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## (N)ostalgic Consumption and the Former German Democratic Republic

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(N)OSTALGIC CONSUMPTION AND THE FORMER GERMAN DEMOCRATIC  
REPUBLIC

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By Savannah Winn Coleman

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion

Of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies

Croft Institute for International Studies

Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

The University of Mississippi

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the consumer psychology of nostalgia. It specifies, focusing on consumer products that are associated with the former German Democratic Republic. My research studies the Ostalgie phenomenon through the lens of nostalgic consumption. The study is focused on understanding the relationship between the consumer psychology of nostalgia and the theory of 'Ostalgie' and what implications such a relationship could have. I took previously discussed concepts and theories of nostalgic consumption and observed if they played a role in the consumption of East German goods. I conducted and distributed surveys to eighty-eight Germans above the age of twenty-eight. Both East and West Germans participated in the surveys. After analyzing my findings, I applied previous theory and literature to my results to examine if nostalgic attachment to these goods is present and if so, what was the nature of that nostalgia. By applying the nostalgic consumption theories to the consumption patterns of East German goods, I was able to determine whether Ostalgie, personal nostalgia or something else is present in the relationship between the consumer and product brand. In my discussion, I discuss the presence of nostalgia between consumers and East German goods and what possible implications it may have on the German society and market.

## INTRODUCTION

It is not a new concept that consumers can develop emotional attachments to consumer product brands. East German goods, particularly those associated with Ostalgie, provide an example of how consumers develop emotional attachments to product brands. However, this is not just another study about Ostalgie. The purpose of this research is to apply nostalgic consumption theory to the trend that has been previously called "Ostalgie", a term used to describe the nostalgic feelings associated with the former German Democratic Republic. Ostalgie has been particularly characterized in the consumption of product brands that are associated with the GDR. Examples of such brands include Spreewald Gürken pickles, Rotkäppchen Sekt sparkling wine, Bautzner Senf mustard, Vita Cola soda, and Nudossi hazelnut chocolate spread. By applying nostalgic consumption theory, I will be able to study Ostalgie from a consumer studies perspective. While nostalgic consumption research has been conducted in the USA, Russia, and China; no such studies have been conducted when discussing the Ostalgie phenomenon. Whereas most previous research concerning Ostalgie is from a political, historical or sociological perspective, I am studying Ostalgie from a market and consumer studies research perspective.

In my Literature Review chapter, I introduce key terms, theories, and provide necessary historical background. I begin by discussing consumer studies theory and the types of emotional connections that consumers can form with product brands. As found in previous theories, emotional attachment for product brands is commonly exercised by consumers. In my research, I argue that this will occur in my results as well. I also

hypothesize that consumers do have emotional attachment for these East German product brands.

While there are many types of emotions that consumers can feel for product brands, my research is focused on the emotion of nostalgia, an emotional longing for the past. Nostalgia is the emotion commonly associated with the Ostalgie phenomenon, which is why this study focuses primarily on nostalgic emotions and attachments. Nostalgic emotions can affect consumer decisions. There are two types of nostalgia on which this study focuses, personal nostalgia and collective nostalgia. Personal nostalgia refers to nostalgia for a time that the individual personally experienced; collective nostalgia refers to a nostalgia for a time period or way of life that the individual did not personally experience.

After introducing the relevant nostalgic consumer theories, I provide historical and cultural background regarding the Ostalgie phenomenon. I then introduce common theories pertaining to Ostalgie. There are varying ideas of what Ostalgie “means” amongst authors and I discuss each of these and the logic behind those theories. However, in my research I apply both theories associated with Ostalgie and theories associated with nostalgic consumption, to see if there is a possible linkage in the two types of thought. I am interested in whether previous nostalgic consumption theories play a role in Ostalgie, and if so, how. By doing so, I can analyze how one would explain the Ostalgie phenomenon in terms of consumption studies.

Ostalgie is a cultural phenomenon that does not only affect East Germans, it also affects West Germans as well, which is why I included both cultural groups in my research. I am interested not only in how individuals perceive East German brands, but

also how different cultural groups perceive East German brand. For the sake of my study, this includes East German and West German cultural groups. I hypothesize that both East Germans and West Germans can develop positive nostalgic feelings for East German product brands. Assuming one group, the East Germans, did individually experience life in the GDR, and assuming the other group, the West Germans, did not individually experience life in the GDR, I argue that there would be differing nostalgic emotions between the two cultural groups. Based on previous theory, I hypothesize that East Germans and West Germans would indicate different nostalgic feelings for these East German product brands. I hypothesize that West Germans would exhibit collective nostalgic feelings and that East Germans would exhibit personal nostalgic feelings. I briefly introduce a competing theory, the home bias theory, of why consumers might feel emotional attachment for East German products. To collect my data, I used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. I distributed surveys to both East and West Germans, collecting a total of eighty-eight qualitative answer surveys. I then compare my findings to my hypotheses to see what type of implications can be made using my data.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Consumer Studies**

In order to better understand the importance of the nostalgic consumption phenomenon, I must lay down a foundation of what existing literature and theory exists on the topic. I will begin by discussing the importance of consumption studies in psychology and sociology. The acts of production and consumption shape modern society. Anderson states that “human societies have been long defined by the objects they produce and use” (2008 p.99). Consumption studies is a relatively new branch in psychology, sociology, and economics that looks into why consumers purchase certain products or services. The increased power of the consumer in our modern-day consumer society has opened a new dialogue about the peculiarities of modern consumption (Ward 1997). In economics, consumption is fundamentally defined as the usage of goods and services by households. The customer is king in modern economic society; the producers find that they can no longer minimize the interests of the consumer, and that the consumer has a valid discretion in how the direction of the economy will continue (Ward 1997). Consumption is a form of discourse; it is essentially a system of exchange and communication. Purchasing patterns indicate how the consumer communicates his/her value to the market and the producers. Through everyday tasks such as brand selection and shopping, one can gain insight into what is relevant in a culture. The sociology term for this association between material objects and a culture is material culture; this material culture can help get insights into various meanings and messages embedded in brand products (Blum 2006).

## **Emotions and Consumption**

Consumption is not always a superficial choice in a supermarket; a purchase or other type of consumer decision can also reflect a consumer's emotions or beliefs. Previous studies have found that consumers can have strong psychological bonds to brands (Grisaffe & Nguyen 2011; Schmitt 2012). Companies can reap huge financial rewards when customers develop strong emotional ties to those brands, which can help to explain the consistent success of those companies, even if there are more incentives for customers to spend their money with other firms (Grisaffe & Nguyen 2011). In their qualitative study, Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011) narrowed down these customer-exerted emotions into five emotional antecedents, the strongest of which was emotional sentimental memories. According to this study, emotional sentimental memories themselves were strong enough to lure customers into buying a product but were only successful long term when combined with other customer benefits such as the product's quality or the product's taste. It is not enough for a company brand to base its success off honing into customers' sentimental emotions; there must be other benefits to the customer for using that product (Grisaffe & Nguyen 2011). Another study found that the emotional dimension of an object was an important factor in the selection and purchase of a product (Errajaa, Partouche, & Dutot 2013). While consumers do consider the price and quality of a good, they also consider the emotional gain from it (Errajaa, Partouche, & Dutot 2013). The findings from these studies demonstrate that consumption is much more than a simple transaction, and consumers can and do relate emotions with certain product brands.

How each consumer perceives the product brand is different; not all consumers have the same type or amount of psychological engagement with product brands. Due to different needs, motives, and goals, all consumers experience varying levels of psychological engagement with product brands. Product brands are often seen as having brand personalities, where the brands are associated with human-like characteristics and traits (Aaker 1997). Consumers and marketers alike anthropomorphize brands, giving the brand personality and character traits (Schmitt 2012). Examples of brand personalities include calling a product “cool”, “hip”, “conservative”, etc. Marketers give their brands personalities through use of advertising, company policies, and other marketing messages. The individual consumer does this by forming personal emotional attachments to particular brands. Whole groups or cultures can also engage psychologically with particular brand products and these brands can often become symbols, used to signify, and represent a group, society, or culture (Schmitt 2012). As a cultural symbol, brands can also stand for a nation and its cultural values (Schmitt 2012). Brand communities form when a group develops a sense of emotional involvement and connection to a group through public consumption of a good (Schmitt 2012). Members of brand communities have a shared goal or identity in relation to their usage of the brand (Schmitt 2012). Both the individual’s attachment and the group’s attachment to product brands are important for my study. One’s consumption is not only a result of an individual’s wants and needs, but can also reflect the wants and needs of the culture in which he participates. In my research, I considered not only how the respondents as individual consumers perceive the East German brands, but also how the respondents as participants of their respective East German and West German cultural groups perceive East German brands.

## **Nostalgia**

For the purpose of my study, I am interested in one particular emotion and that is nostalgia. It can be argued that an item or activity that is represented as 'new' has an increase in appeal to consumers (Errajaa, Partouche, & Dutot 2013). However, the constant innovation can also have its downfall. Sometimes consumers prefer the traditional over the more modern product (Errajaa, Partouche, & Dutot 2013). Consumption is no longer based only on consumers' response to new production techniques: 'new' does not always equal 'better'. There are many reasons why consumers will stick by an old product. The continued use of the product could be based on the failure of the new product, the reliability of the old product, or even emotional attachment, and other psychological reasons (Ward 1997). Here lies a paradox; the globalized world is looking for change and innovation, but consumers and marketers are looking more and more towards the past (Castellano, Ivanova, Adnane, Safraou, & Schiavone 2013). For the purpose of my study, I will be focusing primarily on the psychological reasons of why a consumer prefers older products to the newer and perhaps more innovative competitors.

One aspect of psychology that has been increasingly studied in consumer studies is nostalgia, which is the type of emotional attachment that is relevant for my research. Nostalgia is characterized by a combination of happiness and sadness, invoked by remembering something from the past, and often longing to experience it once again. It is a bittersweet mixture of longing for the past (Merriam-Webster). Nostalgia occurs in two phases. The first phase is the recollection of a time period or past; the second phase is

connecting that memory to a particular emotion. Nostalgia is the emotional response to memory (Castellano et. al 2013).

Nostalgia was originally a term used to describe the medical condition of homesickness, but Davis's research has changed the definition of nostalgia to that of a psychological phenomenon (1979). He argues that nostalgic memories and fantasies are not reliable, as they provide often distorted, rose-colored positive pictures of the past. One often remembers a time or event differently from what it actually was and often individuals can feel nostalgic for a time or place they never directly experienced (Davis 1979).

Nostalgia is also "a sociological phenomenon that helps individuals maintain their identities in the face of major life transitions" (Davis 1979 p.172). The author finds that nostalgia often occurs in times of fear, discontent, anxiety, and uncertainty. He argues that individuals often turn to nostalgic thoughts to alleviate these feelings. In periods of major life transitions, nostalgia is a psychological coping mechanism that allows individuals to maintain a sense of identity (Davis 1979).

Much like any other emotions, some individuals are more prone to nostalgia than others. It was thought that the age group more likely to be nostalgic is those in their middle age and retirement years (Davis 1979). However, it has been established that age and nostalgia proneness are independent of one another; age has no effect on one's proneness to nostalgia (Holbrook 1993). It has also been established that gender has no effect on one's proneness to nostalgia (Davis 1979; Kessous, Roux, and Chandon 2015). An individual's nostalgia proneness depends on the individual's characteristic; an individual's personality traits determine one's proneness to be nostalgic (Holbrook 1993;

Merchant & Rose 2013; Chen, Yeh, & Huan 2014). Nostalgic urges can also be the product of parents, in that one's behavior often copies that of one's parents. In other words, parents can influence feelings of nostalgia on their children, even though the child itself never directly experienced the time period (Hirsch 1992).

