The Mechanism of Nostalgia as a Narrative in XXI’s Campaign #RinduNontondiXXI

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ABSTRACT

For periods of time, emotional appeal in advertisement narratives has become one of the most common practices across the advertising industry. This practice has remained the same even throughout the rise of technology and digital media. It has also developed a broader perspective when faced with the ability for an audience to advocate for specific products and generate contents about them. This strategy has further come to light during recent years. With the presence of the pandemic, business sectors have taken a toll. Furthermore, health and safety concerns would limit the ability for people to do their activities in public areas, which led to resurrections of creative, emotional narratives, specifically within the lines of nostalgia. This momentum has allowed advertisers to explore the theme that would compensate for the loss of engagement in previous conventional methods, to which XXI - one of the largest cinema chains in Indonesia - has recently implemented this into their campaign #RinduNontondiXXI on their social media. One would question the course of action, root causes of its effectiveness and aftereffects regarding the use of nostalgia narrative in a campaign. Through a study case method conducted in this research and literature studies, one would conclude that nostalgia does not fall far from the emotional appeal method in advertising; therefore, the effectiveness derives from these roots. One might also conclude that nostalgia has its associations to brand image, which would affect the creative approach and audience's perception towards a campaign.

Keywords: Nostalgia, Emotional Appeal, Brand Image, User Generated Content, Campaign.

1. BACKGROUND

Technology, in recent times, has helped shape and change access points for target audiences to the world of advertising. Momentarily, entertainment media has never been this accessible to audience; Modern technology has helped facilitate advertisers in approaching target audience with the help of internet, smartphone devices, and social media as platforms. Not to mention, the development of marketing from 1.0 to 4.0 has influenced interaction of brand owners and their audiences, particularly of 5A’s (Aware, Appeal, Ask, Act, and Advocate) introduction of Advocate. Advocate refers to the last stage of target audience behavior that entrepreneurs can expect, namely if there is strong loyalty to a brand reflected in repurchases, giving reviews and feedback, and spontaneous recommendations to others. In this era, we are spectating the blossoming of two-way communication between entrepreneurs and their target audience.

Advocacy can be related to a type of content circulating on social media nowadays – User-Generated Content (UGC). UGC content is produced by audiences who voluntarily contribute to providing or uploading information on internet platforms with the intention being useful or entertaining. UGC is frequently used as an advertising strategy as its’ personal nature has potential to help advertisers communicate their campaign. According to statistics in Offerpop, some 85% of consumers think UGC is more influential than contents from a brand itself (UDC). UGC content has proven its usefulness as an effective strategy in several advertising strategies in this modern era.
COVID-19 takes a toll on various sectors, as public activities and facilities are halted for an indefinite time. People are to reduce outdoor activities and close contacts in public facilities (transportation, food services, and entertainment). Lockdowns and social distancing inevitably seized normalcy, and so would impact the engagement with public facilities. Eventually, businesses that require physical contact may experience a decline. Therefore, marketing and advertising strategies are needed to support the loss. During the 'Large-Scale Social Restrictions', this pseudo period created momentum for the use of nostalgia as a narrative in advertising.

Nostalgia was a term to describe a condition of someone's extreme longing for something far from their grasp. A Switzerland physician, Johannes Hofer mentioned so, due to his observation of soldiers in a battle far away from their homes. Hence the time when nostalgia was considered a pathology, and later, a mental disease that manifested in physical symptoms. Perspectives of nostalgia changed as science studies grew, which ultimately helped depathologize nostalgia. Nostalgia nowadays refers to a condition of someone's longing for something far from the individual. Momentarily, entrepreneurs and advertisers began to pay attention to the potential of nostalgia as a strategy in their craft.

Nostalgia as a narrative in several marketing strategies seems to grow in numbers during lockdowns, forcing social media engagement as the new game plan. Examples found in either the food or entertainment business – for one, XXI, a cinema chain in Indonesia, actively publishing its campaign #RinduNontondiXXI on Instagram. Interestingly, the adaptation of nostalgia narrative has helped XXI remain relevant in this trying time. Therefore, this research will examine how communication strategies use nostalgia as a narrative, particularly in the XXI's digital campaign #RinduNontondiXXI in increasing engagement and brand awareness. It is hoped that through this study, the author will reach an understanding of the brand's course of action, root causes, and aftereffects in utilizing the effectiveness of nostalgia narrative in this momentum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Social Media and Advertising

Studies claim that social media can be thought of from several perspectives. Social media is a series of digital programs, in that is provided a digital 'environment' that allows users to exchange digital information (texts, images, videos) via an internet network. In short, social media is a digital platform. Social media also viewed as a place where people do their activities [1]. Meanwhile, Kaplan & Haenlein through a marketing perspective, views social media as a platform for people to build connections, share information and sentiments [2]. From these definitions, social media is a digital media or an environment in which users carry out the communication process.

