

TEENTIMES

FOR THE YOUTH, BY THE YOUTH!

December 2024



Happy
Holidays

Christmas = Kwanzaa & Hanukkah too

What is Kwanzaa?

Kwanzaa is an African American Christmas tradition that began in the USA in the 1960s. It was started by the civil rights leader Maulana Karenga in 1966. The idea was for black people to unify in coming together and celebrating their history. The focus would then be on values to support their development. However, just like Christmas décor, its influence moved from place to place and it became popular.

When is Kwanzaa?

Kwanzaa starts immediately after Christmas and continues until January 1.

What decorations are used for Kwanzaa?

The main decoration is a *kinara*, a candleholder for seven candles. Three red candles sit to the left, three green to the right and there is a central black candle which is lit first. A candle is lit each day alternating between red and green, which directly links to the seven principles or *Nguzo Saba*.

What are the colours of Kwanzaa?

The colours of Kwanzaa are black, green and red which represent the Pan-African movement; it is a symbol of unity of the African-descent around the world. Black is for the people, red is for the blood, and green is for the land of Africa.

What are the seven principles of Kwanzaa?

The seven principles of Kwanzaa:

- 1: Umoja (unity)
- 2: Kujichagulia (self-determination and responsibility)
- 3: Ujima (collective work and responsibility)
- 4: Ujamaa (cooperative economics)
- 5: Nia (purpose in remembering and restoring black culture, customs and history)
- 6: Kuumba (creativity)
- 7: Imani (faith)

Hanukkah

December 25 this year is not only Christmas Day, but also the start of Hanukkah. Every December, Jewish families around the world gather to celebrate Hanukkah, the festival of lights.



Hanukkah, also known as Chanukah (kha-nu-kah) or Festival of Lights, is an eight-day wintertime celebration for Jewish families celebrating the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Hanukkah begins on the eve of Kislev 25 of the Chanukah calendar, typically falling in

December, and this year it just so happens to fall on the day of Christmas.

The Seleucids, who were Syrian-Greeks who dominated the Holy Land in the second century BCE, attempted to convert the Israelites to Greek culture and beliefs in



place of mitzvah (commandment in the Torah) observance and faith in God of Judaism. Against all odds, a tiny group of devoted but unprepared Jews, led by Judah the Maccabee, drove the Greeks out of the land, beat one of the world's most powerful armies, regained Jerusalem's Holy Temple, and recommitted it to Judaism in God's service. Only one cruse of olive oil that had survived Greek contamination was discovered when they attempted to light the Temple's Menorah, the seven-branched candelabrum. Until fresh oil could be made under ritually pure circumstances, they miraculously lit the menorah, and the one-day supply of oil lasted for eight days. The sages established the Chanukah festival to honour and promote these wonders.

Just one flame is lit on the first night, an additional one is lit the second night, and this goes on until the eighth day of Chanukah, where all eight lights are kindled. Menorahs are lit in every household or even by each individual in the household, and usually placed in a doorway or window. It is also lit in public spaces and synagogues.

There are many traditions that Jews do during this festival, such as eating fried foods, playing fun games and giving gifts. During Chanukah, it is customary for Jewish households to eat fried foods in oil, since the miracle involves oil.

The menorah lighting is the heart of the festival, where the menorah holds nine flames, one of which is the shamash ("attendant") which is used to kindle the other eight lights, and a special prayer is recited prior to the lighting of the menorah, then traditional songs are sung af-



is a publication of

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Christmas Angels of St. Martin

BY SANYA JANDIAL

It's the most wonderful time of the year – the smell of eggnog and freshly baked cookies, the air filled with the scent of candy canes, and the joy of opening presents on Christmas morning with seasonal songs playing in the background. For people all around the globe, Christmas is about spreading happiness for those special people and moments in our lives. However, this time of year doesn't bring the same emotions for those who are underprivileged. Even on our island of St. Martin, we are constantly shown that not everybody has the same advantages. As a friendly community, it is up to our people to stick up for each other throughout the hardships, no matter what.

The K1 Britannia Foundation has beautifully shown the spirit of Christmas by putting in place the Christmas Angels program. Helping people feel appreciated is the sole purpose of this initiative, particularly those who don't normally get that recognition. The Christmas Angels program is associated with an estimated 13 schools and organizations that hand-make angels just for this event! After a whopping 11 years of this project,

some 500 people participated in the making of this year's angels. The stations were set up at different locations including McDonald's, Cost U Less, and the Government Administration Building.

