

Nostalgia Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Brand Loyalty, Emotional Engagement, Advertising Psychology, Kerala Market, Quantitative Study

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Abstract

Nostalgia marketing has emerged as a dynamic tool in influencing consumer behaviour by evoking emotional connections with the past. This study investigates the influence of nostalgia-driven marketing on adult consumers in the Ernakulam district of Kerala, India. Employing a quantitative research design, data was collected from 50 adult respondents through structured online surveys and analyzed using regression, correlation, and paired t-tests. The findings reveal that nostalgic marketing significantly impacts consumer purchasing decisions, emotional engagement, and brand loyalty. Visual elements and retro themes were identified as the most influential nostalgic triggers. The research highlights that emotional loyalty resulting from nostalgic stimuli fosters repeat purchases and brand attachment. Moreover, while specific nostalgic triggers alone may not directly determine purchases, their emotional resonance contributes to consumer-brand trust and long-term engagement. The study concludes that nostalgia marketing, when culturally contextualized and digitally integrated, offers a sustainable competitive advantage for brands aiming to build lasting consumer relationships.

Keywords: *Nostalgia Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Brand Loyalty, Emotional Engagement, Advertising Psychology, Kerala Market, Quantitative Study*

Date of Submission: 01-11-2025

Date of Acceptance: 10-11-2025

I. Introduction

In today's competitive marketing environment, emotional engagement has become a cornerstone of consumer-brand relationships. Among various emotional strategies, nostalgia marketing has emerged as a compelling tool that connects consumers with brands through memories of the past. It involves evoking sentimental feelings linked to childhood, family, culture, or collective experiences, thereby fostering trust, familiarity, and loyalty. Nostalgia not only appeals to consumers' emotions but also influences their purchasing intentions by recreating the comfort of earlier times. Through vintage imagery, retro packaging, and old jingles, brands can build emotional bridges that reinforce positive brand associations and long-term consumer attachment.

The growth of digital platforms has amplified the reach and effectiveness of nostalgia marketing. Social media channels such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook allow brands to revive retro campaigns and share memory-driven content, turning nostalgia into a participatory and viral phenomenon. Consumers actively engage by sharing, commenting, and recreating nostalgic moments, thereby co-creating brand stories that merge the past with the present. In the Indian context, nostalgia marketing has gained unique relevance because of the country's cultural richness and intergenerational emotional ties. Campaigns drawing upon traditional festivals, family values, and popular culture have been particularly successful in rekindling emotional bonds with audiences.

Despite its growing popularity, limited empirical research exists on how nostalgia marketing affects consumer behaviour within localized Indian settings. Much of the existing literature is Western-centric, with insufficient focus on how cultural and emotional memory shapes purchasing patterns in India. To address this gap, the present study investigates how nostalgia marketing influences adult consumers in the Ernakulam district of Kerala. It examines how nostalgic triggers impact purchasing decisions, emotional engagement, and brand loyalty, thereby providing insights into how marketers can use nostalgia strategically to build enduring consumer relationships in culturally dynamic markets.

II. Scope And Significance Of The Study

This study focuses on adult consumers aged 21 and above in Ernakulam district. It targets three major industries food, fashion, and entertainment where nostalgic marketing is most prevalent. Findings from this study will help marketers craft emotionally resonant campaigns that bridge cultural roots and modern branding strategies. By identifying nostalgia's psychological triggers and behavioural impact, this research contributes to understanding emotional marketing within a localized Indian context.

III. Objectives Of The Study

1. To examine how nostalgia influences purchasing decisions among adult consumers.
2. To identify specific nostalgic triggers that lead to increased brand loyalty.
3. To assess whether there is a significant difference between consumer engagement with nostalgic advertisements and consumer behaviour influenced by them.

