

# CRAFTING OPTIMISM

**15 Predictions for a More Joyful 2025**

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**PETER  MAYER**

**IN PETERMAYER'S BRAND JOY LAB,** we ask hundreds of Americans each month, “What brings you joy?”

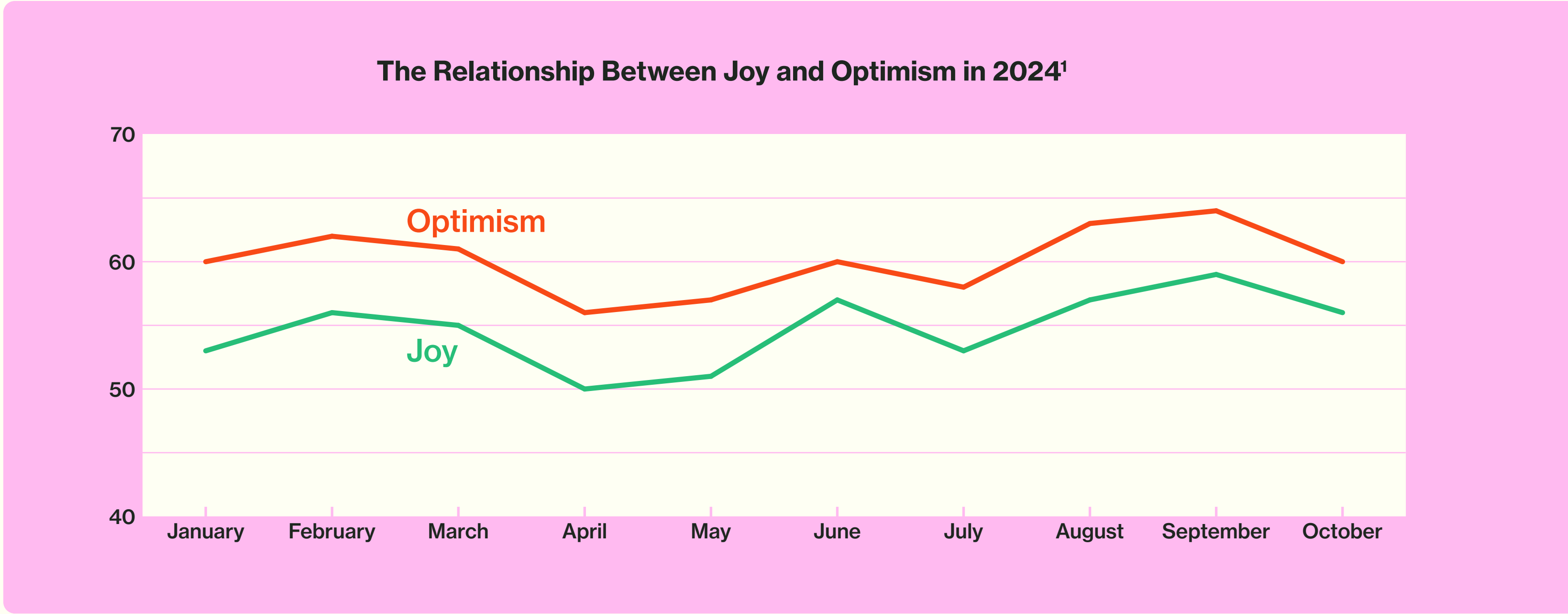
The answers are clear: It's not wealth or flashy achievements but faith, family and small, everyday moments – like a blooming garden or the perfect cocktail. Yet, joy feels scarce in 2024. Our national survey produced an average score of just 2.7 out of 5 for the year when we asked how much joy they felt. The most common culprits? People name health, relationships and financial stress as joy-killers.

**If the basics aren't covered, we feel it.**

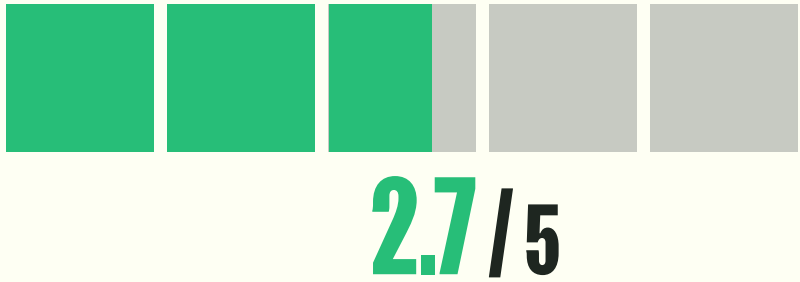
Our data also suggests a path forward, based on a fundamental connection: Joy and optimism go hand in hand. When people can see a brighter future, they're more likely to feel joy. If that future is troubled by external factors – as we've seen with the national and global strife that's marked 2024 – we create new sources of joy to fuel our optimism. And we know that when brands can help bring that joy, they're rewarded for it.

