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Introduction

Nokia's first model reappears in redesigned form. With its simplicity and basic functionality, the "boring phone" offers an escape from the incessant distractions of smartphones. Could this give the brand a new lease of life?

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To mark its 25th anniversary, the legendary Nokia 3210 is making a comeback! The first Nokia 3210 model appeared in 1999 and was one of the most iconic phones of the 2000s, selling over 160 million units.



Source: HMD

The new Nokia 3210

The Nokia 3210 is a new edition of the classic 1999 model, combining a “retro-elegant” aesthetic with a touch of modernity. It is available in three colours, features a 2.4-inch LCD screen(which is relatively modest by today’s standards), and includes a USB-C port for charging. The unbreakable phone promises remarkable autonomy, supporting up to nine and a half hours of talk time from a single charge, and that “won’t die on you when you’re partying hard this summer” writes Human Mobile Devices (HMD), the manufacturer. Compared to smartphones, the Nokia 3210 is strong and resistant to impact due to its durable casing.

For text input, the 3210 uses a traditional 9-key numeric keypad. For example, you’ll need to press 4 twice, 3 twice, 5 six times, and 6 three times just to write the word “Hello”- a total of 13 presses. It does, however, feature T9 predictive writing software to make message writing easier.

Despite the dominance of smartphones with multiple photo sensors, this model features a modest 2-megapixel camera with a flash that can also be used as a flashlight. By comparison, the latest iPhone 15 offers 48 megapixels.

Reedited phones are usually designed differently from the more contemporary smartphones. The idea is to take older models and fill them with new technologies to give them improved functionality. While this device lacks most of the features seen on modern phones, including the current focus on AI, it is still improved from its prior design.

This time, the Nokia 3210 includes integrated 4G and Bluetooth 5.0, as well as the 3.5 mm headphone jack, a feature that many users missed when Apple chose to remove it from their devices. The phone also includes Cloud applications providing useful information such as weather, news, YouTube videos, FM radio and the famous Snake game in glorious colours, for a nostalgic touch.

It is available now on the brand’s official website and retails at, €79.9 (or \$89), much less expensive than a smartphone (on average 400 euros), but a little more pricey than other basic phones.

There are two main reasons one would want to buy the Nokia 3210 in the era of shiny small computers-in-the-pocket: Nostalgia or digital detox. If you’re overwhelmed by constant notifications and digital noise, the retro Nokia 3210 offers a refreshing alternative or a secondary phone. The 3210 may also appeal to older generations who prefer a simpler mobile experience. Sometimes, all you need is to make a call or send a text.

Digital detox, reconnect to real life

The return of the Nokia 3210, with its simplicity and basic functionalities, offers a much-welcomed escape for those wishing to disconnect from the incessant distractions of smartphones. Social media application algorithms are designed to be easily addictive. Research in 2023 from Reviews.org reveal that the average American spend around 4 hours and 25 minutes each day on his phone.



REVIEWSON.ORG

Source: Reviews.org

No more endless notifications or scrolling for hours on colourful demanding apps, some see the basic phones as a way to cut off from social media, while remaining reachable for essential communications.

“If it’s urgent, they’ll call or send a message,” writes HMD.

In the age of “digital detox”, basic phones, often referred to as “boring phones” or “dumbphones”, are now “cool”.

According to The Guardian, this trend stems from Generation Z's distrust of the data-gathering and attention-grabbing technologies they grew up with. Research by GWI supports this, revealing that nearly four out of ten young people aged 16 to 24 are worried about spending too much time on their smartphones.

The movement towards dumbphones is not just about rejecting newer technology but about reclaiming mental space and peace. These less intrusive and addictive communication tools provide a healthier balance between connectivity and personal well-being. HMD names it JOMO, or the joy of missing out. A digital detox is, by definition, a period of time, ranging from an hour to an entire weekend, where a person refrains from online activities, and it is proven to come with a wealth of benefits. Staying away from screens leads to increased productivity, improved sleep, reduced stress and anxiety, and enhanced overall life satisfaction. In other words, spending more time online can lead to a more harmful experience, while spending less time online can improve the quality of your life.

