

Disney holds First Place and Costco Climbs to No. 2 in MBLMs 2026 Brand Intimacy Study

Value brands surge, Samsung overtakes Apple for the first time in 16 years and AI chatbot brands enter the collective conversation.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, September 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Disney holds its position as the No. 1 most intimate brand for a second consecutive year, according to [MBLM's 2026 Brand Intimacy Study](#), a comprehensive ranking of brands based on emotion. Costco's climb from No. 29 to No. 2 marks one of the biggest moves in the study's history, signaling a shift toward value-driven brands, while Samsung rounds out the top three, overtaking Apple for the first time in 16 years. Brand Intimacy is the emotional science behind the bonds consumers form with the brands they use and love.

“

"The world of information, and of marketing specifically, is being shaped by social consensus and algorithms in an environment of volatile politics and economic uncertainty"."

Mario Natarelli

Now in its 16th year, the 2026 Brand Intimacy Study is continuous and longitudinal, collecting and analyzing over four billion data points and an AI-powered evaluation of 425 brands across 23 industries and 25 brand families.

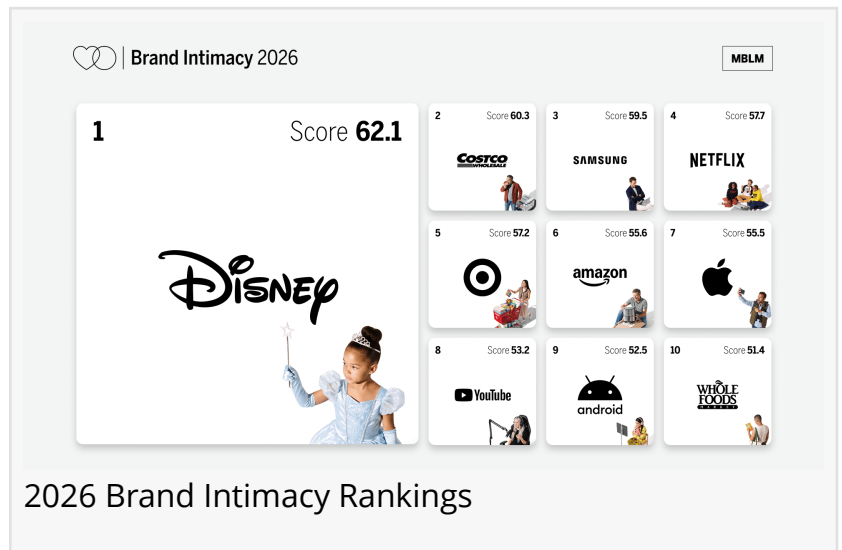
Value Brands Surge

As consumers stretch grocery budgets amid continued economic pressure, few brands are as well-positioned as Costco. Climbing from No. 29, Costco is now No. 2 overall. Target (No. 5), Old Navy (No. 14) and Walmart (No. 24) rank among the other brands benefiting from this focus on

value. Retail is the No. 1 industry overall for the first time, indicating how central value has become to brand relationships in 2026.

Samsung Overtakes Apple

For 16 years, Apple's dominance in Tech and Telecom seemed unshakeable. In 2026, Samsung



ranks No. 3 overall and ahead of Apple (No. 7) for the first time in the study's history, driven by strength in the sharing and fusing stages of intimacy.

AI Enters the Conversation

For the first time, MBLM has studied the emotional performance of AI chatbot brands. These brands have quickly become part of the same collective conversation the study has measured for over a decade, much as social platforms did before them. Gemini leads the new category, in which millions of people now shape and discuss their most intimate brand relationships.

"The world of information, and of marketing specifically, is being shaped by social consensus and algorithms in an environment of volatile politics and economic uncertainty," said [Mario Natarelli](#), managing partner at MBLM. "This year, that dynamic extends to AI itself. Chatbots aren't just tools; they're becoming participants in the conversation that shapes how people feel about brands, wherever those relationships form."

Other notable findings:

- Tesla has continued to decline, falling to No. 141 in this year's rankings.
- Twitch surged from No. 53 to No. 19, exemplifying the gaming category's rise and leading with the archetype of enhancement as it has grown and attracted a more mature audience.
- Top intimate brands outperform the Fortune 500 in revenue and gross and net income.
- Since June 2025, our Brand Intimacy Fund has grown 20%, exceeding the performance of ETFs such as SPY during the same period.

The 2026 Brand Intimacy Study includes rankings and analysis for all 425 brands, 23 industries and 25 brand families. To explore the full rankings or download the report, visit mblm.com/brandintimacy.

Methodology

MBLM analyzed more than 425 brands and over 4.5 billion words across the social internet, focusing on U.S.-based audiences across Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Reddit and X. Each platform was weighted using a principal component and cluster-based model incorporating demographic representation, platform usage patterns and interaction dynamics. Leveraging artificial intelligence, natural language processing, sentiment analysis and MBLM's proprietary Brand Intimacy measures, the study analyzed organic consumer discourse over a rolling three-to six-month period.

About MBLM

MBLM invented Brand Intimacy, the emotional science behind the brands we use and love. We deliver expertise through services, software and agency insights, with offices in New York City, Toronto, Dubai and Seoul. Our multidisciplinary teams invent, transform and enhance brands for businesses of every kind, creating stronger emotional connections with stakeholders that drive better performance and long-term returns. Visit mblm.com.

Mario Natarelli

MBLM

+1 646-560-1981

mnatarelli@mblm.com

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/938297117>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.