### **Types of Nostalgia**

There are different types of nostalgia that one can feel and different reasons why an individual might experience nostalgia. Nostalgic feelings must be supported by some type of meaning; one cannot be simply nostalgic without a reason. Baker & Kennedy discusses the reasons for nostalgic emotion and divided nostalgia into three types: real, simulated, and collective nostalgia (1994).

Real nostalgia is when an individual had direct personal experience with a certain time period. Davis calls this "true nostalgia" (1979), but it is also called personal or childhood nostalgia (Baker and Kennedy 1994). Real or personal nostalgia refers to an individual's nostalgic feeling for "the way I was" and is often referred to as personal or childhood nostalgia in nostalgic consumption studies. Individuals' nostalgic longing for childhood and early adulthood is the strongest of any other period (Davis 1979).

Simulated nostalgia is when an individual did not have direct personal experience with a time period and the individual was introduced to this time period through fantasy (Baker and Kennedy 1994). The authors argue that this type of nostalgia is for a time that one never self-experienced. Closely related to simulated nostalgia is collective nostalgia. The authors argue that collective nostalgia is when an individual did not have direct personal experience with a time period, which was introduced to the individual through

use of history. It is similar to simulated nostalgia, but it is more focused on the nostalgia for a culture, society, generation, or nation of the past. The emotion is felt not only between individuals, but throughout a whole group of people with a similar background. Both simulated and collective nostalgia refers to an individual's nostalgic feeling for "the way it was", and in the studies of nostalgic consumption, is often referred to as historical nostalgia (Baker and Kennedy 1994). In my research, I will work closely with personal nostalgia and collective nostalgia.

### **Theories of Nostalgic Consumption**

These types of nostalgic emotions affect consumer decisions. Havlena & Holak began the exploration in the effects of nostalgia in consumer studies (1991, 1992, 1998). Nostalgia has been found to affect both brand attachment and brand preference. One of their first studies recorded the effect of nostalgic-related marketing on American baby boomers and senior citizens (1991). The study showed that marketers were successfully able to take advantage of a consumer's nostalgia in order to better market a product to the targeted older audience. It was also found that products can engender nostalgic emotions in the consumer; the consumer will get to experience a collective societal past, perhaps one that the consumer never even experienced beforehand or one that never even existed in the first place (Havlena & Holak 1991). Further studies by Holak & Havlena discussed one's friends and family as influences on an individual's nostalgic experience (1992). Family, the home, childhood friends, and classmates often appear in an individual's report of nostalgic experiences. Other nostalgic stimuli include holidays, religious observances, popular music, school-related experiences, and other special occasions (Havlena & Holak 1992). Holak & Havlena describe the nostalgic experience as one of

complex emotional response, eliciting a combination of positive emotions including warmth, joy, gratitude, affection, and innocence (1998). There is however the negative feeling of loss that is often accompanied with nostalgia. Nostalgia can also be linked to a feeling of powerlessness, meaning one is unable to recreate or return to the past. This mix of emotions is best described by Holak and Havlena:

“the pleasant memory of the past is combined with a sense of loss associated with the realization that the past cannot be recreated. The connection between sadness and desire may reflect the recognition of this fact and the feeling of sadness associated with the unattainable desire to return to some time or place in the past.”  
(1998 p.222)

Consumers are often able to reflect on this past using physical objects or products. The most common products that elicit a feeling of ‘recapturing the past’ are food or entertainment products (Holak & Havlena 1998; Kessous, Roux & Chandon 2015). Kessous et. al found that consumer relationships are stronger with nostalgic brands, rather than with non-nostalgic brands (2015). Prior research establishes that a product’s nostalgic status has a positive effect on a consumer’s emotional attachment and preference for a brand (Errajaa et. al 2013; Merchant & Rose 2013; Kessous et. al 2015).

Davis (1979) asserted that individuals turned to nostalgia in times of instability and fear and this has also been shown in nostalgic consumer studies (Hirsch 1992; Castellano et. al 2013; Zhou, Wang, Zhang, & Mou 2013). Collective memories are particularly awakened in times of revolutions, invasions, economic dislocations, transitional periods, and crises (Castellano et. al 2013). Consumers in unstable environments will be more nostalgia prone and will turn to products that symbolize a

form of nostalgia. The more a consumer is dissatisfied with his/her current life, the more the consumer will want to purchase nostalgic consumer products. It is predicted that that marketers will increasingly use nostalgia in coming decades, as consumers grow more unsatisfied with life as it is today (Zhou et. al 2013). The United States saw a rise in nostalgic consumption after the attacks on 9/11; China saw a rise in nostalgic consumption with the 2013 Chinese banking financial crisis (Zhou et. al 2013).

### **Childhood & Collective Nostalgic Consumption**

Marketers and advertisers have since taken advantage of nostalgic messages to attract consumers. Brands can use their nostalgic aspects to appeal across generations (Kessous, Roux, & Chandon 2015). Just as there are different types of nostalgic emotions, there are also different types of nostalgic consumption. Nostalgia signals a symbol of the past to consumers, whether it be one's own personal past or a more collective past (Baker & Kennedy 1994; Kessous & Roux 2008). Nostalgic objects and products can also provide a symbolic benefit, as they allow the consumer to identify one's self with a certain group (Kessous & Roux 2008). How the individual sees this nostalgic symbol varies from consumer to consumer. Different consumers can interpret a nostalgia-semiotic product in different ways, depending on the individual's own experience. For example, a product that references to a certain time period might elicit personal nostalgia for an older consumer who actually experienced that period in his lifetime. However, the same product might elicit simulated or collective nostalgia for a much younger consumer, who never experienced that period in her lifetime. Both can feel nostalgic for that time period, but do so differently. This is important for my research because the West German respondents and the East German respondents might both feel

nostalgia for a certain former GDR product, but could each demonstrate different types of nostalgic feelings.

### **Nostalgia and Product Brands**

Nostalgic consumption is often a collaborative practice in which both the companies and consumers participate (Errajaa et. al 2013). Brands that utilize nostalgia in their products and marketing campaigns are famous for re-launching old products. These types of brands use products or messages associated with “transition and turning point moments,” (Kessous & Roux 2008). Old brands and products, especially those with traditional cultural backgrounds, can utilize their long history to stimulate consumers’ nostalgic bonds. Many former GDR brands follow this path in their marketing messages, about which I will give more details in the Ostalgie section.

There are two types of products that can be nostalgia-semiotic products. A retro-product brand is a product that involves creating a new product using elements or imitations of the past, mixing the old and the new together (Castellano et. al 2013). An example of this is IKEA purposely recreating 1970s aesthetic styled furniture to sell. Another example would be electronic devices, such as TV or music players, that combine retro design with hi-tech content (Castellano et. al 2013). A heritage brand is a brand that upholds a certain continuity of customs, values, practices, and techniques from generation to generation (Castellano et. al 2013). Heritage brands give consumers a stable point of reference in a constantly changing globalized world, allowing the consumer to draw on both the past and present, while also connecting to the future. Popular American heritage brands include Coca Cola and Ford Motors, which have an extended corporate history that has lasted over many generations (Castellano et. al 2013). Nostalgia is different from

heritage, but the concepts are closely related; nostalgia appeals to a consumer's emotional state for a heritage brand. My research is focused primarily on the heritage brands from the former GDR, in that they are a continued product brand that existed in the GDR and still exists today.

### **Nostalgia and other factors**

While nostalgia may influence a consumer's decision, it is not the driving force for all purchases. An individual's proneness to nostalgia can influence whether one will purchase an item as a result of nostalgic reasons (Holbrook 1993; Merchant & Rose 2013; Chen, Yeh, & Huan 2014). There are other important reasons for why a consumer purchases a product. Materialism and the quality of the good still play a large role in whether a consumer will purchase a product. Materialism in this sense refers to the quality-based value of the good, how well it performs, and how worthy the product is for utilitarian purposes (Rindfleisch, Freeman, & Burroughs 2000). Materialism and nostalgia can be oppositional: a consumer may like a good because it elicits nostalgia, but ultimately the quality of the good will influence the consumer's decision, more so than the nostalgic feelings for the product (Rindfleisch et. Al 2000). Price also plays a role, especially in younger consumers. While a consumer may like a good because of its nostalgic properties, if the price point is not satisfactory, the consumer will not always pay more money just because the product elicits nostalgia (Chen, Yeh, & Huan 2014).

## **Russian Case Study**

There has been previous research of post-socialism nostalgic consumption in Russia, which provides an interesting comparison for my Germany case study. Nostalgic-marketing research in Russia has been previously conducted, the results finding that historic nostalgic themes did have some role in the sale of certain Russian products (Holak, Matveev, and Havlena 2007). The Russian consumer responses taken in the survey also expressed nostalgic-coded answers and elements of certain Russian advertisements and marketing ploys also coded positive for nostalgic-inducing elements. Soviet-era brands are still in existence and there has also been a development of retro products, using socialist-associated imagery. It has been noted that nostalgia is becoming a commonly used marketing strategy for Russian goods (Holak, Matveev, and Havlena 2007). One can deduce that nostalgia does have a role in the sale of products in post-socialist Russia, and it would be interesting to extend such a concept in the study of other post-socialist countries. Therefore, the results of the Russian study would provide an interesting comparison when discussing the German Democratic Republic

## **Fall of the Wall: Ditch the Ostprodukte**

Before I can begin introducing my hypotheses, it is important to provide some historical and cultural background into the eastern German Democratic Republic and its consumer products. In the GDR, imported luxury goods from the neighboring western Federal Republic of Germany were scarce but nonetheless popular (Blum 2002). West Germany was a symbol of innovation, progress, efficiency, luxury, consumerism, and capitalism (Blum 2002). Owning a West German good in the GDR was a sign of status (Blum 2002). After the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and the subsequent reunification of East

and West Germany, there was a mad dash of East German consumers to buy West German products (Bach 2002). East Germans after re-unification preferred all things “West”, and were quick to leave their “Ostprodukte” - eastern products - behind (Bach 2002). However, the obsession with Western products was short lived (Cooke 2005). On the weekend before the monetary union between the FDR and the GDR, all GDR products were wiped from stores’ shelves in order to be replaced by western goods (Simine 2013). GDR consumer culture was rapidly devalued in the face of Western capitalist culture (Simine 2013). The GDR planned economy imploded after reunification and entire industries were wiped out. Ostprodukte disappeared seemingly overnight, and along with those products, many East Germans felt their identities disappeared as well (Berdahl 1999; Blum 2006).

### **Resurgence of Ostprodukte**

Ostprodukte have made an unexpected comeback; there is an increased preference for East German products (Cooke 2005). By the turn of the twenty-first century, almost three quarters of East German households preferred eastern products to western products (Cooke 2005). The illusion of western capitalist materialism soon faded (Bach 2002). Old East German products were seen as more authentic than the western brands (Bach 2002). Historians and sociologists claim that “Ostalgie” is the reason for the revival of East German product consumption (Berdahl 1999; Bach 2002; Blum 2006; Simine 2013).

## **What is Ostalgie?**

The term Ostalgie was coined, referencing to the former East German citizens' "nostalgia for the East" (Bach 2002). It is best described as "a household word for the perceived nostalgia for the East (Ost) that presents itself in the form of theme parties, newly revived products, and a general flowering of things eastern," (Bach 2002 p.546). The term was coined by East German artist Uwe Steimle in 1992, but the mass movement took off in the later 1990s and very early 2000s (Simine 2013). Outbreaks of nostalgia often follow periods of major political transitions, so it is not unexpected that a major movement of nostalgia would follow German reunification and many see Ostalgie as the cultural reaction to the process of German integration (Jozwiak & Mermann 2006; Simine 2013).

