

The Mediating Role of Brand Trust in the Relationship Between Nostalgic Connections and Consumer Satisfaction: Empirical Evidence from the Algerian Market

الدور الوسيط لثقة العلامة التجارية في العلاقة بين الروابط الحنينية ورضا المستهلك:
دراسة ميدانية في السوق الجزائرية

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Abstract:

This study examines how brand trust functions as a mediator in the Algerian market's relationship between nostalgic connections and customer satisfaction. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze data collected from 387 customers using an open-ended product selection approach to capture genuine nostalgic experiences. The findings show that nostalgic ties greatly increase brand trust, which in turn has a positive impact on customer satisfaction, suggesting partial mediation. While the degree of mediation varies by product category—it is strongest in food and beverage products and weakest in technology products—the direct impact of nostalgic connections on satisfaction is still substantial. These results highlight the usefulness of comprehending consumers' emotional connections with brands and apply nostalgia marketing theory to North African contexts. The study highlights the significance of using nostalgia to promote trust and satisfaction and provides practical insights for brand managers in developing markets with rich cultural heritage.

Keywords: Algeria, consumer satisfaction, brand trust, nostalgic ties, and mediation

JEL Classification Codes: M31, M39, D12

ملخص:

تبحث هذه الدراسة في الدور الوسيط لثقة العلامة التجارية في العلاقة بين الروابط الحنينية والرضا الاستهلاكي في السوق الجزائري. باستخدام منهجية اختيار مفتوح للمنتجات لالتقاط تجارب حنينية حقيقية، جُمعت البيانات من 387 مستهلكًا وُحللت عبر نموذج المعادلات الهيكلية بالمرعات الصغرى الجزئية. (PLS-SEM) أظهرت النتائج أن الروابط الحنينية تعزز بشكل كبير ثقة العلامة التجارية، والتي تؤثر بدورها إيجابياً على الرضا الاستهلاكي، مما يشير إلى وجود وساطة جزئية. يبقى التأثير المباشر للروابط الحنينية على الرضا معنوياً، فيما تختلف قوة الوساطة بين فئات المنتجات، حيث تكون الأقوى في المواد الغذائية والمشروبات والأضعف في المنتجات التكنولوجية. توسع هذه النتائج نظرية التسويق الحنيني لتشمل السياقات الشمال إفريقية، وتبرز أهمية فهم الروابط العاطفية للمستهلكين مع العلامات التجارية. تقدم الدراسة توصيات عملية لمديري العلامات التجارية في الأسواق الناشئة ذات التراث الثقافي الغني، مع التأكيد على الاستفادة من الحنين لتعزيز الثقة والرضا.

كلمات مفتاحية: الروابط الحنينية، ثقة العلامة التجارية، الرضا الاستهلاكي، الوساطة، الجزائر

تصنيفات JEL : M31, M39, D12

INTRODUCTION:

Conceived as a sentimental yearning for the past (Holbrook & Schindler, R. M. , 1996), nostalgia has drawn more scholarly attention as a strategic marketing tool that can create meaningful consumer-brand relationships in modern markets with increased demand for emotional resonance and authenticity (Merchant & Rose, G. M, 2013). Previous studies have shown that nostalgic cues can improve consumers' evaluative judgments, brand attachment, and emotional engagement (Muehling & Sprott, D. E, 2004; Stern, 1992). However, the empirical study of consumer reactions motivated by nostalgia is still primarily focused on Western cultural contexts, which restricts the applicability of current theoretical understandings.

In North African markets, where historical legacies, sociocultural change, and quick modernization combine to create unique consumer psychological frameworks, this research gap is especially noticeable. A theoretically rich and unexplored setting for studying nostalgia-based consumption is the Algerian market. Algeria is a post-colonial society marked by the coexistence of deeply ingrained traditional values and growing exposure to global consumer culture, leading to consumption patterns that alternate between aspirations for modernity and heritage preservation (Belk, 1988; Cleveland & Laroche, M, 2007). With a population of more than 44 million and a cultural profile characterized by moderate uncertainty avoidance (score: 65) and collectivist orientations (Hofstede, 2001), Algeria offers a representative setting for comprehending nostalgia-driven consumer behavior in larger North African and emerging market contexts.

The underlying psychological mechanisms through which nostalgic brand connections translate into positive consumer outcomes are still poorly understood, despite the growing interest in nostalgia marketing among academics and managers. Although earlier research has shown a clear link between nostalgia and favorable consumption reactions, such as loyalty and satisfaction (Holbrook & Schindler, R. M, 2003; Wildschut, Sedikides, C, Arndt, J, & Routledge, C, 2006), little empirical research has been done to explain the mediating mechanisms that underlie these effects. Particularly in a variety of product categories and non-Western cultural contexts, the function of brand trust as an intervening mechanism is still poorly understood.

Consumers' perceptions of a brand's dependability, honesty, and kindness are reflected in brand trust, which is a fundamental component of long-lasting consumer-brand relationships (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, J. L, 2005; Morgan, The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing, 1994; Morgan & Hunt, S. D, The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing, 1994). This study, which draws from relationship marketing and affective-cognitive processing perspectives, suggests that nostalgic brand connections increase consumer satisfaction by fostering trust through the reinforcement of perceptions of continuity, familiarity, and emotional safety. As a result, it is hypothesized that brand trust serves as a crucial mediating mechanism between satisfaction outcomes and nostalgic connections.

