Literature Review Class 5 Group 19

"Soundtrack of the Heart: the role of nostalgic music in emotional engagement with romance movie trailers"

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Introduction

The ability of movie trailers to create emotional engagement has been a big part of film marketing. A movie trailer is a short preview of a film, typically showing important scenes and moments to excite and attract audiences without revealing the full plot (Kernan, 2004). Particularly romance movie trailers rely on strong emotional appeal to grip audiences (Hellerman, 2024b). However, there is a challenge: how can marketers create emotional investment in a trailer without using well-known actors? Traditionally, recognizable actors serve as a major carry for audiences, but with the rise of streaming platforms and competition, reliance on power of the stars alone is not always successful. This study explores whether emotional engagement can be achieved through elements such as parasocial relationships and nostalgia, even without celebrity recognition. Despite the broad research on **the influence of nostalgia on consumer behavior, and the use of music in this role**, there is still a gap in understanding how these factors specifically add to emotional engagement in romance movie trailers. This research purpose is to research how romance movie trailers can **create emotional engagement** through auditory use in trailers and nostalgia, without the use of well-known actors.

Romance trailers are particularly designed to awaken powerful emotions by highlighting love, longing, and connection, which can deeply resonate with audiences. (Hellerman, 2024b). Research on emotional attachment to media suggests that trailers, because of their brief and impactful style, have a unique ability to create an emotional connection. According to a study published in *Media Psychology*, emotional responses to trailers are influenced by several factors, including visuals, music, and narrative structure (Green & Brock, 2000). Romance trailers use these elements to strengthen feelings of empathy and connection, making viewers emotionally invested. The short but powerful portrayal of romance in these trailers creates a strong desire to see how the story unfolds, increasing audience excitement.

Nostalgia influencing consumer behavior

Nostalgia (a longing for a feeling of home) is a tremendously powerful psychological phenomenon which is in simple terms the desire to go back to the way things were in our past, the desire to get back to a romanticized perception of ultimate comfort (Havlena, W. J. (et al. n.d.) According to Holbrook and Schindler (1989) a person is affected by nostalgia differently in the stages of life. Their research concluded that for example music tastes usually develop in early adolescence and reach their peak around ages 23-24, after that it stagnates to a constant and people above that age are less likely to change their music preferences.

The challenge for the industry in movie trailers is to grasp audiences in multiple generations so that the younger demographic has new concepts to gravitate toward. What advertisers tend to do to induce nostalgia is promise or provide a way for older generations to re-experience their past in several aspects.

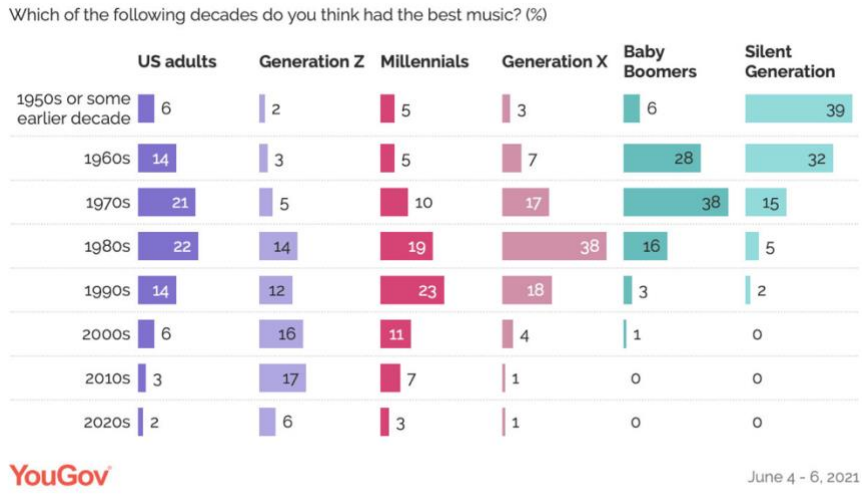
The research goal for this proposed research project is to acquire the necessary information on how to make a successful movie trailer without requiring well know actors using music.

Nostalgia and Romance Films: Analyzing the Desire for Familiarity in Cinematic Love Stories:

Nostalgia is the feeling of longing for a home that no longer exists. Described by Sándor Ferenczi as the desire to return to the womb, the origin of life (Godin, D. B. 2023). According to Jungian psychoanalysis everyone has this desire sometimes known as the mother complex. This complex is an animalistic desire to return to familiarity, to rely on a mother figure either in a physical or spiritual sense. When we talk about nostalgia it is exploiting this desire for familiarity.

