

The most
RELEVANT
brands in China

**Brands consumers
can't live without =
RELEVANCE**

At Prophet, we believe that the strongest brands are the ones that are relentlessly relevant and make a difference in consumers' lives.

We surveyed over 10,000 consumers on 279 brands across 27 industries to develop our brand relevance ranking index.

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The Top 50 Brands

Following are the top 50 most relevant brands ranked by Chinese consumers. The brands were selected for inclusion in the survey based on contribution to Chinese households.

1  支付宝 ALIPAY	2 	3 	4  Marriott.	5  UBER 优步	6 	7  adidas®	8  天猫 Tmall.COM	9  Volkswagen	10 
11  Haier 海尔	12  Audi	13  UnionPay 银联	14  淘宝网 Taobao.com	15  SHANGRI-LA HOTELS and RESORTS	16  LANCÔME PARIS	17  vivo	18  Microsoft	19 	20  ESTÉE LAUDER
21 	22  airbnb	23  HUAWEI	24  Baidu 百度	25  PHILIPS	26  DELL	27 	28  GREE 格力	29  THE RITZ-CARLTON®	30  招商銀行 CHINAMERCHANTS BANK
31  SUNTORY 三得利	32  ROBAM 老板	33  國泰航空公司	34  RIOT GAMES	35  HYATT®	36  Panasonic	37  FOUR SEASONS	38  新浪微博 weibo.com	39 	40  JD. 京东 .COM
41  Nintendo®	42  Ocean Park Hong Kong	43  中國東方航空 CHINA EASTERN	44  Ctrip 携程	45  SAMSUNG	46  佰草集 HERBORIST THE CHINESE BEAUTY REMEDY	47  Midea®	48  WESTIN® HOTELS & RESORTS	49 	50  bp

