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Nostalgia or a broader experience? What works in marketing communication targeted at adults in the toy industry: the LEGO case

Abstract

Research background and purpose: Toy companies are increasingly striving to reach adult consumers and respond to their evolving needs. However, purchasing behaviour of adults in the toy industry, as well as the marketing strategies targeting them, remain insufficiently explored. This paper aims to evaluate the importance of factors influencing their purchase decisions and to examine how toy companies can design marketing communication aimed at adults. The analysis uses LEGO as a case study and is grounded in experiential marketing, with nostalgia considered as one of its elements.

Design/methodology/approach: The study employed a quantitative approach through an online survey conducted in 2024. The sample included 117 individuals aged 18 and above from Poland, including AFOLs (Adult Fans of LEGO). The questionnaire explored purchase frequency, motivations, and perceptions of LEGO brand's adult-oriented marketing communication. The analysis was complemented by a case study of LEGO. Both the questionnaire and the case study were grounded in experiential marketing components.

Findings: The study achieved its objective by evaluating the importance of factors influencing adults' purchasing decisions and demonstrating how LEGO brand's marketing strategy integrates experiential components. The results show that marketing strategy emphasizing experiences is perceived positively and encourage adult customers to purchase LEGO products. The most important drivers are fun, desire to relax, hobby and stimulation of creativity, while nostalgia is less important, however it can foster brand loyalty, particularly among older customers. LEGO brand's strategy illustrates how nostalgia can function as a complementary element within a broader experiential approach.

Value added and limitations: This research provides insights into how toy companies can effectively reach adult customers by emphasizing various experiences while integrating nostalgia as a supporting factor. Nevertheless, the study is limited by its focus on a single brand and a small sample restricted to Polish respondents, which may constrain generalizability. Future research should examine multiple toy brands across different cultural contexts and further explore interplay between nostalgia and other experiential factors.

Keywords: *experiential marketing, nostalgia marketing, toy industry, LEGO brand, marketing communication*

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1. Introduction

Toys are typically purchased by adults, but their intended recipients are children (Manjusha et al., 2021). This plays a pivotal role in child development, influencing key areas such as physical activity, social interactions, and problem-solving skills (Healey et al., 2019). While toys are traditionally geared toward younger audiences, certain products are specifically designed to cater to a broader demographic, including adults (Sadowska, 2016). Adults who embrace interests associated with childhood are known as “kidults” and represent a rapidly expanding market segment. They purchase toys, craft or construction kits, board games and collectibles linked to their childhood (Reisenwitz, 2025). For these consumers, buying toys goes beyond mere entertainment, it is also a way to reduce stress, recharge energy and stimulating creativity (Pi & Chen, 2025).

Recognizing the adult market, LEGO has strategically crafted specialized product lines and marketing campaigns aimed at this consumer segment. These adult-focused sets are carefully engineered to uphold the brand’s renowned quality while addressing the unique preferences of mature consumers. LEGO emphasizes that, through these sets, adults can engage in a creative and immersive form of relaxation, providing an enjoyable escape from the demands of everyday life (Nowak-Kluczyński, 2023).

Adult enthusiasts of LEGO often repurpose bricks and minifigures to make their own creations, transforming the children’s toy into a subversive, playful medium (Geraghty, 2019). Every adult was once a child, and these memories often remain vivid, particularly when companies tap into nostalgia and offer opportunities to relive earlier stages of life (Bernardini, 2014). The behaviour of kidults is strongly influenced by nostalgia (Reisenwitz, 2025). LEGO designed many brick sets referring to classic themes, creating a generational connection with customers and evoking nostalgic emotions. There is a relationship between nostalgia and brand equity, but the strength of toy brands requires further research that considers purchasing behaviour (Lubiński, 2020a). Moreover, there remains a lack of understanding regarding the drivers of adults’ purchase choices (Lubiński & Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2025).

Existing literature according to toys addressed to adults often examines nostalgia in marketing separately from other experience. Therefore, what is the importance of nostalgia in marketing communication and in shaping adults’ purchasing decisions compared other experiences? Furthermore, how is marketing communication emphasizing experiences perceived by adult customers?

The basis for the research is experiential marketing, along with its components described by Gentile et al. (2007) and study of Ju et al. (2016), demonstrating that nostalgia marketing is closely aligned with experiential marketing principles.

The aim of this article is to evaluate the importance of factors influencing adults’ purchasing decisions, ways to attract adults and how toy companies can design

marketing communication aimed at them using LEGO brand as an example. Given the broad spectrum of experiences emphasized by LEGO, nostalgia is examined only as a part of experiential marketing. The obtained insights may support the toy industry more effectively reaching adult customers.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Experiential marketing

The role of experience has been studied for many years and is analysed in various ways across different research perspectives. In 1998 Pine and Gilmore introduced the significant concept “The Experience Economy”, which assumes that companies can generate value not only by delivering goods or services, but by creating engaging interactions that resonate with customers on a personal and memorable level. They proposed a classification of consumer experiences into four realms: entertainment, educational, escapist, and aesthetic, depending on the degree of participation and the connection, suggesting the greatest value creates an integration of all four types. Experiences are defined as events that leave a lasting impression, which motivate customers to return (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

However, Schmitt (2010) points out that instead of interpreting a new phase of economic development, it might be more accurate to shift business focus toward experiences as an alternative approach to marketing goods and services. In this perspective, experiential value is not embedded in the products themselves, but in the marketing of them. He defines experience marketing as any marketing effort centred on the customer that builds meaningful connection. Experiences can be created through various touchpoints, not only by events (Pacanek et al., 2025). They can be generated through products, packaging, in-store engagement, sales process, and more, both physically and digitally. Same and Larimo (2012) notice that every interaction with a company is an experience. From moving to seeing, exploring and comprehending enhances the overall impression. Customers seek extraordinary purchasing and consumption experiences that depend on their personality and the circumstances of the activity or purchase (Batat, 2022a).

