

A Review on How Nostalgic Emotions Influence Contemporary Consumer Preferences and Cultural Revival of Traditional Haryanvi Cuisine in Modern India

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Abstract: *This review explores the influence of nostalgia on consumer behavior and cultural identity, focusing on the resurgence of traditional Haryanvi cuisine in contemporary India. With increasing urbanization and globalization, traditional food practices are being reinterpreted through a lens of cultural pride and emotional connection. Nostalgia, evoked through storytelling, visual media, and culinary memory, serves as a powerful marketing and emotional tool in shaping consumer preferences. The review synthesizes literature from cultural studies, consumer psychology, and food marketing to understand how Haryanvi food is being rediscovered and revalued in modern culinary spaces, especially among younger generations seeking authenticity and roots.*

Keywords: Nostalgia, Haryanvi cuisine, traditional food, consumer behavior, culinary heritage, emotional branding, food memory, cultural identity, regional cuisine, food marketing

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, regional cuisines across India have seen a cultural and commercial revival. Among them, Haryanvi cuisine is gaining renewed attention, largely driven by emotional connections and nostalgia. As younger generations seek authentic experiences in food and identity, nostalgia has become a critical lens through which traditional culinary practices are revived. This paper reviews how nostalgic sentiment drives consumer interest in Haryanvi cuisine, influencing both individual preferences and wider cultural revival.

In recent years, nostalgia has emerged as a powerful emotional driver shaping consumer behavior, especially within the food industry. As modern India rapidly urbanizes and globalizes, traditional regional cuisines risk being overshadowed by contemporary food trends and fast-food culture. However, a notable counter-movement is gaining momentum—one that romanticizes the past and seeks cultural connection through culinary experiences. This review focuses on how nostalgic emotions influence contemporary consumer preferences and contribute to the cultural revival of traditional Haryanvi cuisine.

Haryanvi cuisine, known for its simplicity, rustic flavors, and deep-rooted agrarian traditions, is witnessing renewed interest, especially among younger generations and urban dwellers. Food is no longer just about sustenance; it has become a cultural artifact—evoking childhood memories, family rituals, and the warmth of rural life. The nostalgic appeal of dishes like *bajre ki roti*, *churma*, *ghee-laden lassi*, and *kadhi* lies in their ability to reconnect individuals with their heritage and a perceived simpler, purer past.

This review explores how storytelling, emotional branding, and digital platforms—particularly food vlogs and social media—play a crucial role in reviving traditional Haryanvi cuisine. Through curated narratives, food influencers and local entrepreneurs frame these dishes as not only tasty but emotionally meaningful. The emotional connections

fostered by nostalgia-based marketing create a sense of authenticity, community, and belonging, which in turn impacts consumer choices.

By synthesizing academic and market literature, this paper examines the mechanisms through which nostalgia shapes food preferences and contributes to regional culinary revival. It also investigates the socio-cultural and psychological factors underlying this phenomenon. Ultimately, this review provides insight into how traditional food, when interwoven with memory and identity, serves as a medium of cultural preservation in an increasingly modernized India.

Theoretical Framework: Nostalgia and Consumer Behavior

Nostalgia is a complex emotion involving longing for the past, often associated with comfort, security, and identity. Holak & Havlena (1998) define it as a sentimental longing for the past, often idealized. In consumer psychology, nostalgic advertising and branding play an essential role in shaping product preference, particularly for food items associated with tradition (Sierra & McQuitty, 2007).

Nostalgia, often defined as a sentimental longing for the past, has evolved from being viewed merely as a psychological emotion to a significant construct in consumer behavior studies. The theoretical foundation of nostalgia-driven consumer behavior lies at the intersection of emotional marketing, identity theory, and cultural consumption. Scholars such as Holbrook and Schindler (1991) argue that nostalgic preferences are shaped by formative life experiences, particularly those related to food, which is deeply embedded in family rituals and cultural traditions.

In the context of consumer behavior, nostalgia operates as a cognitive-emotional construct that influences perception, memory recall, and decision-making. When consumers encounter stimuli—such as traditional food, smells, visuals, or narratives—they often engage in nostalgic reflection, which activates positive affective responses. These emotional triggers enhance brand attachment, perceived authenticity, and trust, making consumers more likely to engage with nostalgic products.

Stern (1992) proposed that nostalgic appeals in marketing tap into collective memory and cultural identity, thereby influencing purchase intent. For regional cuisines like Haryanvi food, nostalgic marketing aligns personal memory with a broader cultural revival narrative. It creates a sense of continuity, belonging, and emotional security in an era of rapid socio-cultural change.

