

## CASHING IN ON NOSTALGIA TO SELL A BRAND

How well a brand is defined depends on consistent marketing strategies. Companies must send consistent messages about their brands via advertising by streamlining marketing components so that they focus on the central concepts their brands are intended to signal. Marketing messages have a temporal dimension since consistency can be carried through and must be built up over time. Thus, Procter & Gamble has not changed its "Choosy mothers choose Jif" slogan for a long time in order to create consistency in the brand's position. Consistent marketing also reinforces a belief in the stability of brand attributes (e.g., "Mercedes-Benz always produces high-quality cars") (Swait, 1998, 137). Prolonged consistency in marketing builds the base for nostalgic associations between the consumer and the brand. Nostalgia is a major factor for consumers across age groups (Langer 1997). The brands one grows up with, has affection for, and respects from childhood play important roles in his or her life. Brands used by parents make indelible impressions. The tastes, smells, and memories of a carefree non-adult past become inexorably attached to brands in a consumer society. According to Langer, "While consumers make decisions on individual brands, they also develop overall patterns in their relationships with brands." Just as consumers make connections with brands, they also disconnect from them (Langer). Sometimes, previous attachment, rather than indifference, can lay the foundation for brand rejection. Consumers rightfully feel cheated and dejected when accepted brands fail to deliver. In such cases, it is next to impossible to win people back. "People quit brands that had cut their quality or, in the case of food, their package size, and feel especially let down when the brands of childhood disappoint—when, for instance, a food doesn't match the taste in their mind," says Langer. Nostalgia is not sufficient to keep a brand alive. Consumers do respect timeless brands, but they demand that such brands live up to their expectations. This means that brands must remain dynamic to a certain extent because they must continue to fulfill the consumer's changing desires as successfully as they did in the past. Thus, old brands fade from the mind, and some are rejected as obsolete. Since consumers tend to view their possessions and purchases as symbols of their selves, old brands with consistent marketing strategies that are out of touch with the times risk consumer rejection. Successful older brands play on feelings about the past but also stay current. The introduction of new time-matched products, time-relevant advertisements, and messages mixing nostalgic sentiments with a current outlook seems to work best for successful brands. While consistent brand marketing can create nostalgic associations over time and significantly enhance brand equity, failure to adapt marketing and ensure it remains relevant or failure to live up to consumer expectations can easily destroy the nostalgic effect on the consumer. **Works Cited** Aaker, David A. "Managing Brand Equity." New York, NY: The Free Press, 1991. Farquhar, Peter H. "Managing Brand Equity." *Marketing Research* 1.3 (1989): 24-33. Kotler, P. *Marketing Management*. seventh ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997. Langer, Judith. "What Consumers Wish Brand Managers Knew." *Journal of Advertising Research* 37.6 (1997). Swait, Joffre. "Brand Equity as a Signaling Phenomenon." *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 7.2 (1998): 132.

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