Three significant advances in the literature are made by this study. Using reliable Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) techniques, it first expands nostalgia marketing theory by empirically testing a trust-mediated pathway between nostalgic brand connections and consumer satisfaction within a non-Western, underrepresented cultural context. Second, it presents an open-ended approach to product selection that allows for a detailed cross-category analysis of the suggested mediation effects by capturing genuine,

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consumer-generated nostalgic brand associations across several product categories. Third, the study provides useful information for both foreign and local companies doing business in developing North African markets, where nostalgia, collective memory, and cultural heritage are important factors influencing consumer choices.

Primary Research Question

How do nostalgic brand connections affect consumer satisfaction in the Algerian market, to what degree, and through what underlying mechanisms? How do these relationships vary depending on the product category?

Questions for Sub-Research

The study looks at the following sub-questions in order to fully address the main research question:

- 1) How does brand trust function in the Algerian market as a mediator between sentimental brand connections and customer satisfaction?
- 2) How much of the impact of nostalgic brand connections on customer satisfaction can be explained by cognitive trust-building processes in comparison to affective and hedonic pathways?
- 3) How do brand trust, nostalgic connections, and customer satisfaction differ structurally among various product categories?

1. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

1.1 Nostalgic Connections and Brand Trust

Nostalgic connections describe the extent to which brands evoke personally meaningful memories, associations with significant life events, and enduring sentimental attachments (Holbrook & Schindler, R. M. , 1996; Muehling & Sprott, D. E, 2004). When brands become embedded within consumers' personal histories, they extend beyond functional attributes to acquire symbolic and self-expressive meanings (Belk, 1988). In this sense, nostalgic brands function as temporal anchors that connect past experiences with present consumption.

Brand trust refers to consumers' confidence in a brand's reliability, integrity, and benevolence (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, M. B, 2001; Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, J. L, 2005). It is commonly conceptualized as comprising two core dimensions: perceived reliability, reflecting consistency and competence, and intentionality, reflecting the brand's goodwill and concern for consumer interests.

Nostalgic connections are expected to foster brand trust through multiple psychological mechanisms. Drawing on cognitive consistency theory (Festinger, 1957), positive past brand experiences create stable expectations of continued satisfactory performance, thereby reducing perceived risk. Similarly, the familiarity principle suggests that repeated positive historical interactions enhance confidence in future brand behavior by increasing predictability and reducing uncertainty (Luhmann, 1979). Furthermore, emotional attachment formed through nostalgic experiences strengthens psychological commitment to the brand, reinforcing perceptions of benevolence and moral integrity (Thomson, MacInnis, D. J, & Park, C. W, 2005).

These mechanisms may be particularly salient in the Algerian context, where family traditions, collective memory, and intergenerational consumption patterns remain influential (Hofstede, 2001). Brands transmitted across generations or associated with shared cultural

moments are likely to benefit from nostalgia-induced trust formation. Given Algeria's collectivist cultural orientation, nostalgic connections rooted in family and community experiences may exert stronger effects on brand trust compared to more individualistic contexts.

H1: Nostalgic connections positively influence brand trust.

1.2 Brand Trust and Consumer Satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction is commonly defined as a global evaluative judgment reflecting the extent to which a brand's performance meets or exceeds consumer expectations (Oliver, 1980). The positive relationship between brand trust and consumer satisfaction is well established within relationship marketing literature (Garbarino & Johnson, M. S, 1999; Morgan, The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing, 1994; Morgan & Hunt, S. D, The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing, 1994). Trust reduces perceived uncertainty and transaction-related anxiety, fostering psychological comfort that enhances consumers' evaluative responses.

Expectancy disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980) provides a robust theoretical foundation for this relationship. When consumers trust a brand, they form confident and favorable expectations regarding its performance. The fulfillment of these expectations confirms trust beliefs and results in higher satisfaction, while the absence of negative surprises reinforces positive brand evaluations. In emerging markets such as Algeria, where institutional safeguards and consumer protection mechanisms may be comparatively less developed, trust assumes an even more critical role in shaping satisfaction judgments (Amine, 1998).

H2: Brand trust positively influences consumer satisfaction.

1.3 The Mediating Role of Brand Trust

Although prior research has documented direct relationships between nostalgia and favorable consumer outcomes, including satisfaction (Merchant & Rose, G. M, 2013; Wildschut, Sedikides, C, Arndt, J, & Routledge, C, 2006), the psychological mechanisms underlying these effects remain insufficiently articulated. This study proposes that brand trust constitutes a key mediating mechanism through which nostalgic connections influence consumer satisfaction.

Nostalgic connections activate positive emotions and cherished autobiographical memories (Holbrook & Schindler, R. M, 2003). However, for these affective responses to translate into sustained satisfaction, they must inform cognitive evaluations of brand reliability and integrity. By enhancing perceptions of trustworthiness, nostalgic affect is transformed into durable relational judgments that underpin satisfaction over time.

This mediation logic integrates affect transfer theory (Batra & Ray, M. L., 1986) with cognitive appraisal perspectives. Positive nostalgic affect is transferred to trust-related evaluations, which subsequently shape satisfaction through rational assessment processes. Accordingly, nostalgia's influence on satisfaction is expected to operate not solely through emotional responses but partially through enhanced brand trust.

