DOI https://doi.org/10.30525/2592-8813-2026-spec-1

NOSTALGIC MARKETING AND PACKAGING DESIGN: VISUALISING MEMORY AND HERITAGE

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Abstract. This study explores how nostalgic marketing is expressed through packaging design, using the Latvian chocolate brand Laima as a case study. The paper examines how visual and emotional design elements – such as colour, typography, material texture, and retro symbolism – create nostalgic experiences that strengthen brand identity, authenticity, and consumer loyalty. Combining a visual-historical analysis of Laima's packaging evolution with theoretical insights from consumer psychology and emotional branding, the study traces how design has reflected different socio-cultural contexts – from interwar national romanticism to Soviet modernism and contemporary retro revival. Findings suggest that nostalgia-based packaging operates on both personal and collective levels: it evokes individual memories and shared cultural identity, reinforcing emotional attachment to the brand and its role as a symbol of Latvian heritage.

Key words: nostalgic marketing; packaging design; emotional branding; consumer perception; visual identity.

Introduction. In today's competitive marketplace, brands increasingly rely on emotional marketing strategies to create meaningful connections with consumers. Among these, nostalgic marketing has emerged as a particularly powerful tool, evoking positive emotions associated with the past to strengthen brand loyalty and trust (Pascal, Sprott & Muehling, 2002). Nostalgia allows brands to tap into consumers' collective and personal memories, offering a sense of continuity and emotional comfort in an era of rapid social and technological change (Holbrook & Schindler, 2003). One of the most effective mediums for conveying nostalgic cues is packaging design, which serves not only a functional purpose but also communicates brand heritage and identity (Underwood, 2003). The visual language of packaging – including typography, colour, imagery, and material texture – can instantly trigger emotional associations with "the good old days," reinforcing a brand's authenticity (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008). As Muehling and Pascal (2011) emphasize, nostalgia-based appeals in marketing can enhance perceived brand warmth and consumer attachment, leading to increased purchase intention and long-term loyalty.

The Laima chocolate brand in Latvia provides an excellent example for studying the intersection of nostalgic marketing and packaging design. Founded in 1870, Laima has become not only a confectionery manufacturer but also a symbol of Latvian national identity and cultural memory. Its packaging evolution–from elegant interwar designs to Soviet-era wrappers and contemporary retro-inspired versions–reflects the brand's ongoing effort to balance modern aesthetics with historical resonance. Through design, Laima communicates both continuity and belonging, appealing to multiple generations of consumers who associate its products with family traditions and childhood memories. While global brands such as Coca-Cola, Hershey's, and Milka have long employed nostalgic design elements to reinforce their heritage (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003), relatively little research has focused on how regional heritage brands in smaller markets, such as Latvia, use nostalgia to maintain emotional relevance in a globalized economy. This gap highlights the need to explore how local visual codes and national symbols are integrated into packaging design to evoke cultural nostalgia.

Therefore, this study aims to analyse how Laima's packaging design employs nostalgic visual elements to strengthen emotional engagement and consumer loyalty. The research applies a qualitative visual and contextual analysis of historical and contemporary packaging designs, supported by a review of secondary sources on emotional branding, cultural heritage, and consumer perception. By examining the evolution of Laima's chocolate wrappers and visual identity, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how nostalgic marketing operates through design, particularly in the context of heritage branding and national cultural identity.

Basic theoretical and practical provision. The concept of nostalgic marketing builds upon theories of emotional branding and consumer psychology but places particular emphasis on temporal emotion – the way memories and cultural references to the past shape consumer attitudes. According to Holbrook and Schindler (2003), unlike general emotional appeals, nostalgia operates as a bridge between personal experience and collective memory, creating a feeling of continuity and belonging. Building on this emotional foundation, scholars have conceptualized nostalgic marketing as a strategic approach that translates such feelings of reminiscence into brand communication. It relies on emotional connections to the past to strengthen consumer–brand relationships and reinforce perceptions of authenticity and trust. Pascal, Sprott and Muehling (2002) describe nostalgia marketing as the use of past-oriented themes in advertising and branding that evoke sentimental longing and positive affect associated with earlier times. This approach highlights the emotional dimension of nostalgia as a tool to elicit warmth, comfort, and familiarity.

