

MARKETING TO GEN Z & MILLENNIALS

How the Wizarding World Sells

Gen Z and Millennials are the two generations that will carry Wizarding World merchandise through Christmas 2026 and the decade of HBO that follows. They discover, trust and buy differently from each other, and from everyone before them. Here is how each one shops, why nostalgia is Harry Potter's sharpest tool, and what kind of product actually travels.

WHAT MOVES THE TWO KEY GENERATIONS

	<p>~80%</p> <p>FOLD SOCIAL INTO HOW THEY SHOP</p>	<p>37.2%</p> <p>MILLENNIALS BUY ON TIKTOK (> GENZ)</p>	
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Sources: Bazaarvoice Shopper Preference Report 2025; Nielsen (Jul 2025); Edison Research / eMarketer (Dec 2025). See methodology.

Six things to know about *selling* to them.

Gen Z (born 1997–2012) and Millennials (1981–1996) are the demand center for Wizarding World merchandise heading into the Christmas 2026 HBO premiere and beyond. They are not one audience.

They discover product on different platforms, trust different signals, convert in different places, and feel Harry Potter nostalgia for two entirely different reasons. The brands that win treat them as two playbooks.

FINDING 01

Social is the storefront for both — about 80% fold it into shopping.

Roughly 79–80% of Gen Z and Millennials integrate social media into their shopping journey, and short-form video is the single most influential format (46%). For these two generations, social is the store.

FINDING 02

Discovery and purchase are different generations' games.

Gen Z leads discovery and research; Millennials convert more. TikTok's strongest *buyers* are actually 25–44 (37.2%) over the younger cohort (30.5%). Use short video for Gen Z hype; longer, detailed content for Millennial conversion.

FINDING 03

Nostalgia is Harry Potter's sharpest instrument in two flavors.

Millennials grew up *with* the books and feel lived nostalgia. Gen Z inherits it through films and TikTok — nostalgia for an era they didn't witness. Same IP, two emotional pitches. Nostalgia-led TV series earn 22% more watch time; nostalgia campaigns lift brand likability up to 20%.

FINDING 04

Deals and authenticity drive the purchase, not polish.

46% of social shoppers cite better discounts as a top reason to buy through social, and exclusive/limited drops drive nearly half of social-commerce purchases. But 52% distrust content that feels overly promotional; 43% trust creators who show *pros and cons* of products. Authenticity outsells gloss.

FINDING 05

Collectibles win when they're rituals.

The POP MART blind-box model and LEGO's adult-fan lines show the pattern: limited drops, character lore, and emotional ownership turn buying into a habit. Harry Potter's house system is a built-in version of this — identity baked into the product.

FINDING 06

Digital-first doesn't mean digital-only.

These shoppers blend channels without friction: 72% of Gen Z planned to shop in-store on Black Friday 2025 even as they discover on social. The winning model is omnichannel: discover on TikTok, validate through reviews, buy wherever is fastest.

Two generations, *two* playbooks.

The most common mistake in marketing to "young people" is treating Gen Z and Millennials as one audience. They overlap in their reliance on social, but they discover, trust and convert differently — and the differences matter for where the budget goes.

Both generations have moved their shopping onto social platforms. Roughly 79–80% of Gen Z and Millennials now integrate social media into their shopping journey, according to the Bazaarvoice Shopper Preference Report 2025, a survey of more than 8,000 consumers across six countries.¹ For both, short-form video is the single most influential content format, cited by 46% of shoppers. Where they diverge is the part most brands get wrong.

Gen Z discovers. Millennials buy.

The instinct to equate "social shopping" with "Gen Z" is out of date. Gen Z's strength is at the top of the funnel, discovery, research, trend-spotting. But when it comes to actually completing a purchase, the older cohort converts at higher rates. Edison Research's December 2025 "Infinite Scroll" study (n=2,253, weighted to US census) found that 37.2% of adults aged 25–44 buy from TikTok, compared with 30.5% of the younger group.² TikTok's edge with Gen Z is in discovery and research; the checkout happens more reliably with Millennials. For a Harry Potter audience this is doubly relevant, because Millennials are the cohort that grew up reading the books and now hold the disposable income.