The Top 50 Brands

We surveyed over

10,000

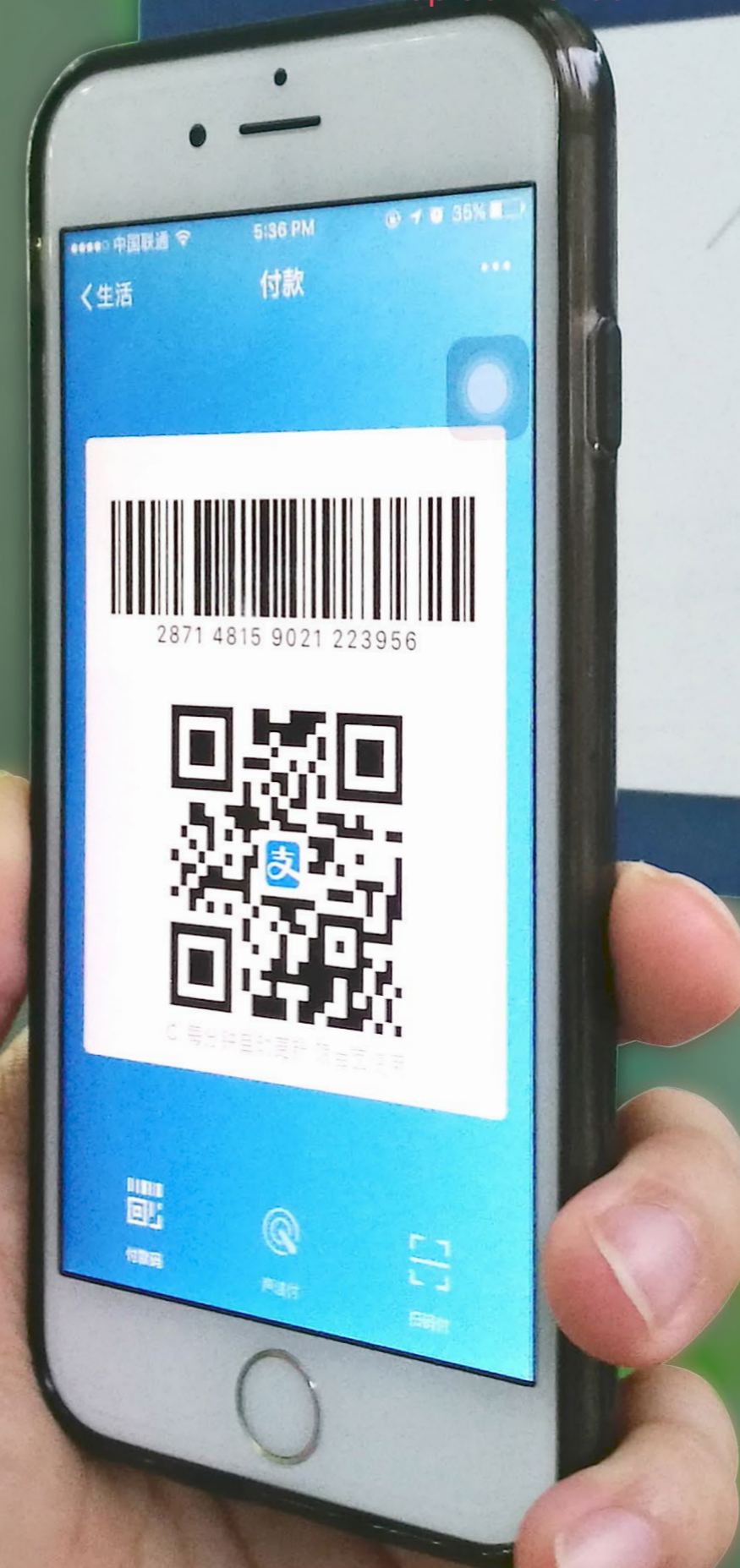
consumers about 279 brands

#1 **ALIPAY**

Your go-to DIGITAL WALLET

It is no surprise that Alibaba's payment platform takes the crown for brand relevance. From online purchases and grocery shopping to giving your friends no excuse but to pay you back (only a few taps to transfer funds on the app), Alipay has revolutionized the concept of digital money management. Owning the lion's share of 70% of China's mobile payment market in 2015, Alipay has 450 million active users (1.5 fold of the US population) and averages 175 million transactions daily¹. Impressively, Alipay dominates all four brand relevance pillars we measure. In particular, it leads second place WeChat by 10% for being "*Distinctively Inspired*".

¹<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/china/business/2016/08/10/474983/Alipay-speeds.htm>



支 支付宝
ALIPAY

We have the inside scoop on what keeps Alipay relevant

Let's chat about it.



#2 WECHAT

So much more than messaging

In just five years since its inception, WeChat has revolutionized the way a messaging app works – integrating all parts of life onto a single unified platform. For its 700 million monthly active users, WeChat has become an omnipotent portal that addresses all sorts of daily needs, be it digital payments, e-commerce, B2C customer service, or even fundraising. 21% of its users access the app more than 50 times a day, while another 40% do it more than 10 times daily². Pioneering a new mobile economy unmatched by any offerings across the globe, WeChat performs exceptionally well in “Meets an important need of my life”, because once you have it, you simply cannot live without it.

² <http://www.199it.com/archives/451833.html>

³ <http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/pages/macroeconomic-insights-folder/chinese-tourist-boom/report.pdf>

#3 VISA

Accepted around the world

In spite of UnionPay’s monopoly status in China, Visa has earned consumers’ trust by providing digital-driven paying services and being readily available beyond the Chinese border. Compared to UnionPay, Visa wins big in terms of being “Available where and when I need it”. With outbound travel being one of the biggest aspirations for China’s burgeoning upper middle class (outbound travel grew 110% from 2010 to 2015³), a globally-accepted Visa card is the golden ticket increasingly sought after by travelers who wish to optimize all aspects of their experience abroad.



#4 MARRIOTT

Destination for business travelers

Marriott has shown tremendous dedication to the Chinese market by outbidding deep-pocketed local conglomerate Anbang for the acquisition of Starwood Hotels & Resorts. With the Chinese Ministry of Commerce finally giving the green light to the merger, the world's largest hotel group has made aggressive plans to build an additional 300 hotels and double its presence in China⁴.

Marriott's success lies largely in strategic wooing of Chinese travelers. For instance, it is one of the first-movers to introduce digital-oriented services tailor-made for Chinese travelers, including AliPay-enabled payments and WeChat global concierge services. These perks allow Marriott to lead its category in *"Has better products, services, and experiences than competitors"*. Moreover, the hotelier scores high among males and high income groups, exemplifying how it successfully brings in business travelers.

The Top 50 Brands



#5 UBER

Getting you there

Despite the extremely tough competition from local ride-hailing superpower Didi Chuxing, Uber earns its rank by being the leader of innovation and establishing itself as the force of change against traditions. It performs better among demographics that look for innovation and appreciate change, namely high income groups and millennials. Overall Uber has a significant lead over Didi when it comes to *"Pushes the status quo"*.

As of 2015, five of Uber's top ten cities by average daily rides are in China, and the US-based company is not afraid to expand into lower tier cities. Chengdu alone had 20,000 active drivers, while New York City had 26,000 and San Francisco had 22,000⁵. Going forward, it would be interesting to see how Uber embarks on new journeys to serve Chinese consumers, having been taken over by Didi in August 2016.

⁴ http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2016-09/26/content_26899801.htm

⁵ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/ellenhuet/2015/09/23/uber-taps-its-new-number-one-city-chengdu-to-debut-commute-product/>



#6 FORD

Any car you want, anywhere you want it

Led by hot demand for SUVs among Chinese families, Ford has seen an increase in demand as well as brand recognition in China. In its category, Ford comes first in “I trust” and third in “I know I can depend on”. According to its CEO Alan Mulally, Ford’s winning strategy, apart from supplying safe and reliable vehicles, is to have a wide range of product offerings for buyers with varying economic power and needs. Sales have soared 22% YOY as of August 2016 despite a slowing Chinese automobile market⁶, driven primarily by strong performances of the New Edge SUV, the Focus, and the Escort.