2025 will give us the opportunity to seed optimism, wherever people find it.

Whether you're providing nostalgic comfort, a sense of financial security or a journey across the American heartland, people are searching for ways to seize control of their situations. Our predictions for 2025 reveal a kaleidoscope of opportunities for brands to activate in the joy economy and empower audiences to create their own optimism.



**Americans' Rating of Joy in 2024<sup>2</sup>**



**63%** of purchase intent is related to the joy consumers experience via a brand's marketing communications.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PETERMAYER Brand Joy Lab 2024. n=4,500  
<sup>2</sup> PETERMAYER Brand Joy Lab 2024. n=5,148  
<sup>3</sup> PETERMAYER Brand Joy Lab 2023–2024

In the last few years, joy seems to have become more elusive and more sought-after. The COVID-19 pandemic, economic uncertainty, political polarization and societal disruptions have shaped consumers’ emotional landscapes.



2019

**Joy in a Booming Economy and Social Media Culture**

*Joy was often associated with material success, personal achievement and social connections, as a strong economy and social media culture promoted “big wins” and public celebrations of success.*

2020–2021

**The Pandemic and the Recalibration of Joy**

*During the pandemic, joy became scarcer, and the focus shifted toward finding joy in small, everyday moments—family time, hobbies (sourdough!) and moments of peace and health. People found joy in reconnecting with themselves and with nature, as lockdowns and isolation redefined priorities.*

2022–2023

**Joy Through Reconnection and Collective Purpose**

*Initially we found joy in reconnecting with each other, celebrating the return to normality. But as political upheaval spread and evidence of climate change became increasingly obvious, joy seemed increasingly associated with feelings of resilience, gratitude and simplicity. Many consumers became mindful and intentional in seeking joy through experiences that aligned with their values, such as sustainability, mental well-being and personal growth.*

2024

**Joy in Resilience and Optimism**

*In 2024, joy has become a combination of resilience and optimism. After years of uncertainty, and within a year of political turmoil, joy is more about short- and long-term emotional well-being and meaningful connections. Of necessity, our sense of peace has become less about external factors and more about internal emotional balance.*





# ACTIVATING OUR OWN OPTIMISM

**15 ways Americans will seek joy in 2025—  
and what brands can do to reach them.**



# Nostalgia for Wholesome Joy

No matter our politics, it can seem the world's gone mad and people publicly flaunt beliefs and behaviors once considered taboo. Look for people to retreat to wholesome pleasures, vintage games and other entertainments.

Board game sales are forecast to more than double by 2032, from \$14 billion to

**\$32B<sup>1</sup>**

By 2029, annual revenue from the puzzles market is expected to grow by more than

**\$500MM**

When it comes to the most popular hobbies in the United States, cooking/baking tops the list, beloved by 41% of Americans. Our #2 hobby? 36% of us like to read in our spare time.<sup>2</sup>

## Marketing Implications

*Offer wholesome micro moments of joy that help people retreat to simpler times or immerse themselves in a creative respite from the every day.*

*Create campaigns that tap into nostalgic emotions, evoking positive memories through imagery, music and storytelling that remind consumers of simpler, happier times.*

*Create a sense of “clubhouse” moments where people feel a part of something that triggers childhood connectivity.*

*Anticipate new versions of nostalgia, as new generations seek to recreate the joys of their youth.*

<sup>1</sup> Fortune Business Insights

<sup>2</sup> Statista



# Civility

Amidst a backdrop of wars and angry politics, many seek a return to old school manners, handwritten thank you notes, formal dinner parties and the like. While we can't control the lack of civility in politics, we can manage it in our personal lives and interactions. With the election over, we may turn down the temperature, learning to be respectfully empathetic to friends and neighbors with whom we disagree.

