

The

# **MOST** **INFLUENTIAL** **BRANDS**

in Canada

# 2021



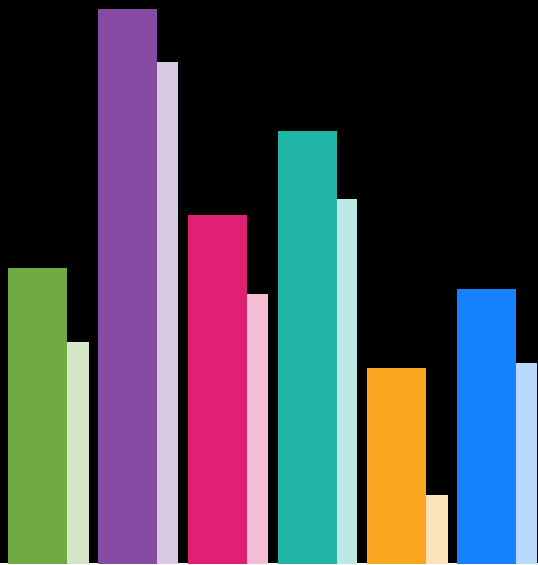
## Results from Ipsos' 2021 Study

Steve Levy, Ipsos Canada

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**GAME CHANGERS**





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# INTRODUCTION

Modern brands have been tested from all angles in the last decade. If they aren't being usurped by tech startups, they're confronted with a ceaseless pandemic. As we saw in 2020, the most digitally innovative companies have had the advantage. That remains true whether they're selling groceries, fast food, financial services or streaming media. So, it's fitting that as Ipsos enters its second decade of tracking brand influence, technology brands dominate our **Most Influential Brands in Canada**. In 2021, the world's biggest tech companies continued to grow. Apple, Alphabet, Amazon, Facebook (Meta), Microsoft and Tesla [added a combined \\$2.9 trillion to their collective market caps](#) as of Dec. 23, according to data from Factset.

As we've done since 2010, Ipsos asked consumers to assess more than 100 brands on five dimensions of brand

influence: **Trustworthiness**, **Engagement**, **Leading Edge**, **Corporate Citizenship** and **Presence**. We added a sixth dimension, **COVID-19**, in 2020 and have retained it in 2021. Despite the ongoing pandemic, COVID was a key contributor for just one brand in our Top Ten. That could mean that brands have adapted or that consumers have. Or perhaps everyone is simply ready to move on.