## **Ostalgie: Remembering the GDR**

Like the standard definition of nostalgia, Ostalgie has both positive and negative connotations. Some citizens were advocates for socialism, and think positively of the low unemployment, equality, and bigger centralized government that characterized the GDR. Others were under the constant watch and reprimand of the State and its secret police, the Stasi. Most were simply just citizens (Fulbrook 2005). The discourse of GDR memory is split between the nostalgia for everyday objects and life, and the traumatic memories of the GDR as a socialist dictatorship (Simine 2013 p.165). Memorials, museums, and heritage sites are split in how they discuss the GDR memory, remembering either "state oppression and suffering, or GDR everyday life and consumer culture" (Simine 2013 p.165).

For these reasons, Ostalgie is often seen as neglecting the truth of the past and is viewed as problematic when trying to deduce a more historical and objective context of time (Berdahl 1999). There is no homogeneous recollection of the GDR (Berdahl 1999). There are many factors and influences that complicate the making of a complete picture (Berdahl 1999). Many feel that the history of the GDR has been marginalized and given no true official recognition; it simply stopped existing (Blum 2006). Bach argues that history can be rewritten or reconstructed, but a memory is a bond to the past, felt by the individual (Bach 2002). Memories are created with emotion and imagination, and can often be flawed. Because there is no homogenous official recognition of GDR history, people often rely on nostalgic memories as a way to remember the past and not feel forgotten (Blum 2006). Because of this, both East and West Germans must turn to nostalgia as a way of preserving the GDR past. Remembering the GDR is multifaceted:

“As the GDR recedes even further into the past, it has become increasingly clear that memories of this past remain in flux, partly in response to shifting political, social, and cultural agendas, but also as a result of the passing of time, the coming of new generations and the exploration of new media. If anything, the place of the GDR within German collective memory has become increasingly complex;”

(Saunders & Pinfeld 2013 p.3-4)

It is important to note that the cultural memory of an event does not necessarily include the political memory. There is a separation from the nostalgia for the everyday life of the GDR and the nostalgia for the former GDR regime. Ostalgie does not refer to nostalgia for the political environment of the GDR; it refers primarily to the nostalgia for the simple everyday life of the GDR (Simine 2013).

## **Ostprodukte and the Memory of the GDR**

Blum claims “one of the predominant features of Ostalgie is its reliance on objects” (2006 p.138). Ostalgie is best represented by its material culture; as the physical remnants of the former GDR disappear, aspects of the everyday culture have resurged (Blum 2006). There is no neutral or unemotional discussion on the East German history, and so it is difficult for people to discuss and be objective about the past. Objects are the easiest way to remember GDR everyday life without the political shadow. The connection to these objects is seen as a coping mechanism to the total physical erasure of GDR life (Blum 2006). The remaining East German brands are seen as markers, or physical evidence of the East Germany identity and culture (Cook 2007). “Nostalgia for material culture generates tangible associations that can produce palpable memories and an unshakeable account of past experience,” (Cook 2007 p.212-213). Objects exist in material form; therefore, they can always be rediscovered and reinterpreted (Simine 2013). The East German products allow consumers to remember not only the GDR but also their own personal biographies. To these individuals, the GDR history and culture is being erased, but the former citizens can keep the memory alive by keeping these physical reminders (Blum 2006). Simine claims “it is no accident that consumer products are at the center of the Ostalgie phenomenon,” (2013 p.275). The overnight disappearance of Ostprodukte was a threat to the legitimacy of East Germans’ existence. The commodities provide a physical proof of these individuals’ existence (Simine 2013).

## **Ostalgie as Identity**

The rise of Ostalgie is important “because it has led to a wider discussion amongst the general populace over what the ‘East’ means,” (Jozwiak & Mermann 2006 p.792). Ostalgie allowed citizens to adopt a common identity with other Eastern Germans (Simine 2013). The products also have the ability to unite East German citizens across different generations (Simine 2013). Once the GDR citizens lost their state, they also lost a major component of their identity. Just like their products were wiped from the supermarket shelves, their identities were wiped as well. In an interview with former GDR citizens, one woman expressed “So much of what we knew back then suddenly didn’t matter anymore and much of it we have forgotten,” (Berdahl 1999 p.204). Many former GDR citizens felt subordinated in comparison to their western counterparts, much like second class citizens (Bach 2002). After reunification, East Germans had emigrated to a new country without even leaving their homes. The country introduced to them a new political system, new educational system, new goods, new means of entertainment and media, and an overall new way of living (Jozwiak & Mermann 2006). As a result, East Germans turned to their consumer products as a way to preserve an identity in their new country; other mediums of cultural preservation include “Ostalgie” themed parties, restaurants, bars, and hotels (Berdahl 1999).

## **East Germans and Ostprodukte**

Many sociologists see Ostalgie as the growth of “an increasingly defiant eastern German identity,” (Berdahl 1999 p.199), where increased interest in GDR material culture is perceived as East Germans use their purchasing power to demonstrate a sense of protest against western culture (Hogwood 2013). If consumption is a form of

discourse, then “the marketing and consumption of Ostalgie represents certain commodification of resistance,” (Berdahl 1999 p.206). Eastern Germans spend just as much as their Western counterparts; their brand preferences are where they differ (Hogwood 2013). Easterners choose the ‘good old’ products from the GDR, instead of the more competitive and superior western goods (Bach 2002). The resistance to the global-domineering western brands is viewed by some as East German residents stating their concern about lost identity (Berdahl 1999; Bach 2002; Blum 2006). Marketers take advantage of their products’ ‘eastern-ness’, displaying signs indicating which products are made within the East German region (Bach 2002). Brands use slogans to capitalize on their ‘eastern-ness’. Examples include Club Cola’s slogan “Belittled by some, it can’t be killed: Club Cola: “the Cola from Berlin” and “Hurrah, I am still alive!”; Rondo Coffee: “Of course not all things we made before were bad”; f6 Cigarettes “The taste remains”; and Kathi baked goods “The East has chosen,” (Bach 2002 p.549). Berdahl found in her research, that Eastern Germans do indicate a strong preference for these Eastern products when compared to their West German counterparts (1999). I expect to see the same type of trend in my results.

### **West Germans and Ostprodukte**

Ostalgie does not only affect East Germans, it also largely affects and influences West Germans (Cook 2007). I am interested in learning not only about why East Germans consume Ostprodukte, but also why West Germans do it as well. Some non-East Germans like the products because of the nostalgia of style (e.g. the nostalgic packing style of the products) (Bach 2002). This nostalgia of style is experienced by West Germans or younger East Germans who were not alive to experience GDR life

(Bach 2002). For the purpose of my study, I consider this type of nostalgia to be that of collective or simulated nostalgia. Non-GDR-born consumers are also largely attracted to these Ostprodukte, including not only West Germans, but also the Eastern Germans too young to actually experience the GDR (Bach 2002; Simine 2013; Simine & Radstone 2013). These consumers are often drawn to Ostprodukte due to the novelty of the brand (Cook 2007). The Western nostalgic feeling for these goods is based off of the perceived and marketed nostalgia for the product, rather than the Western consumers' own personal nostalgia associated for the product (Cook 2007). This "raises questions about what it might tell us about West German identity" (Simine & Radstone 2013 p.30). Exploring memories of the past can help one understand some patterns of modern behavior. Simine and Radstone see this West German participation in Ostalgie as the result of increasing globalization and increased fears over security loss. The rapid expansion of globalization and neo-liberalism makes people feel insecure, leading them to turn towards nostalgic tendencies (Simine & Radstone 2013). For this reason, I have opened up my study to both East and West German respondents to get an understanding of why both parties might purchase East German consumer goods.

West Germans also participate in Ostalgie for the marketing benefits as well. West Germans see Ostprodukte brands as 'traditional, credible, and likable' and 'authentic and original' (Bahles 2014). East German brands are seen as more authentic, often leading Western German companies to buy them out. In such cases, western firms kept the original brand name, and slightly increased the quality to west German standards, a popular example of this being Rotkäppchen Sekt sparkling wine (Bach 2002). Western firms are taking over Eastern brands, using the products' "eastern-ness"

for marketing purposes (Bach 2002). This is relevant evidence that demonstrates that Ostprodukte are no longer just an East German interest, but is also of interest to Western consumers as well as producers.

### **Other reasons for consumption of East German good: Home-bias theory**

There is a competing theory of why East Germans might prefer East German goods and that is home-bias consumption. Home-bias consumption is when a consumer prefers a brand due to its localness (Bahles 2014). A 2014 study examined this consumption pattern and considered the preference of East Germans to purchase East German goods to be a phenomenon of a 'home-bias' based consumption, meaning that the East Germans simply preferred the goods because they were East German (Bahles 2014). While brand preference can be attributed to a local-consumer bias, it could also be attributed to that of nostalgic-consumption. The study did not include discussion or the notion of nostalgia or 'Ostalgie', therefore, I believe the local-consumer bias could potentially be a result of nostalgic consumerism. However, for the purpose of my research, it is important to consider the home-bias consumption theory as well.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Nostalgic consumption has been thoroughly studied in the context of the U.S.A. (Havlena & Holak 1991, 1992, and 1998), France (Kessous, Roux & Chandon 2015), China (Zhou et. al 2013) and post-socialist Russia (Holak, Matveev, and Havlena 2007), but the study has not yet been extended into Germany. Therefore, the first question that must be answered in this study pertains to whether or not there is any relationship between nostalgia and the East German product brands that will be studied. It must not be assumed that nostalgia and consumerism is a trend that branches across all cultures and markets. However, based on previous studies, there is a possibility that the results from this study will indeed find a relationship between certain products, their consumption, and nostalgia. This study will examine whether nostalgia has an influence in the continued consumption of former GDR products. Thus, the first research question is:

RQ1: Is there a strong relationship between nostalgia, East German products, and their consumption?

The results from this study will provide more insight into what type of connection there exists between nostalgia and the consumption of former GDR goods and whether or not there is a connection at all. Based on previous literature asserting Ostalgie as the reason for the growth in East German product sales, I expect that my results will indeed show a presence of nostalgic feeling towards these product brands. My first hypothesis is:

H1: Consumers feel nostalgic for East German product brands.

Based on previous studies of Ostalgie, I expect that Western Germans will also have positive feelings towards these East German brands and may exhibit some form of nostalgia for these products as well. My second hypothesis is:

H2: West German consumers have positive feelings towards East German product goods, including nostalgic feelings.

However, the West German nostalgia will be most likely different from that of the East Germans. This leads to my second research question:

RQ2: If there is a nostalgic connection between the consumers and the product brands, what is the nature of the nostalgia?

Essentially this question asks what type of nostalgia do consumers feel for the product brand. This will better identify what type of nostalgia is felt for the goods, whether it be an individual's personal nostalgia or a more collective form of Ostalgie nostalgia. I see a pattern between the previously discussed nostalgic consumption theories and the Ostalgie consumption phenomenon. Given the several types of nostalgic consumption theories, I expect several types of nostalgic consumption patterns related to Ostalgie. I believe Ostalgie can be interpreted as two different feelings, depending on the individual who experiences it. Based from previous research, I expect the nature of the nostalgia will depend on the individual. Those who directly experienced and participated in GDR life will have a personal nostalgic attachment to the product. Those who did not directly experience and participate in GDR life – Germans born in the FDR - will have a collective nostalgic attachment to the East German goods. Therefore, I have the following hypotheses:

H3a: East Germans will exhibit personal nostalgic feelings toward East German brands.

