2		Use of retro products and packaging
3		Creation of interactive experiences based on nostalgic symbols
4		Adherence to fairness and respect for consumers in the style of the past
5		Communication with customers through storytelling
6	Use of Nostalgic Elements	Use of old and nostalgic images and videos
7		Use of nostalgic styles
8		Use of old experiences and events
9		Combining old technologies with nostalgic emotions
10		Use of nostalgic sounds and music
11	Brand and Product Revitalization Based on Nostalgic Behaviors	Producing digital content to create nostalgic feelings
12		Designing and packaging products in a nostalgic manner
13		Rebuilding advertising and marketing based on nostalgic feelings
14		Collaborating with influencers based on nostalgic emotions
15		Commitment to the quality and sustainability of products
16	Creating a Deep Connection Between Brand and Customer Memories	Maintaining continuous communication with customers based on past attachments
17		Organizing participatory events based on past advertising campaigns
18		Enhancing the customer experience based on the reflection of nostalgic behavior
19		Providing distinctive after-sales services
20		Active feedback and interaction from customers based on nostalgic behaviors
21	Developing Creative Nostalgic Approaches	Offering special products based on nostalgic elements
22		Organizing raffles based on nostalgic elements
23		Creating interactive and nostalgic campaigns on social media
24		Creating competitive pricing based on consumers' nostalgic preferences
25		Strengthening emotional connections with nostalgic symbols

Figure 1

The Final Model of the Study



4 Discussion and Conclusion

The present study examined the design of a sensory marketing model based on consumers' nostalgic preferences in the retail industry. The research findings indicated that the study identified five main dimensions: development of sustainable shopping experiences (designing shopping spaces based on nostalgic symbols, using retro products and packaging, creating interactive experiences based on nostalgic symbols, adhering to fairness and respect for consumers in the style of the past, and communicating with customers through storytelling), use of nostalgic elements (using old and nostalgic images and videos, using nostalgic styles, using old experiences and events, combining old technologies with nostalgic emotions, and using nostalgic sounds and music), brand and product revitalization based on nostalgic behaviors (producing digital content to create nostalgic feelings, designing and packaging products in a nostalgic manner, rebuilding advertising and marketing based on nostalgic feelings, collaborating with influencers based on nostalgic emotions, and commitment to the quality and sustainability of products), creating a deep connection between the brand and customer memories (maintaining

continuous communication with customers based on past attachments, organizing participatory events based on past advertising campaigns, enhancing the customer experience based on the reflection of nostalgic behavior, providing distinctive after-sales services, and active feedback and interaction from customers based on nostalgic behaviors), and developing creative nostalgic approaches (offering special products based on nostalgic elements, organizing raffles based on nostalgic elements, creating interactive and nostalgic campaigns on social media, creating competitive pricing based on consumers' nostalgic preferences, and strengthening emotional connections with nostalgic symbols).

Furthermore, the research results align with previous studies (Chandrasekaran & Chandrasekar, 2016; Ghaedi et al., 2022; Hamacher & Buchkremer, 2022; Holton et al., 2012; Kabiri et al., 2020; Kazemi et al., 2021; Mokhdoumi Gharehbolagh, 2012; Norouzi & Darvish, 2022; Saeidi et al., 2020; Shahid et al., 2022; Tajfar & Masoumi, 2022; Valipouri et al., 2022), which showed that sensory marketing has a significant positive impact on improving customer experience and purchase intent from retail stores. Additionally, all dimensions of sensory marketing positively

influence customer experience and purchase intent. The results of this study are in line with these findings.

Based on the results of this research, the following recommendations are offered: designing shopping spaces based on nostalgic symbols, creating deeper connections between consumers and products, creating interactive experiences based on nostalgic symbols, providing spaces or opportunities for direct interaction with nostalgic products, rebuilding advertising and marketing based on nostalgic feelings, using old and successful advertising campaigns, offering highly personalized after-sales services, and incorporating elements related to the brand's or product's past.

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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