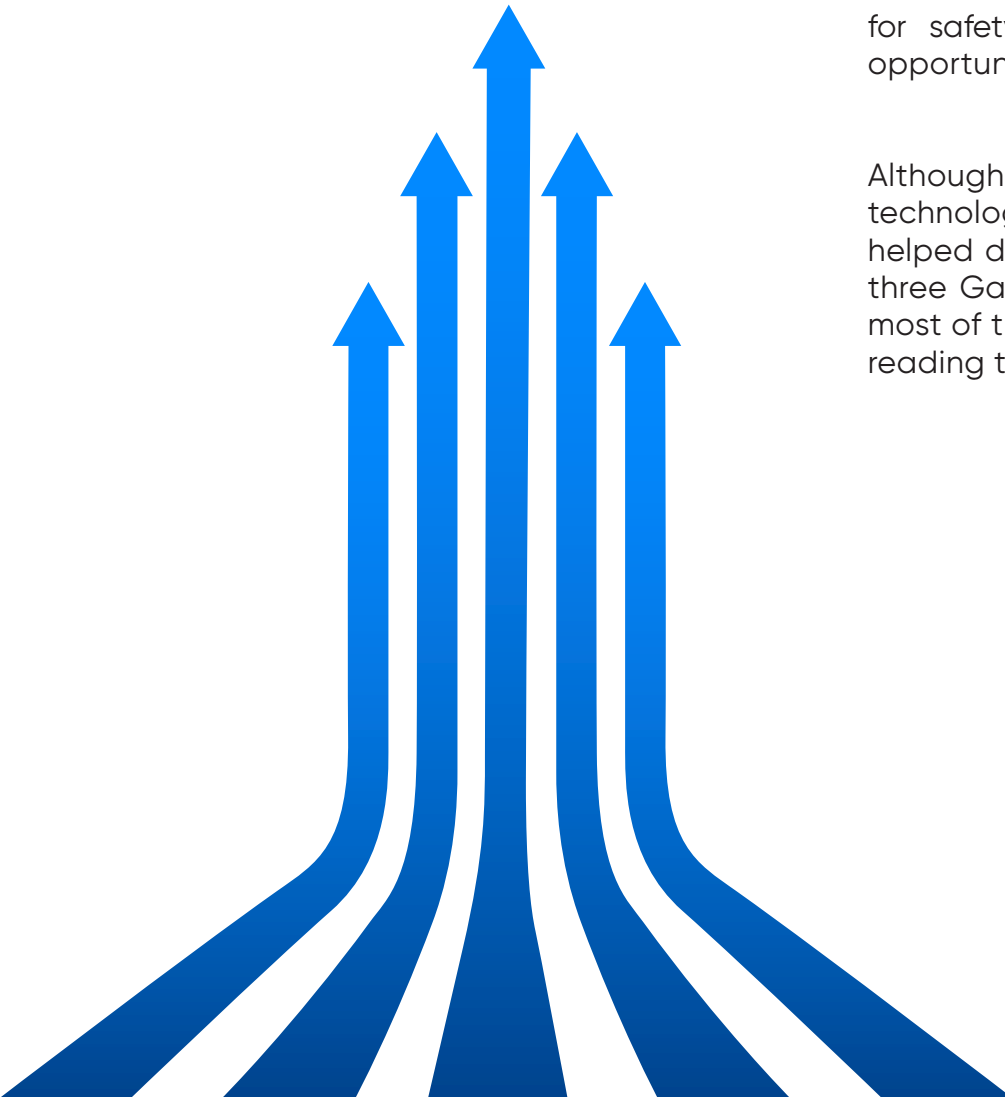
As we unveil the 10 **Most Influential Brands of 2021**, you'll recognize these names from earlier rankings, but with some flux in where brands landed on the list. We also profile three Gainers that showed impressive growth in their influence over the past year. How these brands responded to the fluid market conditions and anticipated their next steps reveal insights about influence that can benefit all brands. Let's dig in.



# GAINERS IN COVID

While COVID-19 didn't factor much into the influence for this year's top brands, it certainly confirmed the resilience and adaptability of our Gainers. That came with all manner of trials stemming from the pandemic. New virus strains and spiking positivity rates disrupted everything from staffing to supply chains. Others kept their doors open for customers with constantly changing rules for safety. These hitches also created opportunities for brands to differentiate.

Although two of our Gainers are technology players, being digitally savvy helped drive the success of all three. All three Gainers moved up by making the most of their value in COVID times. Keep reading to learn how they rose.





TikTok was one of the fastest climbers in our ranking over the last three years. The social video-sharing app ranks #44, up from #126 in 2019 when it made its debut on our list. China's ByteDance first launched TikTok in 2016 and took it international in 2017. Most videos hosted on the site run between 15 seconds and three minutes and are entertainment-focused. Video genres range from pranks and stunts to dances and tricks. Popular Canadian TikTokers like [Kris HC](#), who posts comedy skits, and [Celinaspookyboo](#), known for her sleepwalking videos, have helped triple Canadian users to 11 million, according to Comscore. The average Canadian user spends six hours per month on the site. The app is most popular with Millennials and Gen Zers, especially females. Four in ten TikTok users are between 16–24 years old. The dimensions that contribute most to its influence are Leading Edge (41%) and Engagement (32%). In 2021, TikTok was not only [the most downloaded app of the year](#), it also was the highest-grossing worldwide, with more than \$2 billion in 2021 revenue. It's not all fun and games, though, and that may be a secret power of this app. New Democratic Party leader, [Jagmeet Singh, has attracted more than 600,000 followers](#) to his TikTok account. He has used it to promote the party in the last two Canadian Federal elections.