H3b: West Germans will exhibit collective nostalgic feelings towards East German brands

Although previous literature concerning East German product brands determines Ostalgie to be the driving force, I do not believe that is the main reason that people buy the East German brands. As previously found in other consumer studies, nostalgic feelings are not the only factor that affects consumers' decision making (Grisaffe & Nguyen 2011). Nostalgia can influence consumer decisions, but others factors can influence why a consumer likes a product, such as quality and price (Rindfleisch 2000; Chen 2014). Home or locality bias of East Germans towards East German products could also be a factor (Bahles 2014). Keeping these theories in mind, I propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Ostalgie is not the only reason why people buy East German goods.

I do not expect age or gender to affect one's proneness to nostalgia in accordance to previous nostalgic consumer studies (Davis 1979; Kessous, Roux, and Chandon 2015). So, I propose the following hypothesis and believe my findings will support previous studies:

H5: Neither age nor gender affects one's proneness to be nostalgic for East German product brands.

## **METHOD**

In order to best examine the relationship between consumption East German goods and the possible presence of nostalgia, the research will be conducted by taking the following steps. The approach of this study is mixed. I collected qualitative data by distributing surveys and coded that qualitative data into quantitative data using a coding system.

### **Survey**

The survey contains twenty-six questions and it includes both multiple choice and open-answer questions. A copy of the survey is in the Appendix. I translated my survey from English to German so that I would not alienate any possible respondents. I created the survey using Qualtrics and distributed the surveys using Clickworker, a German created program that is used to connect researchers with willing participants. Participants vary in terms of regional location, personal backgrounds, and career experience, allowing for a more balanced sample. The site allows “workers” to complete certain tasks, for which they are compensated monetarily. Thus, the participants select into participating in the survey. Both parties of the employer/researcher and the worker remain anonymous. Eligibility of the workers is based on the age and location previously specified by the employer (Clickworker). I registered my survey as a task, which the workers completed as they submitted the survey. The participants were forwarded to the Qualtrics survey link and the respondents were compensated upon completion.

Participants were collected based on the following characteristics:

- a. Participants must be born before November 1989 to have been born in the GDR, so for clarity the survey was only available to participants 28 years or older.
- b. Participants must currently live in Germany.

I made fifty surveys available, indicated for those born in the FDR and I made fifty surveys available, indicated for those born in the GDR. I received eighty-eight completed surveys: forty-one from those born in the GDR and forty-seven from those born in the FDR.

The survey questions were aimed to find out the demographics of the respondents; what type of Ostprodukte to which they had attachment; what kind of attachment it is; why they did/did not buy the brand; and insight into other consumption patterns the respondents might exhibit for these products. The survey was distributed in German, but I have translated the answers back into English, as seen in my Findings section.

Results of the surveys were then recorded into an Excel sheet as qualitative answers. The qualitative answers were then coded using the coding program QDA Miner Lite with the following tags: 'nostalgia', 'childhood', 'quality', 'price', 'availability', 'locality', 'tradition', 'home bias', 'retro', 'other', etc. After coding the qualitative answers into quantitative data, I then performed cross-tabulation analyses using SPSS. I performed cross-tabulations for certain factors and trends, not only to compare West Germans to East Germans, but also did some cross-tabulation comparisons between male and female respondents to see if there were any disparities between genders.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Demographics**

There were forty-one respondents (47%) who lived in East Germany during the GDR state socialist period. All of these, except for one respondent, were born in an East German city or town. I will call this group of persons who lived in the GDR, the East German or EG group. Forty-seven respondents (53%) did not live in East Germany during the reign of the GDR, but were instead born in West Germany towns or cities. I will call this group the West German or WG group. The total number of both EG and WG respondents is 88 respondents. The average age of all respondents is 43 years of age. The median age was 42. The mode, or most occurring age was 32 years old. The ages range from 28 to 68.

### **Gender**

Forty-six (53.2%) of all respondents were male; 42 (47.7%) of the respondents were female. Of the East Germany respondents, 61% were female; 39% were male, indicating a slight majority of females in the EG group. Of the WG respondents, 36% were female; 64% were male, indicating a slight majority of males in the WG group.

### **Parents of Respondents**

Of the East German respondents, 93% had parents also born in East Germany. Of the West German respondents, 98% had parents who were also born in West Germany. Only one EG respondent did not have an Eastern-born parent. The one EG respondent without EG born parents was born in Bangladesh; hence the respondent did not have a parent born in the GDR. The respondent had lived in the GDR for a period of at least

fifteen years, but demonstrated no emotional nor nostalgic feelings towards GDR product brands.

There were three Western-born respondents who had at least one Eastern-born German parent. One of the WG respondents with an Eastern born parent did indicate a feeling of nostalgia for the product Spreewald Gürken, as it reminded him of his childhood. Another of the WG respondents with an Eastern-born parent indicated that she associated her family and her hometown with the Eastern product Riesa noodles, indicating a mix of both nostalgia and home bias in her descriptive answers. The final WG respondent with EG parents indicated that he knew the former GDR product Radebürger Bier from a vacation and that he did have a slight emotional attachment to the product. He did not, however, indicate any strong emotional nor nostalgic feelings for the products that were noteworthy. These cases demonstrate that even though the respondents themselves did not live in the GDR, at least one of their parents did and this influenced their relationships with the East German product brands.

### **Products Listed**

In the survey, respondents were asked the following question:

*We are interested in learning more about your consumption of East German brands.*

*Please think of an Eastern German brand that you feel emotionally attached to.*

*In the space provided below, please describe what brand it is, how long you have purchased this brand, and why you feel emotionally attached to it.” (Survey Question 6)*

I observed the following trends of product category groups (see Table 1):

1. Alcoholic beverages, (31%) of total mentions
  - a. Most commonly listed examples: Rotkäppchen (sparkling wine) and Radebürger Pilsner (beer)
2. Chocolate and sweets, (24%) of total mentions
  - a. Most commonly listed examples: Knusperflocken, Nudossi, Halloren, Bambino
3. Food, not including chocolate or sweets, (23%) of total mentions
  - a. Most commonly listed examples: Spreewald Gurken (pickles), Bautzner Senf (mustard), Vita Cola/Club Cola (soda), etc.
4. Household items (18%) of total mentions
  - a. Most commonly listed example: Spee Waschmittel, Fit Waschmittel (detergent)

Only 4 of the 88 respondents were unable to list a single EG product, all of whom were WG born respondents.

**Table 1**

<b>Categories of products listed</b>	<b>General Mentions (percentage of total mentions)</b>	<b>East German Mentions</b>	<b>West German Mentions</b>
Alcoholic beverages	27 (31%)	6	21
Chocolate/sweet food products	21 (24%)	16	5
Food, excluding candy and chocolate	20 (23%)	8	12
Household items	16 (18%)	13	3

**Table 1-A**

<b>Alcoholic Beverage Product Brands Listed</b>	<b>General mentions</b>	<b>% of all mentions</b>
Rotkäppchen	21	24
Radeburger Pilsner	6	7

**Table 1-B**

<b>Chocolate and Sweet Product Brands Listed</b>	<b>General Mentions</b>	<b>% of all mentions</b>
Knusperflocken	9	10
Nudossi	7	8
Halloren	2	2
Bambino	2	2

**Table 1-C**

<b>Household Item Product Brands Listed</b>	<b>General Mentions</b>	<b>% of all mentions</b>
Spee Waschmittel	10	11
Fit Waschmittel	5	6

**Table 1-D**

<b>Food Product Brands Listed</b>	<b>General Mentions</b>	<b>% of all mentions</b>
Spreewald Gurken	10	11
Bautzner Senf	8	9
Vita Cola/Club Soda	2	2

**Summary of listed product brands**

Alcoholic beverages and chocolate/sweet food products were the overall two most popular categories. Alcoholic beverages were the most popular; chocolate/sweet food products were the second most popular. The most popular category for EG respondents was chocolate/sweet food products. The most popular category for WG respondents was

alcoholic beverages. Household items and chocolate/sweet food products were the two most popular categories mentioned by females, each being equally listed twelve times. Alcoholic beverages were the most popular category for male respondents, listed by sixteen different male respondents. The most popular product brand was Rotkäppchen sparkling wine; followed by Spreewald Gürken pickles and Spee Waschmittel laundry detergent.

### **Alcoholic Beverages**

West Germans were much more likely to list alcoholic beverages than East Germans. This category of products was the most commonly listed by the WG respondents, but was the least popular among the EG respondents. West Germans were 3.5 times more likely to list an East German alcoholic beverage than East Germans themselves. Among the alcoholic beverages listed, Rotkäppchen Sekt sparkling wine was the most popular and was mentioned by twenty-one of all respondents (24%), regardless of product category. However, West Germans mentioning Rotkäppchen Sekt significantly outnumbered East Germans mentioning it by four to one. The second most popular alcoholic beverage was Radebürger Pilsner beer and was only mentioned a total of six cases, half of which were East Germans, and the other half were West Germans.

### **Chocolate/Sweet Food Products**

The most commonly listed category by EG respondents was chocolate/sweet food products. Almost 40% of the EG respondents mentioned chocolate/sweet food products when asked to name a EG product or brand; however, this was the second least popular category listed by the WG respondents. The two most popular chocolate/sweet product

brands listed were Zetti Knusperflocken and Nudossi hazelnut-chocolate spread, both of which were listed by an equal number of respondents.

### **Non-chocolate Food Product**

Of the twenty persons who mentioned a non-chocolate food product, 60% were WGs, and 40% were EGs. This was the second most commonly listed category by WG respondents. The infamous Spreewald Gurken was the most popular food item, with no large disparity in mentions between EG (four) and WG (six) respondents. Not far behind was Bautzner Senf mustard, being mentioned in a total of eight respondents, but EG respondents were almost twice as likely to mention Bautzner Senf than the WG respondents. Vita Cola was only mentioned by two respondents, both of whom were West Germans.

### **Household Items**

Sixteen respondents mentioned household items, with the majority mentioned particularly by the East German group. This was the second most commonly listed category by the EG respondents and the least popular for the WG respondents. Spee Waschmittel detergent was the most popular household item, and was mentioned twice as many times as the only other mentioned household item, Fit Waschmittel. In comparing genders, females on average were three times more likely to mention East German household items than men were.

### **Chocolate, Candy, and Nostalgic Descriptions**

(Please see Table A-1 in Appendix C referring to this topic)

The descriptions given in answer to Survey Question 6 were relatively vague and short, but I noticed that when a respondent listed chocolate/sweet food product brands in

particular, he or she described a nostalgic attachment to the chocolate/sweet product. Most other respondents listed no explicit special attachment in answering Survey Question 6. In fact, most respondents simply listed a product and continued to the next question. However, there was a very common trend for those who discussed chocolate/sweet products, to also mention a personal nostalgia tie to the product. The qualitative answers were coded to indicate whether the respondent mentioned personal nostalgia in his/her discussion of chocolate. Sixteen EG respondents explicitly mentioned his/her own personal nostalgia, when discussing his/her attachment to the EG chocolate/sweet food product; only two WG respondents mentioned nostalgia in his/her discussion of East German chocolate. Overall, a relationship between the EG chocolate and personal nostalgia was explicitly expressed in one of every five respondents. In sixteen of the eighteen responses describing chocolate and nostalgia, the respondent made a reference to his/her childhood, all of which came from East German respondents. With regards to gender and the association of nostalgia and chocolate, female respondents were twice as likely to explicitly mention a personal nostalgic feeling when discussing the chocolate/sweet food product compared to male respondents.

Examples of such responses include:

East German Responses:

R14, EG: “Nudossi – Nuss – Nougat Chocolate spread. I grew up with this brand. It reminds me of my childhood.”

R25, EG: “Bambina Chocolate. I used to buy and eat it as a kid and in my youth.”

R26, EG: “Knusperflocken from Zetti, was a candy from the GDR and when I was a child, this candy was especially delicious.”

