

# What Was Old Is New Again -- The Power Of Nostalgia Marketing

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Shockingly I am going to make a pop culture reference to start off this article. I am being quite sarcastic for if you know me, you know of my penchant for infusing pop culture into everything. Yes, everything.

Look no further than [this article](#) for Exhibit A.

So today's pop culture reference comes courtesy of The Doobie Brothers. Yes, I know I am dating myself and I could probably find a more recent reference if I wanted to but, I'm tired and besides I like this reference.

So there. (sticking my tongue out)

Way back in 1978, The Doobies released a song entitled *What A Fool Believes*. One of the lyrics in the song, which is about a man who had been wronged by a woman earlier in his life – is “she musters a smile for his nostalgic tale.”

Well when it comes to the topic of nostalgic **marketing** this particular fool, AKA yours truly, happens to believe that there is undeniably a place for it the hearts of consumers.

## Examples Please

A few months ago an [AdWeek](#) piece touched on the fact that “a burst of '90s nostalgia broke out on Twitter ... causing the hashtag #InThe90sIThought to start trending nationally.”

The piece included samples of how some **brands** were capitalizing on the “burst” including this Tweet from Paramount.

<https://twitter.com/ParamountMovies/status/608700471952285696>

Another fantastic example comes courtesy of Chango, who went Back to the Future, literally for this SlideShare.

<http://www.slideshare.net/TheRubiconProject/back-to-thefuturefinal>

## Coca-Cola And Cocoa

Two more examples of nostalgia **marketing** come from **Coca-Cola** and **Mars** Inc. specifically Crispy **M&M's**. Each **brand** worked with [Collective Bias](#), a Shopper **Social** Media™ platform that works with a network of over 4K **social** influencers who create sponsored content on behalf of **brands**.

“Influencer content is a great way to revive iconic **brands**,” says **Holly Pavlika**, SVP, **Brand** Strategy for Collective Bias. “In the case of **Mars**, fans clamoring for their Crispy **M&Ms** made the **brand** take another look at bringing them back.”

Pavlika and her team worked with **Mars** to help revive Crispy **M&M's** from its '90s heyday in the “Crispy Is Back” campaign. Influential bloggers created online content linking back to a featured landing page on the **Mars** website. The Twitter Party for this nostalgia **marketing** program made Crispy **M&M's** a nationally trending topic.

As for **Coca-Cola**, the “Share It Forward” campaign the company did with them was **designed** to motivate Millennial consumers to shop for **Coca-Cola** products at Walmart specifically, with the goal of increasing sales of 20-ounce bottles. With **Coca-Cola** celebrating the 100th anniversary of its iconic glass bottle this year, they used nostalgic messaging to encourage shoppers to purchase bottles not only for themselves, but also for friends, family and co-workers.

**Amanda Whittaker**, Sr. Shopper **Marketing** Manager, **Coca-Cola** North America: “There is nothing more special than drinking an ice-cold **Coca-Cola** from an 8-ounce glass bottle – it’s the perfect, refreshing experience. By reminding our shoppers of this specialness in a way that is relevant to today, we hoped to reenergize this nostalgic package with consumers.”

It looked like the “reenergization” worked as Walmart’s 20-ounce **Coca-Cola** sales growth was double the growth experienced by all other large retailers combined during the 4-week program with sales peaks hitting as high as +40%.

## Do This, Don’t Do That

I asked **Pavlika** for some Do’s and Dont’s when it comes to nostalgia **marketing** and reviving a nostalgic **brand**.

### Dos

Do 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.

Do identify how your **brand** can connect to an aspect of the past. Make sure any nostalgic campaign focuses on things like simpler times and happier days, some of the attributes that we

long for.

Do leverage **social** media. Listen to your customers like Crispy **M&Ms** did. If they are showing demand for a product, put the customer first and bring back the product.

Do poll your customers. Creating noise about potentially bringing back a product is a great way to capture new customers and gather insights. And to make sure if you use nostalgia that it will be relevant for today's audiences.

**Do invite your community in for ideas.** Bring back the old with a new twist.

### Don'ts

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

Don't choose the nostalgic route if you have a young **brand**.

Don't forget to tap into influencers to create nostalgic stories. **Social** is all about storytelling. People love stories that take people behind the **brand**. And influencers love this kind of **social** currency.

### Final Thoughts

For the final word on this topic I turned to [Gregory Carpenter](#), **James Farley/Booz Allen Hamilton** Professor of **Marketing** Strategy at the Kellogg School of Management:

"People become especially nostalgic when they are anxious about the present and, especially, the future. The past is safe because it is completely predictable. Connecting with the past through familiar, loved **brands** transports people to another time by evoking the same feelings they experienced so long ago.

It works well for **brands** that have an authentic connection with the past, especially some powerful associations with it (e.g, the VW Beetle). It can work for **brands** without an authentic connection to the past if the **brands** can create that familiar feeling without. This is tricky but can be done. It is aspirational for some but at the same time nostalgic."

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