

Harris Poll: Millennials Increasingly Dictating Health Of America's Top Brands

U.S. Consumers Rally Around Brands With Shared Values: Liberals Award Higher Brand Equity to Starbucks, Ben & Jerry's, NPR, HBO and PBS, While Chick-fil-A and Papa John's Are More Appealing to Conservatives

American Airlines, Microsoft Computers, FX Television Network, Five Guys, The Cheesecake Factory, TripAdvisor and CarGurus.com Among Those Making Their Top Brand Debut

NEW YORK, April 19, 2017 – With a rising disposable income, interest in new technologies, and changing life stage needs, millennials [1] are increasingly dictating the health of America's top brands, according to new research from The Harris Poll. The Harris Poll's 29th annual EquiTrend Study reveals the strongest brands across the media, travel, financial, automotive, entertainment, retail, restaurant, technology, household and nonprofit industries, based on consumer response.

Measuring brand health over time, the EquiTrend Brand Equity Index is comprised of three factors - Familiarity, Quality and Purchase Consideration - that result in a brand equity rating for each brand. Brands ranking highest in equity receive the Harris Poll EquiTrend "Brand of the Year" award for their respective categories. This year, more than 100,000 U.S. consumers assessed more than 4,000 brands across more than 450 categories. The full Harris Poll EquiTrend Brands of the Year list can be found at <http://www.theharrispoll.com/equitrend-rankings/2017>.

"More engaged with more brands than ever before, millennials - the largest generational cohort - are reshaping the U.S. brand landscape," said Joan Sinopoli, vice president of brand solutions at The Harris Poll. "With prime earning years still ahead of them and a strong sense of values, they are dictating culture through the brands they buy. Millennials are using their new spending power to explore the world around them, purchase and feather their new nests and take steps to financially protect their growing families."

Evidence of millennials' impact on brand health from The Harris Poll's research includes:

- Changing life needs means millennials are demonstrating increased interest in insurance and financial services brands, boosting equity in these industries. (Insurance industry equity rating of 60 among millennials, compared to an equity rating of 55 among consumers overall; Financial services industry equity rating of 63 among millennials, compared to an equity rating of 59 among consumers overall.)
- Millennials are behind the increased equity in cruise lines and pushed premium brand Royal Caribbean Cruises back into the top spot as Cruise Line Brand of the Year. Royal Caribbean boasts an equity score of 70 among millennials, compared to an equity rating of 63 among consumers overall.

- Millennials aspire to luxury, and that is nowhere more evident than in the automotive industry, where they are driving Mercedes-Benz's equity strength. Seven of the top ten millennial car brands are luxury brands, versus five each for Generation X and baby boomers.
- Car audio brand equity is increasing due to the strength of millennials, with Beats succeeding Bose as Car Audio Brand of the Year. Harris Poll's research shows that 33 percent of millennials are familiar with Beats, compared to 17 percent of consumers overall.
- CarGurus.com, the Online Auto Shopping Brand of the Year, surpassed longtime Brand of the Year KBB.com; 25 percent of millennials are familiar with CarGurus.com, compared to 16 percent of consumers overall.
- Millennials propelled American Airlines to its first Full Service Airline Brand of the Year honor. American Airlines has a higher equity rating among millennials than Delta and Alaska/Horizon Airlines, both former Airline Brands of the Year.
- Millennials continue to be early technology adopters. Netflix (Video Streaming Subscription Brand of the Year) and YouTube (Social Networking Site Brand of the Year) have evolved into popular mainstream brands versus fast-rising disruptors, and Google Home (Smart Home Brand of the Year) and Google Chromecast (Media Streaming Device Brand of the year) are the new tech upstarts.

"Millennials could be considered responsibly rebellious," said Sinopoli. "They want brands who share their values yet deliver experiences and solve solutions with technology and intuition, and demonstrate an acute understanding of how millennials think, act and solve problems."

Right Brand, Left Brand: Beyond the Generation Gap

Harris Poll's research shows that generational impacts are not the only influences on consumers' brand choice. In a country facing a "values chasm," Americans are rallying around brands aligned with their personal values.