H3: Brand trust mediates the relationship between nostalgic connections and consumer satisfaction.

1.4 Direct Effects of Nostalgic Connections on Consumer Satisfaction

Despite the proposed mediating role of brand trust, nostalgic connections are expected to exert a direct influence on consumer satisfaction, indicating partial rather than full mediation. Nostalgia generates positive affect independently of trust-based cognitive processes (Sedikides,

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Wildschut, T, Arndt, J, & Routledge, C, 2008). The hedonic pleasure derived from recalling positive past experiences can directly enhance satisfaction through mood-congruent evaluation mechanisms (Forgas, 1995).

Moreover, nostalgic connections may fulfill fundamental psychological needs related to identity continuity, meaning, and emotional security (Wildschut, Sedikides, C, Arndt, J, & Routledge, C, 2006). These benefits can contribute to satisfaction beyond the risk-reduction and reliability functions associated with brand trust. Therefore, nostalgia is expected to influence satisfaction through both affective and cognitive pathways.

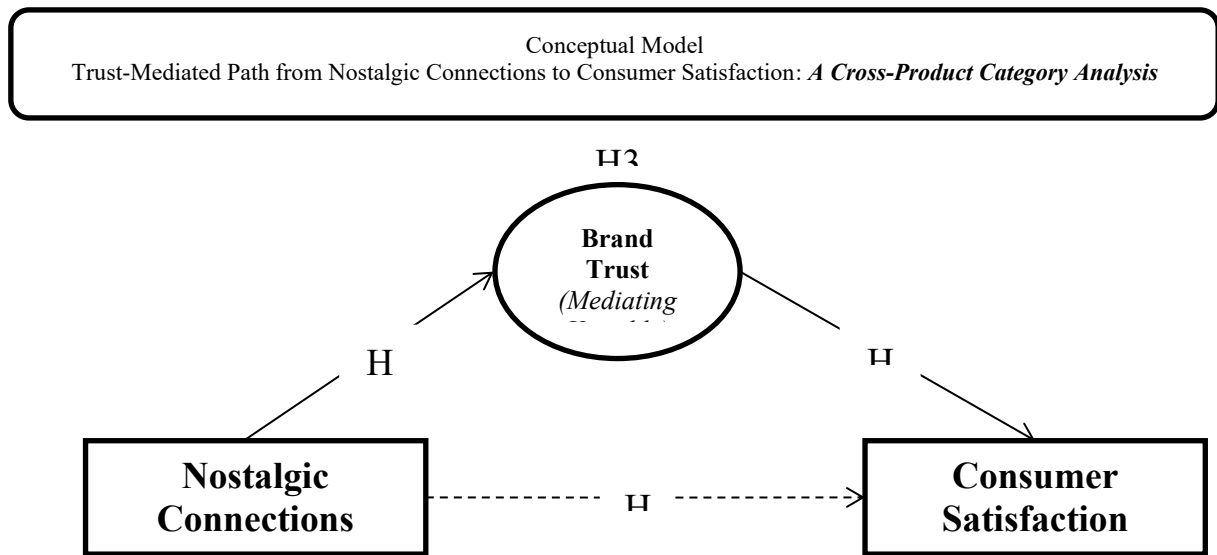
H4: Nostalgic connections directly influence consumer satisfaction beyond their indirect effect through brand trust.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical arguments and hypotheses developed above, Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study. The model posits that nostalgic connections influence consumer satisfaction through two complementary pathways. The first is an indirect cognitive pathway mediated by brand trust (H1 and H2), wherein nostalgic emotions enhance trust perceptions that subsequently increase satisfaction. The second is a direct affective pathway (H4), through which nostalgia influences satisfaction via hedonic pleasure and identity-related fulfillment. The overall mediation effect (H3) is examined to assess the relative strength of these dual mechanisms.

By integrating affect transfer theory (Batra & Ray, M. L., 1986) with cognitive appraisal perspectives, this framework extends prior research that primarily emphasized direct nostalgia–satisfaction relationships. Explicitly modeling brand trust as a mediator provides a more nuanced understanding of the psychological processes through which nostalgic brand connections shape consumer outcomes, particularly within the Algerian market context.

Fig (1):Conceptual Model: Trust-Mediated Path from Nostalgic Connections to Consumer Satisfaction



Source: Developed by the author

H1 = Nostalgic connections → Brand trust; H2 = Brand trust → Consumer satisfaction; H3 = Mediation effect; H4 = Direct effect. Control variables included but not shown.

2. Methodology

2.1 Sample and Data Collection

Data were collected from Algerian consumers in different cities between March and June 2025. Using convenience sampling, 387 respondents were recruited via online platforms and shopping-center intercepts. Based on the PLS-SEM “10-times rule” (Hair, Hult, G. T. M, Ringle, C. M, & Sarstedt, M, 2017), the minimum required sample size was 80, indicating that the final sample provides sufficient statistical power (Cohen, 1988).