Smilansky (2009) writes about experiential marketing as a process of understanding and meeting customer expectations by involving them in two-way interaction that conveys the brand’s character and delivers value to the intended audience. This is also described as a way of communicating that focused on appealing to consumers’ physical feelings and emotions (You-Ming, 2010). The focus is not only on high-quality products but also on creating emotional connection through impactful experiences, which influence consumer perception of the brand (Rahma et al., 2025).

Experiential marketing aims to straighten long-term customer loyalty by delivering unique experiences that differentiate the brand from competitors to be remembered and make customers appreciate what they have purchased (Zarina et al., 2024). According to research by Widowati and Putra (2018) this type of marketing has a positive effect on customer satisfaction that results in positive influence on loyalty. Furthermore, experiential marketing positively impacts purchasing decisions. Consumers who evaluate their experience higher are more likely to buy a product or service (Hamdani et al., 2023). Many researchers demonstrate that experiential marketing has a significant influence on brand perception and consumer behaviour, emphasizing its crucial role in achieving competitive differentiation (Belhaj & Lehman, 2024).

Batat (2022b) proposed “experiential marketing mix” (7Es) that has a different approach than traditional marketing mix (4/7Ps). This construct includes: experience, exchange, extension, emphasis, empathy capital, emotional touchpoints, and emic/etic process. “Experience” refers to self- and environment-oriented, the crucial indicators of the experiential process, and effects of customer experiences. Next “E” is “exchange” that relates to generating value for customers by involving them in a co-creation process. “Extension” is about a wide offer of experience from tangible to digital that are linked or unlinked with the marketplace. “Emphasis” focuses on creating a brand’s cultural meaning to connect with customers. Another is “empathy” that refers to empathizing with consumers to meet their needs in a professional way. “Emotional touchpoints” relates to enhanced comprehension of the emotions, particularly when customers’ memories are evoked. The last is “emic/etic process” that is about expanding the understanding of consumer behaviour by combining insider (consumer) and outsider (company) perspectives in a culturally aware, iterative process.

Schmitt (1999) developed widely cited “strategic experiential modules” that includes five elements. First of them is “sense” consisting of touch, sight, smell, sound and taste. The second component is “feel” related to a wide range of emotions. The element “think” is about intellect and delivering cognitive, creative experience. The fourth is “act” referring to physical behaviours, habits and way of interacting. The last, fifth module is called “relate” and focuses on a sense of social belonging.

Gentile et al. (2007) slightly modified this concept and presented six experiential components:

- sensorial - experiences engaging senses: sight, taste, hearing, smell and touch, but also aesthetical pleasure, satisfaction or excitement,
- emotional - experiences that create affective relation with the company, its product or brand through involving emotions, feelings and moods,
- cognitive - experiences appealing to conscious mental processes, stimulating customers’ creativity and problem solving skills, giving the opportunity to reconsider beliefs about the product,

- pragmatic - experiences focusing on usability and practical aspects of doing something,
- lifestyle - experiences aligning with customers' personal values and beliefs, allowing them to express themselves through product or brand,
- relational - experiences connected to the individual's social context and relationships, fostering community, shared passions, or social identity through use of a product or brand.

The authors of this typology outlined that the components are not functioning separately, they are linked and overlap in certain areas. This study emphasized how holistic and complex experiences are. Datta (2017) states that experiential marketing requires a varied and multidimensional approach. A carefully designed strategy can positively impact customer purchasing patterns (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013). Therefore H1 hypothesis is:

H1. Marketing communication that emphasizes experiences can encourage purchases.

Experiences help people make better choices, can improve well-being, and bring meaningful value to everyday life (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013). Considering the mentioned features of experiential marketing hypothesis H2 has been formulated:

H2. Marketing communication that emphasizes experiences is perceived positively.

2.2. Nostalgia marketing

Nostalgia marketing aligns well with the principles of experiential marketing and connects with its components, particularly sensorial and emotional. This engages consumers' senses to recall moments that result in evoking nostalgic feelings. The key is enabling to mentally revisit positive experiences by products or nostalgic messages (Ju et al., 2016). Nostalgia can be a positive or negative feeling reminding of past events (Havlena & Holak, 1991). This is a subjective emotion, whose source can be personal previous experiences as well as things that are longed for (Chen et al., 2014). Holbrook and Schindler (1991) define nostalgia as an attitude to things, people or places that were popular in one's youth, including childhood, adolescence, or even before birth. It is argued that consumers who encounter brands through early in-home exposure during childhood or through significant personal experiences in the past are likely to recall these brands through positive, often nostalgic, memories (Muehling et al., 2014).

