

# Marketing Misfire: Bridging GenZ's Nostalgia Gap

22 February 2025



# Key Insight

## "The Nostalgia Paradox: Why Brands Are Missing the Mark with GenZ"

While nostalgia ranks as the second-highest preference (43%) in GenZ advertising preferences, current brand campaigns predominantly target millennial nostalgia from the 70s-90s. Brands are overlooking GenZ's unique nostalgic connection to the late 2000s and early 2010s - their formative years of digital transformation, global connectivity, and cultural fusion.

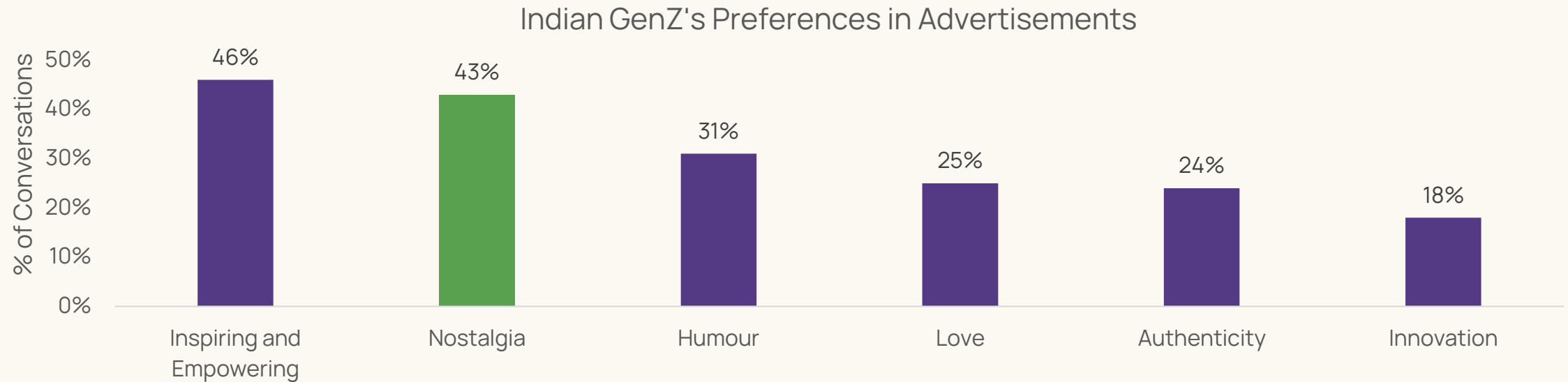
This misalignment represents a significant missed opportunity in connecting with India's largest consumer demographic through their authentic nostalgic triggers.



# Nostalgia Marketing Today Targets Millennials Not GenZ

Brand	Advertisement	Decade in Focus	Brand	Advertisement	Decade in Focus
<b>Campa Cola</b>	Revival Campaign	1970s-80s	<b>MakeMyTrip</b>	Geet From Jab We Met	2000s
<b>Google India</b>	The Hero – A Bollywood Story	1980s-90s	<b>CRED</b>	Campaign featuring Govinda	1980s-90s
<b>7Up</b>	Brought back Fido Dido – Their Mascot	1990s	<b>Cadbury Dairy Milk</b>	#GoodLuckGirls Campaign	1990s
<b>Urban Company</b>	Campaign featuring cast of Sarabhai vs Sarabhai	Early 2000s	<b>YouTube</b>	Komolika and Perna from the iconic Kasautii Zindagii Kay	2000s
<b>Colgate</b>	Advertisement featuring the C.I.D team	1990s-2000s	<b>Oppo</b>	Ranbir and Konkona from Wake Up Sid	2000s
<b>Dunzo</b>	Brought back ACP Pradyuman from C.I.D	1990s-2000s	<b>Flipkart</b>	Arshad Warsi from Golmaal	Early 2000s
<b>Mia by Tanishq</b>	Zeenat Aman dancing to “Toh Baat Ban Jaaye”	1980s	<b>Instamart</b>	Karishma Kapoor with “Sona Kitna Sona”	1990s