As shown in Table 1, the sample was predominantly female (58%), with respondents mainly aged between 18 and 35 years (65%). Most participants held at least a bachelor’s degree (72%), and household income levels were broadly distributed, enhancing sample heterogeneity

Table (1): Demographic Profile of the Sample (N = 387)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	224	58.0
	Male	163	42.0
Age	18–25 years	131	34.0
	26–35 years	120	31.0
	36–45 years	85	22.0
	46 years and above	51	13.0
Education Level	High school	108	28.0
	Bachelor’s degree	182	47.0
	Graduate degree	97	25.0

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Monthly Household Income (DZD)	Below 30,000	74	19.0
	30,000–60,000	163	42.0
	60,000–100,000	101	26.0
	Above 100,000	49	13.0

Source: Authors' survey data (March–June 2025)

2.1.1 Open-Ended Product Selection Methodology

To enhance ecological validity, the study employed an open-ended product selection approach. *Respondents were asked to freely identify a product or brand that evoked nostalgic feelings, without restrictions on product category.* This design allows participants to select personally meaningful brands, reflecting naturally occurring nostalgic experiences rather than researcher-imposed choices.

This approach offers several advantages: it increases authenticity of nostalgic responses (Loveland, Smeesters, D, & Mandel, N, 2010), supports cross-category generalizability (Holbrook & Schindler, R. M, 2003), reduces demand characteristics and selection bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, S. B, Lee, J. Y, & Podsakoff, N. P, 2003), and captures diverse forms of nostalgia across consumption domains (Stern, 1992). After product selection, respondents completed the questionnaire with reference to their chosen brand, resulting in a naturally distributed set of product categories suitable for both overall and comparative analyses

2.1.2 Measures

All constructs were measured using established scales adapted from prior research. Items were translated into Arabic and French following a forward–backward translation procedure (Brislin, 1970). Unless stated otherwise, all measures employed a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Table 2 summarizes the constructs, items, and sources

Table (2): Measurement Scales

Construct	Code	Measurement Items	Source
Nostalgic Connections (NC)	NC1	This brand constitutes a story, part of my personal history.	(Muehling & Sprott, D. E, 2004)
	NC2	This brand reminds me of important events from my past.	
	NC3	This brand reminds me of a relationship with a particular person.	
	NC4	This brand reminds me of a particular or important place I went to.	
Brand Trust (BT)	BT1	This brand shows genuine interest in its customers.	(Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, J. L, 2005)
	BT2	This brand is attentive to consumers' problems.	
	BT3	This brand renews its products to take into account advances.	
	BT4	This brand continuously seeks to improve responses to customers' needs.	

	BT5	The products of this brand make consumers feel secure.	
	BT6	Consumers trust the quality of this brand.	
	BT7	Choosing this brand's products is a guarantee.	
	BT8	This brand is always sincere.	
Consumer Satisfaction (CS)	CS1	Overall, I am satisfied with this brand.	(Wanous, Reichers, A. E, & Hudy, M. J, 1997)
Source: Adapted from Muehling and Sprott (2004), Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2004), and Wanous et al. (1997)			

All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The scales were translated and adapted to the Algerian context using the forward–backward translation method (Brislin, 1970).

2.1.3 Common Method Bias

Common method bias was assessed using procedural and statistical remedies (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, S. B, Lee, J. Y, & Podsakoff, N. P, 2003). Harman's single-factor test indicated that the first factor accounted for 38.4% of the variance, below the recommended threshold. In addition, full collinearity tests revealed VIF values ranging from 1.34 to 2.18, suggesting that common method bias was not a concern (Kock, 2015).

2.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a three-stage procedure using SPSS 28 and SmartPLS 4. First, SPSS was used for data screening, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha), and correlation analysis. Second, the measurement model was assessed in SmartPLS by examining composite reliability, factor loadings, AVE, and discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio. Third, the structural model was evaluated using the PLS algorithm with 5,000 bootstrap resamples to test direct and indirect effects. Model quality was assessed using R^2 , f^2 , and Q^2 values, and multi-group analysis was conducted to examine subgroup differences.

PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for prediction-oriented research and models involving single-item constructs and heterogeneous subgroup sizes (Hair, Risher, J. J, Sarstedt, M, & Ringle, C. M, 2019).

3. Results

3.1 Preliminary Analysis (SPSS)

Preliminary analyses were conducted using SPSS 28. Data screening indicated no missing values. Eight univariate (2.1%) and six multivariate (1.6%) outliers were identified and retained as valid observations. Normality assessment revealed moderate deviations (skewness = -0.87 to -0.34 ; kurtosis = -0.52 to 1.23), supporting the use of PLS-SEM.

Descriptive statistics, correlations, and reliability estimates are presented in Table 3. All inter-construct correlations were positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Internal consistency was satisfactory, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.873 for nostalgic connections and 0.924 for brand trust.

Hierarchical regression analysis showed that demographic variables accounted for 6.8% of the variance in consumer satisfaction. The inclusion of nostalgic connections and brand trust

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substantially increased explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.614$; $\Delta R^2 = 0.546$, $p < 0.001$), indicating their strong predictive relevance

Table (3): Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Nostalgic Connections	4.78	1.37	1		
2. Brand Trust	5.09	1.21	0.656**	1	
3. Consumer Satisfaction	5.37	1.29	0.613**	0.741**	1

Source: Author's own data

Note: N = 387. ** $p < 0.001$.