Remembering pleasant memories can provide detachment from uncertain times, reduce stress, and offer an escape from reality (Kim et al., 2021). Nostalgia is often

initiated by negative emotions such as loneliness, and it can enhance positive mood, boost self-esteem, and strengthen a sense of social connection (Sedikides, 2008). It can foster a sense of belonging with a community of consumers who share similar memories (Errajaa et al., 2013). Nostalgic advertising that evokes positive emotions and past imagery enhances consumers' perception of social support, while personal nostalgia tied to negative emotions corresponds with a decreased sense of this support (Merchant et al., 2013). Nostalgia-based strategies are reportedly used more frequently in times of crisis, as they foster feelings of safety and comfort while also contributing to increased sales (Pereira et al., 2022).

Nostalgia can stimulate a pursuit of meaning that may be fulfilled through the exploration of new products. Therefore, incorporating nostalgic elements into marketing messages may enhance consumers' motivation to seek purpose and facilitate the introduction of new offerings (Xia et al., 2021). Nostalgia marketing has a positive impact on the purchase intention (Özhan & Akkaya, 2020). Research demonstrates that nostalgia-driven marketing can lower consumers' sensitivity to price, thereby increasing their readiness to pay more for products (Lasaleta et al., 2014). Customers are inclined to choose the products that are linked to their past or cultural traditions (Kessous, 2015). Selecting a nostalgic brand is principally the effect of hedonistic motivation, risk-avoidance behaviours, and a deep attachment of consumers' (Grębosz-Krawczyk et al., 2021). Furthermore, triggering nostalgic emotions rooted in memory helps establish a meaningful connection between the brand and the consumer, which in turn boost purchasing behaviour, trust and strengthens brand loyalty (Hungenberg et al., 2020). The experience of nostalgia often fosters a more favourable attitude, and as positive feelings intensify, consumers may become more willing to make nostalgic purchases (Singh et al., 2021).

Holak et al. (2007) describe four types of nostalgic experience: "personal nostalgia" - one's own direct experience, "interpersonal nostalgia" - individual indirect experience arising from communication with others concerning their memories, "cultural nostalgia" - direct experience shared by the group, "virtual nostalgia" - indirect group experience. There is also typology that is the essence of different distinctions presented by various researchers. This includes personal and historical nostalgia. Personal stems from own experiences and memories and is a cognitive response. Historical refers to external sources, and can be constructed by a society or group, even before one's birth (Phau et al., 2016). Brands associated with close or far, personal or historical past are called nostalgic brands. There are distinguished two categories of them: generational brands, based on personal, individual or collective memories, and transgenerational brands referring to own or others' experiences (Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2020).

Nostalgia marketing is influenced by two drivers. First refers to consumers and is a consequence of psychological human aspects, and the process of associating memory with nostalgia. The second driver is related to marketing initiatives

designed to establish nostalgic feelings within the consumer mindset (Rana et al., 2022). Based on the consumer behaviour, the mechanism of nostalgia marketing can be divided into three stages. At the beginning is nostalgic emotional reaction - direct or indirect contact with a product can trigger emotions and awaken personal memories. Next is nostalgic cognitive reaction - at this stage are created positive or negative attitudes toward products. The last phase is nostalgic behavioural reaction - then emotions and perception are transformed into action, the stronger attachment to the things from the past, the more likely consumers are to purchase nostalgic products (Alkhafagi, 2023).

Nevertheless, the presence of nostalgic feelings among customers does not exempt companies from meeting their current needs. Marketing relying solely on nostalgia without incorporating features that align with contemporary consumer expectations may be short-lived (Cui, 2015). Marketers should recognize that nostalgia alone is insufficient (Rana et al., 2020). Taking into account this aspect, H3 hypothesis is:

H3. Nostalgia is not the most important determinant of purchase decisions.

Products must also offer value in the present. When these marketing elements are synchronized, that approach can help capture market share, attract new audiences, and strengthen brand loyalty (Rana et al., 2020). It is essential to evoke past experiences in an authentic and natural way to resonate with consumers without detracting them from the brand's core attributes and values (Gonzalez-Cavazos et al., 2025).

In this study, nostalgia is treated as an example of experience. Nostalgia marketing aligns with components of experiential marketing and simultaneously can be a part of experiential marketing strategy. Whereas experiential marketing is broader than nostalgia marketing and is a holistic approach that has multiple overlapping dimensions.

3. LEGO brand's marketing communication addressed to adults

Toy companies are increasingly developing products for adults, as well as marketing communication targeted at them. For example, Hot Wheel has special, more professional line of model cars for collectors (Mattel, 2025) or Barbie released a film aimed at the older audience, which achieved significant commercial success (Wiederhold, 2024). However, LEGO was selected as an illustrative example due to its broad product portfolio and marketing initiatives targeting the adults.