Furthermore, the concept of “restorative vs. reflective nostalgia” (Boym, 2001) provides an important lens: while restorative nostalgia seeks to reconstruct the lost past, reflective nostalgia appreciates the emotion itself. Haryanvi food promotions often blend both, offering consumers an emotional journey while reinforcing traditional values and heritage.

This framework explains why nostalgia not only influences consumer preferences but also fosters cultural revival. It acts as both a psychological anchor and a strategic tool for marketers, especially in the context of regional cuisine, where identity, memory, and taste intersect. Thus, nostalgia becomes a powerful driver in shaping contemporary food consumption patterns.

Haryanvi Cuisine: A Brief Overview

Haryanvi cuisine, rooted in agrarian culture, emphasizes simple, hearty meals such as bajra roti, churma, lassi, and seasonal vegetable dishes. Historically homemade and locally sourced, these foods were tied to community rituals and festivals (Singh, 2020). Modernization and migration led to their decline, but recent digital and cultural movements are fueling renewed interest.

Haryanvi cuisine reflects the agrarian roots, simplicity, and hearty lifestyle of the people of Haryana, a state in northern India. Known for its rustic flavors, nutritious ingredients, and minimal use of complex spices, the cuisine embodies the essence of rural India—where food is deeply tied to local agricultural practices, seasonal produce, and traditional values. The cuisine is primarily vegetarian, influenced by the dietary customs of farming communities, though some regions also include dairy-rich and occasional non-vegetarian dishes.

Staple foods in Haryanvi households include *bajre ki roti* (millet bread), *missi roti* (gram flour flatbread), *kadhi* (gram flour and yogurt-based curry), *churma* (sweet crushed wheat), and *bathua saag* (a seasonal leafy green dish). Dairy products like *ghee*, *lassi*, *buttermilk*, and homemade *paneer* are widely used, reflecting the state's strong dairy culture. These foods are not only rich in taste but also nutritionally balanced, supporting the labor-intensive lifestyle of rural Haryana.

Meals are often accompanied by freshly churned *makhan* (butter), raw onions, and pickles. The emphasis is on freshness, seasonality, and simplicity, with a deep respect for food as a gift of nature. The culinary practices are also intertwined with cultural and religious festivals—*teej*, *lohri*, and *baisakhi*, for instance, feature special foods prepared using traditional recipes.

In recent years, there has been a growing effort to revive and document traditional Haryanvi cuisine, which has long remained overshadowed by the more commercialized cuisines of neighboring regions like Punjab and Rajasthan. With the rise of food blogs, vlogs, and cultural movements that celebrate local identity, Haryanvi food is gradually reclaiming its space in India's diverse culinary landscape, offering both nostalgic value and authentic regional flavor to modern consumers.

Nostalgia as a Marketing Tool in Regional Food Revival

Branding traditional foods with nostalgic narratives—such as rural memories, grandmother's recipes, and cultural rituals—has proven effective in reintroducing Haryanvi dishes to urban consumers. Food startups and vloggers (Kumar & Mehta, 2021) now use platforms like YouTube and Instagram to tell emotional stories about food origins, invoking nostalgia as a marketing strategy.

Nostalgia has become a powerful and strategic marketing tool, especially in the revival and promotion of regional cuisines. In an era dominated by fast food, urban lifestyles, and globalized tastes, consumers often long for the simplicity and emotional warmth of traditional food. Marketers and food entrepreneurs have tapped into this sentiment by using nostalgia not only to differentiate regional food offerings but also to forge deep emotional connections with consumers. This emotional connection helps reinforce identity, cultural memory, and a sense of belonging.

In the context of regional food revival, such as Haryanvi cuisine, nostalgia-driven marketing often involves storytelling that highlights ancestral recipes, family traditions, rural life, and cultural rituals associated with food. Advertisements, packaging, and digital content—particularly food vlogs and Instagram reels—evoke the flavors of childhood and the values of a simpler past. Terms like “grandmother's recipe,” “authentic taste of the village,” or “traditional flavors of Haryana” are frequently employed to activate emotional memories in consumers.

This technique aligns with emotional branding strategies, where the product is not just sold based on taste or quality, but on the experience and sentiment it offers. Nostalgic cues increase perceived authenticity, encourage consumer trust, and stimulate word-of-mouth promotion, making them highly effective in a culturally diverse market like India.

