

# The role of nostalgia in marketing: Leveraging retro branding to connect with modern consumers

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## Abstract

Nostalgia marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for brands to connect with consumers by evoking emotional memories of the past. This paper explores how brands leverage nostalgia to create emotional bonds, enhance brand loyalty and drive purchasing behavior. It examines relevant theoretical frameworks, including Emotional Resonance Theory and Consumer Brand Relationships Theory, to explain the psychological underpinnings of nostalgia in marketing. Key insights are illustrated through detailed case studies involving Spotify's "Wrapped" campaign, Burger King's retro rebranding, LEGO's franchise collaborations and Silent Hill 2 video game remake. These cases highlight how nostalgia enhances emotional engagement, fosters community through shared memories, and even influences impulsive buying behavior. Results indicate that nostalgia marketing is particularly effective with Millennials and Gen Z generations, a demographic that highly value authenticity, emotional connection and digital personalization. The discussion also evaluates the ethical implications of nostalgia-based marketing practices, including emotional manipulation, cultural sensitivity and environmental responsibility. Recommendations are offered for marketers to ethically and effectively apply nostalgic strategies without reinforcing idealized or exclusionary narratives. Ultimately, this study contributes actionable insights for marketing professionals seeking to integrate nostalgic elements into their campaigns in a way that balances emotional appeal with ethical integrity and sustainable branding practices.

**Keywords:** brand strategy, consumer behavior, emotional resonance, generational marketing, marketing ethics.