"Age is certainly a driver of liberal versus conservative values, but there are other fundamental differences suggesting that there is less a divide based on age alone," said Sinopoli. "It's more of a divide based on ideologies and world views, and we see those values played out for politically and socially active brands."

Liberal-leaning consumers are the drivers behind Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream Shops, a longtime activist brand led by CEOs who actively supported presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, as well as Starbucks, whose CEO has been vocal in his opposition to the administration's recent travel ban proposal, pledging to hire more immigrants and refugees. Chick-fil-A and Papa John's, companies with CEOs who have voiced their conservative beliefs, are awarded higher equity by conservative-leaning consumers.

In the media industry, PBS maintains a strong following across generations, but its brand equity increases among liberal-leaning consumers when compared with conservative leaners (+9). HBO, the home of Bill Maher and John Oliver, has a strong following among millennials, but also among liberal-leaning consumers across generations when compared with conservative leaners (+11). Most notably, Harris Poll's research shows much higher equity for NPR among liberal versus conservative leaners (+24).

"Brand preferences demonstrated by values, rather than generational differences, are more striking and perhaps carry a more serious message about how we live today," said Sinopoli. "How can we expect to close the country's divide if we aren't meeting each other over a cup of coffee or discussing news and entertainment from the same sources?"

Top Brand First Timers

This year, the 29th year that the Harris Poll has been measuring brand equity, 18 companies make their Brand of the Year debut.

The Harris Poll 2017 EquiTrend

Brand of the Year Debuts

Industry	Award Category	Brand of the Year
Auto	Car Audio	Beats In-Vehicle Auto
Auto	Online Auto Shopping	CarGurus.com
Electronics	Home Entertainment Electronics	Bose Home Entertainment Electronics
Electronics	Smart Home*	Google Home
Financial Services	Life Insurance	Guardian Life Insurance
Home	Health Information Website	Drugs.com
Media	General Entertainment	FX Television Network
Media	Sports TV	NFL Red Zone
Nonprofit	International Aid Nonprofit	Mercy Corps
Restaurant	Burger Restaurant	Five Guys
Restaurant	Coffee & Quick Service Restaurant	Starbucks
Restaurant	Casual Dining Restaurant	The Cheesecake Factory
Restaurant	Ice Cream & Frozen Yogurt*	Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream Shop
Technology	Computer Manufacturer	Microsoft Computers
Technology	Smart Watch	Apple Watch
Travel	Full Service Airline	American Airlines
Travel	Luxury Hotel	JW Marriott
Travel	Online Travel Service	TripAdvisor.com

*First year for this category

Methodology

The 2017 Harris Poll EquiTrend Study is based on a sample of 102,617 U.S. consumers ages 15 and over surveyed online, in English, between December 30, 2016 and February 21, 2017. The survey took an average of 30 minutes to complete. The total number of brands rated was 4,052. Each respondent was asked to rate a total of 40 randomly selected brands. Each brand received approximately 1,000 ratings. Data was weighted to be representative of the entire U.S. population of consumers ages 15 and over based on age by sex, education, race/ethnicity, region, income, and data from respondents ages 18 and over were also weighted for their propensity to be online. Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Poll surveys. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in our panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

The Brand Equity Index is the keystone to the EquiTrend program, providing an understanding of a brand's overall strength. A brand's Equity is determined by a calculation of Familiarity, Quality and Purchase Consideration. Brand of the Year is determined by a simple ranking of brands.

The Harris Poll EquiTrend methodology has been validated by academic business experts in the *Journal of Marketing Research* (1994) and *International Journal of Research on Marketing* (2012).

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

About The 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, The Harris Poll has gained strong brand recognition around the world. The Harris Poll offers a diverse portfolio of proprietary client solutions

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

The Harris Poll EquiTrend results disclosed in this press release may not be used for advertising, marketing or promotional purposes without the prior written consent of Harris Poll.

[1] Defined as consumers born 1977 – 1995.