LEGO enables adult consumers to relive the past and evoke feelings of nostalgia through sets inspired by classic movies, such as "Back to the future", "Star Wars" or "Jaws". There are also vintage cars, as well as sets referencing iconic games like "Pac-Man" or "Super Mario". However LEGO does not focus solely on nostalgia, it also offers numerous sets

referring to the art and interior decor, for instance Vincent Van Gogh’s “Sunflowers” from the “LEGO Art” line, impressive miniature buildings from “LEGO Architecture”, and the entire “LEGO Botanicals” series featuring various types of flowers and plants that can be perfect as gift for another adults too. Each set designed for mature consumers is more complex than products addressed for children, particularly “LEGO Technic” including mechanically advanced builds with moving parts and realistic functions.

Table 1. Experiences emphasized by LEGO in marketing communication addressed to adults

LEGO brand’s activities	Emphasized experiences	Experiential components
“LEGO Lates” events - official LEGO Stores were open exclusively for adults after normal opening hours, offering them a unique opportunity to attend talks by professionals from the creative industry (LEGO, 2025c).	Creativity, hobby, fun, connecting people who share the same interests, relax, education	Cognitive, emotional, relational, lifestyle, sensorial, pragmatic
Talent show “LEGO Masters” - participants who are particularly adult, construct advanced buildings with LEGO bricks and are judged by experts (LEGO, 2025b).	Creativity, hobby, fun, connecting people who share the same interests	
“LEGO Ideas” - a website where fans share their own projects and vote for others, the best builds are produced by LEGO (LEGO, 2025a).		
Tennis player Iga Świątek as ambassador of LEGO - she focuses and rests before tournaments thanks to the bricks (Kot, 2024).	Relax, Focus	Emotional, sensorial
“White Noise” album on Spotify - relaxing tracks created using the sounds of LEGO bricks (LEGO, 2021).		
“Adults welcome” - advertising campaign showing how building with LEGO bricks can help adults relax and unwind from everyday stress (Marketing przy kawie, 2021).		
Life-sized, drivable Formula 1 cars made of LEGO bricks - they were used in a driver parade before the 2025 Miami Grand Prix (LEGO, 2025d).	Fun, entertainment	

Source: own elaboration

Through the sets, adult consumers can revisit the past, unwind, spark their creativity, decorate their living spaces and simply enjoy the process. However, LEGO’s marketing communication extends beyond the products themselves. The brand carries out a variety of initiatives aimed at adults that often emphasize these meaningful and personal experiences, transcending the physical bricks. Table 1. presents key brand’s activities

linked with outlined experiences and experiential components described by Gentile et al. (2007) that were mentioned in part 2.1.

Certain initiatives allowed for direct participation, while another highlighted the experiences made possible through LEGO bricks. Some kinds of them are repeated across various activities, which shows their importance in brand's marketing communication. The differentiation and intersection of experiences reflect a complex, multidimensional strategy that is a crucial element of effective experiential marketing (Datta, 2017).

An analysis of the initiatives reveals that nostalgia is explicitly highlighted in specific LEGO sets, whereas in other brand activities it does not dominate and there are prioritized different types of experiences. Thus, nostalgia is not the most important element and represents only a part of a larger, multifaceted experiential marketing approach.

4. Methods

To obtain a broader perspective on the issues under consideration, a quantitative study was conducted in the form of an online survey prepared in Google Forms. The study employed a convenience-based sampling method. Participation in the study was voluntary, and all responses were collected anonymously to ensure respondents' privacy. Questionnaire was distributed via social media platforms, including AFOL (Adult Fan Of Lego) community, thereby ensuring a more varied set of responses. The participants in this group comprised no more than 50% of the total sample based on the fact that link to the survey in AFOL community was opened by 47 individuals. Response rate was not recorded. Data collection was carried out between March 28 and April 28, 2024. Given the scope of the research, the sample included people from Poland aged 18 and above.

Table 2. Respondents characteristics

		N	%
Age	18-24	69	58.97
	25-44	42	35.90
	45-64	6	5.13
Gender	Female	70	59.83
	Male	46	39.32
	Other	1	0.85

Source: own elaboration

The survey was completed by a total of 117 respondents aged between 18 and 64. For the purpose of statistical analysis, the sample was divided into three age groups (Table 2).

The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions, including both single- and multiple-choice. It also included scaled and yes/ no questions. The survey focused on the frequency of LEGO product purchases, factors motivating such purchases, and the perception of LEGO brand's marketing communication aimed at adults. For the purposes of the study, an advertisement from the "Adults welcome" campaign and "LEGO Masters" TV show were selected, due to the diversity of experiences they convey. Marketing activities emphasizing nostalgia were excluded, as no suitable brand initiatives centred explicitly on nostalgia were found apart from LEGO sets referring to the past. These sets, however, could be problematic to analyse due to the highly individual nature of customer preferences regarding specific themes of products.

5. Results

At the beginning of the survey respondents were asked how many times in the past year they had purchased a LEGO product for themselves and for another adult. This question aimed to better understand purchasing behaviour. The responses are illustrated in Figure 1.