The way it works is that once a person in the community picks an angel, a wish-list is given for that specific child or adult. The person then buys the gift in return for the angel. This exchange, which might seem insignificant to some, may very well turn someone's holiday dream into a reality! As the youth of Sint

Maarten, it is necessary to stay engaged in the community. Many teenagers have participated in this workshop, ultimately demonstrating their willingness to put service over self. Here are some thoughts expressed by fellow teens:

"The number of schools that participated by making their "angels" warmed my heart because this showed that we are all united by common aims. More teenagers need to become a part of projects such as these, considering how such undertakings also contribute

much in times of need but simultaneously increase responsibility among participants. It is great to know that our efforts help make Christmas a little happier for less fortunate kids."

"I liked the fact that, instead of asking for plain donations, the program focused on directly buying gifts for kids based on their wish lists. This approach felt transparent and creative, allowing participants to see exactly how they were making a difference. It also gave me a chance to be a sort of 'Christmas angel' for someone in need, which was special. I believe that more teenagers should participate in such projects, as even when we can't donate ourselves, it is easy to use our voices and networks to encourage others to do so."

Just imagine looking up at your decorated Christmas tree after several years of taking part in this Christmas Angels program, and seeing it covered in the angels that symbolize the many lives you've helped brighten. If you don't participate this year, then next time around, do something good and make someone's Christmas merry and sound!



INDISU CHRISTMAS RECITAL

BY ASANTÉ PHILIPPS

The Indisu Dance Theater of St. Maarten is home to some passionate and focused dancers who take pride in their art form. Their emotional movement and face expressions are not only for the song they're dancing to, but also the story they're telling with the dance. This was displayed at their Christmas recital, which took place at the Philipsburg cultural centre, where the dancers left

their mark on the crowd with their amazing performance. To perform well for the show, they prepared for it some two months in advance. Their teachers made them listen to the music before they got to the studio so that they could get a feel of the rhythm and beats. That way, the music wasn't unfamiliar to them.

In the field of dance, preparation is very important, seeing that you have to memorize your steps and keep a focused mind, which is very important for a passionate dancer. By practicing their dance moves before the recital, it ensures a dancer who is understanding of the choreography, flexible and can envision what type of emotional energy they need to put into their dance. This

is how the dancers at Indisu were able to capture the attention of the crowd at the Christmas recital. The art of dance consists of individuals who work together in harmony in order to have a unified performance.

The dancers at Indisu said that being around each other during the Christmas recital was a lot of fun. Their atmosphere is all about laughs and love. Not only do the dancers love being around each other, but they also love their teachers. By having these types of strong relationships and positive vibes with each other, it gives the dancers more confidence and energy, and it strengthens their passion on stage while they're performing. Fostering a family environment among dancers ensures open communication between the dancers and their teachers which elevates the dancers. The show that the directors of the Indisu dance group put together is a mixture of feelings – happy, joyful, funny, hopeful and more. They

make sure to create choreography that has a story to it.

They as dancers are the storytellers. Not only do they tell the story with the dance moves, but with their facial expressions too. When dancing on the stage at the culture centre, it is easy for them to feel at ease. Most of the dancers have danced for many years, so over time, the stage fright wears off – this also helps dancers face and overcome anxiety. For Indisu dancers, their favourite part about performing at the Christmas recital, is being able to do what they're passionate about, and doing it with the people they know love it as much as they themselves love it. There's something so comforting to them in knowing that a group of people can all unite and relate to each other through dance. It connects them in so many ways and helps them build very strong bonds with each other by letting their creativity show.

"So it is safe to say that we love performing! The stage will feel our passion for dance a hundred more times!"





MODERN VS. TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

BY ARTI BULLAND

Christmas is a time of joy, family and tradition, but the way people celebrate has evolved significantly over the years. The holiday season reflects the changing dynamics of society, culture and technology, from the simplicity of traditional celebrations to the elegance and professionalism of modern ones.