### West German Responses:

R66, WG: “Leckermäulchen Milchquark (pudding) in different flavors. I have bought this brand for eight years. Originally because my son liked them, but now I also like to eat the Milchquark (pudding).”

R82, WG: “Zetti Knusperflocken. It was the first GDR brand that I could get to know that did not exist in the West.”

### **Continuing to purchase the brand**

When asked “*Do you still continue to buy this brand?*” (Survey Question 7), only thirty total respondents noted that they continued purchasing the listed product brand. West Germans were twice as likely to continue buying EG brands, even though they had never personally experienced the former GDR themselves. Neither males nor female respondents were particularly more likely to continue purchasing EG brands in comparison to one another.

### **Preference for the product brand**

Approximately one-third of the respondents answered that they prefer this EG product to other products of the same category, that were manufactured by non-EG brands. Surprisingly, WG respondents were significantly more likely to prefer the EG product than actual EGs themselves. Twenty-Four West Germans claimed they preferred the East German product; only nine East Germans claimed they preferred the product. There were no significant differences between the genders.

### **Reasons for liking the product/having an attachment to the product**

Respondents were asked “*Why do you still continue to buy this brand? Please select all that apply*” (Survey Question 9). All the following options were available for the respondents to select:

- a. Emotional attachment; b. Price; c. Product Quality  
d. Reliability; e. Convenience; and f. Other*

The following question (Survey Question 10) asked which of these factors was the most important to the respondent. The results for these questions will be discussed for each type of response in turn.

**Table 2: Most important factors for buying the product**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>General Total</b>	<b>East German Total</b>	<b>West German Total</b>
<b>Quality</b>	<b>47 (53%)</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Emotional Attachment</b>	<b>17 (19%)</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Reasonable Price</b>	<b>8 (9%)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Other Reason</b>	<b>8 (9%)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Reliability</b>	<b>4 (5%)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Simplicity</b>	<b>4 (5%)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

### **Summary of the Most Important Factors**

“Quality” was the top most important factor amongst both EG and WG respondents for buying the product. “Quality” was also the top most important factor,

regardless of gender, for buying the product. The second overall most important reason for EG respondents was “Emotional Attachment” while the second overall most important reason for WG respondents was “Reasonable Price.” “Reasonable Price” was the least overall important reason for EG respondents. “Reliability” and “Simplicity” of the product were the two least overall important reasons for WG respondents.

### **Quality**

70% of respondents listed “Quality” as a reason for buying the product, and over half (53%) of all respondents listed “Quality” as the most important reason for continued purchasing of the product. There were no major disparities between the genders nor between EG and WG respondent groups. In cross-tabulations between the categories of product types and the reasons for buying the products, Quality was constantly the most important reason for buying the product, regardless of the product category.

### **Emotional Attachment**

East Germans were almost twice as likely as West Germans to list their emotional attachment as a reason for continuing to buy the product. In addition, the EG respondents listed “Emotional Attachment” as the most important reason for buying this product more than three times the number of times that the WG respondents did, thirteen to four. With regards to gender, male respondents were almost twice as likely as females to list “Emotional Attachment” as the most important reason for buying the product.

### **Reasonable Price**

Over one-third of respondents considered “reasonable price” as a reason for buying the product. Eight respondents considered “reasonable price” the most important factor for buying the product. WG respondents were more likely to list reasonable price

as the most important reason for buying the product; however, very few respondents considered this as the most important reason overall. There were no major differences between the genders in this category.

### **Other Reasons for buying the product**

Respondents were also able to write in a reason for buying the product, if the reason he/she continued to buy the product was not already listed. A total of eight respondents listed “Other reason” as his/her most important reason for buying this product. EG and WG respondents were equally likely to select “Other reason” as his/her most important reason. Of the “Other reasons” listed, six respondents answered that he/she simply no longer buys the product and two respondents listed he/she likes the product because of the taste.

### **Reliability of the product**

Only four respondents considered “Reliability of the Product” as the most important reason for continued purchasing. There was no major disparity between gender groups nor between EG vs WG respondents.

### **Simplicity of the product**

“Simplicity of the product” was listed only eighteen times as a reason to buy the product and only listed four times as the most important reason for buying the product. In this category, there were no major disparities between WG and EG respondents. With regards to gender, females were twice as likely as males to list “Simplicity of the product” as a reason for buying the product, but when asked to list their most important reason, there was an equal number of males and females in listing “Simplicity of the product” as the most important reason.

### **Qualitative (open-ended) answers explaining Importance of the Product**

Respondents were then asked the open-ended question “What makes this product brand important to you?” (Survey Question 11) and were asked to give an open-ended explanation to answer the question. These qualitative answers were then coded, using tags, the most re-occurring of which include *quality*, *nostalgia*, *taste*, *mention of GDR*, *price*, and *product is unimportant*. These coded-qualitative answers were then translated into nominal quantitative variables, with which I could analyze them in SPSS.

### **Summary of product importance**

The most discussed topic in answer to Survey Question 11 by WG respondents was the taste of the product; 34% of WG respondents explicitly described the product’s taste as the reason why the product was important to him/her. The most discussed topic in answer to Survey Question 11 by EG respondents was the relevance of personal nostalgia described in their responses; 39% of EG respondents explicitly described the relevance of his/her personal nostalgic attachment to the product as the reason as why the product was important to him/her.

### **Product’s importance: good taste**

*Taste*, in discussing an edible product, such as a food, chocolate, or alcoholic beverage product was described explicitly in answer to Survey Question 11. Twenty-six of all respondents referenced *taste* in relation to discussing the importance of the product. WG respondents were 1.5 times more likely than EG respondents to describe *taste* in

answering Survey Question 11. Males were also 1.5 times more likely than females to explicitly describe *taste* in answering the question.

Examples of responses coded under *taste*:

R1, EG: “because it tastes (good)”

R22, EG: “because it simply tastes good”

R 52, WG: “...has a good taste”

R 79, WG: “because it tastes good”

**Product’s importance: personal nostalgia**

(Please see Table A-2 in Appendix D referring to this topic)

A total of twenty-three respondents, over one-fourth of overall responses, referenced *nostalgia* in relation to discussing the importance of the product. The majority were EG respondents; over one-third of aggregate EG responses described *personal nostalgia* in response to Survey Question 11. 70% of aggregate responses indicating nostalgia came from EG respondents. Females were only slightly more inclined to describe nostalgia in response to Survey Question 11 than males were. No particular age was more prone to answer nostalgically either. Of the twenty-three responses who mentioned nostalgia, twelve persons explicitly mentioned their childhood nostalgia, eight mentioned general personal nostalgia, and three answered simply “nostalgia”, indicating a blanket term for nostalgia. This could mean their own personal nostalgia or collective/historical nostalgia, but their answers did not provide enough information to deduce what they meant by simply answering with “nostalgia”.

Examples of responses coded under personal nostalgia:

East German Responses:

R 2, EG: “childhood memories”

R 10, EG: “I establish an emotion attachment to my childhood (with the product)”

R 21, EG: “Nostalgic reasons”

R 26, EG: “I found (the product) great as a kid and still find it delicious”

R 32, EG: “Nostalgia”

West German Responses:

R 50, WG: “Because we drank this (Rotkäppchen) Sekt brand at our wedding.”

R 55, WG: “I no longer buy this product, but it is/was important to me, because my ex- wife used to love to drink the shit.”

R 76, G: “Nostalgia”

Respondent 21 was from EG, and is 56 years old, meaning he did live through and experience the GDR. In his sense of nostalgia, it would be safe to assume he meant his own personal nostalgia. Respondent 32 was from EG and is 60 years old, meaning she did live through and experience the GDR. In her sense of nostalgia, it would be safe to assume she meant her own personal nostalgia. Respondent 76, was from West Germany and is 61 years old, meaning that he did not actually live in the GDR. He currently lives in a former city of the GDR, so it is possible that he could be experiencing some second-hand, or “collective” nostalgia. A lengthier interview or questionnaire would be needed to deduce what he means by nostalgia.

**Product’s importance: quality**

Fourteen respondents explicitly explained *quality* was why this product was important to them. Nine of were East Germans; five were West Germans. Almost 70% of the respondents that explicitly explained *quality* was why this product was important to them were EG respondents. The majority of the respondents that explicitly discussed *quality* in relation to the product were female respondents.

Examples of responses that referenced to the product's quality

R16, EG: "For the quality"

R18, EG: "The quality is constant."

R41, EG: "It demonstrates good washing performance"

R69, WG: "(The product) has never lost its' quality, like other brands that are constantly updated"

R80, WG: "Because the quality always stands and it tastes good"

**Product's importance: product is not important to the respondent**

Ten total respondents explicitly described the product as unimportant. Eight of these respondents were West German; only two of these respondents were East German. WG respondents were four times as likely as their EG counterparts to explicitly describe the product as *unimportant* in answer to Survey Question 11.

**Product's Importance: GDR remembrance and solidarity**

My findings indicate that there are some feelings of the East German identity and Ostalgie, particularly in responses to Survey Question 11. When asked why the product was important to him/her, six East German and three West German respondents mentioned the GDR past of the product.

Examples of responses that mentioned *GDR* as a reason of why the product was

important:

R9, EG: "Endorsement/Sponsorship of the East German economy"

R31, EG: "The product had survived. Most (East German) products were pushed out by West German products."

R33, EG: "There is still quality from the former GDR. Why must I give everything up, only because I now live in the FRG, when the (Eastern products) are still good?"

R48, WG: “Cult-following”  
R83, WG: “It is a symbol of the GDR”

Respondent 48 is West German. In Respondent 48’s answers to other questions, he indicated that he is a Western German, who simply enjoyed the kitschy-type following, that some Western Germans have for the “retro” East German products and lifestyle. Respondents 9, 31, and 33 all answered indicating a connection between the product and the East German GDR identity. These answers are particularly interesting; they are the only ones that evidence any feeling of Ostalgie is the sense of preserving the East German identity.

#### **Product’s importance: low-cost/price of the product**

(Please see Table A-3 in Appendix E referring to this topic)

Five respondents explicitly described *price* of the product in answer to Survey Question 11. Five (100%) of the responses that described *price* of the product in answer to Survey Question 11 were WG respondents; 80% of these responses were male. No EG respondents explicitly described *price* as a reason why the product was of importance to him/her.

#### **Attachment to the product brand**

Survey Question 14 asked respondents if he/she had an attachment to the product brand in question, and if so, how he/she would describe this attachment by providing a self-written explanation to answer the question. The most re-occurring themes in their answers were coded, and then translated into quantitative variables. The most re-occurring themes were *nostalgic connection*, *trust-based connection*, *emotional connection*, *habitual-use connection*, and *no connection*. Some responses contained multiple themes and were counted for each category that they represented.

### **Summary of connections to the product brands**

32% of total EG respondents described an explicitly nostalgic connection, the most common answer for the EG respondent group in answering SQ 14. Over half (55%) of the WG respondent explicitly described no connection in answering SQ 14, the most common answer for the WG group.

### **No attachment to the product brand**

(Please see Table A-4 in Appendix F referring to this topic)

Thirty-three of total respondents described no connection in response to Survey Question 14. Twenty-six (79%) of these *no connection* responses came from WG respondents. Only seven (17%) of EG respondents claimed *no connection* in answer to Survey Question 14. In regards to gender, men were twice as likely to list *no connection* to the product as when compared to their female counterparts.

### **Emotional Connection to the product brand**

An explicit *emotional connection* to the product was described in 17% of all responses to Survey Question 14. There was no disparity between East vs. West, nor between the genders.

#### Emotional connection responses:

R9, EG: “very close, emotional connection”

R25, EG: “I describe this attachment as emotional, patriotic, and pleasurable.”