~80%

OF GEN Z & MILLENNIALS
FOLD SOCIAL INTO THEIR
SHOPPING JOURNEY

37.2%

OF 25–44S BUY FROM TIKTOK
VS. 30.5% OF THE YOUNGER
COHORT

46%

CITE SHORT-FORM VIDEO AS
THE MOST INFLUENTIAL
CONTENT FORMAT

Short for hype, long for conversion

The format split follows the funnel split. Bazaarvoice's read on its own data is blunt: short-form video for Gen Z hype, longer-form content for Millennial conversion.¹ Gen Z responds to fast, social-native clips for awareness: product unboxing (30%) and before-and-after results (36%) are the video types most likely to move them. Millennials lean on more detailed content to close: product demos, tutorials, and longer reviews that build confidence before they spend. A single fifteen-second TikTok can do the awareness job for both, but converting the Millennial usually takes a second, deeper touch, a review, a longer video, a detailed product page.

The practical implication for a Wizarding World licensee or retailer: don't run one piece of content at both generations and expect it to do both jobs. Plan a short, shareable hook for discovery (which Gen Z will spread) and a longer, substantive follow-through for conversion (which Millennials will act on).

Nostalgia is the *sharpest* tool Harry Potter has.

Of all the levers available for marketing to these two generations, nostalgia is the one Harry Potter is uniquely built to pull, and it works on Gen Z and Millennials for two entirely different reasons. Understanding the difference is the difference between one campaign and two.

Nostalgia has become one of the dominant marketing tools of the decade, and the two generations driving it are exactly the two that matter here. According to GWI, 15% of Gen Z and 14% of Millennials say they would rather think about the past than the future.³ On TikTok, the #nostalgia hashtag passed 16.9 million posts and roughly 100 billion views by October 2025, with #90s and #Y2K adding tens of billions more.⁴ The commercial effect is measurable: Nielsen found that nostalgia-led series earn 22% higher average watch time than non-legacy IP — a direct read on what the HBO series can expect.

+22%

higher average watch time for nostalgia-led series versus non-legacy IP, per Nielsen (July 2025).⁵ For a franchise returning to screen after a decade away, with an audience that already carries it, the nostalgia premium is a documented pattern.

Lived nostalgia vs. inherited nostalgia

Here is the distinction that matters most for Harry Potter. Professor June Cotte of Ivey Business School draws the line cleanly: most nostalgia-product success today is driven by Gen X and Millennials buying things they actually consumed in their youth, while Gen Z drives a different behavior — thrifting, and watching older shows like *Friends* and *The Office*. Gen Z's is a nostalgia for a time they did not experience first-hand.⁶

Harry Potter sits perfectly on both sides of that line. Millennials grew up *with* the books, the series published from 1997 to 2007, squarely across their childhoods. They feel genuine, lived nostalgia for it. For them, a new product is a reunion. Gen Z, by contrast, largely inherited the franchise: through BookTok, through TikTok edits, through older siblings and the broader aesthetic revival. Their attachment is real but it is inherited, aesthetic, discovered rather than remembered. Cotte's research adds the timing note that matters: nostalgia resonates most strongly when people feel uncertain or negative about the present, which describes the current consumer mood well.⁶

Two pitches, one franchise

The implication is that the same product needs two emotional framings. To Millennials: *this is the world you grew up in, made for the adult you are now*, original-canon detail, premium execution. To Gen Z: *this is the aesthetic and identity you've adopted, made real*, dark academia, house identity, shareable design. A September 2025 study in *Advances in Consumer Research* backs the second pitch: digital nostalgia significantly drives brand affinity, trust and impulse buying among Gen Z, even for eras they never lived through.⁷

What actually moves the *purchase*.

Discovery gets attention; a smaller set of signals closes the sale. Across both generations, three things consistently convert: a deal, a trusted voice, and the freedom to buy in whatever channel is fastest.