Stationery sales are expected to grow 34% by 2030, surpassing

**\$167B**

in annual sales.<sup>1</sup>

By 2023, nearly

**90%**

of Americans already felt exhausted and frustrated when they thought about politics.<sup>2</sup>

Globally, 68% of consumers say brands celebrating what brings us together and emphasizing our common interest would strengthen the social fabric.<sup>3</sup>

## Marketing Implications

*Facilitate IRL connections that bring about empathy and shared understanding to harness the power of joy in togetherness and bonding.*

*Showcase superior customer service as a competitive advantage, emphasizing genuine, thoughtful and personalized interactions.*

*Interact with your consumer in a non-marketed way. Ground-swell/guerilla marketing, unexpected collabs with micro-influencers.*

*Think handcrafted communications and personal, one-on-one interactions that feel more curated, more intentional, less corporate.*

*Focus on deeply understanding people, what they care about and want.*

*Put your dollars where your values are.*



1 Research and Markets  
2 Pew Research  
3 Edelman



# Radical Self-Reliance

As existential concerns grow and trust continues to decline, Americans take a personal interest in safeguarding ourselves and each other, no longer relying on systems and governmental frameworks. We may seek self-sufficiency via DIY home building and renovations, growing food, community gardens and kitchens. While our concerns may be more consequential than they've been in decades, human societies were born from galvanizing around fear – cavemen sticking together to survive – and it can be deeply satisfying to collaborate to overcome shared challenges.

Today there are more than

**29K**

community garden plots in city parks in just the 100 largest cities, up 22% from just a year ago.<sup>1</sup>

**71% OF GEN Z**

and

**76% OF GEN Y**

respondents planned to plant more and expand their gardens in 2024.<sup>2</sup>

**70%**

of U.S. consumers avoid embarking on DIY projects due to FOMU: fear of messing up.<sup>3</sup>

U.S. Gen Zers are the generation most likely to be preparing for disaster, with 40% saying they spent money on doomsday supplies in the last 12 months, just beating out Millennials at 39%.

<sup>1</sup> Trust for Public Land  
<sup>2</sup> Greenhouse Magazine  
<sup>3</sup> Better Homes and Gardens  
<sup>4</sup> Finder

## Marketing Implications

*Foster communities around the concept of self-reliance where consumers can share tips and experiences, strengthening brand loyalty and advocacy.*

*Help people build confidence and discover the joy in putting themselves in a position to take care of themselves and each other.*

*For CPG think bundling, bulk purchasing, subscriptions for large quantities (doomsday prepping). For travel think escaping into safety, travel as a form of exploration for relocation.*





# Unity, Togetherness, Human Kindness

While we will likely remain entrenched in our beliefs, we will find ourselves craving something we can all get behind, something we can all root for and feel good about. Fandoms could grow even larger, providing a place of unity, agreement, a cause we can all get behind.

**74%**

of Gen Z fans agree they like seeing brands engage with things they're a fan of.<sup>1</sup>

For many, fandom is about emotional fulfillment. Beyond entertainment, fandom helps address innate human needs for safety, belonging, and esteem.<sup>2</sup>

Globally, over

**60%**

of people who describe themselves as part of entertainment fandoms say any brand can get involved with fandoms as long as they make an effort to understand them.<sup>3</sup>

## Marketing Implications

*Uncover the deep-rooted joy that brings people together around your brand to fuel moments of self-expression, connection and engagement.*

*Facilitate Fandom by engaging with topics your audiences care about, and enable your fans to engage meaningfully with—and even create content around—your brand.*

*Behave like a fan: Launch less traditional communications, curate your own communities, show up in unexpected places and demonstrate passion for what your audiences care about.*

*Explore opportunities for cause-based marketing—for the environment, marginalized communities and other causes you and your audiences support.*

<sup>1</sup> Google/SmithGeiger, YouTube Trends Survey  
<sup>2</sup> Amazon, Crowd DNA  
<sup>3</sup> Amazon, Crowd DNA




# Joy in Nature

The human world is exceptionally messy right now, but we can immerse ourselves in nature – or simply gaze on a tiny flower – to remove ourselves from human-driven stresses. In a world in which we can be easily triggered, we may once again seek glimmers.