Dialling into nostalgia

“The original Nokia 3210 holds a special place in the hearts of many users [...] It's the ideal product to reimagine for the modern era, given its strong heritage and iconic design,” explains Ben Wood, founder of the Mobile Phone Museum, interviewed by HMD about the model's importance.

This is not the first time HMD has re-popularised a Nokia model. In 2017, it was the 3310 that was re-released, followed in 2018 by the Nokia 8810 also known as the “Banana phone”. Indeed, the return of classic models is usually greeted with enthusiasm, as these revivals evoke nostalgia while offering a fresh twist or updated features.

Nostalgia carries a powerful emotional influence; it is comforting and familiar like reliving the good old days. It is especially prevalent during uncertain times or periods of change, reminding us that feelings of doom or unease are temporary. In fact, nostalgia-driven trends in pop culture and fashion peaked during the early 2020s, a relatively challenging period.

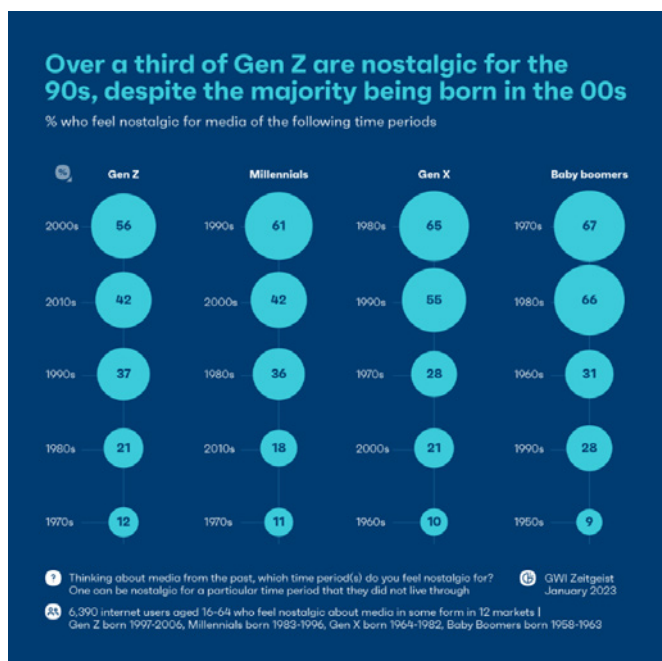
In the fashion industry, tapping into nostalgia has proven effective, with retro logos and reissues of classic designs dominating social media discussions. This approach has led many designers to reintroduce beloved old pieces instead of investing heavily in marketing new products. The revival of iconic handbags like the Dior Saddle Bag, and the Fendi Baguette, with small twists, have become major trends in recent years. The Dior Saddle Bag, for instance, reissued in 2018 as a nod to its status of a Y2K (year 2000) ‘it bag,’ was resized slightly bigger to fit modern essentials like a smartphone. According to Retail Intelligence Platform EDITED, in 2022, the reintroduction of ‘90s and Y2K bags saw high sell-out rates, leading to out-of-stock periods for many items.

In the automotive industry, BMW's revival of the Mini Cooper was very successful, with its iconic design and go-kart feel. However, not all revivals are equally successful. The revival of the DS marque by Citroën has encountered significant challenges. Initially launched with a strategy to differentiate through a premium lineup, the brand struggled with sales, especially in critical markets like China, and faced an identity crisis among consumers who were unclear about its value proposition compared to its heritage.

Conclusion

The success of relaunching a classic model relies on the emotional bond consumers hold with the original versions and their continued relevance in today's world. The Nokia 3210 exemplifies this, it offers a simpler, nostalgic mobile experience for those seeking a digital detox or a return to basics. The dumbphone is already a hit in China, selling out completely within just two days of its release. It shows that less can indeed be more.

Could the commercial success of the Nokia 3210 translate into a rise in Nokia's share price? Let's not forget that Nokia sold its Microsoft cell phone division in 2013 and is now focusing on mobile networks (including 5G). And since 2016, the Finnish company HMD (unlisted) has been in charge of producing the brand's phones.



Source: GWI

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