Muehling and Sprott (2004) further develop this perspective by showing that nostalgia-based advertising prompts consumers to engage in greater self-reflection about personally meaningful experiences. Such reflective processing can lead to more positive evaluations of the advertised brand and stronger purchase intentions. Thus, nostalgic communication not only evokes emotional responses but also shapes consumer attitudes and decision-making behaviour.

From a more strategic standpoint, Merchant and Rose (2013) introduce the concept of vicarious nostalgia, defined as "a preference toward objects or experiences that were popular before one's lifetime, which are stimulated through indirect experiences such as advertising or storytelling". Their findings show that advertising-evoked nostalgia can enhance perceptions of brand heritage, authenticity, and purchase intentions. This perspective extends the discussion of nostalgic marketing beyond individual sentiment, positioning nostalgia as a strategic tool that links commercial value with cultural identity.

Scholars also distinguish between different types of nostalgia that operate in consumer perception. Personal nostalgia reflects individuals' memories of their own past experiences, whereas historical or collective nostalgia evokes longing for an idealised period that one has not personally lived through (Stern, 1992; Holak & Havlena, 1998). This distinction is particularly relevant in marketing contexts, as brands may appeal either to personal memory or to shared cultural imagery to evoke emotional resonance. For instance, heritage brands often rely on collective nostalgia to connect with national identity and intergenerational memory.

In addition, researchers such as Marchegiani and Phau (2010) differentiate between personal nostalgia, grounded in individuals' own lived experiences, and historical nostalgia, which refers to idealised representations of a past that consumers have not personally experienced. Both forms are effective in branding, enabling companies to engage different generations – those who recall the brand's earlier designs and those who connect to them through collective cultural imagery.

From a psychological standpoint, nostalgia also performs key affective and social functions. According to Sedikides et al. (2008), it enhances self-continuity, increases feelings of social connectedness, and generates positive affect. These mechanisms help explain why nostalgia-based marketing strengthens trust, emotional attachment, and long-term loyalty toward brands.

Taken together, these perspectives illustrate that nostalgic marketing functions on both individual and collective levels: it draws on personal memories to create emotional engagement while simultaneously using shared cultural references to reinforce a brand's heritage and authenticity.

While nostalgic marketing primarily operates on emotional and psychological levels, its success depends on how these emotions are communicated through tangible and visual means. Among the many brand touchpoints, packaging holds a particularly significant role: it is both a marketing instrument and a semiotic medium that embodies the brand's visual and emotional identity. Underwood (2003) describes packaging as having "communicative power," serving as a bridge between the brand and the consumer's sensory experience. Beyond its functional purpose of protection and containment, packaging represents a three-dimensional advertisement that continuously interacts with the consumer at the point of purchase and during product use. In the context of nostalgic marketing, this interaction is not merely visual – it is affective and mnemonic, engaging memory and emotion through design.

Klimchuk and Krasovec (2013) further highlight that packaging design exists at the intersection of strategy, marketing, and design thinking. It must simultaneously attract attention, differentiate the product, and communicate the brand's story. Through its form, colour, texture, typography, and imagery, packaging design creates a multi-sensory impression that shapes brand perception. Within nostalgic marketing, these visual and material elements function as mnemonic triggers, capable of recalling personal memories or collective imagery associated with the past. Packaging thus becomes a storytelling device – one that translates abstract emotional associations into visible and tactile form.

The communicative dimension of packaging design extends beyond mere visual appeal. It functions as a sign system that transmits symbolic meanings to consumers through its design language. According to Underwood (2003), packaging contributes to brand identity through "lived and mediated experience," allowing consumers to develop a relationship with the brand that feels both personal and continuous. Orth and Malkewitz (2008) similarly argue that consumers interpret packaging holistically, integrating multiple sensory and visual cues into a single aesthetic impression. This holistic perception explains why certain packaging designs can evoke strong emotional responses – particularly when they resemble familiar styles from earlier decades.

In nostalgic marketing, packaging operates as a form of visual rhetoric. Colours, shapes, and materials act as semiotic signs that evoke emotional resonance and signal authenticity. For example, muted or sepia tones can suggest age and continuity; script fonts may evoke artisanal craftsmanship; and embossed textures or paper wrappings can replicate the tactile experience of historical packaging. Each design choice thus contributes to constructing a narrative of memory and trust, reinforcing the consumer's emotional bond with the brand.