A study argued that social media will become the centre of attention for companies, especially in marketing and advertising [3]. Factors of change in communication caused by social media were due to the nature of social media that does not require much time or money to carry out this form of communication (marketing). Therefore, industries see opportunities in using social media to disseminate promotion, marketing intelligence, sentiment research, public relations, marketing communications, and product & customer management [3-4].

2.2. User Generated Content (UGC)

User-Generated Content or UGC is a form of content that includes images, videos, text, and audio published by a user in an online medium [5]. UGC can be paralleled to a Word of Mouth (WOM) and has the same way of working in electronic form, which can be called eWOM (Electronic Word of Mouth) [5].

2.3. Emotional Appeal in Advertising

The use of emotion as an element of persuasion in advertising is not a new method. Several studies on emotional appeal in advertising show that individuals can buy products based on emotional or rational circumstances, hence the strategy [6-8]. There are two essential elements of persuasion in advertising: emotional and rational [6]. If rational persuasion emphasizes the quality, function, and performance of a product, emotional emphasizes consumer feelings, especially about certain products [7]. Royne [9-10] states that there are two branches of the most basic emotional appeal: positive and negative emotions. Negative emotions such as fear, shame, and guilt can arouse passion for designing an advertisement or campaign that wants to create specific results. On the other hand, positive emotions utilize humor and affection, producing specific outcomes from an advertisement [9-10].

2.4. Nostalgia

According to Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in the 17th century, nostalgia is a combination of the
Greek nostos (homecoming) and algos (painful condition) to describe the anxiety seen in mercenaries fighting far from their hometowns [10-12]. It was once compared to homesickness but was still a term that has yet to be understood. This led to Hofer transforming nostalgia into a medical construct. In later times, doctors could not identify nostalgia in terms of physical abnormalities, leading to physicians viewing nostalgia as a mental disease that manifested in physical symptoms.

Theorists and psychiatrists in 19th century, twould still conclude nostalgia as a disease or a form of melancholia. However, in the first half of 20th century, the psychoanalytic movement shifted nostalgia to the psychological field. Nostalgia was considered as a variant of depression: a saddening farewell to childhood, a longing for a past forever lost, a defence against mourning, and an acute desire for a union with the preoedipal mother; this term is essential to nostalgia in its emotional development [10]. This time, nostalgia was arguably a reaction of alienation of individuation or an overwhelming craving causing a weak attempt in coping with one’s circumstances. These arguments have led to a better understanding that nostalgia, in which identified the bittersweet quality in nostalgia is to be distinguished from depression and is normal to contain both pleasurable and depressive affect [10]. Consequently, the movement has boosted the depathologizing of nostalgia.

Now that nostalgia is likely to be identified as a psychological process, arguments shifted into fundamental elements that define nostalgia and its effects on a social setting. This led to a lengthy discussion on the concept of ‘home’, which theorists argued to be relative to time and place, and nostalgia is no different from the emotional desire for another object or a person. Interestingly, the sad and melancholic notes in nostalgia gradually shifted in the 20th century, where a study claimed nostalgia is now viewed as a heart-warming, yearning for times of childhood [10,12]. Theorists then begin to view and redefine nostalgia as an adaptive response to stress or change, a fundamental component of human experience, or a positive universal emotion [12].

### 2.5 Triggers of Nostalgia

When experiencing nostalgia, an individual can reminisce about an event within a certain period. It is in these instances that elements triggering nostalgia in a person emerge. According to experts, the elements in question are sound, visual, taste, and smell [11-12, 14]. However, autographical elements would effectively trigger nostalgia – unique pasts of an individual along with the objects in memory can determine the effectiveness of nostalgia for an individual [11]. Nostalgia is also influenced by human social factors, sensory input, and memorable events. To illustrate, factors triggering nostalgia comprises of the following.

i. Social Factor

Social factors are stored in one's memories. When tourists tend to remember people who have influenced their experience on holiday vacations [14]. This event triggers active nostalgia and affects that person's memory. A person's memory of another would tend to be more positive, strong, and clear if the person has contributed an excellent influence on someone [13].

ii. Sensory input

Sensory input refers to the information received by the human body through sensory organs [13,15]. Sensory input triggers could range from food, music or sound, taste, atmosphere, and feelings [15]. Seeing these objects can trigger feelings or thoughts that refer to a person's memory of events, scenes in the past in certain circumstances [14].

iii. Memorable events

Merchant states that memorable events include get-together or fun events [16]. Events of a mundane nature tend to be forgotten, while people tend to remember more memorable events because they do not always happen [16].