**\$10B** growth in annual spending on outdoor gear expected by 2028.<sup>1</sup>

Worldwide, people’s well-being is shown to increase by

**18%** 

when they spend time outdoors with others.<sup>2</sup>

People who spend two to three hours a week in nature are approximately 20% more likely to report high overall satisfaction with their lives than those who spend no time outdoors at all.<sup>3</sup>

Globally, **52% of millennials** said they were planning to actively seek out ways to connect with nature as well as prioritize exploration and adventure in 2024.<sup>4</sup>

The members of Virtuoso, a global network of travel agencies, report that **63% of their clients** are seeking more outdoor and nature-focused retreats.<sup>5</sup>

## Marketing Implications

*Seek ways to deepen people’s connection with the natural world, helping them find the joy in nature’s great potential to nurture our well-being and mental health in the face of permacrisis.*

*Sponsor or host outdoor experiential events or virtual nature-based experiences that align with wellness and nature immersion.*

*In your marketing, consider opportunities to slow down, evoke a different rhythm and take on characteristics of nature.*

*Explore bio-mimicry—take inspiration from the biological essence of the earth/nature—in marketing and packaging.*

<sup>1</sup> Statista Market Insights  
<sup>2</sup> Lululemon Global Well-being Report 2024  
<sup>3</sup> Nature.com  
<sup>4</sup> Hilton  
<sup>5</sup> Luxury Travel Advisor





# Big Lifestyle Changes

We will likely see more movement to life off-the-grid, nomadic lifestyles, and perhaps renewed migration away from cities. Specifically, we will likely see some movement of Blue Dot residents away from red states.

25%

increase in one-way moves toward rural areas last year.<sup>1</sup>

In 2024, over

26%

of Americans claimed they are very likely or definitely moving to a new state.<sup>2</sup>

48% of Americans would prefer to move to small metropolitan or rural areas, while just 13% are considering moving to a big city as their first choice.<sup>3</sup>

## Marketing Implications

*Encourage self-exploration, independence and freedom to help people celebrate the joy in exploring big changes.*

*Tailor marketing messages to reflect the values of independence and freedom that these lifestyle changes embody.*

*Support new versions of the American dream.*

1 U-Haul  
2 SpareFoot  
3 SpareFoot



# Alternative Medicine and Spirituality

With often-overwhelming angst, we more people could migrate toward meditation apps, self-help science and even pseudoscience, witchcraft and off-the-wall spirituality. When we feel out of control, many of us seek solutions – from self-actualization books to voodoo dolls and séances – that can give us a sense of power, control, answers.

**1MM+**  
Americans are practicing witchcraft.<sup>1</sup>

As of November 2024, there were more than **700MM** TikTok posts related to New Age spirituality.<sup>2</sup>

There are over 87 billion views on TikTok for #tarot, as well as more than 75 billion views for #zodiacsigns, 3.8 billion for #astrology, and 12.6 billion for #astrologytiktok.<sup>3</sup>

Over a third of Americans say they believe in the power of manifestation.<sup>4</sup>

## Marketing Implications

- Feed appetites for new narratives of belief that challenge conventional pathways to achieving inner peace and joy.*
- Empower via storytelling, using testimonials and user stories to highlight how products help consumers feel more empowered, in control or spiritually fulfilled.*
- Give voice to the underrepresented, including Native Americans, alternative spiritualities and alternative modalities. Show representation spectrum.*

<sup>1</sup> NBC News  
<sup>2</sup> TikTok  
<sup>3</sup> TikTok, November 2024  
<sup>4</sup> Sage Journals



# Controlling What’s in My Control

Expect even greater investment in personal well-being and personal achievement. Making ourselves stronger, faster, better. Obsessively taking control of our health. Intense workouts, competitive sports and fine-tuned diets.

20% compound annual growth rate forecast of biohacking devices, from \$30 billion in 2024 to

**\$159B**  
in 2033.<sup>1</sup>

A record-breaking  
**120K PEOPLE**  
applied to participate in the 2024 Bank of America Chicago Marathon.<sup>3</sup>

Demand for personal trainers is surging globally in 2024, with 38% of Gen Zers, and 29% of consumers overall, opting to use a fitness trainer or coach.<sup>2</sup>

In the U.S., 56% of Gen Zers say fitness is a “very high priority,” compared with 40% of the overall population who claim the same.<sup>4</sup>

## Marketing Implications

*Emphasize the joy in the well-being journey, celebrating personal achievements, milestones, and community connections.*

*Explore how your brand can help consumers self-actualize.*

*Enable achievement by focusing on progress tracking, personal bests and competitive spirit to appeal to goal-oriented consumers. Highlight how products and services enhance personal achievement.*

*Explore personal tracking and public indicators of success measures, and consider opportunities to democratize training regimens, positioning influencers as trainers.*



<sup>1</sup> Dimension Market Research  
<sup>2</sup> ABC Fitness  
<sup>3</sup> NBC Chicago  
<sup>4</sup> McKinsey



# The Joy of the Deal

With the price of daily life so high on Americans’ lists of worries, feeling like we’ve scored a deal may be a bigger thrill than usual. Scoring a deal can deliver more than dollars and cents; it can give us a sense of power and control.