The emotional impact of nostalgic packaging largely depends on specific design cues that activate memory and sentiment. Orth and Malkewitz (2008) identify five key design dimensions – massiveness, delicacy, naturalness, elaborateness, and harmony – which shape consumers' aesthetic impressions of brands. In nostalgic contexts, these dimensions can be manipulated to recall earlier visual traditions. For instance, elaborate ornamentation and harmonious symmetry may evoke pre-digital design sensibilities, while natural materials such as paper or uncoated cardboard suggest authenticity and craftsmanship.

Research in design psychology supports this connection between visual cues and emotional associations. Bloch (1995) notes that visual design triggers both cognitive and affective responses, and that familiarity increases perceived trust and preference. In nostalgic packaging, this familiarity often derives from retro styles or iconic visual motifs – for example, vintage typography, hand-drawn illustrations, or period-specific colour palettes such as muted reds, creams, and golds. These features do not simply imitate the past; they reconstruct it through contemporary design language, allowing brands to merge heritage with modern relevance.

Klimchuk and Krasovec (2013) describe this process as visual storytelling, in which design elements work collectively to express brand heritage and authenticity. Nostalgic packaging thus appeals to consumers' aesthetic memory – their internalised sense of what feels "classic," "familiar," or "comforting." By carefully reintroducing historical design elements, brands can revive emotional connections with long-term customers while attracting younger generations intrigued by retro aesthetics.

Beyond individual emotion, nostalgic packaging also embodies cultural narratives. Heller (2007) argues that design functions as a "carrier of collective memory," encoding cultural values and historical experiences into visual form. In national or regional brands, this cultural dimension becomes especially salient. Packaging often incorporates symbols, patterns, or colour schemes associated with a particular heritage, thereby transforming the product into a cultural artefact.

In the Latvian policy context, the Design of Latvia 2020 framework explicitly positions design as a strategic instrument for economic development, social well-being, and the formation of cultural identity and the national image. The strategy highlights the importance of coordinated institutions, such as the Latvian Design Council, and the integration of design heritage into nation-branding and identity building (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, 2020).

These principles are vividly embodied in the case of Laima, Latvia's oldest and most recognisable chocolate brand. Founded in 1870, Laima has evolved from a confectionery producer into a cultural icon deeply embedded in the nation's collective memory. The name Laima, derived from the Latvian word for "happiness" and the ancient goddess of fate, symbolises good fortune and well-being, values deeply rooted in Latvian culture. Since 2014, Laima has been part of the Norwegian Orkla Group, which also owns several other Baltic confectionery brands. Despite foreign ownership, Laima continues to emphasise its Latvian heritage and design traditions, positioning itself as a symbol of national identity and cultural continuity (Orkla Group, 2015). Today, Laima's product portfolio includes more than 200 confectionery items available both in Latvia and in many foreign markets. The company maintains its traditional recipes and craftsmanship, while integrating modern production technologies and design practices. Over its long history, Laima's packaging has mirrored the socio-political and aesthetic transformations of Latvian society – from the elegant interwar designs to the simplified visual language of the Soviet era, and finally to the contemporary retro-inspired revivals that merge heritage with modernity. The following section presents the results of a visual and contextual analysis of Laima's packaging evolution, examining how nostalgic design elements have been used across different historical periods to shape brand identity and consumer perception.

Evaluation of research results. The evolution of Laima's packaging design demonstrates how nostalgic marketing can be expressed through visual continuity and reinterpretation. Over more than 150 years, Laima has maintained its position as a national symbol of Latvia, reflecting the country's historical and cultural transformations through design.

Table 1. summarises key stages in the evolution of Laima's confectionery packaging, illustrating how the brand has visually balanced heritage and modernity across decades.

This historical overview shows that Laima's packaging design has consistently reflected Latvia's social, cultural, and aesthetic transformations. Each era introduced distinct visual codes – from the refined elegance and national symbolism of the interwar period to the functional realism and industrial aesthetics of the Soviet decades, and later to the revival of heritage motifs after independence. Over time, Laima developed a multilayered visual identity that balanced adaptation to political and economic change with a commitment to preserving continuity and authenticity. Through this evolution, the brand's packaging became more than a marketing tool – it turned into a visual narrative of Latvian collective memory. These accumulated visual and emotional associations now serve as a foundation for Laima's nostalgic appeal, enabling the brand to connect generations of consumers through shared cultural imagery and design heritage.