**TikTok**  
MIB RANKING

#44 | 2021  
#72 | 2020



This decade-old online ordering and food delivery app is another fast riser. In 2019, Skip made its debut in our analysis at #80. It jumped to #70 in 2020 and broke the Top 50 in 2021. As COVID-19 helped accelerate demand for digital food delivery by threefold according to the Foodservice Monitor (Ipsos Canada), 3.5 million Canadians used the service in 2021. Influential with Gen Zers and Millennials from the get-go, Skip has won over Gen Xers in the past year, boosting its reach. Leading Edge (44%) and Engagement (38%), dimensions contribute most its influence, thanks partly to its [wacky TV spots featuring "honourary Canadian" Jon Hamm](#) and comedian [Patrick Groulx](#). It also set partnerships with two important Canadian organizations as the official food delivery app of the National Hockey League and the Canadian Olympic Committee. During mid-2021, Skip [launched a pilot to add home delivery for 1,500-plus grocery and household items](#). Called Skip Express Lane, the service promises to deliver items in 25 minutes or less. Clearly, it worked. In December, Skip announced the service would roll out across Canada. As a result, the company will launch 38 new fulfillment centers coast-to-coast by mid-2022 and create 1,000 jobs nationwide.

**SkipTheDishes**  
MIB RANKING

#46 | 2021  
#70 | 2020



Loblaws made our list of Gainers last year and is the only brand to make a repeat appearance this year. Canada's largest grocery chain soared on our ranking from #53 in 2019 to #31 in 2021. Loblaws gets nearly half (46%) of its influence from the perception that it is a Trustworthy brand. Some of its influence (21%) in 2021 also comes from its response to COVID-19. Loblaws also boosted online sales, curbside pickup, and food delivery. While it eked out a 2% gain in third-quarter 2021, it was over a robust prior-year. These efforts also paid off for investors as [shares increased by 65% in 2021](#). Loblaws has grown in influence with all generations over this time, especially with Boomers and males. One factor could be Loblaws reviving the print version of its PC Insiders periodical after a decade-long hiatus. It first returned as a digital-only magazine last summer. Loblaws ran its ["biggest program ever"](#) for the magazine's print relaunch. That included a [nostalgic campaign set to the Backstreet Boys' 1997 hit, "Everybody"](#) and even featured a holographic chef in stores.

**Loblaws**  
MIB RANKING

**#31** | 2021  
**#46** | 2020

# TOP 10 BRANDS OF 2021



## Walmart

Walmart dropped a spot in our rankings. Surprisingly, Walmart was the sole brand in our Top Ten where COVID-19 factored into its index score (6%). The leading factors contributing to its influence were Presence (38%), thanks to its 400-plus store footprint, and Trustworthy (26%). The company doubled down on that trust by kicking off its planned [\\$3.5 billion, five-year plan to modernize stores](#) and improve its customer experience in Canada. That [started with a record \\$500 million investment](#) in 2021 to upgrade supercenters, improve picking space for online orders and launch its first automated market fulfillment centers. Walmart Canada is also benefiting from its growing Marketplace Grocery. As of September 2021, [it had 175 third-party sellers](#), and the number of new sellers coming on more than doubled in the first half of 2021. The company launched its biggest Canadian campaign in 2021 called “Why We Walmart” including [a TV spot during the Super Bowl](#). The campaign featured Canadians in their own words sharing how the retailer helps people live their lives better.

