

Landmark Research Shows Americans Are Redefining The “Good Life”

DETROIT - In spite of a chaotic political arena, a majority of Americans share the view that The Good Life is defined by connections to people and planet more than by material wealth and consumption. Furthermore, Americans are looking to brands to take the lead in showing them how they can make a more fulfilling life according to a US study of 1,000 adults 18+ conducted in April 2017. The *Enabling the Good Life Report from Sustainable Brands and Harris Poll* released today shows the dramatic shift in American attitudes and reflects a gap between people's new aspirations and the ways business responds.

This new zeitgeist is emerging across geographies, demographics, and political boundaries and beliefs. Despite the rapid pace of life and work, the widespread divisiveness seen in America's politics, unpredictable and tumultuous global conflicts, and the myriad of pressing social and environmental issues, there was much agreement in Americans' outlook.

"Due to our divided times, many assume Americans disagree on what The Good Life looks like. Yet, the research shows that young or old, Republican or Democrat, male or female – leading a balanced, healthy life that is connected to people and issues that matter is at the heart of these new aspirations. It turns out, we are more the same than different," said KoAnn Skrzyniarz, Founder/CEO of Sustainable Brands.

The landmark study released today, *Enabling the Good Life: A Sustainable Brands/Harris Poll Report*, was designed to understand the core elements that are most important to Americans defining The Good Life and how consumers and brands, individually and together, might accelerate the realization of these emerging aspirations.

The research shows that today's vision of The Good Life is different from the past, with 71% saying living the good life is different for them than it was for their parents – perhaps indicating a greater focus on simplicity, health and people over things and looking beyond oneself. What we think of as the traditional elements of the "Good Life," such as wealth and what it unlocks, may be shifting. There is an emerging desire for balance with two leading themes driving the new definition of the Good Life:

- **Meaningful Connections:** 76% believe the Good Life is defined by having meaningful engagement with families and their communities, including those in need and the environment.
- **Balanced Simplicity:** 66% believe the Good Life is defined by having good health and living a simple, yet balanced life. Americans are seeking reduced complexity and healthy behaviors - striking a tone of moderation, all actions contributing to their happiness.

Financial independence (26%) and personal goals (10%) such as career and education trailed balanced simplicity (36%) and human connections (28%) in what Americans view as most important factors in defining the Good Life [\[1\]](#).

While income (62%) is reported as a top obstacle preventing The Good Life, more than 3 in 4 Americans (78%) believe money cannot buy happiness.

The New Role for Business and Brands to Support the Good Life Journey

The research showed that brands have an enormous opportunity to help Americans achieve The Good Life. About half of Americans (51%) believe companies care about helping consumers achieve The Good Life and 75% of American consumers believe that if consumers demanded more products and services to help them achieve The Good Life, companies would change in order to provide them.

Yet, the majority of people in America (65%) feel the products and services offered by companies don't help them achieve what they see as The Good Life. Although brands are commonly looked to for value (18%) and health-related benefits (12%), fewer see a logical path for brands to connect them with others, issues, or their community.

"The majority of Americans believe brands can help them live more meaningful lives, yet two-thirds don't believe companies currently are providing products to help them do so. There's a return on empathy most marketers fail to comprehend," said Wendy Salomon, VP of the Harris Poll.

"People don't really have ideas of how brands can specifically help, and brands are waiting for consumers to tell them what to do. Instead, brands need to generate their own insights and ideas, based on Americans' emerging sense of what's important to a life well lived – and create their own innovations to bring to market," said Skrzyniarz. "Yes, there is a disconnect. Yet, if brands innovate, the payoff is that 4 in 5 Americans say they would be loyal to brands that help them achieve the Good Life."

Companies mentioned as contributing to "The Good Life" include high reputation favorites such as Starbucks, Tesla, and Apple, as well as brands like Target, REI and Panera. Industries that ranked the highest in terms of delivering on helping consumers live the good life include food (48%), technology (45%), and travel and leisure (40%) with fashion (25%), banking (29%) and other categories trailing.

"Going forward, companies and brands must evolve from marketing, to mattering to people. Understanding what makes a difference in people's lives is the force of innovation that leads to true brand loyalty," said Chris Hollander, Head of Marketing, Panera Bread, a brand recognized by the research as helping people to achieve the Good Life.

According to Sustainable Brands, that will require:

- **Deeper engagement** with stakeholders to better understand how brands/companies have potential to support the new definition of The Good Life.
- Using constraints as an opportunity to reimagine and **create with consumers products/services** that matter.
- **Redefining value** beyond "more and cheaper is better" as consumption does not meet the new definition of American's view of The Good Life.

The full study, slated for release at [Sustainable Brands '17 Detroit](#) on May 23rd, is part of a three-year initiative by Sustainable Brands entitled "Redefining, Redesigning and Delivering The Good Life."

About Sustainable Brands

[Sustainable Brands](#)[®] is the premier global community of brand innovators who are shaping the future of commerce worldwide. Since 2006, our mission has been to inspire, engage and equip today's business and brand leaders to prosper for the near and long term by leading the way to a better future. Digitally published news articles and issues-focused conversation topics, internationally known conferences and regional events, a robust e-learning library and peer-to-peer membership groups all facilitate community learning and engagement throughout the year. Sustainable Brands is hosted by Sustainable Brands Worldwide, a division of [Sustainable Life Media](#) headquartered in San Francisco, CA.

The Sustainable Brands and Harris Poll research provides insights for companies and brands leaders who want to know how to do business in an emerging environment where consumers are not just purchasing their products or services on their own merits, but who are also seeking guidance from companies in helping consumers attract the connections and simplicity they desire for a Good Life.

About Harris Poll

Over the last five decades, Harris Polls have become media staples. With comprehensive experience and precise technique in public opinion polling, along with a proven track record of uncovering consumers' motivations and behaviors, Harris Poll has gained strong brand recognition around the world. Harris Poll offers a diverse portfolio of proprietary client solutions to

transform relevant insights into actionable foresight for a wide range of industries including healthcare, technology, public affairs, energy, telecommunications, financial services, insurance, media, retail, restaurant and consumer packaged goods.

Research Methodology

The survey was conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Poll in conjunction with Sustainable Brands, supported by Ketchum. April 10 – 14, 2017. A total of 1,074 interviews were conducted among U.S. adults 18+. The data were weighted to ensure that relevant demographic characteristics of the sample matched those of the U.S. general population. All respondents (not only those who met the qualifying criteria) were weighted to U.S. Census Bureau demographic profiles for the U.S. population 18+ on gender, age, region, education, income, and ethnicity. Propensity score weighting was used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

About Ketchum

Ketchum is a leading global communications firm with operations in more than 70 countries across six continents. The winner of 19 Cannes Lions and an unprecedented five *PRWeek* Campaign of the Year Awards, Ketchum partners with clients to deliver strategic programming, game-changing creative and measurable results that build brands and reputations. Ketchum, is a part of Omnicom Public Relations Group .

[1] Respondents were asked to rate 24 items on how important each was to what their vision of the good life means. These items were then categorized into four groups based on the results of a factor analysis. A survey technique called maximum-difference scaling (*max-diff*) was then used to understand the relative importance of the items in each group. This was then re-indexed to sum to 100% resulting in the following weights for each category: 36%: *Balanced Simplicity*; 28%: *Human Connections*; 26%: *Financial Independence*; 10%: *Personal Goals*.