In the U.S.,  
**65%**  
of consumers live paycheck-to-paycheck in 2024, up from 58% in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

**76%**  
of consumers report trading down – changing the type or quantity of purchases for better value and pricing.<sup>2</sup>

Underconsumption core continues to gain ground, with advocates and organizations like Buy Nothing Project encouraging people to consume and buy less.<sup>3</sup>

**62%** of travelers around the world say they would look for money-saving deals and travel hacks to reduce the costs of their future trips.<sup>4</sup>

American Gen Xers seek cost-of-living tips on YouTube (56%), TikTok (47%), Flickr (47%), Foursquare (44%) and Facebook (40%).<sup>5</sup>

## Marketing Implications

*Gamify deal hunting and cost-cutting hacks, helping people feel the joy and thrill in uncovering and scoring ways to save.*

*Enable a win by designing targeted promotions emphasizing value, savings and the thrill of securing a great deal.*

*Re-package offerings to customize based on customers’ needs and budgets.*

*Offer trades or return options.*

1 CNBC  
2 McKinsey & Company  
3 CNN  
4 Booking.com  
5 Statista



# Financial Optimism

Some Americans, with boosted confidence regarding a Trump-driven vibrant economy, may start making big purchases they’ve been hesitant to make. Homes, big household items, home improvements, cars and vacations would see renewed growth, especially as interest rates have begun to decline.



In 2024, 48% of Gen Zers and 40% of millennials worldwide said they believe their personal finances would improve over the next year.<sup>3</sup>

32% of Americans say they’re motivated to spend money because of celebratory moments.<sup>4</sup>

### Marketing Implications

*Encourage people to find the joy in treating themselves to premium goods, high-quality services, and luxury experiences.*

*Highlight premium product features, upgrades and upsells to cater to consumers’ increased willingness to spend.*

*Embrace the confidence, the swagger, reflecting a boosted economy.*

<sup>1</sup> Fortune Business Insights  
<sup>2</sup> USA Today  
<sup>3</sup> Deloitte  
<sup>4</sup> Empower.com

# Doom Spending

Other Americans may spend big, but not because they’re optimistic. Americans fearful of the next four years are already demonstrating impulse purchasing, buying that quick dopamine hit of a new purse, a big dinner or a big trip.



Gen Z and Millennial consumers are more likely to say it is better to treat themselves now rather than hold off for a future “that feels like it could change at any moment.”<sup>2</sup>

### Marketing Implications

*Highlight products and services as special indulgences to align with the mood of escapist spending.*

*Encourage consumers to carpe diem. Use language about the moment and call to action on seizing the day.*

*Better yet, encourage smart money choices that satisfy the desire to indulge while keeping a joyful wallet.*

<sup>1</sup> Deloitte Insights  
<sup>2</sup> Axios Vibes, The Harris Poll



# Having a Financial Plan

Our own joy research shows that having a financial plan in place delivers a great deal of joy to Americans. Whether we feel like we're coming out of a tough time and are finally able to think about saving, or we're more worried than ever about the future, we may be more inclined to take the step of putting a financial plan in place.

**54%**

of consumers find having a financial plan in place more joy-inducing than drinking a glass of champagne.<sup>1</sup>

**43%**

of American Gen Zers said in 2023 that they experience money dysmorphia – feeling financially insecure regardless of their actual situation.<sup>2</sup>

59% of U.S. Millennials desire education on cash flow and budgeting, while 40% want tangible advice on retirement plans.<sup>3</sup>

## Marketing Implications

*Focus on wealth, leading with financial planning for consumers across all income and asset levels.*

*Create content that enables customers to see a path to a secure future.*

*Double down on financial education to help people find joyful confidence in their money-managing skills.*

<sup>1</sup> PETERMAYER Brand Joy Lab  
<sup>2</sup> Credit Karma  
<sup>3</sup> Accenture



# Another Blossoming of International Travel

As some Americans feel frustrated with the state of the U.S. – and some of us potentially feel unwelcome and even unsafe in many places – we will likely feel drawn to places where we will feel supported. Expect passport renewals to increase along with trips to countries on the “Easiest Countries to Get Citizenship” lists. Look for individuals and families testing out citizenship options, as well as some countries offering easier paths to citizenship. We’re anticipating a renewed boom in nomadic workers.