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**PRESENCE: 38%**

**TRUSTWORTHY: 26%**



Loblaw's popular loyalty program rose a spot on our ranking in its second year in the Top 10. Like last year, 70% of PC Optimum's influence is contributed by the Trustworthy and Engagement dimensions. No wonder. The company's range of supermarket and drug stores and e-commerce ensured it was there for customers during the pandemic. Among these efforts, 20 Shoppers Drug Mart locations in provincial "hot spots" offered [24-hour COVID vaccinations](#) in the Greater Toronto area. Customers rewarded the brand for its personalized app and flyer promotions [with strong online sales on track to beat last year's performance](#), the company said. For example, it offered free weekly items [from peanuts to tissues](#) to PC Optimum members at Loblaws stores. The PC Express online grocery pickup and delivery program drove Q1 2021 online sales to a [133% gain](#) compared to the same period a year before. Loblaw also expanded its [partnership with Imperial Esso](#), adding 2,000 locations where Canadians can earn and redeem Optimum points. The deal replaces the Esso Extra program, which will be retired.

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TRUSTWORTHY: 41%



ENGAGEMENT: 29%



Visa rose one spot in our rankings from a year ago. That coincides with Canadians' growing preference for plastic and virtual wallets over cash. Within that

trend, Visa card ownership and transactions continued to grow in 2021 as 68% of Canadians hold a Visa card, according to the Ipsos Digital Wallet and Payment Trends syndicated research. Half (49%) of Canadians consider Visa to be their primary card and these cardholders pay 78% of their personal expenses using their primary card. Accordingly, the Trust and Presence dimensions contribute to more than half (55%) of Visa's influence. Canadians say if they had to choose a new card, 39% would opt for Visa. Among Canadians, Visa is most influential among the Boomer cohort (#4). Its influence drops from there and has to make up the most ground with Gen Z where it's ranked #22. This will be important as Canadians are [leading the cashless trend](#), continuing to shop online, use more e-commerce, digital and contactless payments for small- and medium-sized businesses. More broadly, through its partnership with IFundWomen, Visa extended its global grant program [to provide ten women entrepreneurs in Canada with funding](#) through grants, resources and mentorship to grow and expand their businesses.

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TRUSTWORTHY: 32%

PRESENCE: 25%



## NETFLIX

The subscription streaming service dropped a spot in the ranking from 2020. This is perhaps not so surprising given that people began to emerge from COVID lockdowns. Its Leading Edge and Trustworthy dimensions contributed to more than half of its influence. That's because viewers have come to trust the brand to continually deliver innovative content like "The Crown," "Tiger King," "The Queen's Gambit" and "Bridgerton." To wit: Korean survival drama Squid Game made its debut in September 2021 and [became the streamer's most-watched show or film ever in just four weeks](#). Collectively, viewers spent 1.65 billion hours watching the show during that time. The show also delivered for Netflix, which paid a mere \$21.4 million for it. "Squid Game" now has an estimated value of \$891 million (and counting). Netflix even rolled out a website called [top10.netflix.com](https://top10.netflix.com) that tracks its most viewed films and series by the number of hours users spend watching them. Until recently, the company limited sharing its viewership data. This gives Netflix [another chance to hype its shows](#) and create FOMO, all the while giving a dig to rival services like Amazon Prime Video and Disney+ that don't regularly release viewership data.

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LEADING EDGE: 28%



TRUSTWORTHY: 24%



The second-most valuable company in the world, Microsoft's market cap [surged 51% in 2021 to \\$2.5 trillion](#). MSFT shares have rallied each year for a decade, its longest-ever, posting double-digit returns for nine straight years. Now, Microsoft (just behind Apple) is close to reaching the \$3 trillion club. These feats helped Microsoft rise two spots on our ranking from 8th last year. Its reliable returns and innovation have fueled its Trustworthy and Leading Edge influence dimensions. Remote work helped Microsoft Teams nearly double daily active users to 145 million over the 12 months ending April 2021. The company took advantage of the demand for its internet-based Office productivity suite of software by hiking prices for premium versions and longer contracts. [More than 300 million monthly active users open Office 365 tools](#) to write reports, create presentations, calculate data and share their work. The accelerated shifts to digital work and the metaverse are also feeding Microsoft's ambition [to move from mobile and cloud computing to ubiquitous computing and ambient intelligence](#), as Chairman-CEO Satya Nadella announced at the company's annual Ignite developer conference.