1. Deals and exclusivity do the heavy lifting

Price is the dominant purchase driver in the current climate. In the Bazaarvoice data, 46% of social shoppers name better discounts as a top reason to buy through social platforms, and exclusive or limited-time deals drive close to half of social-commerce purchases.¹ For these two generations this is amplified by Buy Now, Pay Later: Gen Z and Millennials carry the highest BNPL usage of any cohort, at 39% (Deloitte).⁸ The lesson for licensees isn't to discount the brand, it's that *exclusivity* reads as value. A limited drop, an early-access window, a platform-specific edition all trigger the same purchase response as a discount, without eroding price.

2. Trust comes from creators and honesty

Roughly 56% of Gen Z and Millennials have purchased based on a creator recommendation, and creator influence is strongest in apparel (41%) and health & beauty (53%) — both categories where Harry Potter already has heavy licensed presence.¹ But the trust is conditional. 52% of shoppers distrust creator content that feels overly promotional, and 43% say authenticity comes specifically from creators who acknowledge a product's pros *and* cons.¹ Over-polished, purely promotional content now reads as a warning sign. The most effective creator partnership for a Wizarding World product is a genuine fan who will talk about it like a fan.

46%

of social shoppers cite better discounts as a top reason to purchase through social — and 52% distrust content that feels overly promotional.¹ The winning combination is a real deal delivered by a genuine voice. Polish without either is the least effective content a brand can run.

3. They buy wherever is fastest — including in-store

Digital-first does not mean digital-only. The same shoppers who discover on TikTok still want the choice to buy in a physical store, and they move between channels without friction. 72% of Gen Z planned to shop in-store on Black Friday 2025 (Deloitte),⁸ echoing the in-store intent documented in our earlier *House Effect* brief. The pattern is consistent: discover on social, validate through reviews and creators, then buy on whatever channel removes the most friction in the moment — app, site, or shelf. A licensee that wins discovery on TikTok but isn't on the shelf at the holiday-season retailer has only done half the job.

What kind of Harry Potter product *travels*.

Marketing mechanics only matter if the product is built to move through them. Two product traits consistently turn fandom into repeat purchase among these generations: identity and ritual.

The merchandise that performs with Gen Z and Millennials tends to do one of two things: it lets the buyer signal an identity, or it turns buying into a repeatable ritual. Harry Potter is unusually well-equipped for both, and the brands that lean into these traits will out-travel those selling generic logo product.

Identity: the house system is a built-in segmentation

Few franchises have an identity mechanic as clean as Hogwarts houses. A Slytherin scarf is a statement of self, the same way a band tee or a sports jersey is. Our earlier *House Effect* brief documented how sharply this skews by generation: Gen Z is the most-sorted cohort (65% identify with a house, versus 43% nationally), and they sort differently, Slytherin reaches 17% of Gen Z versus 1% of boomers, and Hufflepuff essentially ties Gryffindor at the top.⁹ For a marketer, that means house-segmented product and house-targeted social content has a ready-made hook that most IP simply doesn't have. Content built around "which house are you" is identity-native to the platforms these generations live on.

Ritual: the collectible model turns buying into a habit

The clearest collectibles success story among these generations is the blind-box model. POP MART — the company behind Labubu and a stable of original characters — turned collecting into what observers describe as a ritual rather than a transaction: limited drops, character lore, and the emotional ownership of completing a set.¹⁰ LEGO has run a parallel playbook with adult-oriented sets and fandom collaborations, pairing childhood nostalgia with participatory building.¹⁰ Both convert one-time fans into repeat buyers by making the next purchase part of an ongoing story. Harry Potter collectibles — wands, house items, figures, trading-style products — map naturally onto this model if they're released as collectible series with scarcity and lore rather than as static individual SKUs.

The aesthetic is the product

For Gen Z especially, the look is doing the work. The dark-academia and cottagecore aesthetics that run through BookTok are the reason it gets bought and posted. Product designed to be photographed and shared gets the free discovery loop these generations run on. A beautiful object becomes its own social content.