Table 1

Evolution of Laima's Packaging Design and Visual Identity (1920s–2025)

Period	Design Characteristics and Cultural Context
1920s–early 1930s	Packaging design featured eclectic and illustrative compositions, often inspired by exotic and historical imagery – African, Egyptian, and tropical motifs – alongside naturalistic and zoomorphic themes. This reflected global visual trends of the 1920s, combining romanticized exoticism with early Art Deco geometry. Rich colour palettes and hand-drawn typography emphasised craftsmanship and modern elegance, while ornamental frames and symmetry showed strong German graphic influence.
Late 1930s	Design gradually adopted more distinctly Latvian motifs – folk ornaments and national symbols such as the sun and waves – while moving toward greater simplicity and visual harmony. This evolution marked Laima's transition from cosmopolitan to nationally inspired aesthetics, aligning the brand with the emerging Latvian cultural identity. By the late 1930s, Laima's packaging reached artistic maturity, blending modernist geometry with national symbols. Wrappers frequently featured monuments and architectural landmarks of Riga, integrated with traditional Latvian decorative patterns.
1940s	After World War II, Laima's production continued under Soviet administration. Packaging reflected ideological alignment with Soviet cultural canons – for instance, 1945 wrappers featured reproductions of Russian painter Ivan Shishkin's "Morning in a Pine Forest."
1950s–1980s	The mid-20th-century evolution of Laima's packaging demonstrates how visual design adapted to changing ideological and aesthetic environments. Iconic Latvian confectionery brands emerged, along with artist-designed packaging, including Gunārs Kirke's Rigonda (1960), which became an integral part of Laima's identity and later a nostalgic symbol of everyday life in Soviet Latvia.
1990s–2000s	The post-independence revival period marked a return to pre-war motifs and cursive logotypes, with nostalgic packaging celebrating national identity and heritage.
2010s–2020s	In 2015, Laima released a retro collection in honour of its 145th anniversary. A contemporary reinterpretation by Kid Design (2024) introduced minimalist compositions, natural paper textures, and a revived handwritten logo, achieving retro-modern harmony.
2025 (redesign)	The latest unified redesign across Laima's product range, presented in March 2025, introduced a refreshed visual identity preserving the heritage colour-circle logo, clearer typography, and enhanced shelf visibility.

(Sources: Lanceniece, 2012; Fold.lv.,2024; Laima, 2025; Laima Chocolate Museum, 2025).

Figure 1 provides examples of Laima's packaging from the 1920s and early 1930s, illustrating the eclectic mix of exotic, naturalistic, and geometric motifs characteristic of interwar design. These compositions reflect global visual trends of the era, including a fascination with exotic imagery, ornamental symmetry, and the growing influence of Art Deco aesthetics in Latvia. It should also be noted that some of Laima's early interwar packaging, such as Moderna Afrika ("Modern Africa"), reflected the period's fascination with exotic and colonial imagery. While these designs followed international Art Deco trends and were not intended to carry explicit racial connotations, from today's perspective they can be reinterpreted through a postcolonial lens that questions the Eurocentric visual codes of "exoticism" (Tunstall, 2013; Arya, 2022; Ulz, 2024).

By the late 1930s, Laima's packaging design had become distinctly Latvian in character, marked by richly detailed and visually expressive compositions. Wrappers from this period showcased a wide range of motifs, yet consistently reflected national aesthetics – folk ornaments, traditional costumes, and depictions of Riga's and Latvia's notable architectural landmarks. Designers frequently employed symbolic imagery such as the sun, waves, and agricultural scenes to express vitality, harmony, and connection to the homeland (see Figure 2). These culturally resonant designs embodied the optimism

and self-confidence of late interwar Latvia (Ūdre, (2024). Although this visual language was interrupted during the Soviet period, its key elements – national ornamentation, symbolism, and colour harmony – were later revived in post-independence redesigns, reaffirming Laima's identity as a symbol of Latvian heritage.