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**TRUSTWORTHY: 27%**



**LEADING EDGE: 26%**



The Mark Zuckerberg-built company has embarked on its own race to stake its claim in the metaverse. In October, [the company rebranded as "Meta Platforms"](#) as part of that vision, keeping Facebook as a social network brand aside Messenger, Instagram, WhatsApp and Oculus for virtual reality. The latter will factor heavily in Meta's virtual worlds where digital avatars can work, travel and play using its VR headsets. Whatever you call it, the company held on to its place in our Top Five this year, with the Leading Edge and Presence factors contributing most to its influence. Reflecting its evolving role as a news and information distributor, Meta continued to build on its partnership with news organizations. Throughout 2021, Meta [partnered with 18 Canadian news organizations to launch its News Innovation Test](#) to support news innovation and sustainability.

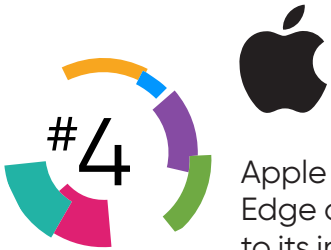
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**LEADING EDGE: 28%**

**PRESENCE: 26%**

## TOP 10 BRANDS OF 2021



Apple also stayed put in the Top Ten, with Leading Edge and Trustworthy again contributing the most to its influence. Not that it was easy to pull off in the year that saw a supply chain mess, the Great Resignation and record spikes in COVID cases. While Apple has long been criticized for hoarding parts and repair information, in 2021 [it reversed those restrictions](#). Now, users will be able to order genuine Apple parts to make basic iPhone repairs at home. Score one for the shareholders, activists and regulators.

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**LEADING EDGE: 30%**



**TRUSTWORTHY: 24%**



The Google-owned video-sharing brand remained as the Top Three brand. Leading Edge and Engagement dimensions contributed equally at 27% each. Here's why: YouTube is the second-most visited monthly site in Canada behind Google. It drew 29.2 million unique visitors in November 2021, according to Comscore. That's more than one million additional unique visitors than November 2020. Canadians spent 40.7 billion minutes streaming and downloading on YouTube in 2021, up from 34 billion the year before. Pandemic-weary Canadians flocked to the site to watch creators like [MrBeast, who spent 50 hours in a glass coffin](#). The March 27, 2021 post has drawn more than 159 million views to-date, beating the 2021 Super Bowl halftime show with 43 million views. Escapism was the [main draw for Canadians in 2021](#), shifting from fitness and do-it-yourself videos in 2020. Importantly, YouTube didn't let TikTok's meteoric rise with young people continue unchallenged. It joined Facebook and Instagram's Reels short video competitors in July 2021 with YouTube Shorts.