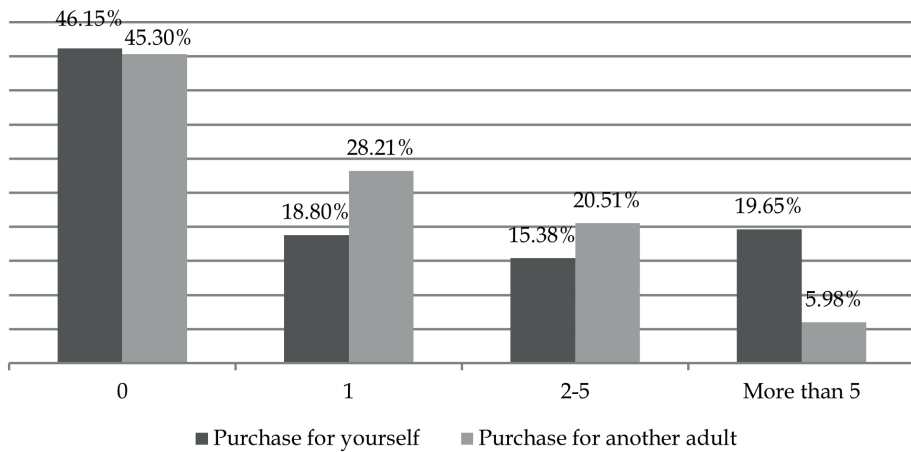


Figure 1. Frequency of LEGO product purchases by respondents for themselves and for another adult in the last year

Source: own elaboration

As many as 53.85% of the participants had purchased a LEGO product for themselves at least once in the past year. Among customers, the most common response was a single purchase, indicated by 18.80% of respondents. The next most frequent answer was 2-5 times, selected by 15.38% of participants. There were also individuals who reported purchasing LEGO products even more than 5 times (19.65%), suggesting that the brand has a group of loyal adult customers. The data also show that 54.7% of respondents purchased LEGO for another adult at least once. This indicates that LEGO products are also perceived as suitable gifts for individuals over the age of 18.

There is observed a relationship between the number of products purchased for oneself and the age of the respondents, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of LEGO products respondents purchased for themselves in the last year by age group

Number of products purchased	Age		
	18-24	25-44	45-64
0	56.52%	26.19%	66.67%
1	17.39%	21.43%	16.67%
2-5	15.94%	14.29%	16.67%
More than 5	10.15%	38.09%	0.00%

Source: own elaboration

Individuals aged 25 to 44 purchased LEGO products significantly more often than respondents from other age groups, indicating that the brand enjoys the greatest popularity among adults within this age range. The second-highest number of purchases was recorded among respondents aged 18-24. The lowest purchase frequency was observed among individuals aged 45 to 64, however, due to the small number of respondents in this age category, this finding cannot be considered a definitive pattern.

There is also a noticeable relationship related to gender. The percentage distribution is presented in the Table 4.

Table 4. Number of LEGO products respondents purchased for themselves in the last year by gender

Number of products purchased	Gender	
	Female	Male
0	60.00%	26.09%
1	17.14%	19.57%
2-5	12.86%	19.57%
More than 5	10%	34.78 %

Source: own elaboration

Men purchased significantly more LEGO products over the last year compared to women.

In the context of this article, it is essential to analyse the factors that motivated respondents to purchase a LEGO product for themselves at least once during the year. Respondents were asked to assess the factors influencing their LEGO purchase decisions: “Do you agree that the following factors encouraged you to purchase a LEGO product?” For each item, participants chose a response on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). Factors selected to the survey refer to experiences that can be created through LEGO bricks and are related to experiential components (Gentile et al., 2007). The obtained responses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Factors encouraging respondents to purchase LEGO products for themselves

Name of factor	Level of agreement					Average
	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	
Fun	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	15.87%	84.13%	4.84
Desire to relax	0.00%	3.17%	1.59%	30.16%	65.08%	4.57
Hobby	1.59%	9.52%	1.59%	19.05%	68.25%	4.43
Stimulation of creativity	1.59%	6.35%	4.76%	31.75%	55.56%	4.33
Nostalgia	1.59%	15.87%	1.59%	38.10%	42.86%	4.05

Interior decoration	7.94%	15.87%	12.70%	33.33%	30.16%	3.62
Exclusivity	12.70%	22.22%	25.40%	23.81%	15.87%	3.08

Source: own elaboration

Fun is the factor that most strongly encourages adults to purchase LEGO products for themselves - as many as 84.13% of respondents selected the “strongly agree” option. The average value is also very high, amounting to 4.84. The second most common motivation is the desire to relax - a total of 95.24% respondents chose either “agree” or “strongly agree”. Hobby and stimulation of creativity also achieved high average values of 4.43 and 4.33 respectively. The average score for nostalgia is 4.05, meaning that this factor also motivates purchases, although to a lesser extent than the ones mentioned above - it ranks fifth. The interior decoration also encouraged some to buy LEGO products - 33.33% of respondents chose “agree”, while 30.16% selected the “strongly agree” option. Many LEGO sets targeted at adults highlight their potential for interior design, yet it appears this aspect is not as significant for respondents. Factor “exclusivity” cannot be clearly classified as either encouraging or discouraging purchases. The responses to this question confirm hypothesis H3.

To better understand the impact of given factors on purchasing behaviour, the average values were compared with the number of LEGO products purchased for oneself over the last year.