R72, EG: “From the heart”

R50, WG: “emotional”

R81, WG: “This attachment to this mentioned product, is intimate and really rich in emotions.

### **Nostalgic connection to the product brand**

(Please see Table A-5 and Table A-6 in Appendix G referring to this topic)

A total of fifteen (17%) of all responses to SQ 14 described a nostalgic connection. Of the fifteen responses that described a nostalgic connection in answer to SQ 14, thirteen were EGs. Only two WG respondents mentioned any form of a nostalgic connection to the product. Females brought up nostalgic connection twice as many times as their male counterparts.

Nostalgic connection responses:

R4, EG: “Childhood memories”

R11, EG: “It reminds me on my childhood. Back then we all ate at the kitchen table and today I can still remember the smell”

R26, EG: “To eat Knusflos is a piece of memory and at the same time, it tastes good”

R71, WG: “Good reminder of my childhood”

R83, WG: “It is an emotional attachment to the past” (Nostalgia)

**Trust-based connection**

Thirteen respondents, 15% of the total sample, described a connection that mentioned *trust-based connection*, meaning he/she had forged a connection to the product due to the respondent’s ability to continuously rely on the product. Nine EG respondents described a *trust-based connection*; only four WG respondents described a *trust-based connection*. EG respondents were twice as likely to mention a *trust-based connection* as their WG counterparts. There was no major disparity between genders.

**Habitual connection to the product brand**

(Please see Table A-7 in Appendix H referring to this topic)

In eleven (12.5%) of SQ14 responses, a *habitual connection* to the product was described meaning respondents described their attachment to the product as one forged from his/her habitual use of the product. There were no major disparities between East

and West. However, men were over twice as likely to describe a *habitual connection* to the product than their female counterparts.

### **Nature of Emotions associated with the product brand**

Survey Question 15 asked respondents about the nature/type of emotion felt towards to the product brand. and Respondents were asked to give an open-ended explanation to answer the question. The most re-occurring themes in their answers were coded, and then translated into quantitative variables. The most re-occurring themes were *positive emotion, nostalgic emotion, home-bias emotion.*

### **Summary of emotions associated with the product brands**

The most popular emotion explicitly described by EG respondents was the feeling of positive emotion (56% of the EG sample), followed by nostalgic emotion (41% of the EG sample). 87% of the EG respondents were able to describe some sort of emotion when answering SQ 15; only 45% of WG respondents reported an emotional feeling at all in their response to SQ 15.

### **Positive emotion associated with the product brand**

A total of thirty-one responses explicitly described a *positive emotion* in answering SQ 15. Twenty-Three East Germans indicated a positive emotion for the product brand; eight West Germans indicated a positive emotion for the product brand. The majority (75%) of these *positive emotion* responses were from EG respondents. There was no noticeable distinction between the genders in reports of *positive emotion*.

Examples of positive emotions

R2, EG: “Trustworthiness”

R14, EG: “Happy feelings”

R19, EG: “Feel connected with the product”

R23, EG: “Positive emotions, (a product) that has lasted through the years and has remained a constant”

R38, EG: “Reliable, Safe, and Dependable”

R46, WG: “Satisfaction”

R62, WG: “Elation”

R81, WG: “The emotions that I feel about this product are: warmth, affection, and longing”

**Nostalgic emotion associated with the product brand**

Twenty-nine responses explicitly described feelings of *nostalgic emotion* towards the product in answering Survey Question 15, of which the EG respondents held a slight majority. In regards to gender, women respondents were over 1.5 times more likely to show evidence of *nostalgic emotion* in describing their emotions about the product.

Examples of nostalgic emotions

R4, EG: “With a good taste and a happy childhood”

R11, EG: “Association: kitchen table with the family. It was simply nice to have breakfast and chitchat with the family on Sundays in the sunshine, early in the mornings.”

R54, WG: “With my regular girlhood evenings”

R60, WG: “Good memories with good company, with this bottle of sparkling wine.”

R77, WG: “Family dinners in my childhood”

## **Homebias-emotion**

(Please see Table A-9 in Appendix I referring to this topic).

With regard to the *home bias emotion*, only a total of three cases explicitly reported any feelings toward the product that described a feeling of home biasness.

Examples of home-bias responses:

R32, EG: “Regional tradition and quality”

R36, EG: “Regional solidarity”

R63, WG, “The homeland”

R63 was born in WG, but had at least one EG parent, therefore it is safe to assume that this respondent’s Eastern parents may have influenced R63’s upbringing with a GDR values or products.

## **Special/pleasant moment associated with the product**

In Survey Question 16, respondents were asked “Do you associate a pleasant or special moment in your life with this brand?” and were to answer yes or no. A total of sixty-three respondents (72%) answered yes to SQ 16. Thirty-Seven West Germans claimed to have a special experience with the product; twenty-six East Germans claimed to have a special experience with the product. The slight majority was held by the WG respondents. In Survey Question 17, the respondents were then asked to describe this pleasant or special moment that was associated with the brand. Most of the answers included memories of his/her childhood or youth years; seventeen respondents mentioned

that they associated the product with his/her childhood. Two responses associated Rotkäppchen Sekt with each individual's wedding night. One response associated Rotkäppchen Sekt with New Year parties he had attended in the past. One respondent associated the Trabi with the memory of buying his first car.

### **Missing/not missing an old-discontinued GDR product**

Survey Questions 18, 19, and 20 asked respondents if there were any GDR products that he/she wished were still on the market. Of the eighty-eight respondents, fifty-nine answered that he/she did not miss any of the GDR discontinued products. Twenty-one respondents claimed that yes, he/she did miss some of the old discontinued GDR products; thirteen of these respondents are East German and eight are West German. EG had a slight majority (62%) in answering "yes" to this question. Eight respondents answered that he/she was unsure or could not think of any at the time. When asked to list which discontinued products were missed, the Trabi automobile was the most popularly listed item. Ten responses explicitly mentioned that he/she missed the discontinued GDR Trabi, 60% of which were West Germans, 40% of which were East Germans. An outstanding majority of 80% of these respondents were male.

Respondents were then asked Survey Question 21, "Could you please explain why you wish you still had access to this product?" and could give an open-ended response. Sixty-one respondents (69% of total respondents) indicated they no longer wanted access to the discontinued product; thirty-six of those respondents are West Germans. Fourteen respondents (16%) indicated that they wished the product would be re-introduced to the market for nostalgic reasons. Both EG and WG respondents were

equally represented in this category of answer. Thirteen respondents (15%) indicated that they wished the product would be re-introduced to the market, due to the quality of the product. Eleven out of the thirteen responses are East German.

### **Feelings of the product returning to the market**

Respondents were then asked how he/she would feel if the discontinued GDR products were re-introduced onto the market again in Survey Question 22, “How would you feel if they (being a discontinued GDR product) were sold again?” Respondents were asked to give an open-ended answer.

### **Summary of reactions**

The majority of reactions were described as potentially positive, with 46% of EG and 32% of WG respondents respectively claiming he/she would have a positive reaction to the reintroduced GDR product, an aggregate total of 39% positive reactions. 27% of aggregate respondents indicated he/she would react neutrally; 22% of aggregate respondents indicated he/she were unsure; and 12% of aggregate respondents indicated he/she would be willing to try and buy the reintroduced GDR product. The majority of female respondents (52%) would react positively; 19% would respond neutrally; 17% were unsure; and 12% would be willing to buy and try. 35% of male respondents would react neutrally; 26% would react positively; 26% were unsure; and 15% would be willing to try and buy.

### **Positive reaction**

Thirty-three respondents, 39% of total sample, answered that he/she would have a positive reaction if the discontinued GDR product in question returned onto the market. The EG respondents held a slight majority in this answer category. Females were almost twice as likely to have a positive reaction as their male counterparts.

Examples of positive reactions

R5, EG: “I would be very happy at the return of these products, and would buy them”

R8, EG: “Pleasantly surprised”

R10, EG: “Super. I would buy them”

R81, WG: “It would make me happy”

R 84, WG: “I would be happy and buy them”

**Neutral/no reaction**

Twenty-four (27%) of the total respondents indicated he/she would have a neutral reaction if the discontinued GDR product was reintroduced onto the market. By neutral reaction, they meant that they had no reaction whatsoever nor indicated any interest in the product’s return. The WG respondents held a slight majority over the EG respondents, in that they would respond neutrally to the reintroduction of the product onto the market. In regards to gender, men were twice as likely to have a neutral response towards the reintroduced GDR product as females.

Examples of neutral reactions:

R4, EG: “I don’t miss these products”

**Unsure reaction**

Nineteen (22%) of the total respondents indicated that he/she was unsure on how he/she would react to the reintroduction of the discontinued GDR product. WG

respondents were twice as likely to be unsure in their reactions in comparison to the responses of the EGs. Males were also twice as likely to be unsure in their reactions when compared to females.

### **Willing to try reaction**

Eleven (12%) of the responses to SQ explicitly mentioned that he/she would be willing to buy and try the GDR discontinued product if it was reintroduced on to the market. EG respondents were twice as likely to try the reintroduced product in comparison with the WGs. There were no major differences between the genders.

### **Relational Purchasing**

Survey Question 23 asked respondents, “Do you buy certain products or brands just because your parents or friends used to use them?” and were give yes/no as answer choices.

55 (63%) of total respondents answered “yes” to SQ 23; thirty-two of these respondents were West German, twenty-three were East German. Of these responses, WG held a slight majority of 58% in answering “yes”, meaning WG respondents were slightly more inclined to buy a product because his/her friend or parent bought the product. Males held a 62% majority in answering that they consumed the product because a friend or parent bought the product.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **East Germans and East German Products**

Survey Question 14 was asked to establish the nature of consumers' attachment to East German product brands. I find that there is a connection present between East German consumers and Ostprodukte. Almost three-fourths of East German respondents indicated some form of connection, but over half of West Germans felt no connection at all for the product. This indicates that East German consumers do indeed have some sort of connection with the product that goes beyond simply purchasing it in the store. While some West Germans did indicate a connection to the Ostprodukte, East Germans overwhelmingly did so, suggesting a cultural difference in how the different groups perceive the product brands. I find that the East German respondents have a stronger attachment to these products than the West Germans.

### **East German Products and Positive Emotions**

Survey Question 15 was asked to determine the nature of emotions felt for Ostprodukte. My findings show that there are positive and nostalgic feelings felt by both East and West German groups towards the product brands. This supports H1 and H2 and

shows that there is indeed a positive and nostalgic connection between consumers and Ostprodukte.

### **East German Products and Nostalgia**

By analyzing the qualitative responses to Survey Questions 11, 14, and 15, I can better understand the nostalgia felt for these products. In support of hypothesis H3a, I find that the clear majority of nostalgia for these products is based off of the individual's own personal past and childhood, instead of collective nostalgia for the GDR. This means that the nature of nostalgia that East Germans feel for these products is personal. My findings support my hypothesis H3a.

On the other hand, my findings conflict with hypothesis H3b. I find that West Germans do not express collective nostalgia that many previous studies expected. There were only two cases that indicated West German collective nostalgia for the Ostprodukte, but these answers did not provide enough information to make a strong conclusion. One person answered simply "Nostalgia" and the other answered "It is an emotional attachment to the past." A lengthier interview or questionnaire would be needed to deduce what these cases mean by nostalgia.