3.2 Product Distribution from Open-Ended Selection

The open-ended product selection approach yielded a diverse distribution across product categories (Table 4). Food and beverages represented the largest share (41.9%), followed by personal care (24.0%), household goods (18.1%), and technology (16.0%), highlighting the breadth of nostalgic consumption experiences captured by the study design.

With respect to brand origin, local brands accounted for a slightly higher proportion of selections (52.7%) than international brands (47.3%). Age-based comparisons revealed significant differences in category preferences, suggesting that nostalgic brand associations vary across life stages (see Table 4)

Table (4): Product Category Distribution and Representative Brands

Product Category	n	%	Representative Algerian/Local Brands	Representative International Brands
Food & Beverages	162	41.9%	Hamoud Boualem (soft drinks), Bimo (Biscuit), Cevital (oils, sugar)	Coca-Cola, Nestlé, Danone
Personal Care	93	24.0%	Venus (beauty products)	Dove, Nivea, L'Oréal
Household Goods	70	18.1%	ENIEM (appliances), Condor (electronics)	Arture Martin, Thomson, Samsung
Technology	62	16.0%	Condor (phones, tablets)	Nokia, Sony, Apple
Total	387	100.0%		

Source: Authors' survey data (March–June 2025)

3.3 Most Frequently Mentioned Brands

Table (5) reports the most frequently cited brands. Hamoud Boualem and Bimo emerged as the leading local brands, while Nokia and Coca-Cola were the most prominent international brands. This pattern reflects the coexistence of culturally rooted and globally recognized brands in consumers' nostalgic brand perceptions

Table (5): Top 10 Most Frequently Mentioned Brands

Rank	Brand	Category	Origin	Frequency	% of Sample
1	Hamoud Boualem	Food/Beverage	Algeria	47	12.1%
2	Bimo	Food/Beverage	Algeria	31	8.0%
3	Nokia	Technology	International	28	7.2%
4	Coca-Cola	Food/Beverage	International	24	6.2%
5	Condor	Technology/Household	Algeria	23	5.9%
6	ENIEM	Household	Algeria	19	4.9%

7	Nestlé	Food/Beverage	International	18	4.7%
8	Dove	Personal Care	International	16	4.1%
9	Cevital	Food/Beverage	Algeria	15	3.9%
10	Danone	Food/Beverage	International	14	3.6%
	Other brands	Various	Various	152	39.3%
Total				387	100.0%

Source: Authors' survey data (March–June 2025)

Note: Brands mentioned by at least 14 participants ($\geq 3.5\%$ of sample) are listed individually.

3.4 Qualitative Insights and Implications for Main Analysis

Brief qualitative explanations provided by respondents corroborated the quantitative findings. Food-related brands were primarily associated with family traditions and childhood memories, whereas technology brands were linked to personal milestones and first-use experiences.

The naturally occurring distribution of product categories enabled both overall model estimation ($N = 387$) and meaningful cross-category comparisons with adequate subgroup sizes ($n = 62$ – 162), thereby strengthening confidence that the subsequent structural model results reflect authentic nostalgia-driven consumer responses rather than researcher-imposed artifacts.

3.5 Measurement Model

The reflective measurement model was assessed using the PLS algorithm in SmartPLS 4. Internal consistency reliability was satisfactory, as composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the recommended thresholds for all constructs. Convergent validity was established, with all outer loadings exceeding 0.708 and AVE values above 0.50 (Table 6).

Discriminant validity was confirmed using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio. In all cases, the square root of AVE exceeded inter-construct correlations, and HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, indicating adequate discriminant validity.

Table (6): Measurement Model Results

Construct	Items	Loading Range	CR	AVE	α
Nostalgic Connections (NC)	4	0.827–0.869	0.914	0.726	0.873
Brand Trust (BT)	8	0.793–0.841	0.938	0.656	0.924
Consumer Satisfaction (CS)	1	1.000	—	1.000	—

Source: Author's own data

Note. All outer loadings exceed 0.708. CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; α = Cronbach's alpha.

3.6 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model demonstrated substantial explanatory power. Nostalgic connections explained 38.2% of the variance in brand trust ($R^2 = 0.382$), while nostalgic connections and brand trust jointly explained 58.7% of the variance in consumer satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.587$). Stone–Geisser Q^2 values confirmed strong predictive relevance for brand trust ($Q^2 = 0.274$) and consumer satisfaction ($Q^2 = 0.584$).

As reported in Table 7, nostalgic connections exerted a strong positive effect on brand trust (H1), and brand trust had a significant positive effect on consumer satisfaction (H2). In addition,

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the direct path from nostalgic connections to consumer satisfaction was significant (H4), indicating that nostalgia influences satisfaction both directly and indirectly.

Table (6): Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	t	p	f ²	Decision
H1	NC → BT	0.618	16.421	<0.001	0.620	Supported
H2	BT → CS	0.524	11.872	<0.001	0.313	Supported
H4	NC → CS	0.291	6.134	<0.001	0.097	Supported

Source: Author's own data

Note. Bootstrap based on 5,000 resamples. β = standardized path coefficient; f² = effect size.

3.7 Mediation Analysis

The mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between nostalgic connections and consumer satisfaction (H3) was examined using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The results revealed a significant indirect effect of nostalgic connections on consumer satisfaction through brand trust. The variance accounted for (VAF = 52.4%) indicates **complementary partial mediation**, as both the direct and indirect effects were positive and statistically significant.