For centuries, the foundation of Christmas celebrations has been simple family get-togethers, religious activities and community development. Therefore, church services, carol singing and charitable deeds were the main foundation for the birth of Jesus Christ. Handcrafted ornaments, candles and pine branches were some of the handmade and frequently simplistic decorations. Small decorations like candles, ribbons and dried fruits were used to decorate the Christmas tree, which gained popularity in the 19th century. Giving gifts was a casual activity. Families exchanged handcrafted or useful presents, like wooden toys, baked products or knitted scarves.

Rather than being extravagant, the emphasis was on the thought behind giving the gift. The meals included tasty, traditional foods such as homemade puddings, roasted meats and potatoes. The importance of community was essential. Towns frequently hosted little Christmas markets with regional goods and treats, neighbours got together to share meals, and Christmas carollers roamed throughout neighbourhoods. Many people engaged in acts of kindness, such as giving to those in need or volunteering their time, as charity and kindness were promoted.



Fast forward to today, Christmas has evolved into a vibrant combination of modernity and tradition. For many, non-religious festivities of family, entertainment and shopping are superior to the holiday's religious aspects. Nowadays, Christmas decorations are a mix of colour and innovation. The current traditions include LED lights, light displays and inflatable yard ornaments. In some places, neighbourhoods compete to have the most eye-catching setup and also determine a winner in some cases.

Due to convenience and environmental concerns, artificial trees, which are typically pre-lit and/or customizable have largely replaced natural ones. Holiday shopping has been transformed by the internet. Gifts may now be ordered online and delivered to your doorstep in just a couple of hours, which has reduced the need to spend time in busy stores. Fancy decorating ideas, themed events and gift wrapping are all influenced by social media sites like Instagram and Pinterest, which allow people to have an inspiration as to how they want theirs to be.

Today, giving large quantities of gifts that are also unique is more important. The majority of people's wish lists include costly presents, high-tech toys and gadgets. Also, because experiences are now more valuable than tangible belongings, experiential gifts like spa days, concert tickets or trip vouchers are beginning to gain popularity. In addition, Black Friday and Cyber Monday, which promote mass consumption before to the holiday, are related to Christmas commercialization.

Some traditional customs have adapted to modern life. For instance, sending Christmas cards has shifted to the internet with social media posts and e-cards replacing physical mail. Advent calendars which started out as straightforward countdown tools are



now filled with chocolates cosmetics and even homemade beverages. In addition, technology has changed how families gather together to celebrate. Loved ones around the world can enjoy moments in real time through video calls and virtual get-togethers. Smart home appliances help to create the ideal holiday atmosphere, and streaming services offer countless choices for Christmas music and films.

The transition from traditional to modern Christmas is marked by gains and losses. Modern inventions make it easier to connect with loved ones, find unique gifts, and create wonderful experiences, even though commercialization and technology have increased convenience and variety. However, as the continuous emphasis on materialism dominates the fundamental principles of love, giving and community that are meant to characterize the season; many regret the loss of simplicity and significance. But the true meaning of Christmas, which is spreading joy and spending time with loved ones, never changes. Families nowadays are coming up with creative ways to combine new and old cus-

tom. For instance, even while they share pictures of their tree on social media or watch viral holiday movies, some people continue to read traditional Christmas stories or bake cookies together.

Christmas will evolve along with society. Decisions are already being influenced by environmental factors. Many people are choosing digital greetings, reusable gift wrap and eco-friendly decorations. With AI-powered gift suggestions and virtual reality holiday experiences, technology promises even more innovation.

Ultimately, whether you like the excitement of modern celebrations or the nostalgia of traditional Christmas, the spirit of the season is always the same with celebrating love, happiness and relationships with people who are most important. We can create a Christmas season that honours the past while looking forward to the future by embracing both the old and the new.

Merry Christmas! May this holiday season be filled with joy and laughter.

FIVE WAYS TO EMBRACE THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT

BY SUHANI NATHUMAL



As Christmas rolls around the corner, the roundabouts sparkle with lit-up Christmas trees, and the streetlights shine with dazzling festive fixtures. Yet, here in the Caribbean, the warm air lingers, and our vibrant green trees remain untouched by snow, making it a little tricky to fully embrace the magic of the season. Despite the lack of frosty mornings or winter coats, Christmas is still a time of joy, love, and most importantly, giving.

If you're finding it hard to feel the holiday spirit this year, don't worry, I've got you covered! Here are five creative and heart-warming ways to bring some holly jolly cheer to your Christmas celebrations and make the season truly unforgettable.

