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Analyzing the Relevance of Nostalgia-Based Marketing as an effective modern marketing strategy concerning advertising commercials from 2019 to 2024.

Sneha Bhagat¹, Shirsh Mishra², Sagarika Gursale³

¹ Student of final year in Journalism and Media Production at Ajeenkya DY Patil University, Pune, E-mail – snehakbs1105@gmail.com

² Student of final year in Journalism and Media Production at Ajeenkya DY Patil University, Pune, E-mail – shirshmishra7@gmail.com

³ Student of final year in Journalism and Media Production at Ajeenkya DY Patil University, Pune, E-mail – sagarikagursale04@gmail.com

ABSTRACT :

This research paper investigates the significance and efficacy of nostalgia-based marketing as a contemporary advertising technique, concentrating on commercials broadcast between 2019 and 2024. The study delves into how nostalgic components such as imagery, music, narratives, and cultural allusions affect consumer interaction, brand recall, and purchasing behavior. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines qualitative content analysis of advertisements from well-known Indian brands like Maggi, Nirma, Santoor, Cadbury, Amul, and MakeMyTrip, alongside a survey of 84 participants. The results indicate that nostalgia-driven advertisements considerably enhance emotional involvement and brand recognition. Key nostalgic elements, including vintage visuals, familiar jingles, and evocative storytelling, emerge as crucial factors in fostering emotional connections, increasing brand loyalty, and enhancing overall engagement. While nostalgia alone does not directly drive purchase intent, the survey suggests that it influences buying decisions when paired with other critical factors like product quality. The paper concludes that nostalgia-based advertising remains a compelling strategy in today's competitive digital environment, enabling brands to create meaningful connections across different generations. Nevertheless, it underscores the need to balance nostalgic appeal with genuine product value to prevent perceived emotional manipulation. This research highlights nostalgia-based advertising as a sustainable and potent tool for modern marketers aiming to engage consumers in an emotionally resonant and lasting manner.

Keywords: Nostalgia-based marketing, advertising strategies, consumer engagement, brand recall, emotional connection, purchase intent, retro advertising, digital advertising, cultural allusions, multi-sensory marketing, emotional branding, brand loyalty, generational marketing.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Questions

1. How effective is nostalgia-based advertising in influencing consumer engagement, brand recall, and purchase intent compared to non-nostalgic advertisements?
2. What key nostalgic elements (e.g., visuals, music, storytelling) impact consumer emotions and brand perception in advertisements from 2019 to 2024?

INTRODUCTION

Nostalgia, an emotion of memory and longing from the past, always turns out to be a psychological trigger to impress the viewer and let the consumer with a thought of profound memories. Nostalgia-based marketing, whether a powerful tool or not, is a trending discussion and a strategy considered to be powerful in the media platforms, too. It turns out to be a generational resemblance by evoking timeless themes. By using relatable elements from retro times, new-age advertisements use this as a tool to drive consumer behavior and increase purchase intentions.

Nostalgia, derived from the Greek words *nostos* (return) and *algos* (pain), refers to a sentimental longing for the past. In the realm of marketing, nostalgia has evolved into a potent psychological tool, enabling brands to forge deep emotional connections with consumers. As markets become increasingly saturated, advertisers are turning to nostalgia-driven campaigns to differentiate themselves, leveraging shared cultural memories to enhance brand loyalty and recall. This study examines the role of nostalgia in advertising by analyzing eight prominent Indian brands—Maggi, Sundarya Sabun (Nirma), Santoor, Moti Soap, Cadbury, Amul, Lux, and MakeMyTrip (MMT)—across various sectors, including FMCG, personal care, confectionery, dairy, and digital services.

This research focuses on major elements like strategies, platforms, effectiveness, period of releasing advertisement, public figures, and their iconic roles, fond memories, familiar jingles, and many more nostalgic elements. Brands and products using this in their advertisements are a target-audience specific study that will uncover how multi-sensory engagement, incorporating a multi-sensory approach, can amplify nostalgia's effect.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to examine the effectiveness of nostalgia-based advertising between 2019 and 2024. A thematic content analysis is conducted on selected advertisements from prominent brands, including Cadbury, Golbibo, and Swiggy Instamart. This analysis focuses on identifying key nostalgic elements, such as retro visuals, vintage music and jingles, cultural references, and narrative styles, that are designed to evoke emotional responses and foster brand connection. To complement the content analysis, a structured survey is administered to a target sample of 100 participants, with preliminary insights drawn from an initial dataset of 84 respondents. The questionnaire is designed to capture a range of variables, including emotional engagement, frequency of exposure to nostalgic advertisements, brand recall, and the influence of nostalgic elements on purchase intent. The survey is distributed via Google Forms, developed by Shirsh Mishra, and the collected data is organized and analyzed in Microsoft Excel by Sagarika Gursale. This methodological framework enables a comprehensive evaluation of both the strategic use of nostalgia in advertising content and its psychological and behavioral impact on consumers.

