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The Travel & Leisure Industry Produces Least Intimate Brand Relationships in the U.S.

MBLM's Brand Intimacy 2015 Report Reveals Industry Ranks Last Among Eight Others

NEW YORK — November 3, 2015 — The [travel & leisure industry](#) produces the least intimate brand relationships compared to eight other industries, according to MBLM's *Brand Intimacy 2015 Report*, which examines ultimate brand relationships. Brand intimacy describes an essential relationship between a person and brand that transcends, usage, purchase and loyalty.

"We do firmly believe that travel & leisure can improve and establish strong mutual bonds with customers. Focusing on delighting users in big and small ways, demonstrating dialogue and inviting conversation, finding meaningful ways to reward those consumers who have selected a particular brand can all help the category improve its ability to connect. Seeking ways to create greater intimacy is the best defense a category has to improve and grow," stated Mario Natarelli, [MBLM's](#) managing partner.

The top travel brand in the U.S., British Airways, ranked 70th out of 200 brands. Comparatively, the top automotive brand, BMW, ranked second, and the top entertainment brand, Disney, ranked sixth. Rounding out the top 10 in travel & leisure are: Southwest, JetBlue, Four Seasons, Ritz Carlton, Marriott, Hilton, Delta, Holiday Inn and United.

MBLM has four theories as to why the industry, despite having the potential to build intimacy, is falling short:

- **Disintermediation of Purchase:** More and more consumers are booking trips using both traditional travel agents and online travel aggregator sites, bypassing the direct airline and hotel brand purchase experience.
- **Disintermediation of Dialogue:** The power of social media and online recommendations has clearly proliferated, and travel is one of the categories that generates the most dialogue. Travel brands are getting cut out of conversations taking place on websites like TripAdvisor, which have become aggregates for everyday recommendations and feedback.
- **Diminished Usage and Changing Habits:** Travel has changed and people are taking 20 percent fewer leisure trips this year compared to 2014. Continued changes to airline loyalty programs and complex tiering and structures, make them less relevant and often punitive.
- **Quality and Quantity:** Reduced quality in both airlines and hotels has created negative associations and a nickel and dime impression of the category in many cases. The proliferation of hotel brands has resulted in weaker relationships and less clarity around brands, while mergers, alliance programs and low budget carriers with airlines also confuse consumers and diminish brand equity.

According to the report, intimate brands create enhanced business performance. The top ranked intimate brands outperform major financial indices in profit growth and revenue growth over the past 10 years and brands that achieve the highest levels of intimacy also enjoy greater price resilience.

This year's report contains one of the most comprehensive rankings of brands based on emotion, analyzing the responses of 6,000 consumers and 52,000 brand evaluations across nine industries in the U.S., Mexico and UAE. MBLM's reports and interactive Brand Ranking Tool showcase the performance of almost 400 brands, revealing the characteristics and intensity of the consumer bonds.

To download the full *Brand Intimacy 2015 Report* or explore the Ranking Tool please visit: <http://mblm.com/brandintimacy/>.

Methodology:

During the spring of 2015, Praxis Research Partners conducted an online quantitative survey among 6,000 consumers in the U.S., Mexico and the UAE. Participants were screened respondents on age (18-64) and annual household income (\$35K or more) in the U.S. and socio-economic levels in Mexico and the UAE (A, B and C socio-economic levels). Quotas were established to ensure that the sample mirrored census data for age, gender, income/SEL and region. MBLM and Praxis Research crafted the survey instrument using insight from extensive qualitative research conducted on the topic of Brand Intimacy. The survey was designed primarily to understand the extent to which consumers have relationships with brands and the strength of those relationships, from fairly detached to highly intimate. It is important to note that this study provides more than a mere ranking of brand performance, and was specifically designed to provide prescriptive guidance to marketers. The agency modeled data from approximately 52,000 brand evaluations to quantify the mechanisms that drive Brand Intimacy. Through factor analysis, structural equation modeling and other sophisticated analytic techniques, the research allows marketers to better understand which levers need to be pulled to build intimacy between their brands and consumers.

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About MBLM: MBLM is the Brand Intimacy Agency, dedicated to creating greater intimacy between people, brands and technology. With offices in seven countries, our multidisciplinary teams help clients deliver stronger marketing outcomes and returns for the long term. To learn more about how we can help you create and sustain ultimate brand relationships, visit mblm.com.