### 2.6. Personal Nostalgia

As the name implies, personal nostalgia is a nostalgia caused by factors that hold personal meaning to an individual. Personal nostalgia provides an opportunity for one to "experience" an event, which can then trigger feelings by remembering it [17-19]. Several factors could help create personal nostalgia, either through music, shows, films, or other individuals who are close to nostalgic individuals. Personal nostalgia is related to a person's autobiographical events, a reality for that individual [17]. This lines with Stern’s conclusion of personal nostalgia relating to "This is The Way I Was" [12], suggesting an occurrence in a certain period of one's life. When historical nostalgia focuses on imaginative settings, personal nostalgia uses realistic settings by utilizing friendly characters known to the audience. The figures are usually ones who uphold the values of love, comfort, everyday life of a person.

Idealization of one's past is the goal of personal nostalgia, and memory helps operational processes to
achieve that goal. To that, a self-concept guides an individual's memory, and the marker of self-concept is a product or object. Some objects can serve as a reminder of an individual's past events; A personal storehouse that stores meanings, raw qualities, from which an individual can forge a self-concept [10,12]. One could be nostalgic for any object since objects serve as symbols. At this moment, it is where a brand image comes to play; In developing a self-concept, a brand image could help find one's self-concept in the 'present' by recalling whom one was, and products used at the time.

2.7. Mechanism of Nostalgia in Marketing

Nostalgia had become a strategy in influencing market consumers to a brand [18]. Nostalgia has advantages in increasing self-esteem and mood and reducing stress [19]. On this occasion, various marketers use nostalgia as a stimulant for consumers [12,14]. Through consumption of marketed products indirectly provides the opportunity for consumers to experience the past that they cannot return to.

The way nostalgia works in the marketing process can be concluded through three processes: emotional, cognitive, and behavioral reactions. When a consumer's memory of a product is triggered, there is a nostalgic response to seeing the product, whether directly or indirectly [14]. A cognitive reaction would follow perceive the product as positive or negative. Then, consumers begin to act after perceiving these nostalgic feelings as positive or negative [14], presumably by purchasing a product or leaving it.

2.8. Nostalgia in Advertising (XXI #RinduNontondiXXI Campaign)

XXI Cinemas was forced to temporarily close from March 2020 to April 2020 to support the prevention of the spread of COVID-19. A decline in XXI’s brand performance made social media as an apparent strategy, hence the activity on XXI’s Instagram on the publication of #RinduNontondiXXI campaign.

2.9. Brand Image Stimulus

Brand image is closely related to the thoughts and perceptions of consumers, the formation of brand image is influenced by numerous factors. Personal and environmental are two critical elements in designing a brand image because these two elements are most dominant in influencing one’s perception [20]. Environmental element includes technical attributes found in a product that the brand owner controls. Personal element includes consumer experience, brand attitude and brand behavior associated with stimulants which are deliberately designed in such a way by the brand owner [20].

Other study argue brand image is formed through stimulants from the products or services offered and is not limited only to physical stimulants but also includes psychological ones [20-21]. Arnould et al. as cited in Wijaya [20] claimed that brand image is the result of the final accumulation (end-product) formed from the process of accumulating stimulants continuously or repetitively.

2.10. Method

The author will utilize a qualitative method with a descriptive approach in examining nostalgia as a narrative in advertising XXI based on Nassaji and Sugiyono [22-23]. Descriptive research concerns more of a descriptive phenomenon and its characteristics, therefore data is often analyzed quantitatively [22]. Meanwhile qualitative research analyzes data to gain a deeper understanding of the subject, which is often explored through an inductive course to identify recurring themes and concepts, ultimately interpreting them into a meaningful emphasis instead of a generalization [22-23]. Data collection for the XXI campaign will be carried out by observing XXI’s social media, particularly its Instagram account @cinema.21. The author will observe news articles about Cinema XXI on the news website. Therefore, the following are the stages carried out in the framework of research and assessment.