The Google Form titled "**Nostalgia-Based Advertising Research Form (Responses)**" contains survey responses from 84 participants regarding their perceptions and emotional engagement with nostalgia-themed advertisements. The survey covers demographics, frequency of encountering nostalgic ads, emotional reactions, recall of brands using nostalgia, and opinions on the effectiveness of nostalgia in advertising.

Link:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1i94oLocRqEiolcOd-cXhIjdW9y_shH-xDUVWkc3etzI/edit?resourcekey=&gid=952114133#gid=952114133

Survey Findings and Analysis

A survey titled "*Nostalgia-Based Advertising Research Form (Responses)*" was conducted to assess public perception and emotional engagement with nostalgia-themed advertisements. A total of 84 participants provided insights into their exposure to, emotional responses to, and the perceived impact of nostalgic advertisements on consumer behavior.

Demographics and Exposure

Respondents represented a broad range of age groups (18–54), with a slight majority identifying as female. A significant number of participants, particularly within the 18–34 age range, reported encountering nostalgic ads very often, indicating that such content is prevalent across media platforms. Only a few respondents indicated they rarely or never came across nostalgia-based advertising.

Emotional Engagement and Reactions

Participants commonly associated nostalgic advertisements with positive emotions such as happiness, warmth, and sentimentality. Most agreed that these ads evoke fond memories and generate a sense of familiarity. A small minority reported feelings of indifference or confusion, but these were notably less frequent.

Brand Recall and Influence on Consumer Behavior

The majority of respondents found it easy to recall brands from nostalgia-themed ads, with frequently mentioned examples including Maggi, Cadbury, Parle, Amul, Nirma, Bajaj, and others. While nostalgia alone was not the primary factor influencing purchase intent, it was seen as a supportive factor when paired with product quality, pricing, and brand reputation. Visual and auditory elements such as retro TV scenes, childhood imagery, and vintage jingles were identified as the most emotionally impactful. Cultural references and storytelling also played a role, though slightly less prominently.

Perceived Effectiveness and Concerns

Most participants agreed that nostalgia is an effective marketing strategy, credited with strengthening emotional bonds, enhancing brand recall, and building trust. Many noted that nostalgic content is more impactful on digital platforms, especially social media, where such ads are more interactive and shareable. However, a few respondents cautioned against overreliance on nostalgia, emphasizing the need to balance emotional appeal with genuine product value. Some also expressed concern about potential emotional manipulation if nostalgia is used without substantive backing. Overall, the survey indicates that nostalgia-based advertising resonates emotionally with a broad audience, enhances brand recall, and moderately influences purchasing decisions. It is widely regarded as a sustainable and effective marketing strategy when executed thoughtfully with authentic nostalgic elements.

FINDINGS

In-Depth Brand-Wise Findings on Nostalgia-Based Advertising (2019–2024)

As part of the extended qualitative analysis, this section explores how nostalgia-based marketing has been applied across eight diverse Indian brands between 2019 and 2024. These brands, Maggi, Nirma (Sundarya Sabun), Santoor, Moti Soap, Cadbury, Amul, Lux, and MakeMyTrip (MMT) span sectors such as FMCG, personal care, confectionery, dairy, and digital travel services. Each brand employs nostalgia distinctively, tailored to its consumer base and cultural history, offering insights into the emotional, psychological, and behavioral impact of nostalgic advertising in a modern context.

1. Maggi

Maggi effectively employs nostalgia to invoke feelings of warmth, familial bonding, and comfort, primarily through its long-standing identity as a "2-minute noodles" brand. Advertisements often portray relatable scenarios such as childhood snacks or mother-child moments, which were particularly impactful during the COVID-19 lockdowns. The brand strategically uses familiar kitchen imagery, emotional narratives, and retro-inspired packaging to rekindle memories, especially among millennials and Gen Z. This emotional connection fosters brand loyalty across generations, positioning Maggi not just as a convenient food product but as a comforting symbol of everyday nostalgia.