There is a general sensation of nostalgia which is familiar to most people, however measuring it can vary in accuracy. According to Wildschut (2023) there are 4 scales that are popular among measuring nostalgia. All of them have to do with taking a table of contents then organizing those contents according to importance to the subject. The study suggests it is important for researchers to consider how to control groups being measured since the way we perceive the past effects our nostalgia response. The researchers paid special attention to feelings of regret, brooding or rumination in the control groups. Measured accuracy with Cronbach's reliability coefficients we come to find out that the scales accuracy depends on the group and the study structure. The datasets from China have less accuracy than the ones from the US especially in relation to other scales. In Chinese datasets the accuracy drops down to .55 which is poor accuracy according to Cronbach however American datasets drop accuracy to .76 which is still acceptable.

One of the most observed aspects of nostalgia is our relation to music.



research conducted on YouGov what the best music is according to different generations

https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2024/05/03/music-paralysis-as-we-age/

According to research conducted on YouGov there is a clear trend where a large chunk of people is partial to listening to music which was popular around their adolescence. Other research suggests that our musical discovery peaks around 24 and gets rigid as we age usually starting at 30-33. Although AI is bridging this gap with different algorithms on platforms like Spotify which provide a weekly discovery where an algorithm collects music based on the trends of the user.

The industry challenge is accurately measuring feelings such as nostalgia, applying it in commercial use and using new technologies to connect generations so that the product reaches the broadest demographics possible.

How music creates romantic engagement

Music plays a crucial role in the early stages of relationships by helping individuals connect, set moods, and build intimacy. According to Vigl et al. (2021), people use music to signal compatibility and express emotions, which facilitates the development of affection and attraction. The study found that music is particularly important for fostering passion and intimacy initially but also tells us music becomes less important in long-term relationships. Music therefore is an effective tool to have the audience romantically engaged with a specific character. By setting a mood or playing music that is within the same taste as the viewer, music creates an environment for a movie character which makes the character psychologically more attractive. Research suggests that music plays a role not only in fostering attraction but also in forming connections, both of which are crucial in romantic relationships. Additionally, shared musical experiences can deepen romantic bonds by creating a sense of unity and emotional synchrony. *"By engaging in shared musical experiences, emotions are transferred to another"* (Omarji, 2025). This phenomenon explains why couples often associate specific songs with pivotal moments in their relationships, using music as a vessel for emotional connection and nostalgia.

Beyond connection, music also aids in conflict resolution. After disagreements, listening to or making music together can ease tension, rebuild intimacy, and lower stress. This is especially important since elevated stress, marked by high cortisol levels, is linked to reduced sexual desire. In this way, music supports both emotional regulation and long-term relationship maintenance (Omarji, 2025).

Music also influences individuals through lyrics. The study by Guéguen et al. (2010) concludes that romantic music can significantly influence romantic behavior, specifically increasing a woman's likelihood of responding positively to a courtship request. In the experiment, 87 female participants interacted with a male individual who asked for their phone number after they had been exposed to either a romantic or neutral song in a waiting room. The results showed a marked difference: **52.2%** of women who had listened to the romantic song gave the man their phone number, compared to only **27.9%** of those who had heard the neutral music. This suggests that romantic lyrics may activate emotional or cognitive behavior associated with love and intimacy, making individuals

more receptive to romantic situations. The researchers concluded that background music, especially songs with romantic themes, can serve as a powerful environmental cue that enhances romantic engagement.

To conclude, music enhances emotional engagement in media, making fictional characters more psychologically attractive by setting a mood or aligning with the viewer's musical preferences. Additionally, music can shape romantic behavior, as demonstrated by Guéguen et al. (2010), who found that romantic lyrics increase romantic response to courtship. By influencing emotions, fostering attraction, and helping with conflict resolution, music serves as a fundamental element in romantic engagement and emotional bonding with characters and people.

The Emotional Influence of Music in Cinematic Romance:

Movies often have the power to engage audiences not only with visual aspects but also with auditory aspects. Music and sound contribute to the entertainment engagement, function, educational purpose or aesthetic pleasure. Music is an effective way to bring out romantic feelings in movies. It can create a wide range of emotional reactions and can even make the viewers feel deeply moved or inspired (*The Psychology Of Music in Multimedia*, z.d.). Through different studies and researches it has been shown that music is a part of the big attention in these products. For centuries long music has been used to win over the audiences. If the tempo, lyrics, and how familiar a song is are used the right way, it can help people pay more attention to the message trying to persuade them.

Music has been associated with movies since the beginning of filmmaking. Some directors have created a unique identity through their use of music in their films, while artists have also gained recognition by contributing to soundtracks (Dittrich & Karlström, 2010). It has a deep and direct influence on our emotions. Iconic love scenes often rely on music to enhance the emotional impact of their romantic climaxes, thereby deepening the connection with the audience (Hettich, 2023). In romantic scenes, music works alongside the emotional and mental impact of the movie's story and visual style.