Figure 1. Examples of early modernist and exotic imagery in Laima's packaging – designs such as *Moderna Afrika* ("Modern Africa"), *Aduja*, *Ēģiptiešu maisījums* ("Egyptian Mixture"), and *Punšs* ("Punch") reflect the interwar cosmopolitan aesthetics and early Art Deco influence. (Mums patīk, 2017)



Figure 2. Laima candy wrappers from the late 1930s: *Jaunais rīts* ("New Morning"), *Nacionālās karameles* ("National Caramels"), and *Lidotāja* ("Aviator"). Combining national symbolism and optimism, this design marked the transition between interwar modernist aesthetics and the emerging visual language of social realism. (Lanceniece, 2012)

In the immediate post-war years, Laima resumed production under Soviet administration, adapting its product range and packaging design to all-Union visual standards. One of the earliest examples of this integration was the introduction, in 1945, of the Lācītis Ķepainītis ("Bear Cub"). One of the earliest examples of this integration was the introduction, in 1945, of the Lācītis Ķepainītis confectionery – the Latvian equivalent of the well-known Soviet Mishka Kosolapy brand (see Figure 3). The design drew upon a long-established Russian visual tradition: the original Mishka Kosolapy wrapper had first appeared in 1913, created by artist Manuil Andreyev for the Einem confectionery company (later Krasny Oktyabr). Andreyev based the composition on the painting Morning in a Pine Forest (1889) by Ivan Shishkin and Konstantin Savitsky, which became one of the most recognisable images in Soviet and post-Soviet consumer culture. Laima's 1945 version reproduced this classic scene of bear cubs playing among pine trees. While the composition underwent stylistic updates in later years, the central image or its variations were consistently preserved, and in the most recent redesign a subtle ribbon in the colours of the Latvian national flag was added, merging historical continuity with renewed national identity.



Figure 3. Evolution of the "Mishka Kosolapy"/Lācītis Ķepainītis confectionery wrapper. From left to right: the original 1913 design created by artist M. Andreyev for the Einem company (Moscow); the classic Soviet-era version by Krasny Oktyabr chief artist Leonid Chelnokov (1950s–1980s); and several Latvian versions Lācītis Ķepainītis produced by Laima. (Museum of Brands, 2025; Laima, 2025)

During the later Soviet decades, Laima chocolates and candies enjoyed wide popularity across the USSR, recognised not only for their exceptional taste but also for their refined and aesthetically sophisticated packaging design. The factory's visual presentation stood out for its artistic illustrations, rich colour palettes, and high production quality. Premium assortments such as Trifele ("Truffle") and other select varieties were often double-wrapped – first in foil and then in printed paper – enhancing their sense of luxury and exclusivity. Among the most popular confections of that period were Vāverīte ("Squirrel"), Sarkanā magone ("Red Poppy"), and Serenāde, distinguished by their vivid and memorable wrappers. Even today, many consumers recognise familiar visual elements in their packaging, perceiving them as a sign of continuity and tradition (see Figure 4). However, some also note that, despite the nostalgic appearance, the flavour has changed over time, often being described as less authentic than in the past (Barkāns, 2023).

In an economy marked by scarcity and limited consumer choice, Laima products symbolised quality and sophistication. While many people regularly purchased inexpensive caramels, toffees, or soy-based chocolates, Laima's boxed pralines and chocolate assortments were associated with festive occasions, New Year celebrations, gifts for loved ones, and expressions of appreciation or respect. Through both taste and design, these confections became emotional tokens of joy and aspiration in everyday Soviet life.



Figure 4. Evolution of Serenāde candy wrappers: from the original 1937 design featuring a musician on the moon, to the dark-blue version popular in the 1970s–1980s, which became one of the most recognisable Laima packages. The two contemporary wrappers on the right are both inspired by the Soviet-era design, though the latest version, introduced after the rebranding, includes the addition of the red Laima logo. (Laima Chocolate Museum, 2025; HoReCa.lv, 2012)

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Laima faced economic uncertainty and limited access to raw materials, leading to the temporary discontinuation of many long-standing products. Nevertheless, even under these challenging circumstances, the company continued to draw inspiration from Latvian cultural traditions. In the early 1990s, Laima introduced a new chocolate confection Līgo (1990), created in honour of the midsummer solstice celebration – a festival that had been officially suppressed during the Soviet era, yet remained one of the core expressions of Latvian identity and collective memory. The Līgo wrapper featured a vivid green colour symbolising summer grass and renewal, adorned with traditional midsummer flowers from the Jāņu bouquet (see Figure 5). Beyond its flavour of cinnamon and cocoa, the confection resonated emotionally as a cultural statement – a rediscovery of national heritage through taste and design. The revival of Līgo marked a turning point in Laima's branding, as nostalgia for pre-Soviet traditions and collective cultural memory became central to its visual language in the post-independence years. The product not only celebrated the midsummer festival but also symbolised the restoration of Latvian identity and values that had been suppressed during the Soviet