2. Nirma (Sundarya Sabun)

Nirma draws on its rich advertising legacy by reintroducing iconic elements like the "Washing Powder Nirma" jingle and the dancing girl mascot in updated formats. These modern iterations maintain the core auditory and visual appeal while adapting to digital platforms, ensuring relevance among younger consumers. By preserving its original identity, Nirma leverages generational memory, creating a nostalgic continuity that resonates with long-term customers. The consistent use of legacy branding illustrates how familiarity in tone and imagery can effectively maintain emotional relevance and trust in a fast-evolving FMCG market.

3. Santoor

Santoor continues to capitalize on nostalgia by preserving its signature narrative—"Young girl? No, she's a mother!"—which has remained consistent over the decades. The brand's minimal alterations in music, visuals, and storytelling help build trust and emotional recognition. Occasional updates featuring contemporary actors keep the campaigns fresh while maintaining the original theme. This emotional continuity, rather than dramatic changes, underpins Santoor's nostalgic value, appealing to loyal consumers while introducing a familiar message to new ones. The brand exemplifies how long-term consistency in message and form can become a powerful emotional anchor.

4. Moti Soap

Moti Soap leverages nostalgia through culturally rooted imagery associated with traditional Indian bathing rituals. Its advertisements, although limited, often feature visuals such as brass vessels, lotus flowers, and serene water settings to evoke memories of heritage self-care practices. This approach appeals to consumers who seek authenticity and a return to simple, ritualistic wellness. While not a frequently advertised brand, Moti effectively utilizes sensory cues to create a niche, nostalgic identity, positioning itself as a premium, tradition-oriented product in a market increasingly driven by modern and fast-paced messaging.

5. Cadbury

Cadbury's nostalgia strategy is highlighted by its modern reinterpretation of the classic "Cricket Girl" ad, where gender roles were reversed while retaining the original melody and emotional tone. The brand frequently uses festive and childhood memories, such as sharing sweets during Diwali or school events, to deepen emotional ties with consumers. By blending traditional sentiments with contemporary themes, Cadbury manages to appeal to both long-time fans and new audiences. Its storytelling technique—anchored in emotion, memory, and shared cultural experiences—cements its place as one of the most emotionally resonant advertisers in India.

6. Amul

Amul sustains its nostalgic appeal primarily through the long-running Amul Girl cartoon series, which blends satire with commentary on current events. The visual format has remained largely unchanged, preserving its hand-drawn charm and humorous tone across decades. This consistency enables the brand to forge strong intergenerational bonds, as consumers relate to both the style and socio-cultural references. Amul's ability to remain timely while maintaining visual uniformity demonstrates the strength of familiarity in branding. The cartoons serve not just as advertisements but as cultural markers that embody collective memory and sentiment.

7. Lux

Lux taps into nostalgia by continuing its historic association with Bollywood glamour. Its ads often draw visual parallels to vintage film aesthetics, referencing classic beauty standards while incorporating current celebrities. The brand maintains continuity through recurring themes of elegance and timeless beauty, appealing to both older viewers and modern audiences. By blending retro cues with present-day cultural figures, Lux successfully bridges generational gaps. Its long-standing tagline as "the beauty soap of film stars" reinforces its aspirational value, making nostalgia an integral part of its identity and long-term appeal.

8. MakeMyTrip (MMT)

MakeMyTrip adopts a more contemporary approach to nostalgia, focusing on recent memories of carefree travel, especially pre-pandemic experiences. Its advertisements use humorous throwbacks, vintage brochure visuals, and familiar vacation moments to elicit a longing for simpler travel times. With

celebrities like Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt, MMT combines modern charisma with emotionally relatable storytelling. Unlike traditional nostalgia rooted in decades-old imagery, MMT's strategy draws on short-term emotional recall, especially among millennials. This approach reflects a shift in nostalgic marketing—from generational memory to experience-driven emotion—in today's fast-moving digital era.

RELEVANCE OF NOSTALGIA-BASED ADVERTISING (2019–2024)

From 2019 to 2024, nostalgia-based advertising has become more popular and relevant, especially in a fast-paced digital world where emotional connection is often missing in marketing. Our research—including a survey of 84 people and an analysis of advertisements from eight major Indian brands—shows that using nostalgia in ads is not just a creative trend. It is a smart and effective way to emotionally connect with audiences, improve brand recall, and build long-term consumer loyalty.