1: Transform your house into a winter wonderland!

Take this holiday season to bond with your family while decorating the Christmas tree together. Watch as each family member's creativity shines, blending unique ornaments and personal touches to create a tree that symbolizes love and unity. Additionally, you can adorn your home with garlands, wreaths, and

twinkling lights. Adding candles or festive scents like cinnamon or pine can create a cosy ambiance, making your house feel warm and inviting. When you walk through your front door, the decorations will welcome you into the heart of Christmas, spreading joy throughout your home.

2: Partake in festive activities

Fill your home with the comforting aroma of freshly baked cookies, the perfect treat (for both you and Santa Claus) to set the holiday mood. Pair them with warm hot chocolate topped with marshmallows for an indulgent delight as you lounge in your cosiest Christmas-themed pyjamas. To complete the atmosphere, put on your favourite Christmas playlist – whether it's cheerful classics or soulful carols, the music is sure to lift your spirits. This simple yet heart-warming activity will bring a sense of togetherness and remind you why this season is so magical.

3: Host a get-together with your friends/family

Plan a fun and festive holiday gathering with your loved ones, and embrace the festive spirit together. To add a playful twist to the event, you

can choose a fun theme, for example, ugly Christmas sweaters. Serve delicious food and drinks, and set up a mix of activities like board games, Christmas trivia or a gift exchange to keep the energy lively. Don't forget to decorate your table with festive centrepieces that you and your guests can create together – it's a fun and meaningful way to make lasting memories this holiday season.

4: Christmas movie marathon

Take a night to unwind and immerse yourself in the magic of Christmas with a movie marathon. Light some candles to create a cosy atmosphere, grab a big bowl of popcorn, and settle in with your favourite festive films. Walk down memory lane by revisiting childhood classics like the Home Alone series or How the Grinch Stole Christmas, and mix in newer hits like The Christmas Chronicles. Whether you're watching with family, friends, or enjoying some peaceful alone time, this relaxing tradition is sure to fill you with holiday cheer and nostalgia.

5: Participate in toy drives

Sometimes, even when the streets are glowing with lights and the

weather feels just right, the holiday spirit can still feel incomplete. The missing piece can often be found in the act of giving. Brighten someone's Christmas by participating in toy drives or Christmas Angel Tree programs that provide gifts to children in need. A simple act of kindness can embody the true spirit of the season – bringing joy, love, and hope to others. Giving back not only makes a difference in their lives but also in yours!

With Christmas approaching, keep in mind that the true magic of the season is found in the joy, love, and togetherness it brings. Whether you're transforming your home into a festive retreat, sharing laughs with loved ones, or giving back to those in need, these moments are what make the season special. Enjoy the warmth and wonder of the holidays in your own special way, and allow the spirit of Christmas to fill your heart and home. After all, it's not about the snow or the cold; it's about making lifelong memories.

Happy Holidays!

Unique Christmas Foods from Around the World

BY DISHITA BABANI

These special foods intrigue not only the palate, but carry deeper historical and cultural relevance as well, making the season of Christmas one that is truly celebrated worldwide. Every culture has its set of Christmas celebrations with local specialties and ingredients. This article covers some of the very unique Christmas dishes from each of several countries, representing many stories and meanings. Every single dish represents a tradition, company, and sharing festive table, a great time that recalls all kinds of various ways people gather to pay respects to this very season.

1. Julestild - Denmark

Julestild, or Christmas herring, is a requisite part of Christmas feasts in

Denmark. Pickled herring is spiced up with cinnamon and cloves and then traditionally served with rye bread and remoulade. Traditionally, Julestild is part of a greater course in the Christmas feast called julefrokost.

2. Bibingka - Philippines

In the Philippines, Christmas is made up of bibingka, a rice flour cake traditionally eaten after Misa de Gallo (a midnight mass). This cake uses coconut milk and is very frequently served with salted duck eggs and cheese on top. These treats are baked in clay pots lined with banana leaves, which enhance their Christmassy feel.

4. Sopa de Galets - Spain

Sopa de galets is a Christmas Day soup with large pasta shells stuffed with meatballs in a rich broth made from beef and ham bones. It is one of the traditional dishes of Catalonia, long in preparation, which symbolizes warmth and family gathering.