#7 ADIDAS

The trendsetting visionary

On one hand, Adidas has capitalized on the Chinese government’s commitment to health and sports development. From partnering with local property developer Wanda to strengthening e-commerce capabilities to leverage the increased preference for digital shopping, Adidas strives to go beyond first-tier cities and build its relevance across demographics. On the other, Adidas has successfully built an almost cult following beyond sports. By recruiting superstars across all facets of popular culture (David Beckham, Kanye West, Chinese fashion mogul Angelababy, you name it) to endorse/design for the brand, Adidas is constantly setting new trends for urban street fashion.



#8 Tmall

Get everything you need without stepping outside

As Alibaba’s B2C e-commerce platform and Taobao’s sister site, Tmall guarantees quality goods and reliable delivery to its 400 million users. A quick browse of the website shows that popular purchases include earphones, lingerie, and Chinese mitten crabs! Tmall scores high in “Engages with me in new and creative ways” by constantly innovating around ways to provide consumers with additional value: the introduction of the Single’s Day sale promises great deals and gives consumers just another reason to do more shopping. On 11/11/2015, Tmall received over ¥10B sales in merely 13 minutes⁷. With the value and convenience it offers, Tmall has undoubtedly become something many urban Chinese can’t fathom living without.



#9 VOLKSWAGEN

The public’s automobile

As one of the first Western automotive brands to break into the Chinese market through a joint venture with SAIC, Volkswagen has been growing and expanding its business vigorously in China for more than 30 years, during which the brand has successfully built a trusting relationship with many Chinese drivers with dependable, safe, and economical vehicles.

Volkswagen is ranked #1 for “Meets an important need in my life” as well as “Makes me happy” among all automotive brands. The fact that most Chinese consumers have traditionally avoided diesel cars and paid little attention to Volkswagen’s diesel crisis allowed the German manufacturer to sustain healthy sales figures even in a bad year. Chinese sales increased 23% to 289,000 for September 2016. Contrastingly, just 24,100 cars were sold in the US in the same period⁸.

⁶ <https://corporate.ford.com/content/dam/corporate/en/investors/investor-events/Press%20Releases/2016/Press-Release%20-Ford-Posts-Best-Ever-August-Sales-in-China.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.chinainternetwatch.com/15497/double-11-2015/>

⁸ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/volkswagens-chinese-medicine-is-about-to-wear-off-1476446447>

#10 **IKEA****Furniture theme park for all**

For Chinese consumers, visiting IKEA is an all-day, immersive, “theme park like” experience. They are welcome to spend hours lounging on sofas and beds, and if they’re hungry, they can head to the in-store cafeteria and enjoy some Swedish meatballs. As a consumer described it, “IKEA is a store of the people⁹.” However, the company’s growth in China did not come without obstacles, as it had to radically adjust its pricing strategies and business model to appeal to price-conscious consumers while fending off copycats. With designs that perfectly fuse aesthetic and practicality, IKEA is favored by demographics that are younger, have yet to start a family, and with higher income, scoring especially high in consumer-centric attributes such as “I trust” and “I know I can depend on”.

#11 **HAIER****Digitizing your home**

When it comes to making life easier for consumers, Haier takes the lead in the durable goods category. It introduced its U+ Smart Life Platform in 2015, a system that wirelessly connects a wide array of home appliances and devices and allows the user to control them via a smartphone app. From a first-of-its-kind smart air conditioner to the touch-screen Magic Mirror, Haier is redefining the home living experience for Chinese urban families. Having recently acquired GE’s US\$5.6B appliance division, the Qingdao-based company is set on building a stronger presence on the world stage of consumer-facing appliances.

#12 **AUDI****From officialdom to public favorite**

The official car of China’s top politicians for many years, Audi has become an icon of power and prestige. Despite President Xi’s recent push for the use of domestic cars, many drivers remain loyal to the brand. Of all automotive brands we studied, it comes on top in “Has better products, services, and experiences than competitors”. Our survey also indicates Audi’s strong performance among female millennials as a result of the brand’s shifting strategy to attract a broader consumer base: moving away from boring boxy sedans, Audi started producing more colorful and cute-looking automobiles. The result? 32% of current Chinese consumers are young people; 37% are women¹⁰, a significant shift from the traditionally male-dominated consumer profile.

#13 **UNIONPAY****The trusted card service provider**

As the state-appointed bank card clearing company, the UnionPay brand is fervently linked to pragmatism as it serves almost every single credit card holder in the local market. In recent years, it is also trying to compete with Visa on the global platform by enabling outbound Chinese travelers to conveniently withdraw local currency and settle payments in RMB terms with minimal conversion fees. That is why UnionPay is ranked #1 in “I can’t imagine living without” as well as “Makes my life easier” in its category.

⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-24769669>

¹⁰ <http://adage.com/article/global-news/audi-reaches-china-s-younger-car-buyers/302742/>



#14 **TAOBAO**

Treasure chest just a click away

As the most successful C2C website in China, Taobao (which means treasure hunt in Chinese) wins on both the sell and buy fronts. With a user-friendly interface and support system, Taobao allows anyone to become a business owner while bringing a huge variety of products to consumers. Whether it's vinyl records, in-home karaoke systems, or sashimi, Taobao has it all. The brand also marks Alibaba's third entry in our top 15 list, spotlighting Alibaba's unmatched relevance as a trailblazer of interlinked digital-oriented services.