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LEADING EDGE: 27%



ENGAGEMENT: 27%



Amazon remains grounded at second in our ranking. But Amazon founder Jeff Bezos is making moves to lift off in several ways as the company expands from retailer to broader digital services. In July, he took a [10-minute flight into space on his Blue Origin New Shepard](#) reusable rocket – at a cost of \$5.5 billion USD. A few weeks before the flight, Bezos stepped aside as Amazon CEO and elevated Andy Jassy. He's known for co-creating and leading Amazon Web Services (AWS) since 2003. In October, Jassy [asked for investors to be patient](#) for the company's \$80 billion logistics investment and hiring spree to pay off. Amazon in September started hiring 15,000 workers across Canada at a higher wage rate but it cut the monthly bonus program. Earlier in the year, worker shortages and a [thwarted unionization effort](#) prompted the company [to launch a new value: "Strive to be Earth's best employer"](#) – to its list of 14 core principles. In November 2021, AWS announced it will open an infrastructure region in West Canada in late 2023/early 2024, thereby joining the existing Central Canada region. The new region will empower developers, startups, enterprises, governments, educators and non-profits to run applications and serve users from data centers located in Canada. The moves [will create more than 5,000 jobs](#), injecting more than CA\$21 billion to the local economies by 2037. It makes sense that the Leading Edge (32%) and Trustworthy (28%) dimensions contribute most of Amazon's influence.

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LEADING EDGE: 32%

TRUSTWORTHY: 28%



Google is once again Canada's Most Influential Brand for the tenth straight year. It's also the most influential brand across generations, ranking first from Gen Z to Boomer consumers. The Trustworthy (29%) and Leading Edge (26%) dimensions contribute most to Google's influence. As part of the company's expansion in Canada, Google will triple its national workforce. Google also announced plans to [boost Canadian news organizations](#) through agreements with Canadian publishers for Google News Showcase. The new product and licensing program will provide customizable space for news content in Google News and Discover. It also added investments to its Google News Initiative in three areas: training, supporting business sustainability and promoting innovation.

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TRUSTWORTHY: 29%

LEADING EDGE: 26%

# THE TAKEAWAY

You can sum up the biggest insight for brands from this year's ranking in one word: **vision**. The most resilient brands have weathered incredible uncertainty by looking forward and spotting the risks and opportunities to differentiate. Anyone who made bets on the pandemic ending in 2021 found themselves on unstable footing. No one can be certain what 2022 will bring. Consequently, brands that map out and prepare for multiple futures will be those that win in the years ahead. That requires understanding customers now and how they may act as technology and business conditions change across the six dimensions that contribute to brand influence.



## Influential brands differentiate by:

- Ensuring that products, solutions, services, and advertising intersect in meaningful and relevant ways with consumers in **moments that matter**. These are most likely to have impact and influence when brands connect with consumers at the right time.
- Communicating trust. Trust hinges less on whether brands are trusted (although this is clearly important) **but whether brands are seen to be earning the trust of Canadians**. This is a meaningful distinction. Brands can do this by sharing their trust milestones with consumers in addition to earning that trust through action.
- Innovating from the consumer perspective. Innovation matters, but **innovation must be anchored on helping** Canadians make the most of your relationship with them. In other words: your brand needs to solve problems and make it easier for consumers to turn to *your* brand for their needs.
- **Offering a true exchange of value**. When brands can create a circumstance where there is a truly curated experience or one that is more relevant or enjoyable, they are more likely to have influence.
- **Influential brands have been able to read the room** and figure out what is important and meaningful to Canadians and make themselves relevant at times when circumstances are more likely to change.

# ABOUT

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Ipsos Canada

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🐦 [@levysteveipsos](https://twitter.com/levysteveipsos)

### Early Life

Born, educated and worked in the U.K. for the first half of his existence.

### Career

Sales (Xerox U.K.), Brand Management (Mars U.K.), Research ACNielsen – Asia, NPD Canada) ... before a sale to Ipsos in 2002.

### Giving Back

Board member – Canadian Marketing Association, Judge for the Young Lions and board member – Earth Rangers Foundation.

### Today

Ipsos (many roles). Author of (among other things) the Most Influential Brand study – Globally. The Digital Marketing Pulse (15 years), Developing the Long Middle story. Frequent public speaker.

### Personal

Hair – it is an ALL or none issue. Eyewear is a big deal. Avid golfer and tennis player. BIG on hot weather. Loves a great hamburger and fries. Father of two daughters + has the best lifetime partner.