1. Data collection in the form of campaign publicity content #RinduNontondiXXI through Instagram account @cinema.21 and observation through articles about XXI,
2. Data Analysis of Nostalgia triggers in publicity contents, narrative in #RinduNontondiXXI publications, and the effectiveness of nostalgia as a campaign narrative.
3. Develop a research report based on research findings and questions.

DISCUSSION

3.1. Social Factor and Sensory Input

In this study of the nostalgia narrative in the XXI campaign, it is possible to observe released contents through Cinema XXI’s Instagram (@cinema.21), precisely when COVID-19 first entered Indonesia in early March 2020. From March 2020 to January 2021,
the @cinema.21 account has passed the Large-Scale Social Restriction period twice. @cinema.21 first started publishing #RinduNontondiXXI contents on April 5, 2020. From April to June 2020, #RinduNontondiXXI content increasingly varied and was frequently published. Until now, the tagged contents have reached 60 or more. Contents vary between informative contents (trivia facts) that would only require a one-way communication and engagement contents (puzzles, quizzes, mini games, etc.) requiring a two-way communication between XXI and its audience.

In this compilation of content, published #RinduNontondiXXI content applies strategies to increase engagement through approaches that would lead to nostalgic responses with the help of its triggers: social factors, sensory input, and memorable events.

Figure 1. #RinduNontondiXXI Instagram Posts Indicating Social Factor Trigger: (a) Tickets & Ticketing Staff; (b) Mas Spoiler; (c) Staffs; (d) Actors and Actresses

As observed in Fig. 1, we would notice key visuals incorporating familiar figures of XXI as a brand. A person who occasionally visits XXI’s outlets would have been acquainted to these brand elements: yellowish theatre tickets, staffs on their office garment, and a familiar face recognized as ‘Mas Spoiler’. These elements are recurrently displayed – Mas Spoiler, for example, is often seen in a video prior to every show, warning people to refrain from illegally recording movies. These repetitively displayed social factors represent XXI’s identity as a brand and serve as a persuasion towards the audience triggering nostalgic responses. As symbols and elements would reinforce the audience’s memory.

In several publications, XXI was carrying out an event in which people are encouraged to participate - to post their version of messages about why they miss XXI. In doing so, local artists and influencers participated in the campaign (See Fig. 1d). When an actor or actress displayed in the contents are influential figures to the audiences’ personal experience, it might trigger nostalgic responses. It would persuade people to act according to, in this case, their biases or favorite stars, ultimately ensuing participation. In Fig. 1d, when actors and actresses carry out the same message (they posted a video of themselves longing for the cinema’s atmosphere), it would trigger the audience who feel the same way to act and eventually post their own version. From these examples, we can see how social factors might trigger nostalgic responses and create new narratives.

Next, we are examining various trivia fact contents, challenges, or mini games within the #RinduNontondiXXI campaign. Recalling a statement sensory input triggers comprise of food, music or sound, taste, atmosphere, and feelings [13-15]. These are precisely the elements found in contents in Fig. 2. Whether or not the campaigners unintentionally included these elements, the factors would trigger a nostalgic response through sensory input.

Figure 2. (a) XXI’s red chair; (b) Lobbies; (c) Theatres; (d) Quizzes
To understand why such contents are perceived as forms of sensory input, one can elaborate on each element within the posts. As public entertainment facilities, XXI as a brand itself has established their brand identity in its interior design. This explains the phenomena where one sees various photos of XXI's lobbies, aisles, and auditoriums, only to find out that one can identify these locations distinctively as an XXI outlet despite different locations in the photos (see Fig. 2b). Likewise, red theatre seats and theatre layouts are a familiar sight to see in every XXI outlet (see Fig. 2a, c).

As food, sound, and feelings are linked to sensory input, Posts in Fig. 2d mentions a recognizable few: “Dingdong Sound”, “All Around You”, “Popcorn Aroma”, and “Watching at IMAX”. These are some of sensory input that people can describe XXI because of past experiences stored in their memories accumulate into an image of XXI as a brand. When the publishers utilize these elements, they produce relatability and reminiscence, hence provoke a nostalgic response. These phenomena explain a successful establishment of the brand XXI in the audiences’ subconscious mind and eventually helped developing nostalgic narrative. Conclusively, photos and images, even evoking texts may trigger recollection of memories being in the outlets before the pandemic hits, therefore trigger responses from the audience.

