

Drive-thru Memory Lane: Nostalgia as a Marketing Strategy in Television Advertisements of Select Fast-food Chains in the Philippines

Francisco Burgos III^{1*}, Leonard David Espiritu¹, Averymae Fernandez ¹, Gabriel Garingalao¹ and Kyna Palattao¹

¹ De La Salle University - Manila *Corresponding Author: francisco_burgos@dlsu.edu.ph

Abstract: The pervasiveness of television advertisements has established the use of television as an effective marketing strategy to expand a business or service's reach to consumers. Nostalgia marketing, which is a marketing strategy that invokes positive yet strong reminiscent emotions among consumers, is a technique used by prominent fast-food chains in the Philippines such as the Jollibee Foods Corporation (JFC) and McDonald's in their television advertisements. Out of the numerous business firms of various activities in the Philippines, the study focused solely on the television advertisements of Jollibee and McDonald's, two of the most prominent fast-food chains in the country. The researchers only included advertisements over the past ten (10) years. As such, television commercials past the ten-year timeframe, as well as businesses other than Jollibee and McDonald's, were not included in the research. The commercials produced by Jollibee and McDonald's evidently focused on three cohesive themes namely, family, love, and the Filipino culture. The aforementioned themes that are utilized in both Jollibee's and McDonald's commercials are cumulated in order to create storylines that would foster nostalgia and spark fond Filipino experiences among consumers. Undeniably, nostalgia marketing has been demonstrated to be a successful marketing tool for brands to generate sales by appealing to customers' emotions. Hence, it is imperative for businesses to recognize the success, impact, and importance of nostalgia marketing in its business operations.

Key Words: Nostalgia Marketing; Jollibee; McDonald's; Television Advertisements; Marketing Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Significance of the Study

With the continuous increase of the emergence of business firms, it is necessary for business firms to implement strategies that may help them achieve brand differentiation and brand distinctiveness. Brand differentiation refers to a business firm setting itself apart from its competitors through highlighting a product or brand's key aspects. On the other hand, brand distinctiveness encompasses establishing recognizability and uniqueness in a brand (Romaniuk, 2013). To achieve brand differentiation and brand

distinctiveness, it is imperative for businesses to apply marketing strategies that create customer relationships and maintain such rapport.

Marketing strategies create a value proposition to potential consumers. The primary objective of a marketing strategy is to communicate and attain to consumers a business's competitive advantage over its competitors (Barone, 2021). Marketing strategies help a firm's management decide on what kind of marketing practices (e.g., television advertisements and social media advertising) the firm should invest in. Developing an effective marketing strategy and delivering an effective marketing practice requires knowing a



business's target market (Joseph, 2015).

Advertising helps a firm communicate to consumers to avail a product or service To reach a vast demographic of consumers and potential customers, business firms must integrate any form of promotional advertising in their marketing mixes (Baba, 2012).

Television advertising, which uses audio-visual means and short time slots to communicate to consumers, can reach a vast number of consumers. This makes it a powerful form of advertising which has an advantageous competitive edge over other forms of media advertising such as printed and radio media (Improve Marketing, n.d.; Kuyucu, 2020). Moreover, Das (2018) posits that television advertisements, when broadcasted repeatedly or in between various television programs, triggers cognitive recall which then positively influences the purchase behavior of consumers.

According to Arcangel (2017), television still remains as the go-to media platform of Filipinos. Kantar Media reported last 2016 that 96.6% of Filipinos watch television daily. Therefore, the prevalent exposure of Filipinos to television daily opens an opportunity for firms to invest in television advertising.

1.2 Review of Related Literature

Nostalgia marketing, as defined by Ju et al. (2016, p. 2064), is the stimulation of consumer emotions by sparking a certain memory from their past through the use of sight, sound, smell, taste, and/or touch. It is predicated on the experiential marketing approach, which focuses on advertising the traits indirectly associated with the product being advertised (p. 2063) and also considers the five senses.

The term "nostalgia" was first coined in 1688 by Swiss physician Johannes Hofer as indicated in the literature review of Rana, et al. (2021, p. 214). Its original definition referred to a mental illness relating to homesickness but various definitions and theories were conceived over time. It was not until 1979 that nostalgia became associated with marketing practices in the work of Fred Davis, seeing as his insights paved the way for the integration of nostalgia in business advertising (p. 214). Further analysis on the connection between nostalgia and marketing was probed by the late Barbara B. Stern, former co-editor of the quarterly peer-reviewed journal Marketing Theory. Her investigation concluded that nostalgia marketing would become more rampant along with customer discontentment for the present, anticipation for an ensuing adversity, and desire for the gratifying past.

