When Looking Retro is Not Enough: Sincerity and Authenticity as Psychological Mechanisms Triggering Consumer Response to Nostalgic Reappropriation

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This study analyzes the impact of nostalgic reappropriation on the consumer-brand relationship and evaluates the psychological mechanisms that drive favorable behavioral responses. Specifically, it investigates how Generation Z's reappropriation of past elements influences engagement and purchase intention by conceptualizing nostalgic cues as legitimacy signals that consumers evaluate through perceptions of brand sincerity and authenticity. An online experiment with 152 participants and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) reveals that the nostalgic experience does not directly generate emotional attachment or behavioral responses. Instead, the effect operates through full serial mediation: nostalgic reappropriation increases perceived sincerity, which in turn fosters perceived brand authenticity. It is this perceived authenticity that ultimately triggers emotional attachment, engagement, and purchase intention. The study concludes that brands must pass a legitimacy-based "evaluative filter" for nostalgia marketing to be effective.

Keywords: Nostalgic Reappropriation, Brand Sincerity, Brand Authenticity, Emotional Brand Attachment, Nostalgia Marketing