3. Christopsomo - Greece

In Greece, families celebrate with sweet breads

decorated with the signs of either crosses or flowers and usually accompany the roasted lamb and other foods on their Christmas tables to symbolize the holiday period in joy and plenty.

5. Lanttulaatikko - Finland

Lanttulaatikko is the sweet swede casserole – mixed with cream, bread-crumbs, and spices – that plays the lead role in any Finnish Christmas Eve dinner. This whole course consists of roast ham, various fish, and whatnot, really showcasing how much Finns love hearty and comforting foods during winter.

6. Sorpotel - Goa, India

Sorpotel is a kind of spiced pork cooked with vinegar in the celebrations of Christmas in Goa, India. It reflects the Portuguese influence of the region and usually is served with rice or bread, which shows the spirit of sharing and community gatherings on the day.

7. Stollen - Germany

A German Christmas fruitcake called Stollen consists of a sort of fruited bread that can be filled with nuts and



dried fruits, which in addition could be sprinkled with icing sugar. It is usually supposed to symbolize the Christ Child.

8. Tamales - Mexico

Tamale, a corn-dough filled with meats or vegetables wrapped in corn husks and steamed, is prepared in their families for Christmas dinner in Mexico. In fact, generally, tamales are made available during family gatherings as one important constituent of a festive fare known as tamalada.

9. KFC Fried Chicken - Japan

Perhaps the most surprising yet popular Christmas tradition in Japan is eating fried chicken from KFC. This tradition emerged in the 1970s because of effective advertising and has since then been a kind of quirky holiday ritual for many families in Japan.



Feature

Traditional Christmas songs on the island

BY JAHZARA PAYNE

Every year around this time, there are the tunes of Christmas carols that play in the stores or on your Christmas playlist. Many of the songs are songs from all over the world such as "All I Want for Christmas" by Mariah Carey or "Last Christmas" by either Ariana Grande or Wham. These songs are always played for the season, which is understandable since they are fantastic songs for the Holidays. Yet, they all have one thing in common – they do not originate from our island or the Caribbean. The island has traditional songs that were made for Christmas and most of the locals do not really play them like the other songs.

One of the many songs that are traditional to this island is "Christmas Morning". This song is well known on the island to the point that there is even a cover of it made, which talks about Motorworld and how they have great deals on the vehicles there. The song is basically what the name states, which is Christmas morning on our little island. The song was sung by King T-Mo as well as a few other songs such as "Ho! Ho!

Ho!", "Santa Why?" and "Christmas the old time days" which we can assume is about the olden days when they had guavaberry and tart for Christmas and how everyone celebrated it together.

Another traditional Christmas carol that many may remember is "Ma Ma, Bake Your Johnny Cake" – this one may bring back many memories for past generations, especially hearing it on the radio in the morning during the Christmas season. The song, which originates from St. Croix, US Virgin Islands, is sung by Stanley & the Ten Sleepless Knights, and is popular throughout the Caribbean. In the song, he repeats that his mother should make some Johnny cakes because Christmas and New Year were coming. Throughout the song, you can hear the flute or recorder being played.

One other traditional song is "How Will Santa Get Here" by King Obstinate, which is a classic as well. This song can be assumed to be about how we live on islands that are not the right temperature for reindeers to live on and how Santa will get here with no reindeers. In the beginning of the song, he starts asking: "How will Santa get here?" because the children are waiting for Santa to come into our country. This song is one for the books, because it also brings back many memories for every generation.

These are only a few of the traditional Christmas songs, but there are more of them out there that bring back many memories to our parents, grandparents and maybe even us the youth if we were raised to listen to this type of music around the holidays. Even though these songs are old, we will all agree that it is still fun to listen to them.



FROM YULE TO CHRISTMAS

BY MELANY ELLIS

Everyone knows what it means when the radio starts playing "All I want for Christmas is you" by Mariah Carey, and the air outside abruptly starts getting colder. The Black Friday sales roll around, stores bring out their best Christmas trees, and the beloved seasonal flu comes around once more. These indicators usually mean that Christmas time is around – the ever most loved and cherished holiday of the year. In the pagan world, there is something very similar called Yule.