Moreover, nostalgia also supports cultural preservation by generating renewed interest in forgotten or underrepresented regional dishes. In doing so, it creates opportunities for local farmers, cooks, and small businesses to thrive. Thus, nostalgia is more than a sentimental feeling—it becomes a bridge between tradition and modernity, memory and marketing, and ultimately plays a pivotal role in reviving and sustaining regional food cultures like that of Haryanvi cuisine in contemporary India.

Role of Media and Storytelling

Visual and digital media amplify nostalgic appeal by presenting food not just as sustenance but as a narrative of identity. Bajaj & Gupta (2019) suggest emotional storytelling enhances brand loyalty and cultural pride. Haryanvi vloggers often emphasize familial warmth and simplicity associated with traditional dishes.

In the revival of traditional regional cuisines like Haryanvi food, media and storytelling play a crucial role in shaping public perception, influencing consumer behavior, and preserving cultural identity. With the advent of digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and food blogs, storytelling has become an essential tool for promoting traditional dishes

to a broader and younger audience. Through visual narratives, personal anecdotes, and cultural symbolism, food communicators breathe life into recipes, transforming them into emotional and nostalgic experiences.

Storytelling in this context goes beyond describing how food is prepared; it often includes tales of family traditions, rural life, festivals, and generational wisdom. These narratives evoke powerful memories and sentiments that connect consumers to their roots, even if they live far from their ancestral homes. For example, a video showcasing the making of *bajre ki roti* on a clay stove, narrated by an elderly village woman, not only highlights culinary technique but also stirs emotional resonance tied to authenticity and heritage.

Mass media also amplifies the reach of such stories, helping to elevate regional cuisines from obscurity to recognition. Television food shows, social media influencers, and cultural documentaries frequently feature traditional Haryanvi dishes, fostering interest and curiosity among viewers. Influencers often frame these dishes within broader themes such as "forgotten flavors of India" or "grandmother's kitchen," which appeal to a sense of nostalgia and cultural pride.

Furthermore, storytelling helps create a brand narrative for regional foods, making them marketable in urban and global spaces. This approach not only supports tourism and culinary entrepreneurship but also plays a key role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Ultimately, media-driven storytelling turns traditional food into a cultural experience—one that connects the past with the present, and memory with market.

Food Memory and Intergenerational Transmission

Food is a repository of cultural memory. Intergenerational transmission—recipes passed from elders to youth—plays a critical role in sustaining culinary traditions. As noted by Boym (2001), reflective nostalgia emphasizes continuity of identity, which is evident in the ways families attempt to preserve ancestral cooking practices.

Food memory plays a vital role in shaping cultural identity and emotional connections across generations. It encompasses the sensory recollections—taste, smell, sight, and touch—associated with traditional dishes, often rooted in family rituals, festivals, and everyday meals. These memories are powerful emotional anchors that connect individuals to their heritage and shared past, making food a conduit for intergenerational transmission of culture and values.

In the context of Haryanvi cuisine, food memory often emerges through experiences such as watching elders cook on wood-fired stoves, savoring homemade *churma* during festivals, or enjoying *lassi* after a day in the fields. These memories are passed down informally through storytelling, cooking together, and family meals, embedding cultural knowledge within daily life.

As modern lifestyles increasingly disconnect younger generations from their rural roots, preserving food memory becomes essential. Parents and grandparents play a crucial role in this process, transmitting not only recipes but also the cultural meanings, agricultural practices, and social customs associated with traditional food. This transmission ensures the survival of regional culinary traditions like Haryanvi cuisine, while also fostering a sense of continuity and identity in younger generations. Thus, food memory becomes a living legacy, preserving culture through shared taste and tradition.

Urbanization, Identity, and the Search for Authenticity

In urbanized settings, traditional foods act as anchors of identity. Tuan (1977) and Appadurai (1988) argue that food connects people to their roots, especially in rapidly changing socio-economic contexts. Haryanvi youth and diaspora populations often express renewed interest in regional food as a way to reclaim heritage.

Urbanization in India has brought significant lifestyle changes, leading to the dilution of regional identities and traditional practices. As cities expand and populations become more cosmopolitan, regional cuisines like Haryanvi food often face marginalization, replaced by standardized, fast-paced, and globalized food habits. In this transition, many individuals, especially those who have migrated from rural areas, experience a loss of cultural identity and a longing for authentic connections to their roots. This growing disconnection has sparked a renewed interest in rediscovering and preserving traditional food cultures as a way of reclaiming identity.

