NOSTALGIACISING:

A PERFORMATIVE THEORY OF NOSTALGIC CONSUMPTION

Nostalgia, like globalization, exists in the plural. (Boym 2001)

Nostalgia—commonly conceptualized as an innate and emotional longing for the past—plays an important role in shaping contemporary consumer behavior and market offerings (e.g., Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003; Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003; Holbrook and Schindler 1991; Maclaran and Brown 2005; Marcoux 2017; Sierra and McQuitty 2007; Thompson and Tian 2008). In particular, nostalgia has been instrumental in theorizing post-socialist societies that have transitioned into capitalist market systems (Brunk, Giesler, and Hartman 2017; Dong and Tian 2009; Kravets 2012; Roberts 2014; Zhao and Belk 2008), especially since the concept of nostalgia is at the heart of emotionally contrasting a safe and stable socialist childhood past with a tumultuous capitalist adulthood present (Jeziński and Wojtkowski 2016).

However, purely retrospective nostalgia is difficult to operationalize and frame in relation to marketing as a discipline, which is overall future-oriented by focusing on "unrealized potentialities" among consumers and how to translate such potentialities into "personal needs and desires" (Zwick and Cayla 2011, 7) through branding, advertising, and other marketing mechanisms. Furthermore, it is no longer clear what role the nostalgic past plays in the contemporary capitalist global era that focuses ever more on the future of mankind. Moreover, scholars argue that we live in an age where crisis has become a signature concept in just about all forms of markets and consumption, ranging from financial crises (Allon and Redden 2012) to energy crises (Press and Arnould 2009) to climate and sustainability crises (Connolly and Prothero 2008) to trust crises (Humphreys and Thompson 2014) to health crises (Mishra, Mishra,

and Masters 2012) to cultural crises (Appadurai 1988) to coffee crises (Vega, Rosenquist, and Collins 2003) to meat crises (D'Silva and Webster 2017). Particularly, Koselleck and Richter (2006, 358) point out how crisis expresses a new sense of time, which involves a reduced sense of permanence, as in "longer or shorter transitions towards something better or worse or towards something altogether different." Likewise, Rodgers (2010, 256) points to the present as being "an age of fracture," where there has occurred "a breakdown in […] predictability and performance." This contemporary crisis context is deleterious to consumer culture and consumer behavior since uncertain consumer "choice brings a sense of overwhelming responsibility into play, and it is bound up with a fear of failure, a feeling of guilt and an anxiety that regret will follow if we have made the wrong choice" (Salecl 2010, 7).

In light of this structuring global condition, we argue that a new type of future-oriented consumer nostalgia, which we term reflective consumer nostalgia, has an increasingly important role to play in the management of consumers' own future. Reflective consumer nostalgia appears to provide a set of playful solutions that can be appropriated and recontextualised towards the future. Boym (2001; 2008, 61) was the first to theorize reflective nostalgia as a playful, funny, and creative narrative that "does not pretend to rebuild the mythical place called home. […] This type of nostalgic narrative is ironic, inconclusive, and fragmentary" and articulates "the relationship between past, present, and future." Bradbury (2012, 341) subsequently noted that, "nostalgia is not only a longing for the way things were, but also a longing for futures that never came, or for horizons of possibilities that seem to have been foreclosed by the unfolding of events." However, we know very little about what forms of reflectivity consumer nostalgia can take in the current age of crisis. Hence, in extension, we ask: *What dimensions of reflectivity mediate nostalgic consumption in the age of crisis?*

To begin answering our research question, we first engaged in a detailed meta-analysis of extant consumer culture theory research (e.g., Castilhos, Dolbec, and Veresiu 2017; MacInnis 2011) on nostalgic consumption. To date, there has been no systematic attempt to bring together the wide body of nostalgia theorizing in consumer culture. Hence, we first provide a brief overview of this subfield by unpacking the concept of nostalgic consumption and some of the connotations it commonly carries. This allowed us to uncover what we believe is a sizeable gap in the literature, which has so far focused on either consumer-driven or producer-driven but past-oriented nostalgic consumption. As such, we are able to shift the focus to future-oriented nostalgic consumption. Next, building on the concept of reflective nostalgia outside consumer culture theory, as well as Butler's (1990) notion of performativity, we conceptualize five performative dimensions of reflective consumer nostalgia: language, space, social systems, community, and style.

