

RETRO BRANDING: CASES FROM INDIAN SCENARIO

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Abstract

A recent marketing phenomenon in the Indian marketing scenario is that reviving the abandoned brand or relaunching them. Retro branding has created a new buzz in the competitive Indian market place. It has helped companies in building a strong brand identity. Consumers become more receptive and inclined to purchase revived brands. Managing retro brands is a complex affair. It is not re-launching or re-advertising, but it is the process of re-launching historical brands with updated features. It tries to capitalize the nostalgia and brand essence associated with the old brands.

This paper explores the various connotation of retro branding with special reference to Indian scenario.

Key Words: Retro branding, Brand re-launch, Brand reviving, Cult brand

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1. Introduction:

In recent years, a new phenomenal development has been seen in the marketing strategy adopted by the Indian firms. One such strategy is known as 'Retro branding'. Companies all around the world are reviving the abandoned brands and re-launching them with updated features. Hence, the concept of 'Retro branding' has helped companies in developing a strong brand identity and to prevent imitation made either by the followers or by the market leaders. Many companies consider re-launching of an existing product a safer option than developing and managing a new product or a brand. However, marketers often forget the fact that unless there is substantial similarity with the heritage brand with an added feature that will justify the re-launch, otherwise the chances of its success are less.

Managing retro brands is a complex affair. It is not re-launching or re-advertising. It is a more intricate issue as the brand is reanimated jointly by the stakeholders (**Brown et.al.2003**). A retro brand is a powerful tool that re-gathers its loyal users. 'Retro branding' tries to capitalize the consumers' nostalgic feelings. However, there is considerable overlapping area among nostalgia, brand heritage and brand revival. The problem associated with the exact reproduction of the old brand is that they do not meet today's performance standards. Retro brand on the other hand, combine old fashioned forms with cutting edge functions and thereby harmonize the past with the present (**Brown,1999**). Hence, it is necessary that a brand when rejuvenated must skillfully exploit the brand heritage.

2. Retro Branding: some strategic issues

In real life, it has been seen that consumers tend to be receptive to familiar things to which they have experienced sometime in the past. They feel nostalgic when old brands are revived and thus are more receptive and more likely to purchase such revived brands. Retro branding which means revival of old brands, hopes to cash in on the nostalgia and '*fin-de-siecle*' (that means humankind propensity to retrospect as centuries draw to a close) effect associated with them.

Penaloza (2000) consider the importance of expanding the conception of history as "a source of market value" and a cultural marker of legitimacy and authenticity.

Thompson, Pollio, and Locander (1994) reported that classic brands not only embody the moral values of craftsmanship and lasting value but also hark back to a time when the world seemed safer, more comprehensible, and much less commercial.

Brown, Kozinets and Sherry Jr. (2003) identified two possible reasons for the rise of retro branding. These are:

1. Rapidity of new product launches and due to the presence of vulnerable cultural environment.
2. Rapid technological up-gradation and imitation, sometimes quickly eradicate the fast mover advantage of the firms. Hence, it is a competitive way to create trust and loyalty that consumers hold towards old brand.

Brown et.al. (2003) defined retro brand as the revival or re-launch of a product or service brand from a prior historical period, which is usually but not always updated to contemporary standards of performance, functioning, or taste. They distinguish retro brands from the nostalgic brands by the element of updating. They also highlighted four themes in the context of retro branding.

These are:

1. **Allegory (Brand Story)** – Symbolic stories, narratives or extended metaphors.
2. **Arcadia (Idealized Brand Community)** – Evoking a utopian sense of past worlds and communities.
3. **Aura (Brand Essence)** – Presence of a powerful sense of authenticity.
4. **Antinomy (Brand Paradox)** – Conflicting desires of the human mind, which can be satisfied simultaneously.

In short, it can be said that re-launches continues to grow but there is one thing common in all these re-launches. All the re-launched brands had updated features and that is exactly what retro brands are supposed to be. They are basically re-launched historical brands with updated features.

3. Retro branding: Cases from Indian Context

As we understand from the above literature that Retro branding is the revival or re-launch of a product or service brands from a prior historical period, which is usually but not always updated to contemporary standards of performance, functioning, or taste. Retro brands are distinguishable

from nostalgic brands by the element of updating. In this regard, few cases pertaining to retro branding with special reference to Indian scenario are analyzed.

3.1 Case of Vespa Scooter:

In order to manage a cult symbol that made a name in the past during '50s and '60s and driven by past iconic status associated with it, Italian scooter brand, Vespa is gearing up in order to restore its glory with a new positioning in the Indian market. It was almost 13 years; Piaggio has brought back the Italian brand, Vespa (The brand was first introduced to the Indian market in 1946 through a joint venture between Bajaj and Piaggio), to the Indian soil in its original avatar. The newly launched campaign for the new Vespa positions the scooter as a timeless and ageless lifestyle product which leverages on its rich heritage.

The campaign aims to establish the point that the Vespa is not just a mode of transportation but an individual style statement, which is further articulated through the tagline, "*Fashion unchanged*". They modernized but maintained a certain DNA i.e. the neo classical style but a contemporary outlook. The products look modern but still retain the design from the 1946 classic.