For many urban dwellers, authenticity in food becomes a form of cultural expression and emotional grounding. The search for authenticity is not merely about taste but also about the meaning, memory, and heritage that food represents. Traditional Haryanvi dishes such as *bajre ki roti*, *kadhi*, and *churma* are increasingly viewed not only as nostalgic meals but as symbols of a simpler, value-oriented lifestyle that urban living often lacks.

This quest for authentic experiences is often fulfilled through cultural festivals, local food events, social media, and culinary tourism, where traditional food becomes a bridge between the urban present and rural past. Restaurants and home-based food ventures specializing in regional cuisines are also capitalizing on this demand by marketing their offerings as “authentic,” “traditional,” and “home-style.”

The revival of Haryanvi cuisine in urban settings thus reflects a deeper socio-cultural movement—a desire to reconnect with one’s roots, assert regional identity, and find emotional fulfillment in the midst of a rapidly changing world. In this context, food becomes more than nourishment; it serves as a cultural anchor, a symbol of authenticity, and a medium through which individuals negotiate their identities in urban modernity.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite the positive role of nostalgia, over-romanticization can lead to the commercialization of culture at the expense of authenticity. There’s also a risk of excluding evolving culinary practices that reflect present realities. Care must be taken to preserve both tradition and innovation.

While the nostalgic revival of traditional Haryanvi cuisine presents exciting opportunities for cultural preservation and market innovation, it also faces several challenges and limitations. One of the primary hurdles is the lack of documentation and standardization of traditional recipes. Much of Haryanvi culinary knowledge exists in oral form, passed down through generations without formal records. This makes it difficult to preserve, replicate, or commercialize the cuisine on a large scale without losing its authenticity.

Another challenge lies in the shifting dietary preferences of modern consumers. Urbanization, fast-paced lifestyles, and the rise of convenience foods have altered food habits, particularly among younger generations who may lack interest or familiarity with traditional dishes. Despite nostalgic marketing, regional cuisines like Haryanvi food struggle to compete with mainstream or global cuisines that dominate urban markets.

Economic and infrastructural limitations also hinder the scalability of Haryanvi cuisine. Many local food producers and traditional cooks lack access to proper packaging, distribution networks, or digital platforms to promote their offerings effectively. In addition, the seasonal and local nature of ingredients in Haryanvi recipes can limit year-round availability and consistency in quality.

Moreover, there is a risk of over-romanticizing the past. Nostalgia-driven marketing can sometimes create an idealized or stereotypical image of rural life that doesn’t align with current realities, leading to misrepresentation or cultural dilution. Balancing emotional appeal with cultural accuracy and respect is a delicate task.

Finally, policy support for regional culinary revival remains limited. There is a need for government initiatives, culinary tourism development, and academic research to support local food systems. Without structured efforts, the revival of Haryanvi cuisine may remain confined to niche audiences. Thus, while nostalgia offers a promising gateway, sustained revival of traditional cuisine requires addressing practical, cultural, and systemic challenges.

II. CONCLUSION

Nostalgia is a powerful emotional tool shaping the love for Haryanvi cuisine in modern India. Through emotional branding, storytelling, and media engagement, traditional food practices are being rediscovered and celebrated. This review affirms that nostalgia not only influences consumer behavior but also contributes to the cultural revival and preservation of regional food heritage.

The review highlights how nostalgic emotions serve as a potent force in shaping contemporary consumer preferences and driving the cultural revival of traditional Haryanvi cuisine in modern India. In an age of rapid globalization and changing food habits, nostalgia reconnects individuals with their roots, evoking memories of simpler times, family

traditions, and authentic flavors. For many, food becomes more than mere sustenance—it transforms into a cultural artifact loaded with emotional and historical significance.

Nostalgia-driven marketing has effectively positioned traditional Haryanvi dishes such as *bajre ki roti*, *kadhi*, *churma*, and *lassi* as symbols of identity and heritage. Through storytelling, digital media, and emotional branding, these foods are being rediscovered and revalued by a generation seeking authenticity and belonging. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and local food festivals have played a vital role in amplifying these narratives, connecting rural traditions to urban consumers.

However, the revival journey is not without its challenges. Issues such as loss of oral culinary knowledge, limited scalability, shifting food trends, and romanticized depictions of rural life present significant barriers. Addressing these challenges requires a balanced approach that combines cultural preservation with innovation and inclusivity.

Ultimately, nostalgia serves not only as a marketing strategy but also as a bridge between generations, reinforcing cultural continuity through shared food experiences. The resurgence of Haryanvi cuisine stands as a testament to the emotional power of food memory, underscoring the importance of preserving regional culinary traditions in an ever-modernizing India.

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