Following Butler's (1990, 25) conceptualization of gender performativity, where "gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed," we argue that nostalgia is not a pre-existing (innate) emotion, but rather a narrative that emerges as individuals engage in doing the act of reflecting across different dimensions. By conceptualizing performativity as a powerful discourse that effects change in the world and functions as a form of social action (Butler 1990), reflective consumer nostalgia can be thought of as performative, since it allows individuals to explore and reveal concealed presuppositions in the present circumstances (Shusterman and Tomlin 2010). Reflective consumer nostalgia thus suggests different imagined or performative futures and positions for consumers to inhabit. Hence, we propose a performative theory of nostalgic consumption, which we term nostalgiacising. We define nostalgiacising as reflective (future-oriented) consumer nostalgia that is not innate or

emotional, but rather performatively enacted through five specific dimensions: language, space, social systems, community, and style.

We conclude with a discussion of our construct nostalgiacising. Since these performative dimensions are important in the Foucauldian theorization of discipline and the production of self (Binkley and Capetillo 2009), we see reflective consumer nostalgia as making "a project of *oneself*" (Zwick and Cayla 2011, 7) by introducing new possibilities for the future. Thus, rather than merely being mobilized in regard to "specific preferences and limitations of the capitalist present" (Brunk, Giesler, and Hartman 2017, 2), reflective consumer nostalgia engages with the social imaginary of the future (Castoriadis 1987). Furthermore, against temporal flow (Woermann and Rokka 2015), reflective consumer nostalgia becomes a jarring rupture to time that creates new ways of imagining the future and frames the possible construction of consumer identities in the face of the age of crisis.

Methodological Considerations

We engaged in a qualitative meta-analytic review (e.g., Castilhos, Dolbec, and Veresiu 2017; MacInnis 2011; Paterson et al. 2001; Sandelowski et al. 1997; Timulak 2009; Zimmer 2006) of relevant research on nostalgia, consumption, and markets. This approach is typically used to generate new insights by synthesizing the relationships between existing research to discover unexplored analytical dimensions and categories. This entailed first identifying all articles published in marketing academic journals on the topic of nostalgic consumption. Next, we coded 36 consumer culture theory articles for emerging themes and theoretical gaps, resulting in Table 1. Finally, using extant theory outside the field of marketing and consumer research, we offer an extension to the study of nostalgic consumption: reflective consumer nostalgia.

Nostalgic Consumption Reviewed

The concept of nostalgia was originally conceptualized as a medical illness related to homesickness (Rutherford and Shaw 2011). Holbrook and Schindler (1991, 330) broadened the meaning of nostalgia to "a [consumer] preference toward objects (people, places, or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was younger […] or even before birth." Nostalgic consumption is widely conceptualized as a positive, consumer-driven phenomenon (e.g., Holbrook and Schindler 1991), but some researchers believe that it is bittersweet because it contains both pleasant and unpleasant aspects (e.g., Havlena and Holak 1991; Walder 2014). Despite being rich and evocative, consumers' memories have an imaginary character (i.e., they are more imaginary than real), and some researchers have discussed vicarious nostalgia (Goulding 2002) and interpersonal or virtual nostalgia (Havlena and Holak 1996). These nostalgias result from recollections of friends, family, or the media (e.g., books, newspapers, movies). The imaginary character allows the displacement of hopes and ideals from the present into a different time (Belk 1990). According to Belk (1988; 1990), consumers transcend their immediate confines by incorporating objects from their past and physical environment into their present identities. Researchers have demonstrated that there is something about the past that brings comfort (e.g., Rutherford and Shaw 2011). When individuals feel sad and powerless, they experience higher levels of nostalgia and prefer objects that provide short-term distraction from the present. Nostalgia can thus serve as a means of consumer escapism (Belk 1990; Goulding 2000, 2002; Stewart 1988). At a societal level, consumers sometimes experience communal nostalgia in the wake of world-changing events (Ebenkamp and Odiorne 2002; Nadkarni and Schevchenko 2004; Stewart 1988).