Six *plays* for reaching both generations.

By channel, content, and product decision. Each is anchored to the behavior documented in this brief and oriented to the run-up to Christmas 2026 and the HBO decade beyond.

PLAY 01 · CONTENT · TWO-SPEED FUNNEL

Make short content for Gen Z discovery, long content for Millennial conversion.

The funnel splits by generation: Gen Z discovers and spreads, Millennials research and buy. Run a short, shareable hook — a "which house" clip, an unboxing, a before-and-after — for Gen Z reach, then back it with longer demo and review content that gives Millennials the detail they need to convert. One asset can't do both jobs.

PLAY 02 · NOSTALGIA · TWO PITCHES

Pitch lived nostalgia to Millennials, inherited nostalgia to Gen Z.

Millennials grew up with the books; Gen Z inherited the franchise through BookTok and aesthetic revival. Same product, two framings: to Millennials, "the world you grew up in, for the adult you are now" — original-canon detail, premium execution. To Gen Z, "the aesthetic and identity you've adopted, made real" — dark academia, house identity, shareable design. The HBO premiere is the moment to run both.

PLAY 03 · PROMOTION · EXCLUSIVITY AS VALUE

Use limited drops and early access instead of discounting the brand.

46% of social shoppers cite better deals as a top purchase driver, and exclusive/limited drops drive nearly half of social-commerce purchases — but the Wizarding World is a premium brand that shouldn't race to the bottom on price. Exclusivity reads as value without eroding it: limited house-edition runs, platform-specific drops, early-access windows for fans. BNPL (39% usage in these cohorts) makes higher-ticket collectibles accessible without a markdown.

PLAY 04 · CREATORS · REAL FANS, NOT ENDORSEMENTS

Partner with genuine fan creators who'll show pros and cons.

56% of these shoppers have bought on a creator recommendation, and creator influence peaks in apparel (41%) — a core HP category. But 52% distrust overly promotional content and 43% trust creators who acknowledge a product's flaws. The Wizarding World has one of the largest organic fan-creator bases of any franchise; a real fan talking like a fan outperforms a polished paid endorsement. Brief creators for honesty.

PLAY 05 · PRODUCT · COLLECTIBLE RITUAL

Release collectibles as series with scarcity and lore.

POP MART and LEGO show the model: limited drops, character lore and set-completion turn buying into a repeatable ritual rather than a one-off. Harry Potter's house system is a built-in identity mechanic (Gen Z is the most-sorted cohort at 65%). Build collectible series — house-segmented, scarcity-driven, designed to be photographed and shared — so each purchase pulls the next, and each piece doubles as social content.

PLAY 06 · CHANNEL · OMNICHANNEL BY CHRISTMAS

Win discovery on social, but be on the shelf for the holiday.

These shoppers blend channels without friction. 72% of Gen Z planned to shop in-store on Black Friday 2025 even as they discover on social. Discovery on TikTok and Instagram is necessary but not sufficient; the purchase lands wherever is fastest, often the holiday-season shelf. For Christmas 2026, the play is presence across the whole path: social discovery, creator validation, frictionless online checkout, and physical retail availability in the same window.

Methodology & *sources*.

This brief synthesizes consumer-behavior research from established providers (Bazaarvoice/Savanta, Edison Research, eMarketer, Deloitte, GWI, Nielsen, Kantar) with Harry Potter category data from prior MuggleNet Insights briefs.

What's measured. The social, buying and nostalgia figures describe US and multi-market consumer behavior among Gen Z (born 1997–2012) and Millennials (1981–1996), drawn from named survey research. Where a statistic circulated widely through secondary coverage, this brief traces it to and cites the primary source — the research firm or its published report — rather than the aggregator that repeated it.

What this brief does not do. It does not measure Harry Potter merchandise sales by generation directly — that data is not publicly disclosed. It establishes how these two generations discover, trust and buy in general, and how Harry Potter's specific traits (house identity, nostalgia equity, fan-creator base) map onto those behaviors. The Harry Potter house-identification figures are from the Morning Consult dataset analyzed in our *House Effect* brief; the HBO premiere timing is "Christmas 2026" per Warner Bros. Discovery (a specific date has not been officially confirmed).