The Top 50 Brands

#15 **SHANGRI-LA**

Building a uniquely local identity

Shangri-La strives to offer luxurious, innovative experiences while encapsulating the warmth of Asian hospitality into every guest's stay. The only regional hospitality brand breaking into our Top 50 ranking, Shangri-La is ranked #1 in "Engages with me in new and creative ways" within its category and performs exceptionally well among millennials who are continuously seeking more premium brands that are authentic and unique. Notably, the Singapore founded but Hong Kong-based hotel group is extremely successful in embedding local taste into its brand identity. For instance, the Shangri-La Qufu is known for its exterior that is reminiscent of a Chinese pagoda, reflecting Qufu's history but also offering a modern taste.

#16 **LANCÔME**

Connecting to beauty lovers one level deeper

How does Lancôme outperform its category when it comes to "Makes me feel inspired"? It adopts a digital strategy that leverages its community of users. Aside from having strong social media presence, Lancôme has its own online forum, Rose Beauty, for consumers to share beauty tips and information on products and events. This fosters both an emotional and pragmatic connection to not only the brand, but also a community of dedicated beauty lovers.

#17 **VIVO**

Homemade brilliance

Unlike domestic players who make their names by offering budget or midrange devices, Vivo has always focused on the high-end market despite fierce competition. To win, the Chinese smartphone manufacturer offers unique devices that pack serious technology – the Xplay 5 Elite for example features a curved screen and the same processor used in the Samsung Galaxy S7. With its premium devices that promise quality, Vivo scores high among well-educated millennials in our survey.



#18 MICROSOFT

Modern workhorse

Since entering China in 1992, Microsoft's products and software have been widely utilized and trusted by individuals and corporations alike. It is a symbol of pragmatic technology that helps make one's life easier. From partnering with Xiaomi to drive Windows 10 adoption on mobile to adding Didi's ride hailing services into Outlook, Microsoft is cleverly leveraging the local know-how of its Chinese partners to build its business. Its recent joint venture with the China Electronics Technology Group is another attempt to strengthen its position in the country, as the deal would allow Microsoft to supply state-approved Windows 10 to SOEs and even directly to the Chinese government.



#19 BMW

Luxury on wheels

Of all the automotive brands we studied, BMW scores the highest in "Is modern and in-touch". It is no surprise that consumers, especially those living in tier 1 cities, regard BMW as a symbol of prestige. In the increasingly competitive luxury automobile market, the Munich-based manufacturer has actively adopted localization strategies to sustain its competitiveness: for example, having found that the Chinese love long wheel-based cars as a strong personal statement, BMW developed the luxurious 7-series especially for this market.



#20 ESTÉE LAUDER

Distinctively different, collectively distinguishable

Estée Lauder succeeds in reaching consumers across varying segments with its diversified portfolio of iconic brands. This includes not only the Estée Lauder-branded products but also M.A.C., Clinique, and LA MER. Though each brand preserves its own identity, they all share one similarity – the premium quality of their products. As a result, Estée Lauder is able to sustain its leadership as an elite beauty brand across income groups as well as city tiers.



#21 SHELL

Powering and empowering cities

Shell's long history in the country as well as its sustained strategic partnerships with local gas suppliers such as CNOOC and Sinopec have made it a trusted and dependable partner for many Chinese drivers. The Dutch gas company's network reaches far beyond top-tier cities, with more than 500 gas stations countrywide and strong presence in cities such as Chongqing and Jiangsu. This is why Shell is able to deliver a strong performance among those living in tier 2 cities (ranked at #16). To further foster its relationship with the general public, Shell is also pursuing a wide range of social investment projects in three focus areas: education, environment, and capacity building.

China's outbound international tourism is growing steadily and travelers are getting younger, more educated, and increasingly self-organized. This is great news for Airbnb, as outbound travel from Chinese guests has grown 700% in 2015¹¹, making it the fastest growing outbound market for the travel planning website. With a user-friendly interface that empowers China's increasingly independent travelers to arrange lodging themselves, Airbnb performs exceptionally well among young tier 1 city-dwellers in "Is always finding new ways to meet my needs".

Like this story?

This could be your company next year

#22 **AIRBNB**

GATEWAY to the world



¹¹ <https://blog.airbnb.com/introducing-airbnbs-newest-partners-in-china/>



#23 HUAWEI

Crafting a competitive edge for itself

Initially focused on B2B, Huawei quickly gained ground in consumer electronics by offering beautifully designed yet more economical devices to China's enormous middle market. Our survey reflects such go-to-market strategy, as the brand is rated more favorably by male millennials living primarily in tier 2 cities. As the smartphone market grows more and more competitive, Huawei is seeking new ways to differentiate itself. A partnership with Leica, for instance, will help create an unprecedented smartphone photography experience for Huawei's users.



