

Nostalgia Marketing Tips for Success

Tried and Trusted vs Tired and Rusted



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Why does nostalgia marketing work?

Nostalgia is a powerful tool for creating an emotional connection with your audience.

Research shows we're more likely to spend money when we're feeling nostalgic (*Journal of Consumer Research, 2014*). Plus, **68% of consumers** are willing to pay more for a product which appeals to them on a personal or emotional level. The nostalgia angle promises tangible value for marketers.

But it's not as simple as re-hashing a past campaign. The most successful nostalgia marketing campaigns are

not one-dimensional but strategic and creative. The aim should be to create something new that is more than the sum of its parts. The trick is to create not just an emotional connection using nostalgia but also something new and engaging.

“Research shows we’re more likely to spend money when we’re feeling nostalgic.”

Why nostalgia, now?

Technology

Nostalgia has been a technique in marketing for just about forever. It's getting more play today, ironically perhaps, **due to digital technology**. Mobile phones, the Internet, social media and apps empower recording, recycling and remixing as never before. More moments are recorded, and precious memories are now available on-tap.

Sharing

Nostalgia made more visible, is also more contagious. Hashtags trend (try **#InThe90sIThought**), memes go viral, and are picked up by news media, amplifying the effect. So it's easier to spot the turning point when fashions and trends move from 'passed their used-by' to 'blast-from-the-past'.

The most radical shift of all might be seamless sharing. Sharing memories with friends and family used to mean

digging out the projector for slides night. But reminiscence is now quick, easy and very public

Personalisation

In tandem with sharing, personalisation using collected data is now a reality (*Entrepreneur*). Facebook constantly curates memories in videos and slideshows. Spotify recently launched Your Time Capsule, creating personal nostalgic playlists based on your age and current tastes. Marketers can now deliver personalised nostalgic experiences – and the hit is more powerful than ever.

Millennials

Nostalgia used to be for those of middle-age and beyond. But millennials seem to suffer early-onset nostalgia. As Cassandra McIntosh, Senior Insights Analyst at Exponential told *Digiday*, (our emphasis):

*"Millennials are coming of age in an age of economic turmoil — a difficult job market... Therefore, they end up romanticizing simpler times much more – **even those times they weren't around for.**"*

No wonder nostalgia marketing is such a potent strategy to tap into the buying power of this elusive market.

Is nostalgia right for my brand?

Nostalgia has been used successfully across many industry sectors. Music. FMCG. Tech brands. It can work for most consumer brands - as long as you do it with care. Storytelling is key. But don't stop at your brands' story, think about your consumers' stories too. If in doubt, you can always try concepts out on social media in a small and subtle way.

Brand age and history

If your brand is young, you might feel your opportunities are limited. But as Rob Grant of Marketing Mag points out, **young brands can thrive** on the instant heritage created by nostalgia techniques.

Brands with more rings on the trunk can draw on a rich history and an authentic connection to the past. But they need to take special care to avoid appearing dated, derivative or plain old naff.

The deciding factor is not how old your brand is, but how authentic a

connection you can make with your customer. Try bouncing your customers' memories against your brand values and see where they spark. What story are you telling? If it aligns with your brand values, it could work. Even if your foundational story is older than your brand, the right fit means you can build on it.

Do you need to lighten up or humanise your brand?

Nostalgia can work to humanise your brand. It can also lighten your image and show consumers that your brand doesn't take itself too seriously. But be realistic about what you can achieve - you don't want to take it that step too far.

“The deciding factor is not how old your brand is, but how authentic a connection you can make with your customer.”

The Guidelines

5 ways to nail nostalgia

1. Bring back the old with a new twist

Be clever. Take the opportunity to create something new with material from the archive. **Pokemon Go** capitalised on pre-existing assets, but created a new game which was fresh and relevant. It both appealed to millennials who had grown up with the game, and introduced Pokemon to a younger target market. Dr Clay Routledge, professor of psychology at North Dakota State University, told *Time*:

“Nostalgia is just as much about the future as it is the past... [Pokemon Go is] this perfect marriage of nostalgia, bringing something old that people have these memories of from their childhood. And coupling that with technology that allows people to connect and share these experiences in ways they could not in the past.”

2. Make use of historic brand assets

One of the great benefits of nostalgia

marketing is that you can make use of existing brand assets, at lesser cost for greater effect. Stretch your budget, maximise your return and do more with less.

3. Think carefully about which time period to focus on

- How old are they now?
- When were they young?
- Are you choosing a decade they experienced, or one they have heard about?
- Do you know who your target audience(s) are?

Different generations have different associations and experiences with a brand and the nostalgic aspects can greatly vary between individuals.