From a producer-oriented perspective, nostalgia presents numerous possibilities for the creation of unique market offerings. For instance, Callcott and Alvey (1991) illustrate how advertisers prime consumers' personal memories and elicit nostalgia with the use of characters. Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry (2003) demonstrate that consumers resort to retro brands to connect to communities that once shared those brands, which has led Brown (2007) to develop a retro-dominant logic of marketing. Furthermore, nostalgia has been used in heritage attractions (Goulding 1999), in high street shopping (Maclaran and Brown 2001), in cinematic experiences like remakes, sequels, and prequels (Brown 2001), in celebrity artists (Fillis 2015). From the perspective of producers or memory makers, consumers "interact with the cultural meanings of nostalgic brands and expand them into social universes composed of stories fueled by the yearning for what is gone but not forgotten" (Giesler et al. 2014). Hence, more than one type of nostalgia exists. In a post-socialist context for instance, Brunk, Giesler, and Hartman (2017) identify three salient nostalgic frames that depoliticize the socialist past to make it compatible with the capitalist present: moralistic, pastoral, and carnivalesque nostalgia. According to these authors (2017, 3), nostalgia reduces political dissent through: a) moralistic contrasts between the "virtue and purity" of the past and the "immorality and decadence" of the present; b) contrasts between an "idyllic and pure" past versus an "impure and artificial" present; and c) contrasts between a "celebratory past" versus an "unhappy present." Yet, the distinctions of consumer-driven or producer-driven nostalgic consumption (summarized in Table 1) focus on the past-orientation of nostalgia rather than also including nostalgia's future-facing potential.

Table 1: Nostalgic Consumption

	Past-Oriented Nostalgic Consumption	**Future-Oriented Nostalgic Consumption**
Consumer-Driven Nostalgic Consumption	- nostalgia as consumer preference towards popular objects from childhood or before birth (Holbrook and Schindler 1991) - interpersonal/virtual nostalgia (Havlena and Holak 1996) - vicarious nostalgia (Goulding 2002) - nostalgia as means of escapism (e.g., Belk 1990; Goulding 2000, 2002; Stewart 1988) - communal nostalgia (e.g., Ebenkamp and Odiorne 2002; Nadkarni and Schevchenko 2004; Stewart 1988) - nostalgia as traditional celebrations (rites of passage), mythology, and symbolic icons (Kessous 2015)	- reflective consumer nostalgia, which is performatively enacted across five dimensions: language, space, social systems, community, and style
Producer-Driven Nostalgic Consumption	- nostalgia as a form of advertising (Callcott and Alvey 1991) - nostalgia in heritage attractions (Goulding 1999) - nostalgia as a cinematic experience, i.e. remakes, sequels, prequels (Brown 2001) - nostalgia as (retro)branding tool (Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003) - nostalgia as a retro-dominant logic of marketing (Brown 2007) - nostalgia in high street shopping (Maclaran and Brown 2001) - nostalgia-inducing imagery by celebrity artists, e.g. Kinkade (Fillis 2015) - nostalgia as depoliticizing mechanism (Brunk, Giesler, and Hartman 2017)	Future Research Directions: - What are the specific value propositions of reflective nostalgia

Performative Dimensions of Reflective Consumer Nostalgia

Although future oriented nostalgia has so far been overlooked in consumer culture theory, outside the field, Juhl et al. (2010, 309) demonstrate how nostalgia is consumed to create "the capacity to think about the self in time," since it "allows people to reflect on past events, learn from them, and plan for the future." Hence, nostalgia can be mobilized with an outlook to attain "benefit in the future" (Baudrillard 2005, 179). We follow Bradbury (2012, 341) in pointing out how nostalgic "narratives of the past" are important since they "may provide

resources for articulating future possibilities." Bradbury (2012, 341) further notes that nostalgia is less about the past - it manages "the unfolding of events." Moreover, since reflective nostalgia (Boym 2008) is conceptualized as a narrative, we argue that reflective consumer nostalgia in turn, can be performatively (Butler 1990) enacted through five specific dimensions (see Table 2). One dimension is language, whereby the reflective nostalgic consumption of language draws on past modalities of language style (Eckert and Rickford 2001) as a template for future possibilities of social distinction through language. A second dimension is that of space, where reflective nostalgic consumption of space draws on past modalities of living space (Low 2016) as a template for future possibilities. Third, we conceptualize the dimension of social systems, where reflective nostalgic consumption draws on past forms of habitualization (Berger and Luckmann 1966) as a template to structure future group behaviour into specific social systems. Fourth, the reflective nostalgic consumption of community draws on past ways of demarking a boundary for a group of people (Cohen 1985) as a template for future possibilities of demarking in/out boundaries. Lastly, the fifth dimension is style or aesthetics, whereby the reflective nostalgic consumption of style draws on past ways of passionately objectifying oneself as a template (Hobart and Kapferer 2006) for future ways of such objectification. Together, these five performative dimensions of reflective nostalgia form a performative theory of nostalgic consumption, which we term nostalgiacising. In a nutshell, nostalgiacising allows consumers to playfully engage with the future, while living in the present, using past-oriented market offerings.