Presently, nostalgia is referred to as a general longing for the past, most especially one's childhood (Cui, 2015). The aforementioned definition is what drives the marketing practices of businesses today, even

during the escalation of nostalgia marketing in the 1990s to 2000s when nostalgia concepts were tested on automobiles, furniture, and perfume brands (Rana, et al., 2021, p. 2016). Due to COVID-19, many businesses had to be creative in promoting and positioning their products while prioritizing the health and safety of their employees and customers; such creativity was manifested using the power of nostalgia marketing. This leverage on nostalgia led to the reimplementation of classic food recipes, creation of satisfactory drive-thru and dine-in experiences, and resurfacing of 1950s diner concepts (Nnamani, 2021, para. 8).

It is safe to assume that the early 2000s were dominated by millennials. The generation born between 1981 and 1996 had complete control on the food trends and fashion topics that reigned over the Philippines during the onset of the 21st century. Due to this, it is only natural that millennials are the primary target market of businesses when employing the nostalgia marketing approach (Castañeda, 2017, para. 5). That being said, it does not necessarily mean that the said marketing form only applies to millennials. Nostalgia may also be evoked not only by past memory, but by a sense of comfort and familiarity as well. Mercado (2017) enumerated the famous Filipino brands that used nostalgia to their marketing advantage in their article for Adobo Magazine.

In 2017, Lucky Me Pancit Canton's #OurOneAndOnly marketing campaign was received well by the general public. A huge contribution to the campaign's success was the reunion of iconic rom-com pair, Bea Alonzo and John Lloyd Cruz. Similar to how the advertisement was promoting the brand's return to their original noodle formula, having the famous love team front the campaign tugged at the teenage heartstrings of Filipino millennials. This detail is significant, especially with Mercado's statement on how Lucky Me Pancit Canton "make maliciously good use of a generation's teenage memories" (para. 15) in guaranteeing the success of an advertisement.

Another nostalgic brand is Coca-Cola, the company that produces the globally famous soft drink. Though not rooted in the Philippines, Coca-Cola has become a Christmas must-have at any *noche buena* table. Their iconic Christmas campaigns are now an integral part of the holiday season, with relatively younger audiences also being enticed by the company's advertisements. Moreover, Coca-Cola pulls on the Filipinos' value for family, embellishing the brand as a symbol of togetherness. Mercado cites that even the conventional appearance of Santa Claus was conceived by Coca-Cola, further proving the brand's control on the Christmas season.

Pressing on, the use of nostalgia marketing in the Philippines is largely driven by the exploitation of



pop culture and Filipino values. Having this idea in mind would make it easier for current and future companies to successfully practice nostalgia marketing in the country.

As outlined above, the earlier literatures on the subject are focused mainly on enumerating several television advertisements on a specific time rather than longitudinal reviews and analyses. As such, the aforementioned instances of brands that used nostalgic marketing may not be conclusive to the results that could be formed upon examining the cases of Jollibee and McDonald's.

1.3 Scope and Limitations

The researchers acknowledge that effective advertising may be cross-sectional and may employ using online or social media platforms to further communicate with target consumers. However, the study focused solely on television advertising in the Philippines. Out of the numerous business firms of various business activities nationwide, the study focused on the television advertisements of two prominent fast-food chains, Jollibee and McDonald's, over the past ten (10) years. Television commercials past the ten-year timeframe and businesses other than Jollibee and McDonald's are out of the scope of the research.

2. METHODOLOGY

The researchers utilized content analysis to examine television advertisements produced by two prominent fast food chains in the Philippines, namely Jollibee and McDonald's. Content analysis is the production of a summary of texts and their analyses via "the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes" to be able to posit or contest an existing theory (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 476). The writers reviewed and analyzed the television advertisements of the aforementioned companies over the past 10 years, that is from 2010. Hence, advertisements produced past the ten-year set timeframe were excluded in the conduct of the recent study.