### Honour

Canadian Marketing Association lifetime achievement award 2020:

<https://youtu.be/Mvj0yRCqXM>

## ABOUT IPSOS

At Ipsos we are passionately curious about people, markets, brands and society. We deliver information and analysis that makes our complex world easier and faster to navigate and inspires our clients to make smarter decisions.

We believe that our work is important. Security, Simplicity, Speed and Substance applies to everything we do.

Through specialization, we offer our clients a unique depth of knowledge and expertise. Learning from different experiences gives us perspective and inspires us to boldly call things into question, to be creative.

By nurturing a culture of collaboration and curiosity, we attract the highest caliber of people who have the ability and desire to influence and shape the future.

To learn more, visit:

[www.ipsos.ca](http://www.ipsos.ca)



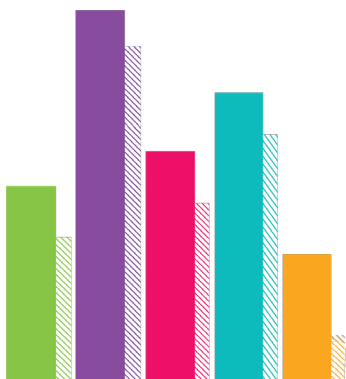
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# MOST INFLUENTIAL BRANDS in Canada 2021

The pandemic started in 2020 but most certainly continued through 2021 with its ups and downs. Canada's Most Influential Brands have needed to adapt, be resilient and provide assistance in new and different ways. Their edgy, unconventional and in some cases supportive nature is what makes them stand out in a crowded, competitive marketplace. They influence how we dress, communicate, shop, spend our free time, celebrate, socialize and since 2020 "stay safe". Moreover, the Most Influential Brands don't just sell a product or service. They promote a strong sense of purpose and shape our world while connecting emotionally with people. Only those that strike the right balance **trustworthiness**, **engagement**, being **leading edge**, **corporate citizenship**, having **presence** and **playing an important role during covid** will truly make an impact.



Steve Levy | Ipsos Canada



11<sup>th</sup>

2021 marks the **11<sup>th</sup> consecutive year** of the study and results were unveiled on the morning of February 9<sup>th</sup> at the Ipsos Most Influential Brands event.

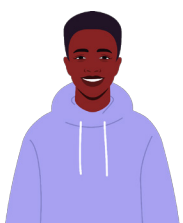
100+

Each year Ipsos studies **over 100 brands** that spend the most on advertising in Canada on an annual basis and ranks their influence.

## 2021 TOP 10 MOST INFLUENTIAL BRANDS IN CANADA [Overall]

- 1 GOOGLE
- 2 AMAZON
- 3 YOUTUBE
- 4 APPLE
- 5 FACEBOOK
- 6 MICROSOFT
- 7 NETFLIX
- 8 VISA
- 9 PC OPTIMUM
- 10 WALMART

## 2021 TOP 3 MOST INFLUENTIAL BRANDS BY GENERATION



### GEN Z

GOOGLE  
APPLE  
YOUTUBE



### MILLENNIALS

GOOGLE  
YOUTUBE  
AMAZON



### GEN X

GOOGLE  
AMAZON  
YOUTUBE



### BOOMERS

GOOGLE  
AMAZON  
MICROSOFT



## DID YOU KNOW

This is an annual study that has been conducted since 2010.

Findings were released on February 9<sup>th</sup> at a virtual event hosted by Ipsos and our partners ACA, CMDC, Publicis and The Globe and Mail.

Subscriptions to the study are available to understand your brand vis-à-vis the competitive category set.

Customized Reports review the drivers of influence for your brand, as well as performance on all measures included in the study. Additional analytics are available at an incremental cost.

Subscriptions include a management presentation customized to include your brand and your competitors.

Customized reports are available now.

**SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: \$19,000** for 8 brands  
+\$1,000 for each brand beyond 8

## SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Billing is 100% upon approval. HST is applicable to all study costs.

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Approving Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_