Nostalgia works well across different age groups. Brands like Maggi, Cadbury, and Santoor use familiar songs, visuals, and stories to remind people of their childhood or family life. These elements create feelings of warmth, happiness, and comfort. Our survey found that most participants felt emotionally connected to nostalgic ads and could easily remember the brands featured in them. Ads that included cultural references and past memories stood out more to people and made a stronger impact.

Other brands like Amul and Lux show how keeping a consistent visual style or using well-known celebrities over time helps build a strong connection with their audience. Even less frequently advertised brands like Moti Soap use traditional Indian imagery to connect with people looking for authenticity and heritage. On the other hand, MakeMyTrip (MMT) uses nostalgia in a modern way by reminding people of recent experiences like pre-pandemic travel, making it relevant to today's youth who value experiences over products.

In today's crowded digital market, nostalgia helps ads feel more personal and memorable. People are more likely to connect with and share ads that bring back good memories. However, our findings also highlight the need for balance. Using nostalgia must be backed by real product quality and relevance. Otherwise, audiences may feel the ads are emotionally manipulative or overused. To sum up, nostalgia-based advertising has remained a powerful and flexible marketing strategy between 2019 and 2024. When done right, it builds strong emotional connections, appeals to multiple generations, and helps brands stand out in a competitive space. This makes nostalgia an important and relevant tool for modern marketers who want to engage audiences in a meaningful and lasting way.

Research Question 1:

How effective is nostalgia-based advertising in influencing consumer engagement, brand recall, and purchase intent compared to non-nostalgic advertisements?

Nostalgia-based advertising proves highly effective in increasing consumer engagement, brand recall, and purchase intent. The survey conducted in this study indicates that nostalgic ads, featuring elements like familiar jingles, retro visuals, and childhood memories, evoke stronger emotional responses compared to non-nostalgic ads. Brand recall was notably higher for ads that incorporated nostalgic elements, as they triggered memories and positive emotions linked to the brand. While purchase intent was not solely driven by nostalgia, it served as a supportive factor when paired with product quality and relevance. In essence, nostalgia-based advertising is more effective than non-nostalgic ads in fostering emotional connections, improving brand recognition, and indirectly influencing purchasing behavior.

Research Question 2:

What key nostalgic elements (e.g., visuals, music, storytelling) have the greatest impact on consumer emotions and brand perception in advertisements from 2019 to 2024?

The survey findings and content analysis reveal that visuals, music (especially jingles), and storytelling were the most impactful nostalgic elements in driving consumer emotions and shaping brand perception. Visuals, such as retro TV scenes, childhood imagery, and culturally familiar references, elicited strong emotional responses, creating a sense of nostalgia. Music, particularly iconic jingles from the past, helped reinforce emotional connections and improve brand recall. Storytelling, rooted in personal experiences or familiar cultural moments, also resonated deeply with audiences, enhancing emotional engagement. Brands like Cadbury, Maggi, and Amul effectively utilized these elements, improving their brand perception and emotional appeal. Overall, the use of these nostalgic elements in advertisements resulted in heightened emotional resonance, improved consumer perception, and stronger brand loyalty.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research underscores the growing importance of nostalgia-based marketing as a highly effective and emotionally resonant strategy in the modern advertising world, particularly between 2019 and 2024. By skillfully incorporating nostalgic elements such as familiar visuals, iconic jingles, and evocative storytelling, brands have managed to forge strong emotional connections with their audiences, significantly enhancing brand recall and fostering consumer loyalty. The power of nostalgia lies not just in its ability to evoke memories of the past but in its capacity to create a sense of warmth, comfort, and familiarity, which deeply resonates with diverse consumer groups across generations. While nostalgia in advertising does not always directly translate into immediate purchase intent, it plays a vital role in influencing consumer decisions when paired with other crucial factors such as product quality, price, and brand reputation. However, the research also highlights the necessity for a careful and balanced approach, ensuring that nostalgia doesn't become a tool of emotional manipulation, but instead remains authentic and aligned with the brand's values. In a digital age where consumer attention is fragmented and fleeting, nostalgia offers a unique opportunity for brands to stand out, create lasting emotional connections, and engage audiences in a meaningful, memorable way. This study affirms that nostalgia-based marketing, when implemented thoughtfully, remains a powerful,

sustainable, and impactful tool for modern advertisers aiming to remain relevant and emotionally connected to their consumers in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

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