**1,500%  
GROWTH**

after Donald Trump won the 2024 election in number of Americans searching for information about moving abroad.<sup>1</sup>

In early November 2024, 21% of Americans said they would consider moving abroad if their preferred candidate lost the race.<sup>2</sup>

Two-fifths of surveyed parents would rather spend money on a trip of a lifetime in 2025 than leave an inheritance to their children.<sup>3</sup>

## Marketing Implications

*U.S. destinations can highlight the delight in discovering travel experiences that indulge the need to escape to far-flung places without the hassle and stress.*

*Showcase tolerance: U.S. travel destinations can demonstrate diversity, tolerance and a welcoming environment to compete more effectively against international destinations.*

<sup>1</sup> The Independent, VisaGuide.World, Google  
<sup>2</sup> CNBC, casino.org  
<sup>3</sup> Booking.com



# The Great American Road Trip

Conversely, the classic road trip and events like state fairs are likely to find renewed popularity in Summer 2025 as domestic protectionism remains high on many agendas. On the eve of the USA's 250th birthday, look for a resurgence in American travel nostalgia and small, historically relevant, quintessential American towns.

**66%**

of Americans are likely to go on a summer road trip, an 18% increase year-over-year.<sup>1</sup>

In 2023, streaming of country music – one of the fastest growing genres – increased 23.7%, exceeding 20 billion on-demand streams.<sup>2</sup>

Expedia's list of Detour Destinations all experienced an increase in searches over the past year, and 63% of consumers say they are likely to visit a detour destination on their next trip.<sup>3</sup>

## Marketing Implications

*Lean into the hyper-local, helping travelers discover the joy in recreating experiences that harken back to simpler times while they're on the road.*

*Create campaigns that focus on regional attractions and road trip itineraries.*

*Highlight Americana and recreate past times in content and activations.*



<sup>1</sup> Deloitte  
<sup>2</sup> Newsweek, Luminate  
<sup>3</sup> Expedia



# Joy in Outer Space

As our Earthbound concerns increase, and compelling imagery from space continues to flood our streams, expect greater interest in space exploration, space travel and colonization efforts.

35%

of Americans are interested in orbiting Earth in a spacecraft.<sup>1</sup>

52%

of American travelers are seeking a sense of connection with the cosmos on their trips.<sup>2</sup>

Gen Z is 51% more likely than average travelers to be interested in a hotel that offers celestial, astrology or space-themed excursions.<sup>3</sup>

## Marketing Implications

*Harness the joy found in the cosmos, highlighting astro-tourism experiences that bring people closer to the great beyond.*

*Develop virtual reality and augmented reality experiences that allow consumers to experience space exploration in a compelling way.*

1 Pew Research Center  
2 SkyScanner  
3 Priceline



# About the Authors



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Laura oversees research, communications innovation and strategic leadership, driving creative excellence and agency IP. With 27 years of experience, her portfolio includes iconic brands like Crayola, Pantene, Old Spice and National Parks. She tracks socio-cultural shifts and behavioral inflection points shaping fashion, CPG, food and lifestyle trends.



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Amy Hubbell leads the Brand Joy Lab, uncovering how joy shapes consumer behavior and brand success. With a background in insight-driven marketing, management consulting and advertising, she brings a sharp focus to trend-tracking – viewing every shift through the vibrant lens of joy to drive impactful strategies.



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A thought leader in communications planning, branding and cultural trends, Eric helps craft strategies that drive business-building results. His experience in media and brand-building across a variety of brands gives him savvy insight into how consumer behavior shifts within categories and platforms.





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Do you have a joy-related question for the Brand Joy Lab?

Drop us a line at AskJoy@peteramayer.com

Visit the Brand Joy Lab online: peteramayer.com/brand-joy-lab

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