# Indian GenZ Craves Both Nostalgia AND Empowerment

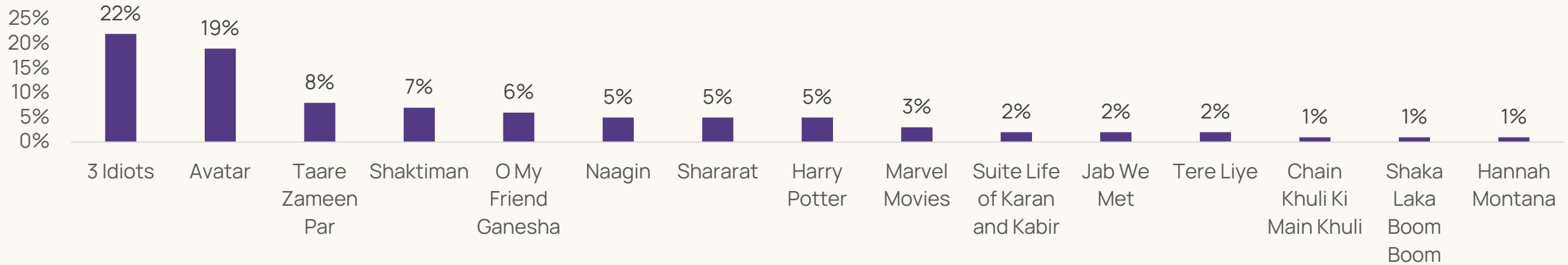


The hierarchy of Indian Gen Z's advertising preferences unveils a fascinating paradox: a generation deeply drawn to both future empowerment and past nostalgia. Despite being digital natives, they show strong emotional connections to eras they experienced in their younger days.

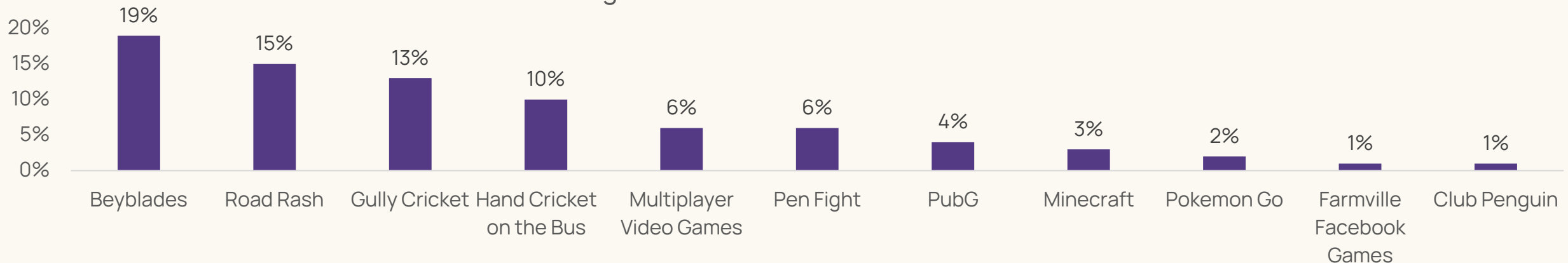
This nostalgia-driven consumption suggests they seek comfort and authenticity in an increasingly uncertain world, while simultaneously wanting content that inspires their future. While humor ranks well, the relatively lower appeal of innovation challenges the stereotype of Gen Z as purely tech-focused.