Congruent to the set scope and limitation of the recent study — nostalgia marketing — the authors reviewed the advertisements and took note of recurrent patterns in the said medium. Several themes then surfaced during the review.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Case of Jollibee

3.1.1 Themes Present in Jollibee's TV Commercials The Filiping community is no stranger to

The Filipino community is no stranger to Jollibee's TV commercials, as they easily view Jollibee's

branding towards Filipino values that highly reflect on their marketing and advertising (Cruz & Convento, 2019). During February, Valentines in the Philippines is not complete without an episode coming from Jollibee's notable commercial series entitled "Kwentong Jollibee Valentine Series". Various select Jollibee commercials from 2017 to 2020 start off with a prompt saying "Inspired by a True Story", which presents that the company utilizes common nostalgic experiences of unrequited, old, first, and new love among others.

Apart from the TV commercials during the Valentine season, select TV advertisements that are under the "Kwentong Jollibee" series in 2016, 2018, and 2021 utilized the common theme of Filipino experiences and values such as family sacrifice. These commercials remind us of our own, a shared experience within Filipino families. The vast use of themes by Jollibee spark a nostalgic tone towards its commercials which leaves viewers reminiscing about similar experiences.

3.1.2 Reason for Jollibee's Use of Nostalgia as a Marketing Strategy

Though Jollibee initially uses nostalgia through its commercials, Filipinos already view the restaurant itself as nostalgic. This nostalgic view towards the restaurant is highly seen especially with Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) as this is a symbol of their home country, the Philippines. Jollibee has become so deeply rooted into Filipino culture that Filipinos abroad view the restaurant as a time machine back to the good days (Reyes, 2018). According to Alfiler (n.d., as cited in Reyes, 2018), the restaurant is a staple where every Filipino can share their own Jollibee experience.

3.2 The Case of McDonald's

3.2.1 Themes Present in McDonald's TV Commercials

Throughout the years, the Golden Arches has produced several television commercials here in the Philippines. Undoubtedly, the common denominator between these commercials is the utilization of nostalgia in order to spark a certain memory from the consumer's past in hopes of stimulating their emotions and feeling a sense of nostalgia (Ju et al., 2016, p. 2064).

In select McDonald's TV commercials in 2012, 2014, and 2019, childhood experiences with one's father are used as a common theme. Driving for the first time with an individual's father, being rewarded after each good deed, being carried on a father's arm, and role-playing with one's father are some significant, paternal experiences that are carried by individuals throughout life as fond memories.



"Holiday Sweet Pleasures" (McDo Philippines, 2013), on the other hand, is a commercial that revolves around the experiences during the holiday season. The long lines at stores and shopping malls, purchasing gifts, food items, and decorations needed at the last minute for the yuletide season are events that most Filipinos can relate to. The aforementioned themes presented and utilized by McDonald's in some of their television commercials more often than not, spur and stimulate the sense of nostalgia in consumers who can relate to the presented themes.

3.2.2 Reason for McDonald's' Use of Nostalgia as a Marketing Strategy

Furthermore, according to Mercado (2017), enabling consumers to revisit the brand's original identity, or consumers' past experiences tend to rekindle the loyalty of the brand's consumers and would cement the brand's icon status. Arguably, factors like these are the reason behind McDonald's use of nostalgia in some of their marketing stints.

Recently, McDonald's launched an event that proved nostalgia as a marketing tool by placing one of the 15 popular toys from the past in a Happy Meal order. Mitchell (n.d., in Luna 2019) cited that parents fondly remembered their favorite toys; Powell (n.d., in Luna, 2019) stated that the said event boosted consumer numbers by attracting parents who have not likely visited the store.

Although nostalgia is not the brand's main marketing strategy, it is fair to say that whenever nostalgia is used as a marketing tool, it never fails to rekindle consumers' fond memories and stimulate their sense of nostalgia. With that, the capability of nostalgia as a marketing tool, the impact of nostalgia marketing on consumers and McDonald's recent nostalgia marketing stints gives more clarity to the reason behind why McDonald's use said strategy.

3.3 Impact of Common Themes to Filipino Consumers

Nostalgia marketing relates to a lot of individuals because when people care, they're more inclined to take action (Castañeda, 2017). In the Philippines, brands have been known to use emotions in conveying the advertisement's message (Vergara, 2020, p.62). Much of nostalgic marketing is currently centered around the experiences and memories of customers.