#24 BAIDU

Much more than a Chinese version of Google

Often dubbed the Chinese Google, Baidu offers a variety of internet services ranging from simple search to group-buying e-commerce and restaurant reviews. It has become an indispensably practical tool for many Chinese consumers, performing exceptionally well in "Makes my life easier" and "Is available where and when I need it". Even prior to Google's exit from China, Baidu has been dominating the market with more than 60% share¹².



#25 PHILIPS

Illuminating the path forward

As the highest ranked durable goods brand headquartered outside China, Philips stands out for being "Pervasively Innovative", outperforming the category significantly in "Has better products, services, and experiences than competitors" as well as "Is modern and in-touch". Its focus on innovation also helps Philips score high among well-educated millennials. In the future, it is the company's plan to introduce more advanced smart lighting products, and in turn help millions of Chinese homes use energy more efficiently.



#26 DELL

Innovation dark horse

While Dell resonates with many Chinese consumers for its pragmatism and dependability, one may be surprised to learn that consumers also recognize Dell for its innovation efforts: in its category, it is ranked only second to Apple for "Pushes the status quo". Not only is it building strategic collaborations with local companies in the field of big data, it is also partnering with the Chinese Academy of Sciences to establish the Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Computer Joint-Lab in China.



#27 APPLE

Reigning status symbol

Despite slowing sales, Apple is still adored by Chinese consumers, especially those living in tier 1 cities, for its beautifully-designed devices that scream prestige and exclusiveness. In a highly collective society like China, social status plays a pivotal role in interpersonal relations. This is a critical reason why Apple's positioning as a high-end luxury product works so well. As China's upper middle class burgeons, so will the number of consumers seeking Apple's premium devices.

¹² <http://en.yibada.com/articles/104532/20160216/baidu-s-success-china-google-left-robin-li.htm#ixzz4Kh6enSth>



#28 GREE

From “Made” to “Created” in China

From a small factory in Zhuhai with an annual production value of ¥20M to China’s largest air conditioning company, Gree commits to supplying durable and reliable electrical appliances to homes all over China. Today, the company continues to push for self-innovation and R&D in order to transform the concept of “Made in China” to “Created in China.” With the release of its first smart smartphone in 2015, Gree aims to become more relevant to consumers by entering the smart home market and the Internet of Things sphere.



#29 RITZ-CARLTON

Unimpeachable standard of excellence

One word comes to mind when picturing an experience at a Ritz-Carlton – grandeur. As China’s luxury consumers become increasingly selective, Ritz-Carlton successfully earns their loyalty by positioning itself as a sophisticated and prestigious brand that offers the highest standard of luxury hospitality. Experts and consumers agree: Ritz-Carlton dominated at Hotelier Awards China in 2015 with five wins in a total of 18 categories¹³. Of all hospitality brands we studied, it comes only second to Shangri-La in “Makes me happy”.

¹³ <http://jingdaily.com/ritz-carlton-dominates-at-hotelier-awards-china-2015/>

#30 CHINA MERCHANTS BANK

Breaking boundaries for consumers

Established in 1987 in Shenzhen, CMB stands on the forefront of China’s reform and opening-up drive. A closer look at the bank’s offerings sheds light on why CMB leads its category by 10% in “Pushes the status quo”. For startups or SMEs, CMB provides micro-loans that are regarded as best-in-class. For individual clients, CMB offers innovative personal banking services on various digital platforms, which include the highly rated “Zhaozhaoying” app that allows users to easily manage their personal investments. As the highest ranked bank in our study, CMB truly fulfills its brand promise of “We are here just for you.”





#31 **SUNTORY**

Delighting palates with localized tastes

The Japanese beverage manufacturer first entered China in 1984 when it started exporting beer. Since then, Suntory has steadily grown its Chinese business with a wide array of ready-to-drink (RTD) tea beverages that are tailored towards local tastes. For example, considering the fact that young Chinese consumers who opt for RTD teas prefer beverages that are sweeter and more flavorful, Suntory introduced a line of Oolong teas with varying degrees of sweetness. The company has also won praise for its dependable, health-conscious drinks, scoring exceptionally high among families with children in our survey.



#32 **ROBAM**

Smartening up your kitchen one device at a time

Robam performs very well in “Engages with me in new and creative ways” as well as “Is always finding new ways to meet my needs”. Despite a slowing durable goods market in China, kitchen appliances recorded exceptional sales growth of 8.3% in 2015¹⁴. Robam led the charge with a strategic focus on developing smart kitchenware and fixtures. From gas hobs and range hoods to the pioneering sterilization cabinets, Robam’s products know how to think on their own. Sounds scary? No worries, rest assured that they are only thinking about how to create a better cooking experience for you.