Figure 5. Laima "Līgo" confection (1990). (Latvijas Sabiedriskais medijs, 2017)

The chronological overview shows that Laima's visual identity has accumulated layers of historical and emotional meaning that now serve as a key nostalgic resource. Each redesign has drawn selectively from the brand's visual heritage, transforming familiar motifs into emotionally resonant

touchpoints. By reintroducing traditional ornaments, vintage typography, and colour palettes from earlier decades, Laima evokes both collective memory and a sense of emotional continuity among consumers – precisely the mechanism described by Holbrook and Schindler (2003) as the bridge between personal experience and shared cultural memory.

A clear manifestation of this strategy was the Retro Chocolate Collection, released in 2015 to commemorate Laima's 145th anniversary. Developed as both a marketing initiative and a cultural project, the collection aimed to celebrate the art of chocolate making and highlight the company's historical legacy. According to NP Foods (2015), the company invested approximately EUR 35,000 in the initiative, underscoring its importance not only as a commercial product launch but also as an act of cultural remembrance. The collection consisted of seven premium products featuring two newly developed flavour lines – Dessert and Berries. The Dessert Collection served as a retrospective on Laima's historical packaging, particularly from the 1930s, while the Berries Collection paid tribute to the Japanese aesthetic influences that fascinated Latvian society during the 1940s (see Figure 6). One of the most symbolically charged elements was the inclusion of 90% dark chocolate and Lukss chocolate bars, whose design referenced the Ulmanis era – the interwar period under President Kārlis Ulmanis (1934–1940). For many Latvians, the Ulmanis period remains a powerful symbol of national independence, economic progress, and cultural confidence, often idealised in collective memory as a "golden age" of Latvian statehood (Romanovska, 2020).

By evoking the visual and emotional codes of this historical era, Laima effectively reconnected consumers with a time associated with prosperity, stability, and national pride. Through the Retro Chocolate Collection, Laima positioned itself not merely as a confectionery producer, but as a custodian of Latvian design heritage and cultural nostalgia. The collection exemplified how packaging can serve as both a medium of historical storytelling and a strategic marketing tool, transforming collective memory into a source of brand authenticity and emotional engagement.



Figure 6. Laima Retro Chocolate Collection (2015). (Laima, 2015)

Continuing its engagement with national memory, Laima launched the "Nostalģija" ("Nostalgia") project to mark Latvia's centenary. The campaign invited the public to vote for their favourite historical Laima confections – one representing each decade of the brand's history. Among the ten classic candies featured in the campaign, Talismans and Karakums received the highest number of votes and were reintroduced in 2018 according to their original recipes. (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Visual materials from Laima's "Nostalģija" centenary project – illustrations of classic confections Talismans (1920s) and Karakums (1950s) used in the public voting campaign, alongside the reissued 2018 wrappers. (NRA.LV., 2017; Laima, 2018)

First introduced in 1925, when Laima became a joint-stock company, Talismans ("Talisman") soon emerged as one of the brand's most beloved confections of the 1920s. Created in the mid-twentieth century and inspired by the Central Asian desert of the same name, Karakums ("Kara-Kum") – a chocolate candy with delicate wafer pieces – became an iconic treat across the Soviet Union and remains one of the most enduring symbols of shared nostalgia among consumers in the post-Soviet region (Cabinet Oxford, 2021).

As Lineta Mikša, Public Relations and Communications Manager at Orkla Confectionery & Snacks Latvija, observed: "Each decade of Latvia's history has had its own character, style, and taste – including a favourite Laima chocolate. We are truly delighted by the public's response and their eagerness to rediscover the history of chocolate in Latvia."

Through this initiative, Laima transformed nostalgic sentiment into active public participation, reinforcing its role as both a cultural symbol and a custodian of Latvia's collective sweet memories.

This nostalgic dialogue with the past continued in the 2023 redesign of Laima's chocolate bars by KID Design, which deliberately revived the tactile and handcrafted qualities of historical packaging (see Figure 8). The design team approached the project as both a modernization and a cultural revival, aiming to strengthen emotional continuity while improving brand clarity.