The television commercial (TVC) titled "*Fashion unchanged*" shows that a young man in a modern setting, getting ready to go out. He jumps out of bed, wears his favourite shirt, shoes and jacket, and straps on his helmet. Interestingly, he styles himself in the Vespa way, maintaining the retro classic look. He gets on his Vespa in search of the perfect girl to match his style and his scooter. After screening several girls, he finally finds the perfect girl and takes her for a ride on his Vespa. (See Pic-1)



Pic-1 (Television Commercial of Vespa)

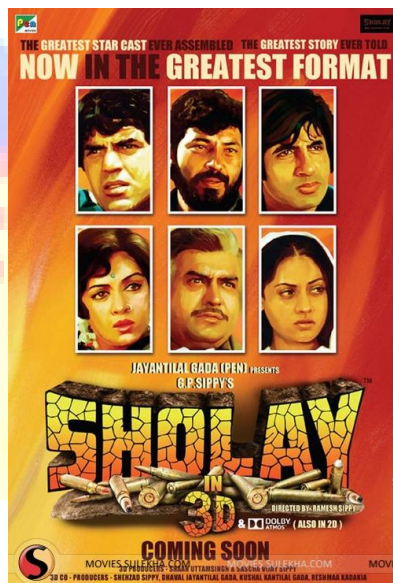
Source:https://www.google.co.in/search?q=vespa+retro+indian+advertisement&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=qHPUvT_BIv7rAe2tIHQBQ&ved=0CAcQ_AUoAQ&biw=1366&bih=676#facrc=_&imgdii=_&imggrc=NaPjCoCZeXIuQM%253A

In other words, brand Vespa try to create a cult status by associated with the concept ‘Allegory’, ‘Aura’ and ‘Arcadia’ as identified by **Brown et.al (2003)**.

3.2 Case of Sholay 3D film:

Another most interesting example of retro branding is the case of reviving the iconic film *Sholay* (1975) in 3D version in order to woo the next generation movie seekers. It is a recent example of retro branding which is distinguished from nostalgic brands by the elements of updating.

Sholay (1975) which was an action based Hindi film directed by Ramesh Sippy and produced by his father G. P. Sippy. The film follows two criminals, Veeru and Jai (played by Dharmendra and Amitabh Bachchan), hired by a retired police officer (Sanjeev Kumar) to capture the ruthless dacoit Gabbar Singh (Amjad Khan) (*Wikipedia*). It was a complete entertainer, with a judicious mix of emotion, humor, action and story of revenge. (*see pic-2*)



Pic-2 (Commercial Ad of Sholay in 3D)

Source:https://www.google.co.in/search?source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=56TPUtiQJ4SNrgfP14D4Bw&ved=0CAcQ_AUoAQ&biw=1366&bih=676&q=sholay%20film%20in%203d#facrc=_&imgdii=_&imggrc=NaPjCoCZeXIuQM%253A

The cult status is underscored by the tales associated with it. In the words of Jayantilal Gada and Sasha Sippy, “we have given people to see Sholay in theatres and we have given people a reason to revisit the theatres for old classics by making Sholay in 3D” (*Economic Times*). Hence, it possesses all the four features of retro branding as suggested by **Brown et.al (2003)**.

Table: 1

Retro Branding of Sholay Film in 3D

Allegory (Brand Story)	It is a tale of two law small time lawbreakers freeing a village from the clutches of a fearsome bandit.
Arcadia (Idealized Brand Community)	It evoking a utopian sense of past and provide movie lovers to revisit the classic in brand new way (i.e. in 3D format).
Aura (Brand Essence)	The film Portray a powerful sense of authenticity by virtue of its classic saga, a timeless storyline of revenge,emotion,action and depiction of the characters in the film like jai, veeru, vasanti and Gabbar Singh in such a way to make it very close to our heart.
Antinomy (Brand Paradox)	It creates a conflict of opinion between the original classic and its up-gradation in 3D format.

Source: *compiled by author*

3.3 Case of Dhara oil:

After a gap of almost six years, Dhara returns to the television advertising this time with a new brand positioning, “*India ka Tadka*”.Dhara was born out of the operation Golden Flow, a programme that brought small scale oil seed farmers and the **National Dairy development Board (NDDB)** together in production collection, processing and packaging (*Business Standard*).

Dhara is now looking to stage a comeback in the edible oil market. **Mother Dairy Fruit & Vegetable (MDFVL)** which now manages Dhara after the two were merged a few years ago (by **NDDDB**), launched a new campaign called “*India ka Tadka*”. The strategy for the brand came from two strong insights. Firstly, the word ‘**Tadka**’ (which means tempering) that gives Indian food its special flavours. Secondly, though Indians love fried items, there is a growing awareness on health and fitness due to which people shy away from indulgence. (*Business Standard*). Some of the past nostalgic Dhara edible oil campaign “*Dhara, Dhara, Shuddh Dhara*” which was emphasis on purity to convince buyers to make switch from unbranded to branded edible oil. Early 1990s campaign titled “*My Daddy strongest*” emphasized on purity along with health. Hence, Dhara embedded all the four features of retro branding as suggested by **Brown et.al (2003)**.



Pic-3 (TV advertisement of Dhara)

Source: https://www.google.co.in/search?q=dhara+come+back&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ei=C DbnUpnVL8mKrQecoYHACA&ved=0CAcQ_AUoAQ&biw=1366&bih=677#facrc=_&imgdii=_&imgrc=4MQdY8_3qW6aPM%2

4. Conclusion:

Hence, there is no surprise that while reviving retro product or service, the marketer relies and leverage on the consumer’s nostalgic bend of mind. Marketers have realized that technology and imitation quickly eradicate first mover advantage and that communal nostalgia increases during chaotic times. If managed well, they can become a powerful marketing tactics.

Retro brands make their appearance with each phase of the business cycle of the economy, especially during slumps and hardships in order to capitalize the nostalgia associated with better, happier times. Retro branding is more effective with cult brands because the chances of success of revival of cult brands are easier as compared to ordinary ones.

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