IV. Methodology

The study adopts a quantitative design, collecting data from 50 adult consumers in Ernakulam through Google Forms using convenience sampling. Statistical tools such as linear regression, partial correlation, and paired t-tests were used to test hypotheses. Variables include nostalgic triggers, brand loyalty, emotional engagement, and purchasing decisions. Analysis was conducted using SPSS software at a 5% significance level.

V. Review Of Literature

Nostalgia marketing has become a cornerstone of emotional branding, as researchers have explored its psychological, cultural, and behavioural dimensions. Davis and Pavia (2018) identified nostalgia as a marketing device that enhances emotional connection and brand recall. Holbrook and Schindler (2019) demonstrated that nostalgic advertisements evoke comfort and familiarity, influencing repeat purchases. Similarly, Routledge et al. (2020) found that nostalgia provides psychological security during uncertainty, promoting brand trust. Williams and Brown (2021) discussed how social media amplifies nostalgia, allowing brands to engage consumers through shared memories. Smith and Lee (2022) revealed that nostalgia-driven branding in the fashion and food sectors enhances emotional connection and long-term loyalty. Ramesh and Iyer (2022) emphasized the power of cultural nostalgia in Indian advertising, especially where regional traditions strengthen brand attachment. Patel, Nair, and Thomas (2023) examined impulse buying behaviour linked to nostalgic cues, showing how emotional recall can drive spontaneous purchases. Menon and Das (2023) highlighted regional variations, showing that South Indian consumers respond more positively to nostalgia reflecting local culture and language. Johnson and Carter (2023) explained how nostalgia stabilizes emotional well-being during crises, making it a valuable tool in turbulent economies. Thomas and Varghese (2024) illustrated nostalgia's evolution from television campaigns to digital media, especially on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. In earlier works, Baker and Kennedy (1994) and Belk (1990) conceptualized nostalgia as a "yearning for the past" capable of shaping consumption experiences. Merchant and Rose (2013) found that nostalgic cues evoke autobiographical memories that influence purchasing intentions. Sedikides et al. (2015) explained nostalgia as a restorative emotion that enhances life meaning and interpersonal connection critical for consumer attachment. Loveland et al. (2010) argued that nostalgic consumption increases willingness to pay and enhances perceived product value. Collectively, these studies affirm that nostalgia strengthens brand-consumer relationships through emotional engagement and memory-based appeal. However, limited empirical research exists on how nostalgia operates in localized Indian contexts. This study addresses that gap by examining adult consumers in Kerala, providing insights into how nostalgic marketing shapes purchasing decisions and loyalty within a culturally grounded demographic.

VI. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study draws primarily from Nostalgia Theory, Consumer Behaviour Theory, and elements of Emotional Attachment Theory. Together, these frameworks explain how emotional recollection and affective experiences influence purchasing behaviour, brand attachment, and long-term loyalty.

Nostalgia Theory (Davis, 1979; Holbrook & Schindler, 2019) proposes that individuals experience a sentimental longing for the past, often triggered by sensory or symbolic cues such as visuals, sounds, or cultural references. These triggers evoke positive emotions associated with comfort, stability, and familiarity. In marketing contexts, nostalgia transforms into a strategic communication tool brands recreate or reference elements from a consumer's past to activate emotional recall. This emotional resonance enhances brand perception, reinforces trust, and strengthens the consumer-brand relationship. Nostalgic advertising, therefore, operates as an emotional bridge between past experiences and current consumption choices, influencing both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty.

Consumer Behaviour Theory (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2015) further supports this process by explaining how consumers make purchasing decisions based on psychological, emotional, and cultural influences rather than purely rational evaluation. According to this theory, external stimuli such as nostalgic advertisements activate internal processes like perception, motivation, and memory retrieval, which then shape purchase intention. When consumers associate brands with personal or collective memories, the decision-making process becomes emotionally driven. In this way, nostalgia functions as a psychological cue that transforms emotional engagement into behavioural outcomes such as repeated purchase or positive word-of-mouth.

