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Apple Ranks #1 in MBLM's 2021 *Brand Intimacy COVID Study*, Indicating Essential Role it Plays in Second Year of the Pandemic

Zoom and Lysol Hold Strong with Best Response to COVID, while New Entrants Target and Costco Deepen Emotional Connection with Customers

NEW YORK — September 8, 2021 — Apple ranks as the #1 most intimate brand during COVID, according to MBLM's 2021 *Brand Intimacy COVID Study*, a study of brands based on emotional connections during the pandemic. MBLM (pronounced Emblem) uses emotional science to build and manage more intimate brands. Amazon and Google are second and third in the study overall, respectively. Brand Intimacy is the emotional science behind the bonds we form with the brands we use and love.

MBLM's study reveals that the remaining brands in the top 10 are Amazon, Disney, Target, YouTube, Toyota, Walmart, Costco, Harley-Davidson, and Google. The latest COVID rankings show many of the top Brand Intimacy performers continue to lead. However, there were three new top 10 entrants, Target, Costco, and Harley-Davidson. There has also been a shift in focus with more retail brands in the top 10 and fewer media and entertainment brands, suggesting the beginnings of a shift to post-pandemic normalcy in terms of how customers engage with the brands they love, and a greater reliance on retail brands.

Intimate brand performance has increased, on average, 7 percent since the start of COVID, resulting in more users willing to pay 20 percent more and less willing to live without the brand. Top intimate brands have also continued to outperform leading brands in the Fortune 500 and S&P 500 indices in profit, and stock price growth over last year, generating an additional \$16 billion in profit.

"In year two of the pandemic, our study reveals the brands that pivoted effectively and benefitted from doing so, demonstrating how leading brands continue to gain emotional currency in our lives," stated Mario Natarelli, managing partner, MBLM. "The reality is that the pandemic has created brand winners and losers – and those that are 'winning' are seeing dramatic improvement in business performance and increased distance between themselves and their competitors."

The study also revealed additional noteworthy findings, including:

- The percent of consumers that are in an intimate relationship has increased 37 percent since before the pandemic
- Consumers have shown a 31 percent increase in brands they can't live without, and 21 percent are willing to pay 20 percent more to engage with their favorite brands
- Daily usage of consumers' favorite brands is on the rise, at 30 percent compared to 28 percent in the same period of 2020
- Media & entertainment, automotive and retail are the top 3 industries
- Apple is the shared top brand across all ages and income ranges
- Purell is the top brand that people are using more during the pandemic, followed by Zoom and Netflix

- Chick fil A is the #1 brand for consumers willing to pay 20 percent more for its services or products. Last year, the top ranked brand for this measure was Purell
- New entrant Costco ranks #1 for users in the sharing stage of Brand Intimacy, the earliest stage during which knowledge is being shared and attraction occurs through reciprocity and assurance

During summer 2021, MBLM conducted a quantitative survey of 3,000 consumers in the U.S. to detail their experiences across 10 industries and 100 Brands. The follow-up *Brand Intimacy COVID Study* focuses on highlights, insight and rankings from this survey. To see the study's detailed methodology, click [here](#).

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About MBLM: MBLM invented Brand Intimacy, the emotional science behind the brands we use and love. For our clients, we deliver expertise and value through our agency insights, services and software offerings.

With offices in five countries, our multidisciplinary teams invent, transform and enhance brands for businesses of every kind. We deliver marketing that creates stronger emotional connections with stakeholders. These bonds create better performance and long-term returns. To learn more about how we can help you create and sustain ultimate brand relationships, visit mblm.com.