Yule, or the winter solstice, is a yearly celebration that originated in Nordic countries and has survived through centuries up till this day. Many cultures and religions celebrate this, including the Germanic people, Wiccans, Neo-Pagans and the Celtic people.

Yule deeply coincides with the winter solstice, a term coined to indicate the "shortest day in the year" – that is to say, the day with the fewest hours of daylight or the longest night of the year. This happens twice a year, once in each hemisphere. To that hemisphere, the winter solstice is the day with the shortest period of daylight. This might seem insignificant today, but this was important historically for farming and taking care of crops.

Livestock were slaughtered so farmers would not have to feed them during the winter. It was almost the



only time of the year when a plentiful supply of fresh meat was available. This led to traditions of having feasts and breaking bread during this time. To pagan people, the winter

solstice signified the end and start of a new cycle of the sun, symbolizing hope and renewal for the next year. Fun fact: Ancient monuments such as Stonehenge, Newgrange, Ca-

hokia Woodhenge and Ahu Tongariki are aligned with the sunrise and/or sunset on the winter solstice.

Yule originated in Ancient Europe

around the 5th or 6th century Common Era (CE). During the Christianisation of Europe in the 15th century, it is said that Yule and Christmas merged. According to the saga of King Haakon Haraldsson, during his reign in the 10th century in Norway, after his return from a trip to England, Haakon converted to Christianity and made it a law that Christmas and Yule should be celebrated around the same time. Everyone was required to have ale from a measure of grain and keep the holiday while the ale lasted, or they would be subjected to a fine.

This led to both celebrations being similar in traditions and rituals whilst being celebrated for two completely different reasons. A central tradition surrounding Yule consists of the burning of a log covered in herbs (cinnamon, orange peels, cloves, etc.) to represent the return of the sun. There are also other Yule traditions such as gift-giving, feasting on a big, shared meal, decorating a "Yule" tree and singing carols – all similar to those Christian traditions of Christmas.

Today, many perform the act of gift-giving, decorating their Christmas trees and singing classic Christmas carols, unaware of the origins of those same traditions. Although Yule today is not very popular, the practices are still being kept alive by small groups around the globe.

Back to the future: Why nostalgia matters more than ever for Gen Z

Nostalgia isn't just a sentimental journey; it's a force shaping culture, creativity, and commerce. For Generation Z, a cohort born into a fast-evolving digital world, nostalgia serves as a comforting anchor and a creative muse. From the revival of 90s fashion to the resurgence of retro video games and vinyl records, this generation is reimagining the past to create a modern-day cultural phenomenon.

The comfort of the familiar
Growing up in an era of constant change, Gen Z has developed a unique connection to the past. Nostalgia offers stability in an age characterized by rapid technological advancements and global uncertainties. According to insights shared by Pion, nostalgic experiences – from classic TV shows, like Friends, to childhood toys and video games – allow young consumers to retreat to a simpler, less overwhelming time.

This connection to the past isn't a rejection of modernity, but a way to humanize and personalize their experiences in a fast-paced world. By blending nostalgic elements into their daily lives, Gen Z creates a balance between the digital and the tangible.

The creative power of nostalgia
Far from simply replicating the past, Gen Z uses nostalgia as a creative springboard. The generation thrives

on remixing and reinterpreting old trends, making them their own. For instance, 90s-inspired fashion trends like bucket hats, baggy jeans, and platform shoes have returned to the mainstream, but with modern twists. Similarly, retro video game aesthetics are now embedded in new gaming experiences and pop culture references.

This innovation extends beyond aesthetics. Nostalgia influences everything from music, where artists like Olivia Rodrigo blend vintage sounds with contemporary lyrics, to technology, where "retro-futuristic" designs combine nostalgic styling with cutting-edge functionality.

Nostalgia and spending habits
Nostalgia is also a powerful driver of consumer behaviour. Gen Z's spending patterns reveal a willingness to invest in experiences and products that evoke a sense of the past. This trend has reshaped industries like fashion, entertainment, and even home décor. Vintage-inspired furniture, Polaroid cameras, and vinyl records are thriving in this market.

Brands are quick to capitalize on this sentiment. Marketing campaigns often lean into retro aesthetics or collaborations with legacy brands to evoke familiarity and trust. Experiential marketing, such as nostalgic pop-ups and re-creations of iconic moments, has also gained traction,



helping brands connect with Gen Z on a deeper emotional level.