In addition, Emotional Attachment Theory (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005) contributes to understanding how affective bonds form between consumers and brands. This theory posits that emotional

attachment results from feelings of affection, connection, and passion toward a brand emotion that are often nurtured by nostalgic stimuli. Nostalgia marketing, by invoking shared experiences and cultural continuity, fosters emotional bonds that go beyond functional satisfaction to form enduring psychological connections.

The conceptual framework derived from these theories suggests a cyclical relationship among nostalgic stimuli, emotional engagement, and consumer behaviour. Nostalgic cues first evoke emotional reactions (affective stage), which enhance brand perception and trust (cognitive stage), ultimately leading to loyalty and repeat purchasing behaviour (behavioural stage). This framework guided the construction of research objectives, questionnaire design, and hypothesis formulation, ensuring theoretical alignment and empirical consistency throughout the study.

VII. Data Analysis And Findings

The analysis of data gathered from 50 adult respondents in the Ernakulam district provided comprehensive insights into how nostalgia marketing influences consumer behaviour. The descriptive statistics revealed that many respondents (44%) belonged to the 21–25 age group, followed by 22% aged 36–44 years and 20% aged 45 years and above, indicating that nostalgia resonates strongly among both young and mature consumers. Gender distribution was nearly balanced, with 54% males and 46% females. Regarding occupation, students (32%) formed the largest segment, followed by full-time employees (28%) and self-employed individuals (22%). In terms of income, 56% earned below ₹20,000 per month, showing that the sample included predominantly early-career or mid-income consumers. When asked about their purchasing responses, 68% stated that nostalgic advertisements increased their likelihood of purchase, and 60% confirmed that they had previously purchased a product because it reminded them of their past. Moreover, 72% of participants recalled childhood memories through nostalgic advertisements, while 75% identified visual elements such as retro packaging, old logos, and traditional colours as the most influential nostalgic triggers. The mean agreement scores for the influence of nostalgia on purchasing decisions was 4.1 out of 5, indicating a strong positive sentiment towards nostalgia-based marketing.

The inferential statistical analysis further established a significant relationship between nostalgia marketing and consumer behaviour. A regression analysis ($R^2 = 0.227$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrated that nostalgia marketing significantly influences purchasing decisions through its impact on brand loyalty. This indicates that the stronger the emotional connection evoked by nostalgic advertisements, the higher the likelihood of purchase. The partial correlation test ($r = 0.358$, $p = 0.011$) confirmed a significant positive relationship between emotional loyalty and purchase frequency, suggesting that consumers who develop emotional attachment through nostalgic cues are more likely to make repeat purchases. However, the correlation between individual nostalgic triggers (such as music or old celebrity endorsements) and direct purchasing decisions was weak ($r = 0.056$, $p = 0.699$), implying that emotional resonance, rather than isolated nostalgic elements, drives behavioural change. A paired samples t-test ($t(49) = -3.74$, $p < 0.001$) revealed a statistically significant difference between consumer engagement with nostalgic advertisements and their actual behavioural responses, indicating that nostalgic marketing prompts stronger behavioural outcomes than passive emotional engagement. The effect size (Cohen's $d = -0.53$) suggested a moderate practical significance, validating the emotional-to-behavioural transition observed among respondents. Together, these findings empirically confirm that nostalgia marketing meaningfully shapes consumer purchasing patterns, strengthens brand loyalty, and enhances emotional engagement across demographic groups in Ernakulam.