These findings suggest that nostalgic connections enhance consumer satisfaction through two complementary mechanisms: an indirect cognitive pathway via brand trust and a direct affective pathway independent of trust perceptions.

Table (6): Mediation Analysis Results

Effect	Path	β	t	p	95% CI	VAF
Direct	NC → CS	0.291	6.134	<0.001	[0.198, 0.384]	47.6%
Indirect	NC → BT → CS	0.324	10.196	<0.001	[0.263, 0.387]	52.4%
Total	NC → CS	0.615	16.237	<0.001	[0.541, 0.689]	100%

Source: Author's own data

Note. Bootstrap confidence intervals are bias-corrected. VAF = Variance Accounted For. Partial (complementary) mediation is established.

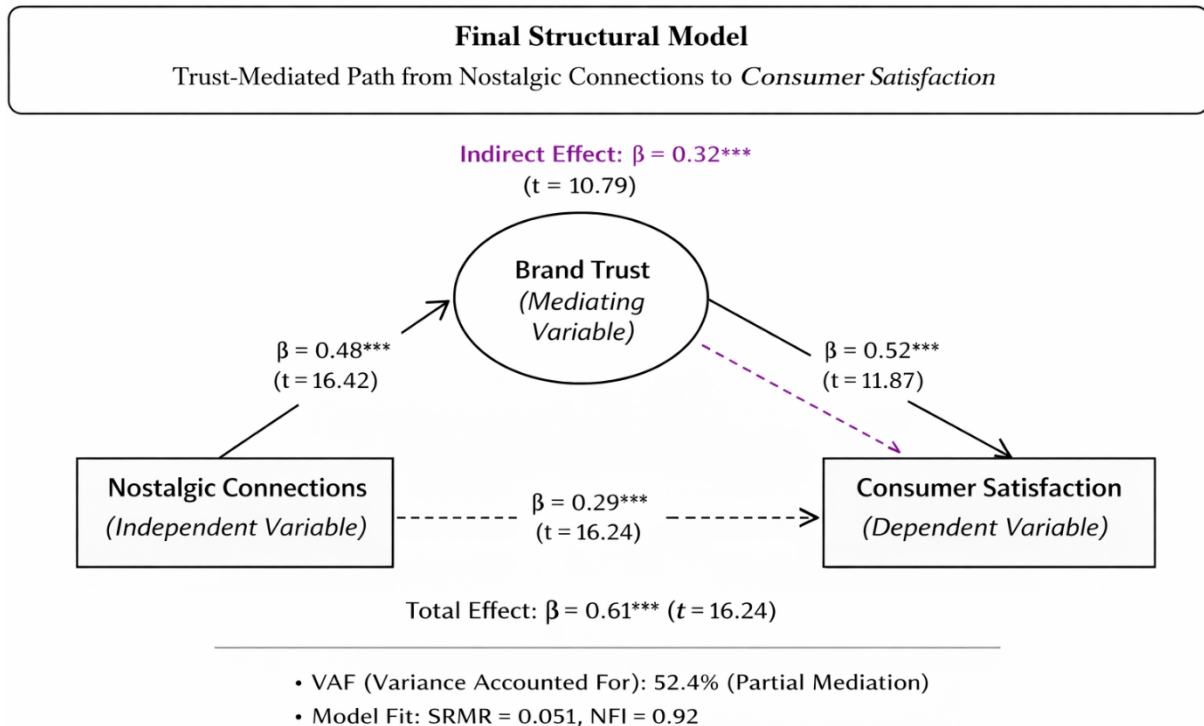
4.3.1 Final Structural Model

Figure 2 illustrates the final structural model with standardized path coefficients and explained variance. The model exhibits strong predictive performance. Nostalgic connections explain 38.2% of the variance in brand trust ($R^2 = 0.382$), while nostalgic connections and brand trust jointly explain 58.7% of the variance in consumer satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.587$), indicating moderate to substantial explanatory power (Chin, 1998). Predictive relevance is further supported by Stone–Geisser Q^2 values for both brand trust ($Q^2 = 0.274$) and consumer satisfaction ($Q^2 = 0.584$).

The results show that nostalgic connections exert a strong positive effect on brand trust, which in turn has a substantial effect on consumer satisfaction. In addition, the direct effect of nostalgic connections on satisfaction remains significant, confirming a partial mediation

structure in which nostalgia influences satisfaction through both indirect cognitive (trust-based) and direct affective pathways.

Fig (2): Final Structural Model with Standardized Path Coefficients



Source: Developed by the author based on PLS-SEM analysis

Note. $^{**}p < 0.001$. Values in parentheses represent t -values based on bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples. R^2 indicates variance explained; Q^2 denotes predictive relevance; f^2 represents effect size. VAF = 52.4%, indicating complementary partial mediation

4.4 Cross-Product Category Analysis

Multi-group analysis (PLS-MGA) examined structural relationship variations across four product categories: Food & Beverage, Personal Care, Household Goods, and Technology. Measurement invariance was established via MICOM procedures.