### **West Germans and Personal Nostalgia**

Some form of nostalgia was indicated by both East and West Germans in twenty-nine answers to Survey Question 15. East Germans were more likely to describe personal nostalgic emotions for the product, but nonetheless there were West Germans who demonstrated personal nostalgic emotions as well. The nostalgia felt for these East German products is due to personal events and memories; it is personal nostalgia. Both

East and West German respondents referenced to moments in their childhoods, meaning they did have access to these products as adolescents. Examples of this occurring can be found by analyzing the responses from respondents R54 and R77. R54, a West German, is twenty-nine years old, meaning she was only an infant during the time of two Germanys; R77 would have been fifteen at the time of reunification. I found similar cases of young West Germans who could access these East German products in their childhood. After taking a deeper look into their survey answers, I understood why they had access to these products. For many of these respondents, they were adolescents or young adults at the time of German reunification. This explains the childhood connections to the Ostprodukte, as respondents had easy access to these products in the integrated Germany of their youths. Thus, these respondents could form personal nostalgic bonds to these products, although they themselves never lived in the GDR.

West Germans also demonstrated personal nostalgia for Ostprodukte in other ways. West Germans shared nostalgic memories that they had formed with the East German products, even after German reunification. Examples of such memories include weddings, vacations, and dinners with friends. This trend is important as it demonstrates that West Germans can and do in fact have personal nostalgic feelings towards these products. I find that for these reasons, my H3b is not supported. Personal nostalgia for Ostprodukte is not only limited to former citizens of the GDR. I find that this is a result of the long period that has passed since German reunification; within those 28 years, West German consumers were able to buy, try, and form personal nostalgic bonds to these previously East-only products.

Holak and Halvena's 1992 study found that family, home, and one's childhood often appear in an individual's report of nostalgic experiences. Other experiences such as holidays and special occasions appear as well. I find evidence of this in my qualitative data, both from East and West Germans. These stimuli support personal nostalgic feelings that the respondents have for East German products.

### **Is it Ostalgie?**

I researched the nature of demonstrated consumer nostalgia in order to determine what now fuels this Ostalgie phenomenon. However, now I question the standard definition of Ostalgie. I previously assumed that West German individuals would feel some sort of collective nostalgia for these products. I assumed that although they themselves never experienced the GDR lifestyle, they would demonstrate some secondhand nostalgia for these products. However, my findings do not support this. Moreover, from the East German responses, I did not see any major indication of East Germans preferring East German products as a way to preserve GDR identity and culture. Because of these findings, I do not see the pre-conceived notion of Ostalgie being overwhelmingly supported in my research.

My findings are similar to those of Hyland's 2013 series of interviews. Hyland conducted in-depth interviews with citizens born in the 1970s GDR to find out what was the nature of this Ostalgie or if Ostalgie played a role at all (2013). However; the respondents felt that many of the abstract interpretations from previous sociologists of

Ostalgie were false. For these respondents, their preference for East German goods was a result of their own personal experiences and memories. They did not purchase East German goods as a way to preserve an East German identity; they bought the items because they were simply the product brands they always bought. One of the participants claimed he preferred the East German version of Nutella (Nudossi) simply because it reminded him of his childhood, not because it gave him nostalgia for the GDR per se (Hyland 2013 p.111). This is an example of Ostalgie in the personal sense, as it refers to an individual's biography and my findings support this inference. In my research, most expressions of nostalgia were in reference to one's own personal past, rather than the past of the GDR. I expect that as time continues, Ostalgie will decrease and die out; Ostprodukte will simply become "Produkte" as more and more consumers created personal connections and memories with these products, not as East or West Germans, but simply as Germans.

### **Reasons for Buying the Products**

My hypothesis H4 proposed that Ostalgie was not the main factor for consumers to purchase East German goods. I assumed that that nostalgia was not only reason that people bought these goods and my findings support this hypothesis. Survey Questions 9-10 asked what was the most important reason for buying these products. Respondents could pick one of the following answers: Emotional attachment; Price; Product Quality; Reliability; Convenience; and Other. The majority of respondents in both East and West German groups listed Quality as the most important reason for buying the product. This supports previous theories that emotional-influence is not the only reason why a consumer makes a purchase (Grisaffe & Nguyen 2011). My findings show that quality is

more of a driving factor for purchases, than emotional feelings or nostalgia. Rindfleisch's et. al 2000 study found that materialism and emotional connection to a product can be oppositional and my findings support this. While emotional attachment to the product is important to a consumer, quality of the product is more important.

East and West German groups differ in what their runner-up most important factors were. Thirteen (32%) of East Germans considered emotional attachment to the product to be his/her most important reason for buying the product. This finding supports Erraja et. al 2013's study in which the emotional dimension of a product is an important factor in the consumption of a good. For these respondents, the emotional gain of the Ostprodukte was more important than the quality or price. Only four West German respondents listed this category as the most important.

Seven of the West Germans considered price to be the most important factor for liking a product; whereas only one East German considered price to be the most important factor. This could indicate a cultural difference between East and West German consumption patterns. These findings support Chen's et. al 2014 study that found price is more important to consumers who do not have a personal nostalgic attachment to a product.

Survey Question 11 asked a variation of the same question again, but allowed cases to provide an open-ended response, so that I could get a deeper insight into what those reasons might be. The qualitative answers were coded so that I could notice a pattern in answers to this question. There was again a difference in the responses between East and West German groups. West Germans commonly mentioned taste, whereas East Germans commonly mentioned a personal nostalgic connection. This again supports the

notion that East Germans have a deep emotional connection to these brands, especially more so than West Germans.

### **Products Listed**

Survey Question 6 was asked to determine what kind of East German goods consumers feel emotionally attached to and to get an open-ended qualitative description to accompany that product. The most popular product categories with West Germans were alcoholic beverages and food products. This supports previous research that found food products are most commonly associated with nostalgic feelings (Holak & Havlena 1998; Kessous, Roux & Chandon 2015). The food products that were mentioned (e.g. Spreewald Gurken and Bautzner Senf) were popular food brands that have risen in popularity after the Ostalgie-influenced film “Goodbye Lenin” was released (Cook 2007). Western familiarity with those brands could be a direct result of the film’s popularity, which is why West Germans were more inclined to list these products.

Vita Cola was only listed twice and both times by West Germans. This could be due to Vita Cola restyling their brand and marketing itself towards an active young consumer base (Geschichte – VITA COLA). Vita Cola and Club Cola were created in the GDR to replace the capitalist western Coca-Cola brand. These beverages were created as “Ersatz Colas”, replacement colas (Blum 2006). After German reunification, these East German colas quickly died out in the competition against Coca-Cola; however, Vita-Cola was reintroduced onto the market in 1994 with the same flavor and taste as its predecessor. East German Vita-Cola replaced Coca-Cola as the sales leader in the German province of Thuringia, and is currently the second-best seller in the other former GDR German provinces (Geschichte - VITA-COLA). Both Vita Cola and Rotkäppchen

have cult status among younger generations (Blum 2006). While Vita Cola remains a truly East German brand, Rotkäppchen was bought out by a Western Company and its quality increased to West German standards which could indicate its popularity with West Germans in my results (Bach 2002).

### **Chocolate and Nostalgia**

Particularly interesting in the results from SQ 6 was the tendency of East Germans to explicitly describe nostalgic feelings when discussing an East German chocolate or sweet food product. There were two West German respondents that also provided such a description. The answers from the East Germans directly discussed the respondent's childhood and the product; the West German answers discussed nostalgic memories, but from a later time period in the respondents' lives. The presence of nostalgic descriptions while talking about sweets supports previous studies that demonstrated food being a common product that reminds one of the past (Holak & Havlena 1998; Kessous et. al 2015). I find the obvious tie between sweets, childhood, and nostalgia intriguing. While it does make sense that one's childhood and sweets are connected, why the respondents felt the need to explicitly express their nostalgia in describing the product, whereas other cases did not, is noteworthy. Further studies could better determine the generality of the strong connection between nostalgia and sweets.

### **West German Preference for East German Brands**

Survey Questions 7 and 8 were asked to determine respondents' current purchasing interactions with the brand. West Germans, rather than East Germans, indicated a stronger propensity and preference to buy East German brands. This contradicts Berdahl's 1999 study where East Germans indicated a strong preference for East German brands. These findings could mean two things: West Germans are becoming more intrigued with East German brands or East Germans are now less inclined to think of brands of East vs. West, or of buying East German brands as a way of preserve their East German identity. Twenty-eight years have passed since German reunification. There is a growing generation of those who were not alive to experience a divided Germany, and the political, economic, and cultural differences are quickly closing between the two Germanys (Jozwiak & Mermann 2006).

It could be that East Germans' Ostalgie is on the decline. German integration began over twenty-five years ago, East Germans are seeing less and less of a divide between East and West, and as a result, no longer indicate their East German identity by preferring and purchasing primarily East German goods. At the same time, this could indicate a rise in Ostalgie from West Germans. The current West German preference towards East German products can be a result of the ever-increasing globalization and security loss, supporting Simine & Radstone's 2013 study on West German Ostalgie. The expanding neo-liberalist market along with the massive influx of immigration pressures in Germany might have an increasing result in feelings of nostalgia, especially for West Germans, as times of economic and political turmoil increase feelings of nostalgia and nostalgic consumption practices (Davis 1979; Hirsch 1992; Castellano et. al 2013; Zhou, Wang, Zhang, & Mou 2013; Simine & Radstone 2013).

In order to study the connection between the respondents' feeling of instability and their proneness to nostalgia, Survey Questions 24-26 asked about the respondent's life, country, and global affairs satisfaction to better determine the feelings of security or insecurity that respondents might have. However, the results were not noteworthy. There were no major feelings of dissatisfaction or insecurity noted, regardless of gender or upbringing. As a result, it is difficult to make any conclusions about life stability and satisfaction in discussing the West German's propensity and preference for East German products. Additional research would be necessary to determine any feelings of insecurity in relation to the West German preference and propensity to purchase East German brands.

### **Nostalgia, Age, and Gender**

No particular age was largely and consistently more nostalgia prone, partially supporting H5 and previous studies that found the same to be true (Davis 1979; Kessous et. al 2015). I find that men were twice as likely as men to list emotional attachment as the most important reason for buying the product, indicating an inclination for men to feel more emotionally attached to Ostprodukte. However, it is important to note that emotional attachment in this case does not necessarily refer to nostalgic emotional attachment. It refers to emotional attachment in general. With regards to nostalgia, I found that women expressed more nostalgic feelings. In my findings for Survey Questions 6, 11, 14, and 15, females were more nostalgic than men in their answers. I find female respondents to be more inclined to have a nostalgic relationship with the Ostprodukte than male respondents, meaning they were possibly more prone to nostalgia. This questions H5 and contradicts findings in previous studies (Davis 1979; Kessous et.

al 2015), which do not report gender differences in nostalgic consumption. It could be that these female individuals themselves were just especially prone to nostalgia, but it might also have other implications. While gender might have no direct effect on an individual's proneness to nostalgia, I find that there might be a correlation between gender and nostalgia in this study.

### **Home bias, does it matter?**

A 2014 study of East German consumer goods indicated that East Germans preferred East German foods due to the localness of the product (Bahles 2014). I find little evidence of this home-bias in my result. Only three cases at all described any feelings of home bias emotions. Thus, I do not see home-bias as a competing theory with nostalgic consumption practices.