# 3 Idiots Most Nostalgic Movie; Beyblades Leads in Games

Nostalgic Themes around Movies and Shows



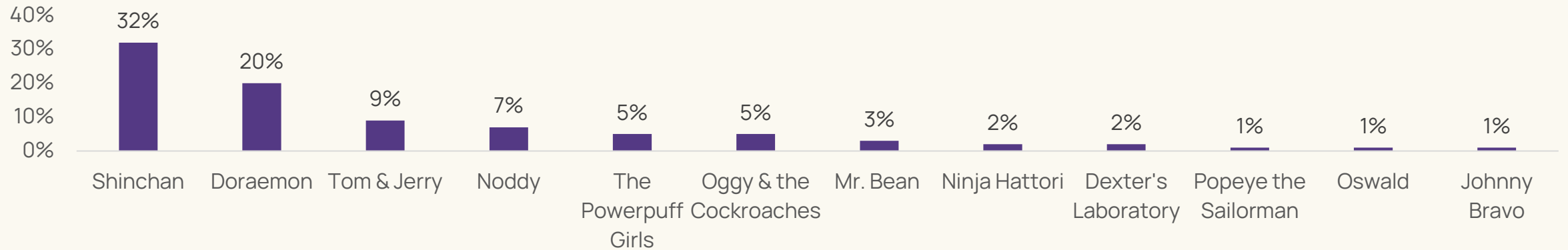
Nostalgic Themes around Games and Video Games



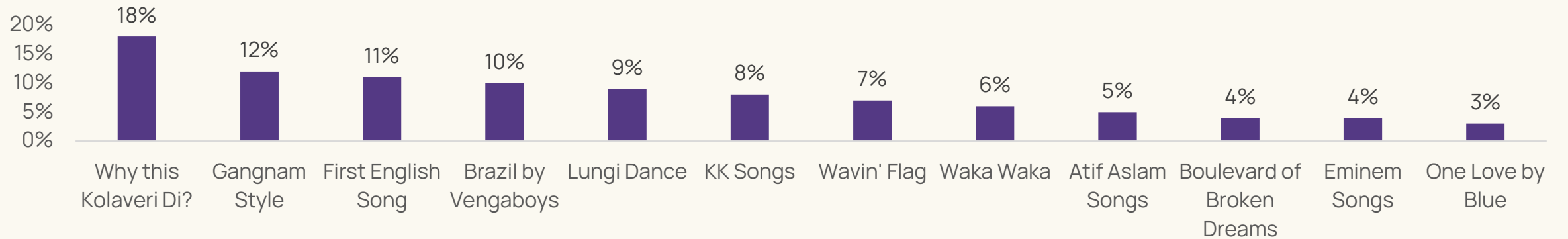
Sources: Social Media Conversations – Reddit, Twitter, YouTube: 32,308