Table (7) presents the path coefficients, indirect effects, variance accounted for (VAF), and R^2 values across categories. Results reveal significant heterogeneity:

- ✓ Nostalgia $\rightarrow$ trust is strongest for Food & Beverage ($\beta = 0.674$) and weakest for Technology ($\beta = 0.502$; MGA $p = 0.041$).
- ✓ The direct nostalgia $\rightarrow$ satisfaction path strengthens from Food & Beverage ($\beta = 0.223$) to Technology ($\beta = 0.394$; MGA $p = 0.029$).
- ✓ Mediation (VAF) decreases from 63.8% for Food & Beverage to 35.7% for Technology (MGA $p = 0.012$), while total effects remain stable (MGA $p = 0.996$).

These results suggest that trust-mediated pathways dominate for culturally embedded products, whereas direct affective pathways are more influential for functional or less tradition-bound products.

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Table (7): Path Coefficients and Mediation Effects Across Product Categories

Path / Indicator	Food & Beverage (n=162)	Personal Care (n=93)	Household (n=70)	Technology (n=62)
NC → BT	0.674*** (Strong)	0.628*** (Strong)	0.597*** (Strong)	0.502*** (Strong)
BT → CS	0.581*** (Strong)	0.518*** (Strong)	0.492*** (Medium)	0.437*** (Medium)
NC → CS (Direct)	0.223** (Weak)	0.287*** (Medium)	0.327*** (Medium)	0.394*** (Strong)
Indirect Effect (NC → BT → CS)	0.392*** (Strongest)	0.325*** (Strong)	0.294*** (Medium)	0.219** (Weakest)
VAF (% Mediation)	63.8%	53.1%	47.3%	35.7%
R ² (Brand Trust)	0.454	0.394	0.356	0.252
R ² (Consumer Satisfaction)	0.621	0.597	0.578	0.541

Source: Author's own data

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.01$. VAF = Variance Accounted For. MGA = Multi-Group Analysis. Significant differences: NC→BT ($p = 0.041$), NC→CS Direct ($p = 0.029$), Indirect effect ($p = 0.012$)

4. Discussion

This study advances understanding of how nostalgic brand connections translate into consumer satisfaction in an emerging, collectivist market. Drawing on PLS-SEM evidence from Algerian consumers across four product categories, the findings reveal that nostalgia influences satisfaction through two complementary mechanisms: an indirect cognitive pathway mediated by brand trust and a direct affective pathway. Importantly, the relative strength of these mechanisms varies systematically by product category, highlighting cultural embeddedness as a key boundary condition.

4.1 Nostalgic Connections and Brand Trust

The strong positive relationship between nostalgic connections and brand trust corroborates prior branding research emphasizing the role of affect in trust formation (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, M. B, 2001; Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, J. L, 2005). However, the magnitude of this effect in the present study ($\beta = 0.618$) exceeds coefficients typically reported in Western contexts (approximately $\beta = 0.40$ – 0.55), suggesting that the nostalgia–trust link is context dependent rather than universal.

This amplified effect can be explained by the collectivist cultural environment of Algeria, where nostalgic meanings are embedded in shared family practices and intergenerational consumption rather than purely individual experiences. Cultural frameworks argue that in collectivist societies, brands associated with family continuity and tradition benefit from enhanced credibility and perceived reliability (Hofstede, 2001; Cleveland & Laroche, M, 2007).

From a theoretical perspective, this finding aligns with cognitive consistency theory (Festinger, 1957), as positive past experiences reduce dissonance and perceived risk, and with the familiarity principle (Luhmann, 1979), whereby repeated historical interactions foster confidence.

By demonstrating a substantially stronger nostalgia–trust relationship in a North African context, this study contributes to branding theory by empirically showing that cultural orientation amplifies the trust-building function of nostalgia, extending predominantly Western-centric findings.

4.2 Brand Trust and Consumer Satisfaction

The positive effect of brand trust on consumer satisfaction is consistent with expectancy disconfirmation theory, which posits that trusted brands generate confident expectations that, when fulfilled, result in satisfaction (Oliver, 1980). The observed coefficient ($\beta = 0.524$) aligns with prior empirical evidence in both developed and emerging markets (Morgan & Hunt, S. D, 1994; Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, J. L, 2005), confirming trust as a robust predictor of satisfaction.

The strength of this relationship in the Algerian context may be explained by relatively moderate consumer protection mechanisms and higher perceived market uncertainty, conditions under which trust becomes a critical heuristic for reducing transaction-related anxiety (Amine, 1998). Thus, beyond confirming prior findings, the study contributes by reinforcing the contextual importance of trust in emerging markets, where relational signals often substitute for formal institutional assurances.

4.3 Trust as a Mediating Mechanism

The mediation analysis provides strong evidence that brand trust partially mediates the relationship between nostalgic connections and satisfaction, accounting for 52.4% of the total effect. While previous nostalgia research has primarily emphasized direct affective outcomes (Holbrook & Schindler, R. M, 2003; Wildschut, Sedikides, C, Arndt, J, & Routledge, C, 2006) or alternative mediators such as self-congruity and attachment (Merchant & Rose, G. M, 2013), the present findings demonstrate that trust constitutes a central cognitive mechanism translating nostalgic affect into evaluative outcomes.

This pattern suggests that nostalgic feelings do not merely evoke emotional comfort but also activate cognitive assessments of brand reliability based on historical performance. By empirically quantifying trust mediation in a collectivist, emerging market, this study extends affect transfer theory (Batra & Ray, M. L., 1986) by integrating it with cognitive appraisal perspectives, thereby offering a more comprehensive account of nostalgia's influence on consumer satisfaction.