The business of nostalgia
Companies aiming to engage with Gen Z are increasingly designing strategies centred on nostalgia. Influencer marketing, particularly with creators who resonate with Gen Z, helps brands amplify their nostalgic appeal. Experiential campaigns that blend the past with the present, like Spotify's "Decade Wrapped" playlists or themed events, are particularly effective. For businesses, the challenge lies in authenticity. Gen Z values genuine connections to the past rather than superficial imitations. The most successful brands incorporate nostalgic

elements into meaningful narratives, showing respect for the cultural significance of those memories.

Why it matters
Nostalgia is more than a fleeting trend – it's a lens through which Gen Z processes the complexities of the modern world. It helps them forge identities, connect with others, and find inspiration. By revisiting the past, they're not just preserving it, but actively shaping its role in the future.

For marketers, creators, and brands, understanding the deep relationship between nostalgia and Gen Z is key to staying relevant in a rapidly shifting cultural landscape.

Feature

The commercial and religious history of the most wonderful time of the year

Christmas is a sacred religious holiday and a worldwide cultural phenomenon, observed on December 25 by Christians of all denominations around the world. For more than 2000 years, people of many different countries and cultures have celebrated it with a mixture of religious and secular traditions. Christians commemorate Christmas Day as a religious and cultural celebration commemorating the birth of Jesus of

Nazareth, who is the foundation of Christian belief.

It also includes popular customs such as exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with loved ones, and awaiting Santa Claus – all blending the old and modern practices. Yet, long before Christmas became what it is today, early Europeans marked the winter solstice with celebrations of light and renewal, tied to the term

"Yule". That feast honoured the return of longer days, symbolizing hope and rebirth in the heart of winter. Similarly, words for Christmas in different languages, including Spanish, means "hallowed night". Christmas celebrations of the past were deeply rooted in religious observance and simpler customs, compared to today's elaborate festivities.

The holiday was also mainly a time of going to church, staging plays called nativity plays, and being more hymn-focused as this represented the spiritual meaning of such an occasion. Decorations were understated, featuring greenery, holly, and candles, while the Christmas tree – introduced more widely in the 19th century – was adorned with handmade ornaments. Gift-giving was modest, often consisting of practical or handmade items such as oranges, nuts, or small toys. Entertainment revolved around communal activities like carolling and was-sailing, with feasts focused on locally available seasonal foods like roasted meats and puddings. Contrasted to this, the Christmas of today focuses on family gatherings, lavish decorations, and the commercialization of gifts.

It starts well in advance as the shopping, parades, and lights have taken over. The decorations have become increasingly sophisticated with electric lights, themed displays, and new technologies. The giving of gifts has become an economic boon for most economies, fostered by advertising and consumerist culture. Entertainment has become a multi-media event, from seasonal movies to virtual celebrations. Santa Claus, once a figure steeped in cultural and religious folklore, has become an international symbol of joy and generosity. The changes reflect how Christmas is evolving to mirror the evolution of society, blending ancient traditions with modern innovations.



DIVISION STUDY FINANCING: Empowering Students' Futures

BY LEHAR MARATA

As we approach the peak of the daunting college application season; confusion, fear, and anxiety are also rising, especially regarding finances. Division Study Financing is an entity within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport that is here to help YOU with that! Division Study Financing is tasked with handling the legislation and policies that allow eligible citizens of St. Maarten to pursue a tertiary-level education. To do this, they provide preparatory workshops and training to prepare students to live abroad, payment to students, tickets, insurance, guidance/ supervision, monitoring of study progress, and establishing study debt and payment plans.

1: What are the eligibility criteria for study financing?

Age: Students above the age of 17 are eligible for Study Financing. At 17 years old, however, there may be some applicable conditions regarding legal guardianship in the place of study. Between the ages of 18 and 25, regular Study Financing conditions apply. Additionally, there are special conditions for recipients above the age of 26.

Study: The chosen study must be from the list of priority studies and careers as listed by the Government of St. Maarten (this list can be found online). However, if a student is classified as a "gifted student" based on their outstanding academic performance, they may be exempted from this requirement. (The required academic results to qualify as a gifted student can be found on Division Study Financing's website: www.study-financing.sx)

The student is only eligible for study financing for one degree and then to pursue continuing education. For example, a recipient is not eligible for financing to pursue two Bachelor's or two Master's degrees, but they are eligible for financing to pursue a Bachelor's after MBO or SBO or a Master's after their Bachelor's.