# Shinchan the Clear Cartoon Favourite; Why this Kolaveri Di? Reigns Supreme

Nostalgic Themes around Cartoons



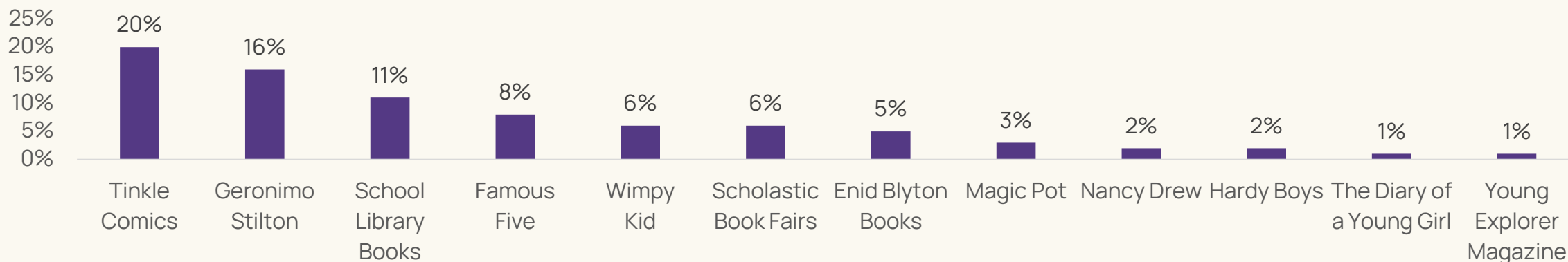
Nostalgic Themes around Songs



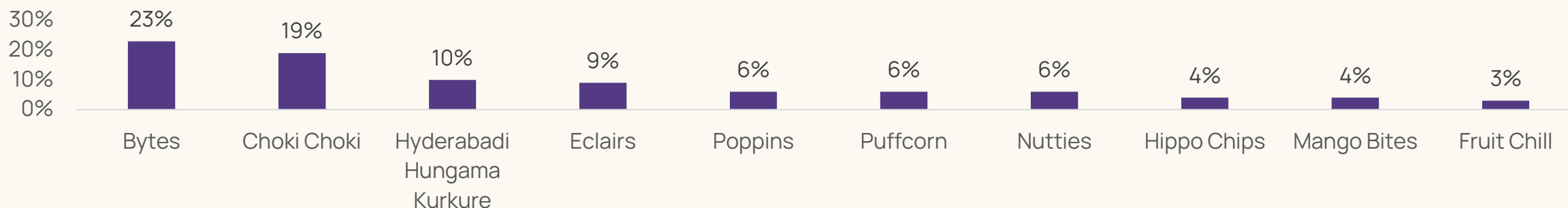
Sources: Social Media Conversations – Reddit, Twitter, YouTube: 32,308

# Tinkle Takes the Throne while Bytes Bites into Nostalgic Snacking Trends

Nostalgic Themes around Books



Nostalgic Themes around Snacks



Sources: Social Media Conversations – Reddit, Twitter, YouTube: 32,308

# Decoding GenZ's Memory Lane: A Cultural Time Capsule

Indian GenZ's nostalgic sweet spot lies in the **late 2000s to early 2010s** - an era marked by rapid digitalization, global cultural fusion, and the dawn of social media. This period represents their formative years when traditional Indian values merged with global influences.

- Entertainment choices reflect a unique blend of intellectual stimulation and emotional resonance. '3 Idiots' resonates deeply by addressing academic pressure and self-discovery, while global phenomena like Avatar showcase their early exposure to international blockbusters.
- Gaming preferences reveal a fascinating mix of physical and digital play. Beyblades represents their last connection to traditional toy-based gaming, while Road Rash and multiplayer games mark their transition into digital socialization. This hybrid gaming culture uniquely defines their generation's social interactions.
- Music trends demonstrate their position as India's first truly global generation. Songs like "Why this Kolaveri Di" and "Gangnam Style" represent viral phenomena that introduced them to global internet culture. Their musical nostalgia intertwines local content with international hits, reflecting their borderless digital upbringing.
- Cartoon preferences highlight their consumption of both Eastern and Western content. Shinchan and Doraemon's popularity shows strong Japanese cultural influence, while cartoons like Powerpuff Girls represent Western impact. This diverse exposure shaped their multicultural perspective and humor sensibilities.
- Literary choices reveal a strong foundation in traditional reading despite digital nativity. Tinkle Comics maintained their connection to Indian storytelling, while international series like Geronimo Stilton exposed them to global narratives. This reading culture bridged their traditional and digital worlds.



# Reframing Nostalgia Marketing – Meeting GenZ where their Memories Live

- Current nostalgia marketing campaigns predominantly focus on 70s-90s cultural touchpoints, targeting millennials while missing GenZ's emotional wavelength. Brands must pivot to late 2000s and early 2010s references to authentically connect with GenZ consumers who now wield significant purchasing power.
- Brands should leverage the unique digital-physical hybrid experiences that defined GenZ's childhood. Marketing campaigns could reference early social media platforms, viral content, and the transition from traditional to digital entertainment, resonating with their distinctive generational experience.
- Successful GenZ nostalgia marketing requires multicultural fluency. Campaigns should reflect their exposure to both local and global content, incorporating references to viral phenomena, international music trends, and fusion entertainment that shaped their cultural identity.
- The approach should balance empowerment with nostalgia, as data shows these are GenZ's top two preferences in advertising. Campaigns can link nostalgic elements to forward-looking themes, acknowledging their past while appealing to their aspirational nature.





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