Table 6. Average agreement scores for value types by number of LEGO products respondents purchased for themselves in the last year | nagłówki: Number of products purchased oraz Value type

Number of products purchased	Value type					
	Fun	Desire to relax	Hobby	Stimulation of creativity	Nostalgia	Interior decoration
1	4.77	4.50	4.14	4.05	3.86	3.45
2-5	4.89	4.72	4.33	4.39	3.78	3.56
More than 5	4.87	4.52	4.78	4.57	4.43	3.83

Source: own elaboration

It turns out that fun is a very important and the most significant factor, regardless of the number of products purchased. However, clear differences can be observed in the cases of hobby, stimulation of creativity, and nostalgia (Table 6). In these

instances, the number of purchases increased along with the importance of the factor to respondents.

The average values for the given factors were also compared across age groups to examine whether there are any age-related patterns among customers (Table 7).

Table 7. Average response scores for value types by age group

Age	Value type					
	Fun	Desire to relax	Hobby	Stimulation of creativity	Nostalgia	Interior decoration
18-24	4.87	4.43	4.43	4.33	3.90	3.63
25-44	4.81	4.68	4.48	4.39	4.23	3.65

Source: own elaboration

Regardless of age, fun is the most important factor influencing the purchase decision. A greater difference is observed only in the case of nostalgia, which serves as a more influential purchase driver for the 25-44 age group compared to the 18-24 group.

Responses regarding factors encouraging the purchase of LEGO products were also analysed in relation to gender in order to examine potential associations.

Table 8. Average response scores for value types by gender

Gender	Value type					
	Fun	Desire to relax	Hobby	Stimulation of creativity	Nostalgia	Interior decoration
Female	4.89	4.68	4.21	4.61	3.75	3.50
Male	4.79	4.47	4.68	4.15	4.32	3.71

Source: own elaboration

Fun emerged as the most important factor for both female and male respondents. The greatest difference between genders is observed in the case of nostalgia, which proved to be more important for men, similarly to the hobby factor. In contrast, stimulation of creativity is more significant for women (Table 8).

Experiences such as hobby and relaxation were emphasized in advertising campaigns previously run by LEGO before conducting the survey. To enable further analyses,

respondents were asked whether they had ever seen an advertisement for LEGO products targeted at adults. LEGO advertisements targeted at adults reached 56.41% of respondents, meaning just over half. To examine the effect of exposure to these advertisements on the number of LEGO products purchased over the past year, a linear regression was conducted. The model was statistically significant, $F(1,115) = 12.38$, $p < 0.001$, explaining 9.7% of the variance in purchases ($R^2 = 0.097$). Exposure to adult-oriented advertisements significantly increased the number of purchases ($B = 0.74$, $SE = 0.21$, $t = 3.52$, $p < 0.001$). The 95% confidence interval ranged from 0.32 to 1.16, confirming the positive nature of the effect and its statistical significance. Based on these two findings, it can be concluded that exposure to the advertisement enhancing experiences may have influenced positively the number of purchases. Hence, hypothesis H1 is confirmed.

In the subsequent part of the survey, respondents were shown a commercial (The LEGO Group, 2021) from the earlier mentioned “Adults Welcome” campaign and were asked to indicate up to three characteristics that best described it. Figure 2 presents the distribution of attributes selected by participants.

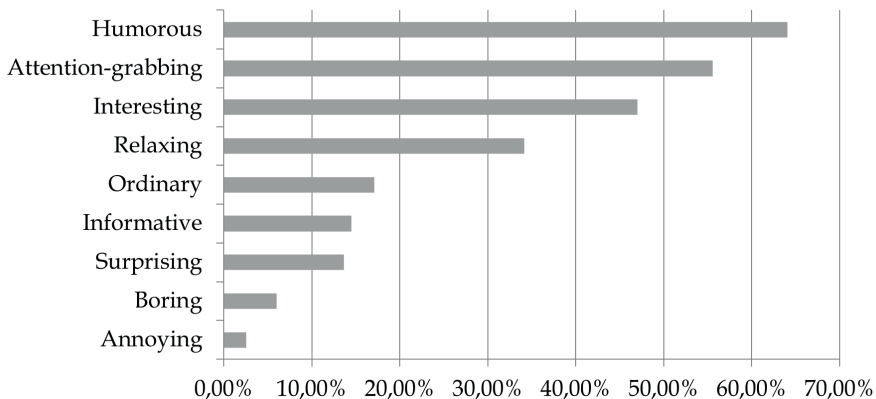


Figure 2. Attributes that best describe the presented advertisement

Source: own elaboration

The humorous characteristic was most frequently indicated by respondents (64.10%). Additionally, 55.56% of participants considered the advertisement to be attention-grabbing. Other characteristics were selected by less than 50.00% of respondents. Positive attributes dominated the top rankings, while negative descriptors such as “annoying” or “boring” were rarely chosen, with less than 10.00% of indications. This suggests that an

advertisement highlighting the experience of relaxation through LEGO bricks is well perceived by the audience and confirms hypothesis H2.

In the following stage of the survey, attention was directed to the “LEGO Masters” TV show, which emphasizes other experiences and was watched by 57.26% of respondents.