Jollibee used this to its advantage in its advertising and marketing. Their recent launch in Madrid, Spain, last September 2021 got thousands of Filipinos lining up just for the opening, which garnered interest among Spanish locals as well. By having loyal Filipino customers worldwide, Jollibee easily

establishes itself in different places. It opens doors for Jollibee towards international recognition since Non-Filipino customers are enticed to check out and try for themselves the Jollibee experience. The strategy of Jollibee to utilize its nostalgic branding to its potential created emotional connections between the customer and the restaurant. This strategy gives them a positive appeal to customers because of the spark of joy it provides through re-experiencing their time with Jollibee.

As stated before, McDonald's has produced several television commercials in the Philippines. These commercials are primarily short stories in the form of short films. In addition, consumers pursue nostalgia, especially advertisements that explore, revisit, and reignite old experiences (Vergara, 2020, p.64-65). Nostalgia marketing is a unique business strategy used by McDonald's to spur positive reactions from consumers, especially those who have not gone to a McDonald's in a very long time. This strategy impacts consumers in a way that fond emotions and memories of these individuals are stimulated and rekindled, ultimately enticing them to visit a McDonald's once again.

Jollibee and McDonalds' advertisements are centered around three common themes namely, Family, Love, and the Filipino Culture. These themes encompass what it means to be a Filipino. Filipinos pride themselves when it comes to their family and their identity and this is what these themes bring. These themes hold special interest to Filipinos because these three themes are very relatable to Filipinos. In addition, Filipinos commonly hold good memories and feel fondness when interacting with advertisements that reminisce about these themes. Arguably, this is why this marketing strategy spurs positive reactions from consumers as they relate to these advertisements that portray memories and experiences close and dear to their hearts.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Importance of Employing Marketing Strategies in Business Operations

Businesses must integrate various marketing strategies to strive amidst the highly competitive environment of business. Marketing strategies create a value proposition among consumers; hence, these strategies help improve the engagement of consumers on a brand a business firm aspires to offer.

Creative marketing strategies help business firms achieve both brand distinctiveness and brand differentiation which help in establishing recognizability in the competitive business market.



Advertising is a powerful tool to establish and maintain brand image. Television advertising, which is pervasive in nature, is an example of a marketing strategy. Moreover, nostalgia marketing is a marketing strategy used by businesses to invoke positive yet strong reminiscent emotions among consumers.

4.2 Common Themes Used by Jollibee and McDonald's in Advertising

Both Jollibee and McDonald's have each of their own characteristics and styles when it comes to advertising. In commercials, Jollibee and McDonald's had similarities when it comes to storyline, theme and message that they want to put out: family, love, and Filipino culture. They utilize nostalgia as a theme by creating storylines that spark common Filipino experiences. both make use of the nostalgic experiences. While other commercials revolve around different seasons and holidays in the Philippines.

4.3 Effectiveness of Nostalgic Marketing in Generating Sales

Nostalgia marketing tends to have a significant impact on consumers who can relate to the advertisement or commercial as experiences or events from the past that stimulate nostalgia are always used. Jollibee and McDonald's often carry out promotions, commercials and advertisements revolving around the very intimate and fond memories of their consumers; thus, the said marketing items create a positive impact that would significantly boost their respective sales. The positive impact on consumers, especially loyal consumers, would entice consumers to go back to their once beloved store and relive the experience once again. Ultimately, the effectiveness of nostalgia marketing as a tool to generate sales should not be overlooked and underestimated. If it is used correctly just as McDonald's and Jollibee have over the years, the positive effect of nostalgia marketing on the sales of a company would be irrefutably convincing.

4.4 Implications of Nostalgic Marketing in Business Operations

As the country continues to experience restrictions due to COVID-19, businesses would need to implement new strategies that would create a more amenable environment for accommodating such restrictions. Transitioning from marketing ideologies predicated on consumer statistics to one based on human emotion sets a crucial tone for the future of business operations.

With the entire world confined in their respective homes due to the pandemic, the call for

having a sense of familiarity is strong. Hence, many businesses began utilizing nostalgia in their marketing activities, perhaps to both entice the customers and comfort the community. Implementing the said strategy is certainly effective as seen on the continuous growth of Jollibee and McDonald's despite the community quarantine. This implies that nostalgia marketing will continue to generate customers and sales for the duration of the pandemic. Moreover, with the strategy in question being based on consumer emotion instead of industry statistics, businesses can create a more intimate relationship with their customers. Customer loyalty will also be improved as business patrons realize that their wants and needs are being prioritized over profiting schemes. Moving forward, it would be beneficial for businesses to realize the significance of nostalgia marketing and its effectiveness in business operations.

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