Nationality: Only students with the Dutch nationality are eligible to apply for study financing, this includes those with a Bekendmaking van de verkrijging van het Nederlanderschap. It must be noted that an invitation letter from the Governor regarding a naturalization ceremony is not valid proof.

Residency: To be eligible for study financing, the student must have been residing in St. Maarten for at least five years, prior to the request. If the student does not meet this requirement then at least one parent must have been a resident for at least five years prior to requesting study financing. This five-year cap for parents can be reduced to two years if the applicant or at least one parent was born in St. Maarten or the former Netherlands Antilles.

Educational background: Only students who have completed their secondary education are eligible to apply, this must be higher than PSVE PBL. Students from the St. Maarten Vocation-



al Training School are only eligible for study financing that will be used to pursue a study or certification at NIPA.

Educational institution: Applicants must be admissible to their chosen institution and major. The institution chosen by the recipient must be appropriate for the chosen study. If programs are available at St. Maarten, no study financing will be awarded to students opting to pursue those courses abroad.

Preference: Students with the best academic results are given preference.

A country-specific "required results to qualify list" can be found on their website.

2: What are the academic requirements to maintain eligibility?

To maintain eligibility, the student must maintain a GPA of 2.50 or higher, 49.99 or higher in the UK, 45 ECTS or higher, promotion to the next grade in an MBO or SBO program, or any other equivalents to a GPA of 2.50. If a student fails to meet these standards then the student will receive a letter warning them to improve their performance within one year.

3: What types of study financing programs are available?

Study financing is available for three different types of programs: regular (certification or degrees), CAPE/ IB/ NIPA, and talent/ sports/ creative arts (for professional development within the athletic or arts field).

4: How are the amounts determined for each applicant?

The maximum annual amount is awarded based on place of study, educational institution, degree type, year of study, online or in person.

5: What documents are needed for the application?

The documents required are as follows:

- Proof of Dutch Nationality
- Crib Number
- Detailed Registration Form
- Proof of Application (or admittance letter from the intended educational institution)
- Certificate of Good Health
- Most Recent Study Results
- Tax Declarations (for 2025 Applicants, Taxes for the year 2023 are required)

More information as to how to access these documents and even examples of these documents can be found on the Division Study Financing's website.

6: What is the timeline for applying?

Applications open on January 1 and the last date to submit an application is February 15, these dates remain the same for all years.

7: When are decisions communicated?

- For students not writing exams in June/July, decisions will be communicated in week 3 or 4 in May.
- For HAVO, VWO, and PSVE students, decisions will be communicated in week 2 or 3 of June after their results are published.
- CXC, CAPE, and IB students will receive their decision after their results are published.

8: What are repayment terms for loans?

The repayment terms and interest rates depend on how study financing is revoked; interest rates can range from 5-10%. However, graduates who choose to return to St. Maarten to live and work can receive a 40-70% discount. Students who do not complete their studies or decide to remain abroad after graduating must repay the full amount with an additional 10% interest. Division Study

Financing aims to keep the monthly payments below NAF. 300 and the repayment term is between 5 and 30 years.

9: Can the financing be extended if the program of study takes longer than anticipated?

The student can request an extension in the event of a study delay.

10: What expenses are covered by the Division Study Financing?

Division Study Financing can partially or completely cover the following expenses:

- Start-up in your place of study (1-2 days hotel stays, orientation, housing deposit, first-month rent, and furnishing your room)
- Travel (transportation to hotel and airfare to the place of study)
- Study-related expenses (tuition, books, educational devices, clothing, materials)

11: What is the long-term vision for Division Study Financing St. Maarten?

The department has a vision to increase the return on investment in human capital with highly qualified professionals working in the identified priority market areas. Additionally, they would like to continue digital innovation transformation to better serve clients.

The Division Study Financing St. Maarten continues to shape the lives of St. Maarten's youth by giving them the resources to achieve their dreams. By offering a wide range of support, the department ensures that students are prepared for their new college endeavours. To learn more about what the Division Study Financing offers, make sure to attend the public information session on January 16 at 7:00pm at the Government Administration Building!