#33 **CATHAY PACIFIC**

New heights of consumer experience

Cathay Pacific has won the “World’s Best Airline” award more than any other airlines¹⁵, and that should come as no surprise to anyone who has flown with them. The Hong-Kong based airline is known for its exquisite airport lounges, wide selection of in-flight entertainment options, and most of all “Service Straight From The Heart.” Leading its category in three out of the four key pillars, Cathay Pacific convinces its consumers that even a 15-hour flight is a journey worth looking forward to.



#34 **RIOT GAMES**

The gaming legend

Even if you aren’t a gamer, you are bound to have heard of the legendary League of Legends, a billion-dollar franchise created by Riot Games. The multiplayer online battle arena game, with an average 27 million daily players, is often regarded as the most popular game in the world, thanks to its free-to-play model that gives players content and services they value. Now completely owned by Tencent, League of Legends is distributed to more than 300 million Chinese Internet users through Tencent’s QQ Game Portal, making it truly the gaming legend of the century.



#35 **HYATT**

Serving travelers everywhere they go

In 1986, Hyatt entered China positioning itself as a five-star luxury hotel. But to capture China’s growing budget travel market and to further strengthen its brand among travelers across demographics, Hyatt partners with local companies to expand into tier 2 and 3 cities with sub-brands that provide selected services, namely Hyatt Place and Hyatt House. Their strategy is working: the hotelier scores high even among lower income groups and comes third overall for being “Ruthlessly Pragmatic” in its category.

¹⁴ <http://home.163.com/16/0224/11/BGJ9R83D00104JOP.html>

¹⁵ http://www.worldairlineawards.com/Awards/worlds_best_airline.html



#36 **PANASONIC**

Down to the last detail

Panasonic understands that 10 centimeters make all the difference in the world when it comes to purchasing home appliances. Once troubled by lackluster performance in China, Panasonic re-strategized to focus on understanding consumer needs. Studying 300 households, they noticed that Chinese kitchens were usually small and the space for a fridge was just 55 centimeters wide. Panasonic's standard fridge width was 65 centimeters. Upon reconfiguring their products, fridge sales increased 10-fold over the previous year¹⁶. No wonder Panasonic leads its category for "Is always finding new ways to meet my needs".

#37 **FOUR SEASONS**

Get ready to be wowed

Four Seasons comes second only to category winner Marriott in "Makes me feel inspired", revving its relevance by specializing in unique and deluxe guest experiences. Be it touring the Great Wall in Beijing, visiting ateliers in Shanghai, or meeting up with fashion designers in Hong Kong, Four Seasons will not stop until the guest is wowed. Next time you book a stay at a Four Seasons, make sure you have your travel bucket list ready.

¹⁶ <http://hbr.org/2012/12/what-panasonic-learned-in-china>

¹⁷ <http://www.hongkiat.com/blog/things-twitter-can-learn-from-sina-weibo/>

¹⁸ <https://www.chinainternetwatch.com/18051/weibo-usage-study-2016/>



#38 **SINA WEIBO**

Where everyone is TALKING

A microblogging site with similar services as Twitter, Sina Weibo is no joke: it gained more than 140 million users in less than two years while it took Twitter almost five years to gain 200 million¹⁷. With a robust commenting system and a micro topics page to capture all trending topics on the site at a given time, Sina Weibo has become a widely favored media brand. Even with less monthly active users than WeChat, Weibo is still the most preferred outlet for Chinese netizens looking to obtain instant news¹⁸.



#39 7-ELEVEN

Transforming 7-11 to 24/7/365

7-Eleven got its name originally to reflect the convenient stores' opening hours (7am-11pm). Since then, the company has moved to stay open 24 hours. To further cater to the needs of Chinese consumers, 7-Eleven has evolved into a bonafide foodie destination in its own right, offering local snacks like Dimsum and rice. Consumers adore the brand because it is "Ruthlessly Pragmatic", ranking at #11 among all brands we surveyed.



#40 JD

Strikes hard in the battle of B2C e-commerce

Starting off with a focus on electronics, JD's e-commerce platform has grown to become a prominent competitor of Alibaba's Tmall. To differentiate itself, JD provides both the e-commerce platform and comprehensive packages for logistics and warehouse services for sellers. Teaming up with Internet service powerhouses Tencent and Baidu to drive web traffic and cross-channel presence, JD is ready to go to war with Alibaba and reign over China's B2C e-commerce landscape.

#41 NINTENDO

Gotta love 'em all

Yes, consumers gotta love all the Pokemon they have been catching, but their love for Nintendo franchises and characters dates back to years ago. From Super Mario Bros. to The Legend of Zelda, serious and casual gamers alike find Nintendo games irresistibly fun and addictive. The brand resonates so deeply with consumers worldwide that the Japanese government gave Super Mario a leading role in Tokyo Olympics 2020's first commercial video. Unsurprisingly, Nintendo is especially popular among millennials, breaking into the top 20 for this demographic.





#42 OCEAN PARK

Educator, entertainer, turtle saver

Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2017, Hong Kong's leading amusement park attracts millions of Chinese consumers with thrilling rides as well as family-friendly entertainment. But more importantly, Ocean Park is well-known for its conservation efforts. Every time wildlife marine animals are captured by mistake or injured, they are sent to Ocean Park for veterinary assessment and nurture before being released back to the sea. Consumers most certainly recognize these efforts: the park is ranked first for "Has a purpose I believe in" in its category.