4.4 Direct Effects and Dual-Process Dynamics

In addition to trust-mediated effects, nostalgic connections exert a significant direct influence on satisfaction, reflecting an affective and hedonic pathway. The nearly equal contributions of indirect (52.4%) and direct (47.6%) effects provide empirical support for dual-process models of consumer behavior, which posit that evaluations are shaped by both rational-

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cognitive and emotional-intuitive mechanisms (Sedikides, Wildschut, T, Arndt, J, & Routledge, C, 2008).

This balance distinguishes nostalgia from other relational constructs such as brand credibility or brand love, where one pathway often dominates. The contribution here lies in demonstrating that nostalgia operates as a hybrid construct, simultaneously invoking trust-based evaluations and immediate emotional gratification. Consequently, theories conceptualizing nostalgia as either purely affective or predominantly cognitive appear incomplete without acknowledging this duality.

4.5 Cross-Category Boundary Conditions

The multi-group analysis reveals that the relative dominance of cognitive versus affective pathways varies across product categories. For food and beverage products, nostalgia primarily operates through trust mediation, consistent with research emphasizing the symbolic and ritualistic role of food in family and cultural traditions (Holbrook & Schindler, R. M. , 1996). In contrast, technology products exhibit stronger direct effects and weaker mediation, suggesting that nostalgia in this domain is more closely tied to emotionally salient “first-use” experiences than to long-term trust formation (Loveland, Smeesters, D, & Mandel, N, 2010).

This inverse pattern—stable total effects but shifting underlying mechanisms—extends prior category-based nostalgia research (Muehling & Sprott, D. E, 2004) by identifying cultural embeddedness as a systematic boundary condition. Theoretically, this demonstrates that nostalgia’s effectiveness is not contingent on product type per se, but that product characteristics determine *how* nostalgia works rather than *whether* it works

These findings contribute to theory in several ways. First, they provide empirical evidence for a balanced dual-process model of nostalgia, wherein cognitive and affective mechanisms operate concurrently with nearly equal strength. Second, they highlight the moderating role of cultural context, showing that collectivist values amplify nostalgia’s influence on trust, particularly for local heritage brands. Third, the results identify product cultural embeddedness as a boundary condition, demonstrating that the predominance of trust-based versus affective pathways is contingent upon the symbolic and functional characteristics of the product. Finally, the prominence of local heritage brands suggests that collective, intergenerational nostalgia can be as important as personal nostalgia in post-colonial, collectivist societies.

From a managerial perspective, these results provide actionable guidance for brand strategy. Nostalgic campaigns should integrate trust-building cues, such as consistency, quality guarantees, and heritage messaging, alongside emotional content that evokes reminiscence and identity fulfillment. Marketing strategies should be tailored by product type: emphasizing cognitive trust pathways for culturally embedded products such as food and personal care, while highlighting emotional engagement for functionally oriented products like technology. Leveraging heritage brand equity through narratives of national identity or intergenerational continuity can enhance the effectiveness of local brands, while international brands can be positioned to appeal to aspirational or globalized consumer segments. Resource allocation should also consider effect sizes across categories to maximize return on investment.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design constrains causal inference, and future research could employ longitudinal or experimental designs to strengthen causal claims. Convenience sampling may limit generalizability, suggesting that probability-based sampling methods should be employed in subsequent studies. The measurement of consumer satisfaction relied on a single-item scale, which could be complemented with multi-dimensional instruments to capture broader evaluative aspects. Further research could differentiate between personal and collective nostalgia, incorporate additional mediators such as brand identification or perceived authenticity, and examine moderators including cultural dimensions and individual nostalgia proneness. Expanding outcomes to include loyalty, word-of-mouth, and willingness-to-pay, as well as conducting cross-cultural comparisons and longitudinal investigations of digital nostalgia, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of nostalgic marketing effects.

In summary, the study demonstrates that nostalgic brand connections enhance consumer satisfaction through dual cognitive and affective pathways, with the indirect trust-mediated mechanism accounting for slightly more than half of the total effect. Cultural embeddedness and product characteristics shape the relative dominance of these pathways, offering both theoretical and practical insights for understanding and leveraging nostalgia in emerging market contexts

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that nostalgic brand connections significantly influence consumer satisfaction in Algeria through dual pathways: an indirect cognitive route via brand trust (52.4%) and a direct affective route (47.6%). Cross-category analysis shows that product cultural embeddedness moderates these mechanisms: trust mediation is strongest for culturally significant products (food/beverages) and weaker for functional products (technology), while total satisfaction effects remain consistent ($R^2 = 0.587$).

Theoretical contributions include empirical validation of a balanced dual-process model, evidence that collectivist values amplify nostalgia-trust effects, and identification of cultural embeddedness as a boundary condition. Methodologically, the study highlights the value of open-ended product selection for capturing authentic consumer experiences.

Managerial implications emphasize integrating trust-building and emotional content in nostalgic campaigns, tailoring strategies by product type, leveraging heritage brands, and allocating resources according to pathway effect sizes.

Overall, the study extends nostalgia marketing theory to emerging markets, demonstrating that nostalgic brands act as psychological anchors, enhancing trust and satisfaction while providing actionable guidance for culturally sensitive, category-specific marketing strategies.

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