ENDNOTES

¹ **Social commerce behavior.** Bazaarvoice Shopper Preference Report 2025, commissioned by Bazaarvoice and conducted January 2025 by Savanta among 8,000+ consumers across the US, UK, Germany, France, Australia and Canada. Figures cited: ~79–80% of Gen Z and Millennials integrate social into shopping; short-form video most influential format (46%); 46% cite better discounts as a top purchase driver; ~56% purchased on a creator recommendation; creator influence by category (apparel 41%, health & beauty 53%); 52% distrust overly promotional content; 43% trust creators who show pros and cons; "short for Gen Z hype, long for Millennial conversion." Press release and report, March–June 2025.

² **TikTok purchase rates by age.** Edison Research, "The Infinite Scroll: A TikTok Report," December 2025; n=2,253 US ages 13+, surveyed online October 3–29 2025, weighted to US census. 37.2% of adults 25–44 buy from TikTok vs. 30.5% of the younger cohort. Reported via eMarketer, February 2026.

³ **Preference for the past.** GWI consumer research: 15% of Gen Z and 14% of Millennials say they would rather think about the past than the future. Cited in Shopify / Stacker, "Nostalgia sells," November 2025.

⁴ **Nostalgia on TikTok.** As of October 2025, TikTok's #nostalgia hashtag included 16.9 million posts and approximately 100 billion views; #90s and #Y2K added tens of billions more. Reported in Shopify / Stacker, November 2025.

⁵ **Commercial effect of nostalgia.** Nielsen (July 2025): nostalgia-led series generated 22% higher average watch time than originals without legacy IP. Kantar: nostalgia-based campaigns can increase brand likability by up to 20%, and nostalgic email campaigns outperform standard formats by 19%. Cited in Pulse Advertising, August 2025, and Shopify / Stacker, November 2025.

⁶ **Lived vs. inherited nostalgia.** June Cotte, Professor of Marketing, Ivey Business School, "The power of nostalgia in marketing," Ivey Impact, December 2025. Gen X / Millennials buy products consumed in youth; Gen Z drives thrift buying and viewership of older shows (*Friends*, *The Office*) from before their time; nostalgia resonates most when consumers feel negative or uncertain about the present.

⁷ **Digital nostalgia and Gen Z.** "Digital Nostalgia Marketing: How Past-Centric Ads Affect Gen Z Consumption," *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 2(4), September 2025. Mixed-method study, n=386 Gen Z respondents: digital nostalgia significantly influences brand affinity, trust and impulsive buying.

⁸ **BNPL and in-store intent.** Deloitte holiday retail research, 2025: Gen Z and Millennials hold the highest Buy Now, Pay Later usage rate (39%); 72% of Gen Z planned to shop in-store on Black Friday 2025; Gen Z projected to spend an average of \$607 over Black Friday / Cyber Monday.

⁹ **Harry Potter house identification.** Morning Consult National Tracking Poll #2304108 (April 2023), Table MCEN11, as analyzed in MuggleNet Insights No. 01, *The House Effect*. Gen Z is the most-sorted cohort (65% identify with a house vs. 43% nationally); Slytherin reaches 17% of Gen Z vs. 1% of boomers; Hufflepuff ties Gryffindor at the top in Gen Z.

¹⁰ **Collectible and fandom models.** POP MART blind-box model (Labubu and original IP) and LEGO's adult-oriented and fandom-collaboration lines, as documented in consumer-trend analysis, 2025–2026. Cited as illustrative category models, not as Harry Potter sales data.



Two generations. *One world.*

This was Issue No. 02 of MuggleNet Insights — research and positioning briefs for brands, licensees and retailers in the Harry Potter category.

Together with *The House Effect*, this brief maps who the Wizarding World audience is, when the category activates, and how to reach the consumers who will carry it through the HBO decade.