#43 CHINA EASTERN AIRLINES

One-stop service for all

Despite stagnant growth in recent years, China Eastern Airlines remains one of China's top three airlines by passenger numbers. It offers consumers tailor-made comfort through personalized services. Whether it's arranging limousine pickups or offering connecting services between planes, trains, and buses, China Eastern strives to put "World-class hospitality with Eastern charm" into action by providing consumers seamless one-stop service that makes travel utterly enjoyable.



#44 CTRIP

The omnipotent blue dolphin

Wherever you go, whichever transportation you use, whether you want to stay in a 5-star hotel or a friendly B&B, whether you want to travel independently or in a group, Ctrip has something for you. As the first-mover within the online travel agent (OTA) market, Ctrip has quickly grown to become a consumer favorite, taking up 25% of market share in 2015¹⁹. As the competition heats up, Ctrip has continuously adopted strategic initiatives to sustain its leading position, from multi-channel distribution to attractive rebates and thoughtful services for non-English speakers traveling abroad.

SAMSUNG

#45 SAMSUNG

Treading the country road

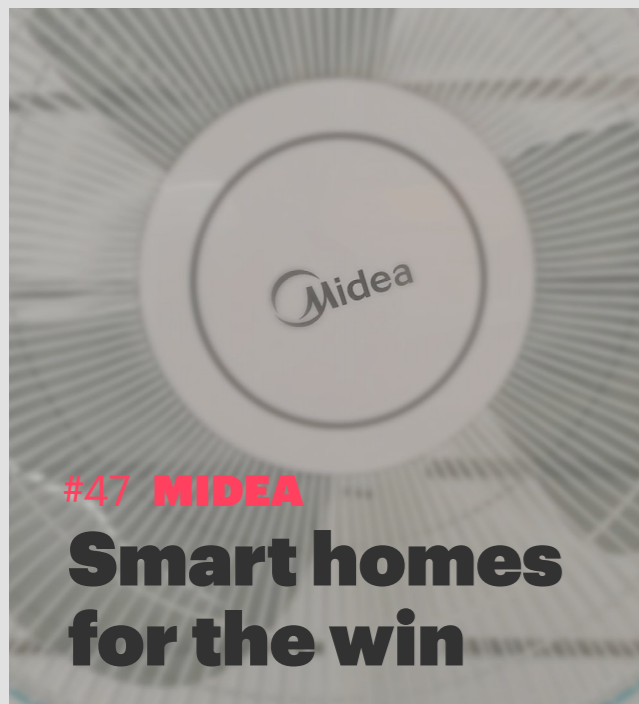
The Chinese tech market is especially difficult to crack due to the intense competition from both local and global players. Samsung's key to success, aside from delivering premium quality devices, rests in its strong distribution networks even into China's countryside. Upon wresting control over distribution networks back from local retailers, Samsung was able to get more direct feedback from consumers and attune to local preferences. However, in light of its recent Note 7 safety fiasco, the Korean consumer electronics powerhouse must find a way to rebuild consumer confidence even among loyalists.

¹⁹ <http://www.chinainternetwatch.com/17141/online-travel-agent-market-2015/>



#46 HERBORIST
A beauty philosophy

Herborist draws on the wisdom of Chinese herbology to develop its gentle, high-quality skincare products. Founded in Shanghai, Herborist has lived up to its mission of fusing traditional knowledge with innovative formulas. But the brand's ultimate goal is to promote the overall wellbeing of its beauty evangelists: to learn to slow down, to eat healthier, and to create daily restorative rituals. No wonder Herborist comes first in its category for "Has a purpose I believe in", leading second place Estée Lauder by 8%.



#47 MIDEA
Smart homes for the win

Smart solutions are driving growth in China's home appliances industry, and Midea is certainly leveraging that trend. The Guangdong-based company has unveiled more than 30 categories of smart products, from electric cookers to air conditioners, since 2014. As a strategic move, Midea has also signed collaboration agreements with a number of domestic and international solution providers, including Huawei, Xiaomi, and IBM, to facilitate the development of smart services, thus positioning itself as a worthy contender in the saturated home appliances sector.



#48 WESTIN
Adding eastern elements to your experience

Operating hotels all across the country, Westin knows how to embed the culture of not only China, but also individual cities, into the guest experience. In Beijing, for instance, Westin offered its consumers a range of crab dishes in fall, having understood consumers love eating crabs during this season but crabs are rarely raised in Northern China. Such emphasis on hospitality makes Westin extremely relevant to tier 1 female consumers, according to our survey.



#49 NIKE
Continues to just do it

Many international retail companies in China have been struggling due to the country's recent economic slowdown, but not Nike. Riding on the Chinese health and fitness wave, Nike recorded revenues of ¥21B in China in 2015 and expects figures to double by 2020²⁰. The sports apparel giant is also targeting the rising popularity of basketball in China, which is estimated to be played by 300 million people across the country. For instance, Nike put out China-exclusive ads that feature NBA legend Kobe Bryant, who is second only to native son Yao Ming in terms of basketball popularity.