## **CONCLUSION**

My study tackled the Ostalgie phenomenon through a different perspective than other sociologists, historians, and political scientists. My study used nostalgic consumer psychology theory to get a better understanding of what motivates purchases of Ostprodukte. I first wanted to determine if there were still feelings of nostalgia for these products, which I did find. By adapting nostalgic consumption studies practices, methods, and theories, I was able to approach Ostalgie with a new understanding. Even 28 years after German reunification, East Germans still have a noticeable attachment to their East German goods. However, both East and West Germans have experienced nostalgia for these products, and mostly because they both had experience with those products at some time in their life. Moreover, they associate these products with positive feelings or memories. Ostalgie in the kitschy, touristic sense is not present in my findings, demonstrated neither by East nor West Germans. The most important take away from my findings is the presence of personal nostalgia in association with the East German products. This personal nostalgia was not only exhibited by West Germans, but also by

East Germans. I noticed slight cultural differences between East and West Germans in how they determined what makes a product important to them and in what products each group was more likely to list. While quality was the most important reason for buying the products, West Germans were more inclined to buy a product due to the price point of the product while East Germans were more inclined to buy a product due to the emotional attachment to the product. Overall, there were no major differences between the two groups, hinting that German reunification is slowly closing the cultural divide. While there may be slight cultural differences between the two groups, in relation to nostalgic consumption, both exhibited the same type of nostalgic consumption emotions and tendencies. I found a tendency for females to be more nostalgia-prone than men, which contradicts previous theories on nostalgia proneness and gender. This provides interesting insight for future research on the relationship between one's proneness to nostalgia and one's gender.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: Survey Q

- 1) Age:
  - a. Open ended
- 2) Sex:
  - a. Open ended
- 3) Current Location of Residence: (please list City and Region):
  - a. Open ended
- 4) Have you lived at one-time period within the borders of the German Democratic Republic?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 5) Have at least one of your parents lived within the borders of the German Democratic Republic?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 6) We are interested in learning more about your consumption of East German brands.  
Please think of an Eastern German brand that you feel emotionally attached to.  
  
In the space provided below, please describe what brand it is, how long you have purchased this brand, and why you feel emotionally attached to it.”
  - a. Open ended
- 7) Do you still continue to buy this brand?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 8) Do you prefer this brand to other brands within the same product category?
  - a. Yes
  - b. no
- 9) Why do you still continue to buy this brand? Please select all that apply
  - a. Emotional attachment
  - b. Price
  - c. Product Quality
  - d. Reliability
  - e. Convenience
  - f. Other (please list)
- 10) Of these factors (emotional attachment, price and economic value, product quality, convenience, other), which is the most important reason why you continue to buy this brand?
  - a. Emotional attachment
  - b. Price
  - c. Product Quality
  - d. Reliability

- e. Convenience
  - f. Other (please list)
- 11) What makes this product/brand important to you?
    - a. Open ended
  - 12) How do you perceive/regard this brand?
    - a. Open ended
  - 13) Do you have an attachment to these products or brands?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  - 14) How would you describe this attachment?
    - a. Open ended
  - 15) What kind of emotions do you feel about this brand?
    - a. Open ended
  - 16) Do you associate a pleasant or special moment in your life with this brand?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  - 17) Can you please describe this pleasant or special moment that you associate with this brand?
    - a. Open ended
  - 18) Could you please list some other East German brands to which you feel emotionally attached to?
    - a. Open ended
  - 19) Can you recall some products or brands that you liked in the past, but cannot be found for sale anymore?
    - a. Yes
    - b. no
  - 20) If so, can you please list some?
    - a. Open ended
  - 21) Could you please explain why you wish you still had access to this product?
    - a. Open ended
  - 22) How would you feel if they were sold again?
    - a. Open ended
  - 23) Do you buy certain products or brands just because your parents or friends used to use them?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  - 24) How satisfied are you with your life currently?
    - a. scaled 1-5 from satisfied to not very satisfied
  - 25) How satisfied are you with the current state of affairs in your country?
    - a. scaled 1-5 from satisfied to not very satisfied
  - 26) How satisfied are you with the current state of global affairs?
    - a. scaled 1-5 from satisfied to not very satisfied

## APPENDIX B

### Codebook for SPSS Crosstabulations

1. Gender (L), female = 1; male = 0
2. East\_vs\_West (O) eastern/ddr born = 0; western/gdr born = 1
3. ChocolateANDnostalgia (V)
  - a. Subject shows a relationship between chocolate and nostalgia
4. textpersonalnostalgia
  - a. childhood/personal nostalgia is a reason why the product is important to the consumer
5. textunimportant
  - a. consumer finds product unimportant
6. textprice
  - a. Low price of the product is listed as important to the consumer
7. nostalgicCONNECTION
  - a. When asked “How can you describe your attachment to the product?”, a nostalgic connection is explicitly listed in the qualitative open ended answers
    - i. i.e. childhood, personal past and memories (personal/childhood nostalgia)
8. habitualCONNECTION
  - a. “..” subject explains a connection to the product due to his/her habitual or traditional use of the product
    - i. i.e. the subject likes the product because he/she has always used it and always will
9. positive\_emotion
  - a. When asked “What kind of emotions do you feel for this product? What do you associate with this product?”, positive emotions were explicitly expressed
10. homebias\_emotion
  - a. “...” home or locality bias/attachment were expressed about the product

APPENDIX C

Table A-1

ChocolateANDnostalgia \* East vs West Crosstabulation

			East vs West		Total
			0	1	
ChocolateANDnostalgia	0	Count	25	45	70
		% within ChocolateANDnostalgia	35.7%	64.3%	100.0%
	1	Count	16	2	18
		% within ChocolateANDnostalgia	88.9%	11.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	41	47	88
		% within ChocolateANDnostalgia	46.6%	53.4%	100.0%

Table A-1: Eastern Germans are indicated in the left “0” column, West Germans are indicated in the right “1” column. The “0” row indicates that the respondent did not discuss nostalgia in reference to a chocolate/sweet food product. The “1” row indicates that the respondent did discuss nostalgia in reference to a chocolate/sweet food product.

APPENDIX D

Table A-2

textpersonalnostalgia \* East\_vs\_West Crosstabulation

		East vs West		Total	
		0	1		
textpersonalnostalgia	0	Count	25	40	65
	a	% within textpersonalnostalgia	38.5%	61.5%	100.0%
		% within East_vs_West	61.0%	85.1%	73.9%
		1	Count	16	7
		% within textpersonalnostalgia	69.6%	30.4%	100.0%
		% within East_vs_West	39.0%	14.9%	26.1%
Total	Count	41	47	88	
	% within textpersonalnostalgia	46.6%	53.4%	100.0%	
	% within East_vs_West	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Table A-2: Eastern Germans are indicated in the left "0" column, West Germans are indicated in the right "1" column. The "0" row indicates that the respondent did not discuss nostalgia in his/her answer to Question 11. The "1" row indicates that the respondent did discuss nostalgia in his/her answer to Question 11.

APPENDIX E

**Table A-3**  
**textprice \* East vs West Crosstabulation**

			East vs West		Total
			0	1	
textprice	0	Count	41	42	83
		% within textprice	49.4%	50.6%	100.0%
		% within East vs West	100.0%	89.4%	94.3%
	1	Count	0	5	5
		% within textprice	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% within East vs West	0.0%	10.6%	5.7%
Total		Count	41	47	88
		% within textprice	46.6%	53.4%	100.0%
		% within East vs West	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*Table A-3: East Germans are indicated in the left “0” column, West Germans are indicated in the right “1” column. The “0” row indicates that the respondent did not discuss price in his/her answer to Question 11. The “1” row indicates that the respondent did discuss price in his/her answer to Question 11.*

APPENDIX F

Table A-4

noCONNECTION \* East vs West Crosstabulation

			East vs West		Total
			0	1	
noCONNECTION	0	Count	34	21	55
		% within noCONNECTION	61.8%	38.2%	100.0%
		% within East vs West	82.9%	44.7%	62.5%
1		Count	7	26	33
		% within noCONNECTION	21.2%	78.8%	100.0%
		% within East vs West	17.1%	55.3%	37.5%
Total		Count	41	47	88
		% within noCONNECTION	46.6%	53.4%	100.0%
		% within East vs West	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table A-4: East Germans are indicated in the left “0” column, West Germans are indicated in the right “1” column. The “0” row indicates that the respondent did have some sort of connection to the product in his/her answer to Question 14. The “1” row indicates that the respondent explicitly stated no connection to the product in his/her answer to Question 14.

APPENDIX G

**Table A-5**  
**nostalgicCONNECTION \* East vs West Crosstabulation**

			East vs West		Total
			0	1	
nostalgicCONNECTION	0	Count	28	45	73
		% within nostalgicCONNECTION	38.4%	61.6%	100.0%
		% within East vs West	68.3%	95.7%	83.0%
	1	Count	13	2	15
		% within nostalgicCONNECTION	86.7%	13.3%	100.0%
		% within East vs West	31.7%	4.3%	17.0%
Total	Count	41	47	88	
	% within nostalgicCONNECTION	46.6%	53.4%	100.0%	
	% within East vs West	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

*Table A-5: East Germans are indicated in the left “0” column, West Germans are indicated in the right “1” column. The “0” row indicates that the respondent did not describe a nostalgic connection in his/her answer to Question 14. The “1” row indicates that the respondent described a nostalgic connection in his/her answer to Question 14*

**Table A-6  
nostalgicCONNECTION \* Gender Crosstabulation**

			Gender		Total
			0	1	
nostalgicCONNECTION	0	Count	41	32	73
		% within nostalgicCONNECTION	56.2%	43.8%	100.0%
		% within Gender	89.1%	76.2%	83.0%
	1	Count	5	10	15
		% within nostalgicCONNECTION	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
		% within Gender	10.9%	23.8%	17.0%
Total		Count	46	42	88
		% within nostalgicCONNECTION	52.3%	47.7%	100.0%
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*Table A-6: Male Germans are indicated in the left “0” column, female Germans are indicated in the right “1” column. The “0” row indicates that the respondent did not describe a nostalgic connection in his/her answer to Question 14. The “1” row indicates that the respondent described a nostalgic connection in his/her answer to Question 14.*

APPENDIX H

Table A-7

habitualCONNECTION \* Gender Crosstabulation

		Gender		Total
		0	1	
habitualCONNECTION 0	Count	38	39	77
	% within habitualCONNECTION	49.4%	50.6%	100.0%
	% within Gender	82.6%	92.9%	87.5%
1	Count	8	3	11
	% within habitualCONNECTION	72.7%	27.3%	100.0%
	% within Gender	17.4%	7.1%	12.5%
Total	Count	46	42	88
	% within habitualCONNECTION	52.3%	47.7%	100.0%
	% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table A-7: Male Germans are indicated in the left "0" column, female Germans are indicated in the right "1" column. The "0" row indicates that the respondent did not describe a habitual connection in his/her answer to Question 14. The "1" row indicates that the respondent described a habitual connection in his/her answer to Question 14.

APPENDIX I

Table A-8

**positive\_emotion \* East\_vs\_West Crosstabulation**

		East vs West		Total	
		0	1		
positive_emotion	0	Count	18	39	57
		% within positive emotion	31.6%	68.4%	100.0%
	1	Count	23	8	31
		% within positive emotion	74.2%	25.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	41	47	88
		% within positive emotion	46.6%	53.4%	100.0%

Table A-8: East Germans are indicated in the left “0” column, West Germans are indicated in the right “1” column. The “0” row indicates that the respondent did not describe a positive emotion in his/her answer to Question 15. The “1” row indicates that the respondent described a positive emotion in his/her answer to Question 15.

Table A-9

**homebias\_emotion \* East\_vs\_West Crosstabulation**

		East vs West		Total	
		0	1		
homebias_emotion	0	Count	39	46	85
		% within homebias_emotion	45.9%	54.1%	100.0%
	1	Count	2	1	3
		% within homebias_emotion	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	41	47	88
		% within homebias_emotion	46.6%	53.4%	100.0%

Table A-9: East Germans are indicated in the left “0” column, West Germans are indicated in the right “1” column. The “0” row indicates that the respondent did not describe a home bias emotion in his/her answer to Question 15. The “1” row indicates that the respondent described an emotion of home bias his/her answer to Question 15.