VIII. Discussion

The findings of this study strongly affirm that nostalgia marketing exerts a significant emotional and behavioural influence on consumer decision-making. The statistical evidence demonstrates that nostalgic stimuli especially visual and auditory cues such as retro packaging, old jingles, and vintage imagery profoundly affect consumers' purchasing intentions and loyalty levels. The regression and correlation analyses reveal that nostalgia marketing not only evokes emotional responses but also converts them into tangible behavioural outcomes such as repeat purchasing and positive brand advocacy. These results are consistent with prior studies (Holbrook & Schindler, 2019; Patel et al., 2023; Ramesh & Iyer, 2022), which suggest that emotional recall plays a vital role in shaping brand attachment and consumer trust. In the context of Kerala, nostalgia's impact is further intensified by the state's strong cultural identity and collective memory, where traditional values, local language, and shared experiences evoke deep emotional associations. The study's observation that 72% of respondents recalled childhood memories and 62% reported higher trust in nostalgic brands underscores the relevance of emotional storytelling rooted in cultural familiarity. Furthermore, the paired t-test results showing significant differences between engagement and behaviour ($t(49) = -3.74$, $p < 0.001$) confirm that nostalgia stimulates not only emotional enjoyment but also actual behavioural change. Thus, nostalgia serves as both a psychological comfort and a strategic marketing tool—bridging personal identity and brand experience. It fosters emotional stability, strengthens brand trust, and enhances perceived authenticity in a time when consumers seek meaning and

belonging in brands. By merging emotional cues with digital storytelling and modern aesthetics, marketers can create enduring consumer relationships that transcend generational boundaries. Hence, this study reinforces the theoretical proposition that nostalgia is not merely a sentimental emotion but a measurable driver of consumer engagement and long-term brand loyalty, especially in culturally rich markets like India.

IX. Practical Implications

The results of this study offer several meaningful practical implications for marketers, advertisers, and brand strategists seeking to strengthen consumer relationships through emotional engagement. Nostalgia marketing, when used strategically, can serve as a powerful bridge between consumers' emotional memories and contemporary brand identity. Brands can leverage nostalgic cues such as old jingles, vintage packaging, or iconic imagery to evoke familiarity and trust, thereby enhancing both emotional attachment and purchase intention. In culturally vibrant regions like Kerala, marketers should integrate local traditions, childhood experiences, and shared cultural memories to ensure greater emotional resonance. The findings also suggest that nostalgia is most effective when blended with modern relevance reviving past themes within today's digital and social media environments can attract both older consumers, who identify with the past, and younger audiences, who view nostalgia as retro cool. Moreover, digital storytelling can amplify nostalgic appeal by encouraging consumers to share personal memories associated with products, creating community-driven engagement. Businesses can also apply nostalgia marketing to product diversification and rebranding initiatives to rekindle dormant brand relationships and reintroduce heritage products. Overall, nostalgia marketing should not be perceived merely as a creative device but as a strategic tool that enhances brand equity, emotional loyalty, and long-term customer retention in an era increasingly defined by transient brand relationships.

X. Conclusion

This study concludes that nostalgia marketing plays a vital role in shaping consumer behaviour by transforming emotional memories into measurable purchasing actions and brand loyalty. The quantitative analysis confirms that nostalgic advertising significantly influences purchase decisions ($p < 0.001$) and fosters emotional loyalty ($r = 0.358$, $p = 0.011$), demonstrating that emotional attachment acts as a key mediator between nostalgia and consumer behaviour. Visual and auditory cues particularly retro designs, familiar logos, and childhood music were found to be the strongest triggers of nostalgic engagement, with 75% of respondents identifying visuals as the primary influence. In Kerala's cultural context, nostalgia serves as a powerful emotional connector that bridges generational experiences and contemporary consumption, allowing brands to build trust and continuity in an evolving market. These findings substantiate the theoretical premise that nostalgia operates not only as an emotional comfort but also as a strategic marketing asset capable of driving long-term consumer-brand relationships. Therefore, integrating nostalgia with digital storytelling, cultural symbolism, and authentic brand communication can significantly enhance engagement, loyalty, and market differentiation. In essence, nostalgia marketing represents a timeless yet evolving approach that combines emotional intelligence with strategic creativity making it one of the most effective pathways for sustainable brand success in the modern consumer landscape.

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