3.2. Memorable Events and UGC in #RinduNontondiXXI Campaign

During the campaign, XXI has encouraged its audience to generate their content regarding #RinduNontondiXXI. One of them were videos. As it has turned out, previous contents containing social factors and sensory inputs have accumulated a trigger for pivotal memories in ones' mind. The audience can create contents through Instagram and other platforms, which XXI supports by publishing some of them on their official account. For example, a user who posted her collection of XXI tickets into a video was reposted by XXI (see Fig. 3a). In this matter, one can acquire two findings. One, it is evident that objects possess symbolic meanings to certain people as they would remind one's memories to help one forge a self-concept [10,12]. Therefore, XXI tickets can be associated as an object that holds memories, ultimately accumulating to memorable events. In publishing it would also trigger viewers' reaction, resulting in more nostalgic user-generated contents (see Fig. 3b, c).

3.3. Personal Nostalgia in #RinduNontondiXXI Campaign

Through observing triggers and nostalgic narratives used in the publications, we can conclude that XXI's #RinduNontondiXXI campaign utilizes the personal nostalgia approach. As Stern explained, personal nostalgia touches on personal traits relatable to the audiences' past experiences [12]. The campaign's contents reflect these traits, in which the audience has been provided the opportunity to reminisce XXI's atmosphere when they are momentarily unreachable. In this moment, one can witness the application of personal nostalgia through different mediums, whether they are social factors, sensory input, and memorable events relevant to the majority of XXI's audience. In other words, these factors help XXI convey their messages about personal nostalgia in a more understandable fashion.

Furthermore, the rise of social media as a platform provides room for growth in communication. One would notice that personal nostalgia as a narrative could bridge two parties and prolong the engagement. Through #RinduNontondiXXI's campaign, publishers
are designing contents enticing responses from the audience; comment sections are filled with reactions; XXI responded by reposting some of the UGCs.

3.4. Cause of Effectiveness of Nostalgic Narrative in #RinduNontondiXXI Campaign

Following the analysis of theoretical foundations, nostalgia closely relates to human emotions and feelings. If Chu in Idris et al. [5] argues that one of the fundamental elements of persuasion in advertising is an emotional element, nostalgia inevitably belongs to the category. Therefore, the effectiveness of nostalgic narrative is directly correlated to the high efficacy of practicing emotional appeal in digital media, which is said to be effective by Rodgers & Thorson [8-9].

Examining further, however, the #RinduNontondiXXI campaign case is not simply a matter of the emotional appeal. A deeper layer within the effectiveness of personal nostalgia, in this case, correlates to brand image, brand experiences, and brand loyalty. One would notice, in several contents, pictures of locations, hallways and lobbies are taken from different XXI outlets, and yet, the audience would still identify and recognize them as XXI. One would even recognize XXI’s brand elements just by reading descriptions. This phenomenon reflects a cultivated brand image of XXI in the audience's mind, which acts as one of the catalysts to the campaign's engagement. If the audience were not familiar with XXI and its service in the first place, they would not attach themselves to the objects representing XXI's identity, hence the possible inexistence of engagement.

Furthermore, not forming a brand image and experience would forfeit reasons for strong brand loyalty, as the audience would not feel their self-concept represented in the brand image. In this case, the absence of XXI's brand image might have jeopardized the personal nostalgia as narrative in #RinduNontondiXXI. Therefore, brand image influences nostalgic narratives, particularly if the narrative will hint upon a brand's communication with its audience.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the whole #RinduNontondiXXI campaign, one can observe numerous factors conveyed to create nostalgic narratives. Social factors, sensory input, memorable events, and even products that hold significance in portraying XXI's brand image converted into more understandable elements such as photos, videos, narrated audios, and copies. To this, the audience would perceive the campaign as a means of communication. Therefore, the audience would provide feedback or even generate UGCs with the ability to do so. Hence, the campaign has fulfilled the last point of 5A - Advocate.

Finally, through the study, the author discovered the cause of the nostalgic narrative's effectiveness, particularly in this campaign. Nostalgia is indeed intertwined with emotional appeal; therefore, emotions and personalization are considered the most effective methods of persuasion. The author has also discovered that brand image, brand experience, and brand loyalty would be some of the causes behind the effectiveness of nostalgic narrative in #RinduNontondiXXI within the nature of the planned contents encompassing XXI's interactions with its audience. Hence, a strong brand image would strengthen a nostalgic narrative.

REFERENCES