Table 9. Percentage distribution of viewing of the “LEGO Masters” TV show by age group and gender

		Viewing of the “LEGO Masters” TV show	
		Yes	No
Age	18-24	59.62%	40.38%
	25-44	80.00%	20.00%
Gender	Female	61.82%	38.18%
	Male	80.49%	19.51%

Source: own elaboration

As shown in Table 9, men were more likely to report having watched “LEGO Masters” (80.49%). Among female respondents, 61.82% had seen the program, indicating lower interest compared to men. Respondents aged 18-24 reported watching the show less frequently (59.62%) than adults aged 25-44 (80.00%). This difference is likely due to the program being primarily broadcast on television, a medium that is getting less popular among younger adults.

Viewers of this TV program were asked to indicate the extent to which the listed attributes align with the show. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that each of several listed traits applies to the LEGO Masters program. The question was phrased as follows: “Do you agree that the following describe the LEGO Masters program?” Respondents rated each trait on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). The results are presented in the Table 10.

Table 10. Alignment of the listed attributes with the “LEGO Masters” TV show

Attribute	Level of agreement					Average
	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	
Creative	0.00%	1.49%	1.49%	17.91%	79.10%	4.75

Suitable for of all ages	0.00%	4.48%	1.49%	38.81%	55.22%	4.45
Family-oriented	0.00%	1.49%	13.43%	40.30%	44.78%	4.28
Relaxing	1.49%	2.99%	17.91%	53.73%	23.88%	3.96
High-standard	1.49%	8.96%	17.91%	43.28%	28.36%	3.88
Childish	23.88%	43.28%	19.40%	8.96%	4.48%	2.27
Boring	43.28%	38.81%	13.43%	2.99%	1.49%	1.81

Source: own elaboration

Respondents largely perceive “LEGO Masters” as a creative TV show (4.75), suitable for all ages (4.45), and family-oriented (4.28). Slightly lower mean scores were recorded for attributes “relaxing” (3.96) and “high-standard” (3.88). The attributes “childish” and “boring” received significantly lower average values, which is a positive finding. The responses to this question indicate that “LEGO Masters” is a TV program positively perceived among adults, and values emphasized by the brand are recognised by them. Thus, hypothesis H2 is supported.

A linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether watching the “LEGO Masters” influence the number of LEGO products purchased within the last year. The model was statistically significant, $F(1,115) = 16.60$, $p < 0.001$, explaining 12.6% of the variance in purchase behaviour ($R^2 = 0.126$). Watching “LEGO Masters” significantly increased the number of purchases ($B = 0.85$, $SE = 0.21$, $t = 4.07$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that individuals who watched the show tended to purchase. The 95% confidence interval ranged from 0.44 to 1.26, supporting the positive and statistically robust nature of the effect. This suggests that a TV program emphasizing particularly the creative experience may support purchasing behaviour. Furthermore, hypothesis H1 is supported.

6. Discussion

The results show that approximately half of the respondents reported purchasing LEGO products both for themselves and for other adults. This suggests that LEGO is perceived as a product appropriate for their age group, which may in part result from the brand’s marketing activities specifically targeting adult consumers.

Purchases were most frequently made by respondents aged 25-44 and by men, which may be attributed to male-focused marketing strategies that LEGO started using in the 1980s, transforming into a “boy brand”. LEGO after unsuccessful attempts at products for girls, returned to including girls in marketing communication in 2012, releasing

LEGO Friends sets (Hains & Shewmaker, 2019). Ten years later, the brand began promoting the idea “Girls can achieve anything” (Majchrowska, 2022).

Regardless of gender, age, or purchase frequency, fun is the most prominent driver of purchasing LEGO products. Next in order are desire to relax, hobby and stimulation of creativity. Nostalgia appeared after these factors, showing that other experiences are more important in shaping adults’ purchasing decisions.

However, the results show that nostalgia and hobby are more motivating aspects for men, which is probably linked to the previously mentioned gendered marketing strategies, and for the 25-44 age group, what may be due to the launch of LEGO products on the Polish market in the late 1990s after political changes (Lubiński, 2020b). Some foreign products that had been unavailable during communism were perceived as a symbol of luxury. After foreign brands entered the Polish market in the post-communist period, they quickly gained popularity. This could influence the nostalgic attitudes of Polish consumers, particularly among the older generations (Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2018).

Furthermore, the greater importance of nostalgia for respondents was, the more LEGO products they purchased. It can be related to personal nostalgia that supports the process of collecting toys, particularly when they evoke memories (Sotelo-Duarte, 2022) and positive influence of nostalgia on brand loyalty (Hungenberg et al., 2020).

The number of purchases increases also along with the hobby and stimulation of creativity. Hobby can be associated with collecting sets, and among individuals who appreciate creativity stimulation might be LEGO artists, who, due to their need for specific brick sizes, colours, and styles, often also become collectors (Jennings, 2019). This can result in a higher purchase frequency.

Advertisements targeted at adults, as well as the “LEGO Masters” TV show are perceived positively and may also have an influence on purchasing decisions, as their audiences were observed to buy LEGO products more frequently. This may be due to the fact these marketing activities emphasize experiences such as relaxation, fun, and creativity aligning with consumer needs.