According to an article by Arcella (2022), romance films often feature orchestral music with violins taking the spotlight, creating an emotional background as the story unfolds. Nowadays, pop songs are frequently adapted into violin versions for these films, which helps trigger the audience's memories and emotional connections to the music. This technique results in a unique experience for each viewer, influencing how they connect with the film or even video games, making the emotional impact more personal (Arcella, 2022).

In conclusion, romantic movies do not always have to contain romantic music to make the audience feel engaged or emotionally connected. The strategic use of music in films, particularly in romantic scenes, not only enhances emotional engagement but also strengthens the connection between the audience and the story, making it a timeless tool for filmmakers to evoke powerful responses and deeper emotional connection.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature demonstrates that nostalgia is a longing for familiarity, often rooted in a psychological desire to return to a place of emotional safety. While nostalgia is a shared human experience, its measurement varies significantly, especially between cultural contexts. Music emerges as a key trigger of nostalgia and a powerful tool in cinematic romance, enhancing emotional engagement, signaling compatibility, and deepening connections. However, while much

is known about music's emotional influence, the research gap lies in understanding how nostalgia specifically shapes audience responses to romantic narratives in film.

Research Questions and potential hypotheses

Our main research question is how nostalgic music in romance movie trailers influences emotional engagement and viewers' likelihood of watching the full movie

To answer the main research questions the following questions will be addressed in this proposed research project:

- What makes music nostalgic?
- What makes movie trailers engaging?
- Does emotional engagement with nostalgic music in trailers increase viewers' likelihood of watching the full movie?
- How do different age groups respond to nostalgia in romance movie trailers?
- How do personal experiences and memories influence emotional responses to nostalgic music in trailers?

Our potential hypothesis is:
Viewers are more emotionally engaged with romance movie trailers when they experience music that creates a feeling nostalgia, leading to a stronger emotional connection and a higher likelihood of viewing the full movie.

Methodology

To test the influence of nostalgia and music in romance movie trailers and how they affect emotional engagement, there are several experimental methods to approach the topic. These can range from field experiments to psychophysiological measures.

The first method is using surveys, asking 40-50 participants aged 18-35 to rate their emotional response to a romance movie trailer. These people are recruited via university networks and social media and randomly assigned to a control group (no music while watching the trailer), or experimental group (with music). The results may reveal differences in emotional intensity, the level of nostalgia, and the connection to the story. A couple of topics and questions for the survey would be:

1. Demographic information like age, gender, cultural background
2. How emotionally engaged did you feel while watching the romantic movie trailer?
3. How intense were your emotional reactions during the trailer?
4. Did any part of the film remind you of past experiences or memories?
5. Did the music evoke any nostalgic memories for you?
6. If yes, which parts? How did the nostalgic elements make you feel?
7. How did the music in the trailer influence your emotional experience?
8. Did the music make sure you felt more engaged in the movie trailer?
9. Would you go see the movie?

To add to that, a ‘scale-survey’ will also be held. In this survey, the questions will be about rating specific emotional reactions on a scale from 1 to 10. This can help create more data, which is very useful in comparing results during the research and eventually coming up with a conclusion.

Secondly, psychophysiological measurements are valuable in research because they’re hard to fake. Emotional engagement can be tracked through heart rate, skin conductance, and facial expressions while watching a trailer (BRADLEY et al., 1994). Increased responses indicate stronger emotional impact.
Brain activity can also be measured, using Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) or Electroencephalography (EEG). These systems may detect abnormalities within the brain that cannot be found with other imaging techniques (Radiological Society of North America (RSNA) and American College of Radiology (ACR), z.d.). This would allow researchers to see which areas of the brain are activated when nostalgic music is playing versus when it’s not. Areas in the brain associated with memory and emotion, like the hippocampus, could be highlighted in nostalgic scenes.

After the measurements are conducted, it is important to combine them (J Lang & M Bradley, 2009) and look at whether the outcomes of the physical research (heartrate, skin-conductance and brain

activity) relate to the answers of the survey-based research. T-tests will analyze engagement differences across conditions.

This research must consider ethical factors such as informed consent and ensuring emotional well-being. Since nostalgic content can evoke strong feelings, participants should be warned beforehand and allowed to withdraw at any point. Additionally, participants' privacy must be protected, particularly with physiological data.

In conclusion, combining both survey-based and psychophysiological measurements provides an in-depth understanding of how nostalgia and music influence emotional engagement in romance movie trailers, helping researchers better understand the psychological and physiological factors behind viewer engagement.

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We used ChatGPT for creating the (sub)titles, to make them more engaging and appealing. ChatGPT is also used for rephrasing some of our research, to make it seem more formal and professional.

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