Table 2: Dimensions of Nostalgic Performativity

Performative Dimension	Definition	Examples
Language	Style in language is enacted by how "agents in a social space negotiate their positions and goals within a system of distinctions and possibilities" (Eckert and Rickford 2001, 24). The reflective nostalgic consumption of language draws on past modalities of language style as a template for future possibilities of social distinction through language.	- Collecting medieval gilded books - Consuming political comic strips (e.g., in newspapers) - Consuming the Atlantis Legend
Space	In performative terms, space is defined as lived space. This refers to spatial practices that allow space to appear phenomenologically and as a cultural practice (Low 2016). The reflective nostalgic consumption of space draws on past modalities of living space as a template for future possibilities of space.	- Consuming Disneyland in California – envisioning future communities by contrasting an imagined main-street from the past to the highways/strip malls of the present - Hipster coffee shops – imagining future post-industrial spaces - Ritz Tea Room (London) and the Great Gatsby Garden Party (Toronto) – playful re-enactment of 1920s British/American high society to think of how class systems could look like in the future
Social Systems	Social systems appear through forms of "habitualization" of a group of individuals (Berger and Luckmann 2011). The reflective nostalgic consumption of social systems draws on past forms of habitualization as a template to structure future group behaviour into specific social systems.	- St. Patrick's Day in North America
Community	Community is defined as members of a group that "have something in common, which distinguishes them in a significant way from other groups…The element which embodies this sense of discrimination is the boundary" (Cohen 1985). The reflective nostalgic consumption of community draws on past ways of demarking a boundary for a group of people as a template for future possibilities of demarking in/out boundaries.	- Paleo Lifestyle community – leading a future-oriented healthy lifestyle by imagining a pre-historic healthy community - Online social consumption communities, e.g. He-Man.org
Style	Style, as an aesthetic form is defined as "a changing and differentiated collection of symbolic formations and processes" within which humans "passionately objectify themselves and come to be directed into diverse realities" (Hobart and Kapferer 2006, 5). The reflective nostalgic consumption of style draws on past ways of passionately objectifying oneself as a template for future ways of such objectification.	- Consuming vintage-style fast-fashion clothing - Shopping in thrift stores - Laura Ashley textile design company – imagining future femininity by consuming imagined past femininity

Discussion: Towards a Performative Theory of Nostalgia

Overall, this conceptual paper has aimed to establish a performative theory of nostalgic consumption, which we term nostalgiacising. We define nostalgiacising as reflective (future-oriented) consumer nostalgia that is not innate or emotional, but rather performatively enacted through five specific dimensions. Menke (2013, 76) argues that there are various "modes of reflectivity," which suggests that there are various kinds of concealed presuppositions that reflective consumer nostalgia can reveal. This gave rise to our research question: *What dimensions of reflectivity mediate nostalgic consumption?* Our conceptual investigation revealed that reflective consumer nostalgia is mediated through language, space, social system, community, and style. These are five important dimensions in the Foucauldian theorization of discipline and the production of self (Binkley and Capetillo 2009), wherefore we see reflective consumer nostalgia framing what Zwick and Cayla (2011, 7) term "the perpetual questioning machine" and the consumer project of making "a project of *oneself*." Reflective consumer nostalgia engages with the basic operation of discipline in society and points to a playful performative engagement in the age of crisis to create new potential futures.

Reflectively engaging with, and reframing, the past, thus, plays a pivotal role in consumer processes by replenishing the symbolic resources available for "imaginative anticipation of, or speculation about the future" (Campbell 1987, 83) or transforming what Douglas and Isherwood ([1979] 1996, 30) term "culturally situated patterns of expectations for specific places." As such, our concept of reflective consumer nostalgia also contributes to the body of work investigating the dimension of time in consumer behavior (e.g., Woermann and Rokka 2015). However, unlike Woermann and Rokka's (2015) study, which emphasizes the present and continuity of timeflow, our conceptual investigation demonstrates how the past can

inform imagined futures and horizons of expectation. Reflective consumer nostalgia provides consumer culture with a possible temporal rupture by playfully introducing novel linguistic dimensions, new social systems, reframed communities, and refined styles. Reflective consumer nostalgia can thus demonstrate how ruptures can be introduced into consumer temporality (Robinson 2015). Overall, nostalgiacising is a future-oriented response to the demands of living in an age of crisis, and it allows us to rethink the temporal dynamics of consuming the past.

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