Individuals aged 25-44 more often declared watching the “LEGO Masters” program. Probably because of broadcasting primarily on television that is becoming less popular among younger adults. Men also reported watching this TV show more frequently, which represents yet another aspect in which they dominate.

Based on analysis, it can be concluded that, overall, the LEGO brand’s marketing communication emphasizing experiences resonates with adults and various experiences, especially fun, are factors that encourage purchases. Nostalgia is not the most important driver but can result in a higher number of purchases and is related to age and gender. A particularly important customer segment consists of men and individuals aged 25-44, who tend to buy LEGO products more frequently.

Results align with studies that emphasize positive impact of experiential marketing on consumer perception (Rahma et al., 2025) and purchasing decisions (Hamdani et al., 2023). This study is consistent with the statement that experiential components are not functioning separately (Gentile et al., 2007). There is also observed a link between nostalgia and brand loyalty (Hungenberg et al., 2020). However, it was revealed that nostalgia holds less importance in motivating purchasing decisions than other experiences, what was not emphasized in prior research according to adults customers on toy market. Furthermore, the most prominent age group in this study include individuals from Generation Y, and this aligns with the fact that a majority of kidult consumers are Millennials (Reisenwitz, 2025).

Findings may serve as a valuable guideline for the toy industry. Rather than relying solely on nostalgic appeals, companies should highlight the wide range of experiences that toys can provide adult consumers, such as fun, relaxation, hobby or creativity, depending on the type of product. Nostalgia can remain an important element to foster brand loyalty, however as a part of greater strategy integrating multiple experiential components.

7. Conclusions

The purpose of this article was evaluating the importance of factors that influence adults' purchase decisions and how toy companies can design marketing communication addressed to adults. Base to analysis was experiential marketing with nostalgia as its element and LEGO as an example. The research demonstrates that LEGO brand's marketing strategy integrates multiple experiential components: emotional, cognitive, sensorial, relational, lifestyle, and pragmatic. They are highlighted through various activities, such as events, talent show, commercials or involvement of ambassadors. Whereas nostalgia appears particularly in sets that reference classic themes or earlier collections. Nostalgia functions only as an element of wider experiential marketing rather than primary message, which turns out to be a successful strategy targeting adults.

The findings indicate that marketing communication emphasizing experiences is perceived positively (H2 confirmed) and encourage adult customers to purchase (H1 confirmed). The most important drivers are fun, desire to relax, hobby and stimulation of creativity. Nostalgia is less important (H3 confirmed). Respondents who placed greater importance on nostalgia tended to buy more LEGO products, so it can foster brand loyalty. Hypothesis, their verification, and the resulting conclusions are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11. Hypotheses, their verification and resulting conclusions

Hypothesis	Measures	Key statistics	Conclusion
H1. Marketing communication that emphasizes experiences can encourage purchases.	Linear regression analysis.	Positive effect and its statistical significance. Hypothesis confirmed	Emphasizing experiences in marketing communication targeted at adults in the toy industry can increase purchases.
H2. Marketing communication that emphasizes experiences is perceived positively.	Responses frequency and average value.	Respondents more often chose positive descriptions than negative, and their average values are higher. Hypothesis confirmed	Marketing communication emphasizing experiences can be perceived positively by adult audience in the toy industry.
H3. Nostalgia is not the most important determinant of purchase decisions.	Average value.	Other experiences have higher average values in context of motivating purchases. Hypothesis confirmed.	Marketing communication addressed to adults in the toy industry should consist of various experiences with nostalgia only as a part of strategy.

Source: own elaboration

These insights suggest that toy companies can effectively reach adult consumers by emphasizing various, multiple experiences depending on type of toy. Positioning toys as a form of play and stress relief that responds to the everyday needs of adults may be a particularly appealing approach. Whereas nostalgia can support brand loyalty and collecting behaviours, particularly among older segments.

Presented research is a step toward understanding marketing strategies aimed at adults in the toy industry and clarifies the role of nostalgia as a complementary element rather than a primary driver of purchasing decisions, suggesting that nostalgia alone may be insufficient to motivate adult customers to buy a toy.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the analysis focused on the LEGO brand, which may limit the generalization of the findings to other toy brands, therefore they should be interpreted as indicative and may serve only as guidance. Particularly relations with gender and age may depend on the type of toy. In addition, the sample size was small, and the respondents were solely from Poland, so customer behaviours and perception may differ across countries. Nevertheless, considering the literature review, which includes studies from various regions describing the characteristics and positive effects of experiential marketing and nostalgia, it is probable that similar results could be observed across different countries, both in further analyses and in practical marketing applications.

Future research could expand the scope of analysis by examining multiple toy brands and different cultures, providing more comprehensive insights. It would also be valuable to compare nostalgia and experiential marketing messages and to investigate

which experiential elements can be combined with nostalgia to maximize marketing effectiveness.

Authors' contribution

K.K.: article conception, theoretical content of the article, research methods applied, conducting the research, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, draft manuscript preparation. **R.R.:** theoretical content of the article, draft manuscript preparation.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the authors used ChatGPT in order to improve the style of the language. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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