According to Brand Capital, nostalgic aesthetics appeal not only to long-time consumers who associate Laima with childhood memories, but also to younger audiences who romanticize the aesthetics of eras they never personally experienced. This finding aligns with Merchant and Rose's (2013) notion of vicarious nostalgia – emotional engagement with a collectively imagined past. To bridge these audiences, illustrator Līva Eichmane created delicate watercolour depictions of the chocolate bars' ingredients, visually evoking the taste and texture of the products while preserving the retro mood of the design.

As designer Maija Rozenfelde explains, "the original sketches were drawn by hand, and handmade work has a different aura… We wanted to bring back that naturalness and nostalgic feeling with a human touch. For example, if a name has two a's, each one is deliberately made slightly different.

All the sketches were done by hand, as in the past, and then, of course, transferred into digital graphics" (Fold.lv, 2024). This tactile, imperfect aesthetic reinforces the authenticity associated with handcrafted design, resonating with what Muehling and Sprott (2004) describe as the reflective aspect of nostalgia – prompting consumers to engage emotionally through memories or imagined experiences of the past. Reflecting on the project, Kristīne Mūrniece, Laima's Marketing Manager, emphasized that "the designers have managed to preserve the historical connection and emotional elements of the iconic Laima products, creating a modern version of a classic" (Fold.lv, 2024).



Figure 8. Laima Chocolate Bar Redesign by KID Design (2023). (Fold.lv., 2024)

The ongoing packaging renewal demonstrates how Laima continues to treat nostalgic design as both an emotional and strategic asset – maintaining cultural continuity while ensuring visual relevance in a competitive market. Through the deliberate revival of historical motifs, typographic styles, and colour palettes, the brand transforms nostalgia into a form of emotional storytelling that bridges generations and reinforces consumer trust. This case illustrates that nostalgic marketing in packaging is not merely an aesthetic exercise, but a multidimensional strategy that strengthens brand authenticity, enhances emotional engagement, and sustains long-term loyalty. In the broader context of heritage branding, Laima's evolution shows how visual nostalgia can function as a cultural connector – linking individual memories with collective identity and positioning the brand as both a commercial and cultural institution.

Conclusion. This study examined how nostalgic marketing operates through packaging design, using the Latvian heritage brand Laima as a case study. The analysis demonstrated that nostalgia in design functions as both an emotional and strategic mechanism: it evokes personal and collective memories while reinforcing perceptions of authenticity and cultural belonging. By reintroducing historical visual codes – such as traditional motifs, retro typography, and handcrafted aesthetics – Laima effectively bridges its past and present, turning brand heritage into a source of emotional value and competitive advantage.

The historical evolution of Laima's packaging closely mirrors the cultural and political transformations of Latvia itself. Each era – from the national romanticism of the 1930s, through the socialist industrial modernism of the Soviet period, to the contemporary revival of retro design – has left its visual imprint on the brand's identity. These successive layers of design memory now function as a nostalgic archive, enabling the brand to resonate emotionally with consumers across generations. Older audiences experience personal nostalgia, recalling the taste, imagery, and emotions of their

own childhood, while younger consumers often engage with collective nostalgia, finding symbolic connection to an idealised vision of Latvia's cultural past. This dual appeal helps Laima maintain emotional relevance in a rapidly changing market.

In this way, nostalgic packaging transcends its commercial function and enters the cultural sphere. It preserves fragments of visual history – fonts, colours, illustrations – that together evoke a sense of belonging and pride. When consumers encounter such packaging, they are not simply reminded of a product; they are reminded of a shared past, a cultural identity, and the emotional comfort of familiarity.

The case of Laima also highlights the broader role of nostalgic design in small-market and national brands. For companies rooted in cultural heritage, nostalgia provides a framework for expressing identity and continuity amid globalisation. It allows brands to speak simultaneously to local sentiment and to universal emotions of warmth, memory, and connection. Thus, nostalgic marketing in packaging design emerges not only as a promotional strategy, but also as a cultural practice that maintains collective memory and aesthetic tradition.

Future research could further explore how consumers from different generations and cultural backgrounds interpret nostalgia-based design cues, as well as how digital media and sustainability trends influence the visual language of heritage branding. Understanding these dynamics will contribute to a deeper appreciation of how design functions as both a medium of emotion and a vehicle of cultural storytelling.

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