4. Pay attention to the detail

If you're trying to capture a particular decade, consider all aspects including:

- Music
- Styles
- Clothing
- Language and slang
- Typefaces

5. Consider your channel carefully

Social media loves nostalgia. Apart from being the perfect place to share and create viral content, it's where your brand's most loyal followers reside. The ones who remember and connect with your nostalgic history.

The popularity of #ThrowbackThursday, *Timehop*, and Facebook's "On This Day" shows how well nostalgia and social media go together. We're not saying other channels won't work, but choose with care.

Which time period?

- 20 years is the average time period where trends shift from naff to nostalgic (*Entrepreneur*).
- **“We’ve found that, regardless of their current age, people tend to over-index for listening to songs that came out when they were roughly 10-22,”** Clay Gibson, a product manager at Spotify told *Wired*.
- Cross-generational appeal: Throwback brands / toys **vary between generations.**

5 traps to avoid

“You can’t just bring in Hulk Hogan.”

– Speaking Human at thinkmonsters.com

1. Don’t stray from your core brand values

Make sure that your nostalgia piece makes sense. Identify ways that your brand can connect to an aspect of the past. You can’t just tap an 80’s icon if it doesn’t fit your narrative. The cognitive dissonance will be too great.

2. Don’t be self-indulgent about your brand history

You and your friends are interested in your photo album – but that might be as far as it goes. Don’t presume that everyone will care. A key reason why social media is such a great place for nostalgia. It’s where your brand friends hang out.

3. Don’t change the product so that you lose the very thing people love

Don’t make the same mistake as **Arnotts** (unless you believe all publicity

is good publicity!) Reinventing the flavours of their Shapes range created a furore on social media. Eventually, they had to backpedal.

4. Don’t forget to engage your customers

Your community of consumers and users know what they love about your brand and what they used to love about your brand. Ask them. They’d love to tell you.

5. Use in moderation

Make sure you work to get the balance correct. Don’t go overboard with the nostalgic references or you might veer into ‘dated and dowdy’ territory.

BONDS 100 Years

Bonds deliberately *avoided a self-obsessed trip down memory lane when they celebrated their 100 year anniversary. (Mumbrella)*. They limited sharing historic TVCs to social channels, while the main campaign made a more oblique reference to turning 100.

Ideas to kick off your own Nostalgia Marketing

1. Celebrate historic company dates and anniversaries

Historic dates and anniversaries are an obvious place to start. Celebrate 10 years in business – or 25, or 50, or 100.

But like all history, liven up the dates with some stories. Who were the founders? What drove them? What challenges did they overcome?

Take **Bacardi**. In 2012 they celebrated 150 years in business. They combined the fresh coinage 'Partylicious' with historic themes and flashback such as the [legend of the Bacardi bat](#) and the [1950s party](#).

The approach must have worked. They went with [history in their advertising](#) the next year too! This time with a story, not a date. The birth of the Cuba Libre cocktail – what we know in Australia as a humble rum and coke.

It was the first in a series of ads promoting the history of various cocktails – all with Bacardi.

So if you can't celebrate the history of your brand itself, what other products, icons or everyday experiences are related to them? What story can you build around that?

TOP TIP: Add stories to anniversaries

Remember history class? You probably know the stories of the Eureka Stockade, Ned Kelly, or the building of the Sydney Opera House, but not the exact dates.

Stories engage emotion, dates don't.



2. Tap your archives

Products, flavours, packaging, adverts, jingles or even just taglines. Brand assets which have been long discarded can be revived to great effect.

Aussie Homeloans brought back their iconic 'We'll save you' tagline.

Berlei's 100-year campaign featured Serena Williams in a hero spot, but was backed up by compilation videos focusing on the brand's history. These included both print campaign images and video clips.

Plus the ads extend their tagline 'Supporting 100 Years of Women' to more than just underwear. References to women managers and support for breast cancer sufferers reinforce brand values and create a greater connection.

But first prize for use of archive material goes to Audi for their **campaign on their history of innovation**.



TOP TIP: Prepare for the future now

Kevin Goult of Audi was lucky. His predecessors kept an archive, so he could find everything he wanted. If you want to do the same, we can help you **digitise** or **look after digital assets** and **store physical media items** too.

3. Refresh, recreate, extend

If some of your advertising has established an emotional connection, look for ways to build on that.

For a double – maybe even triple - dose of nostalgia, take British bread company **Hovis**.

Their **1973 ad**, voted *Britain's favourite ad of all time*, plays on classic nostalgic themes. Pure, simple, healthy food. Hard work followed by the simple pleasure of freewheeling downhill.



Everyone in Australia knows the *Aeroplane Jelly* jingle. But did you know?

- The Andrews Sisters recorded a version.
- Greek, Italian, Russian and Yugoslav versions were made in 1966 for ethnic radio channels.
- The company marked its 75th anniversary with a national competition to re-record the jingle.
- They fund-raised for the Starlight Foundation – a great fit!

In 2007, when the Hovis brand was struggling, there was no way this national memory could be ignored. Instead, marketers deliberately referenced the original ad in their **new campaign**.

They didn't recreate the ad, but they took elements from it. The boy. The journey. The bread. The past.

And they reinforced it all with the nostalgic slogan *'As good today as it's always been.'*

As a final twist, 40 years after this iconic ad was made, the original actor recreated it and got national press coverage.

Yet another round of nostalgia!



TOP TIP: Nostalgia alone is not enough.

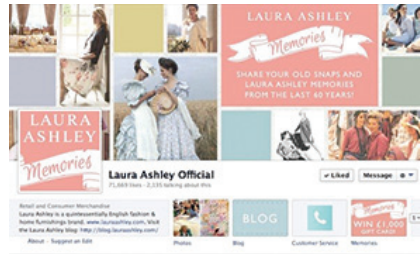
You want to reference the past, not live in it. You need to reassure people that you're still relevant and up-to-date.

4. Leverage social media for user generated content

Nostalgia is for those who have some connection with you already. So build on that connection. Invite them to contribute too. Now you have real consumer engagement and endorsement as well as nostalgia.

A 2013 **Laura Ashley** social media campaign asked people to share their Laura Ashley memories.

Hundreds of people sent in old photographs that summed up wonderful life events such as wedding days and christenings. Each photo showed something personal and each featured a Laura Ashley product.



British travel retailer **Holiday Hypermarket** ran a social competition called **#Holidays**, to celebrate Father's Day. People sent in photographs of their dads on holiday via Instagram and Twitter.

The prize was small (a goodie bag), but the social media campaign was incredibly successful – everyone loves to share their memories! And everyone has a pic of Dad on holiday.

TOP TIP: It's not all about you.

If you want to tap into the emotional value of customer memories, take time to listen, respond to and share those memories too.

5. Tap into influencers to create nostalgic stories

The 2007 Hovis campaign included journalists and employees as extras.

Social is all about storytelling. These journalists and employees now had an extra story to share.

And stories that take people behind the brand are really popular. People feel special, as if you've let them in on a secret.

Identify your target demographic.
Identify their key influencers.

Work out how you can get them involved in your campaign.

Of course not all of them will respond positively, but if none of them do, take heed. If you get feedback about how you could change things, listen carefully. If your idea doesn't appeal to the top dogs in your target audience, is it going to work at all?

6. Test your ideas

Not just with influencers. With your social media followers too.

Put out some simple posts and see how much engagement you get. It's a way of deciding which ideas to develop further and invest in. Pay attention to the detail in the comments too. You never know where the nuggets of gold are hiding!

7. Monitor #TBT for trends

Monitor #TBT (Throwback Thursday) on social-media channels and take advantage of trends. Think of ways to make it your own.

Don't forget #FlashbackFriday either!

TOP TIP: Influencers matter.

Use them to *test* your campaign idea as well as to promote it.

8. Tie in with holidays when people are already feeling nostalgic

Family-centred holidays are especially effective. Christmas stands out.

Coca-Cola UK's Christmas TV campaign has been going for 21 years. The ads are change, but the theme 'Holidays are coming', the **Coca Cola trucks** and the jingle are all the same.

UK and Ireland Marketing Director Aedamar Howlett told **Marketing Week**,

"One of my favourite things to hear at Christmas time is people saying 'I've seen the Coca-Cola TV advert so it's



officially Christmas!' But at the same time, 'we understand the need to keep innovating and, most importantly, to keep surprising people."

It takes time to reach that level of association, but you can still tap into the themes of home, holiday and happiness.

Or you can take a different approach. This **Sainsbury's ad tells the story of Christmas Eve 1914**, when enemy troops called an impromptu armistice and played football.

It's had over **19 million views**.



Conclusion

Nostalgia marketing is about creating an emotional connection. As in all marketing, that connection is key to success.

Just remember that it takes two to make a great connection – so don't forget your customer. It's not about you. It's about him. Or her. Each and every individual you want to reach.

To build and deepen that connection, ask yourself:

- What times or events give your customer feelings of warmth, trust and joy?
- How does your product or brand fit into those times and events?
- How can you engage and share rather than shout?

Test every campaign idea, every archive photo, jingle or film clip, against these questions. Ask yourself first. If you're still not sure, test with some of your more connected customers on social media.

They'll let you know!

Then once you know, you're ready to invest and roll out.

A visit to the archive can reveal some real gems. Used correctly and in moderation - you can achieve real results. For potentially less outlay than if you were to create an entirely new campaign. We hope this inspires you to take advantage of your rich brand history.

And don't forget, if you need any historic material digitised, [get in touch](#).



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