#50 BP
Fueling growth with the right partners

Venturing into China more than 40 years ago, BP has established a name for itself in China through frequent strategic collaborations with local energy companies such as Sinopec. The British oil and gas giant also recently doubled down on its commitment to shale gas by signing a second deal with China National Petroleum Corporation. Going forward, Chinese drivers will see BP's sun-resembling logo at more and more gas stations across the country.

We have the inside scoop on what keeps Nike relevant

Let's chat about it.

²⁰ <http://marketrealist.com/2015/10/analyzing-future-sales-upside-nikes-greater-china-segment/>

Defining Relevance:

RELEVANCE:
brands we depend on

What's brand relevance?

In an era of expanding consumer expectations and constant competitive change, brands must continually find new ways to engage and delight people in order to win. Those that do are what we call relentlessly relevant, always seeking deeper and steadier connections to their consumers.

Relentlessly relevant brands engage, surprise and connect. They delight, disrupt and deliver. They are restless. They push themselves to earn and re-earn consumers' loyalty — and they define and redefine what's possible in their categories and in our world.

Those companies that have built relentlessly relevant brands generally have four common dimensions...



Customer Obsessed

Brands we can't imagine living without.

Everything these brands invest in, create and bring to market is designed to meet important needs in peoples' lives.



Ruthlessly Pragmatic

Brands we depend on.

These brands make sure their products are available where and when customers need them, deliver consistent experiences, and simply make life easier for their customers.



Distinctively Inspired

Brands that inspire us.

These brands make emotional connections, earn trust and often exist to fulfill a larger purpose.



Pervasively Innovative

Brands that consistently innovate.

These brands don't rest on their laurels. Even as industry leaders – they push the status quo, engage with customers in new and creative ways, and find new ways to address unmet needs.

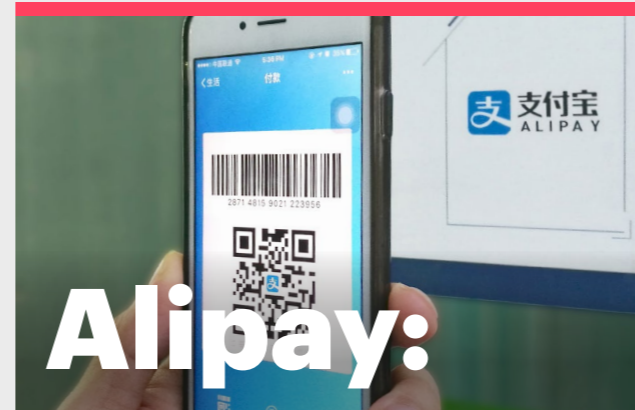
Themes:

RELEVANCE

= Growth

Re(invent)

Challenge category norms and exceed expectations by continuously imagining new ways to engage consumers



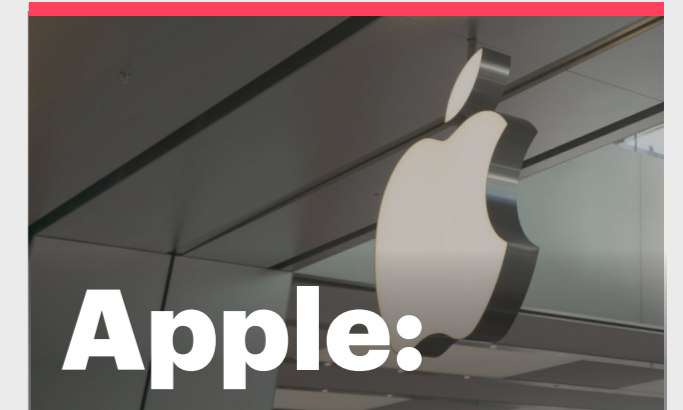
Alipay:

Originally created to facilitate e-commerce transactions when online banking barely existed in China, Alipay has literally invented the concept of digital money management. No matter what you want to do with your money – be it going Dutch with friends, investing in funds, applying for loans, wiring overseas, or paying for utility bills – Alipay can do it all. With a new partnership with Ingenico, the 450 million Chinese users will even be able to use their Alipay wallets in thousands of online and physical stores in 150 countries. Alipay has clearly become the Godfather of digital wallet – making it astonishingly simple and almost indispensable.



WeChat:

Nobody asks “What is your phone number?” anymore; in China, the Chinese only ask for your WeChat number. Since its launch in 2011, WeChat has completely revolutionized the way Chinese people use their phones. On the road, they use it to play games; in the office, they use it to update progress; at home, they use it for grocery shopping; lonely at night, they use it for random encounters; even for business, they add a QR code on the cards to link into WeChat. It has also become an increasingly indispensable platform for businesses to connect to customers. From latest news on products and services to sales promotions to customer service support, the myriad of functions have expanded enormously, and continue to evolve. The app can do so many different things that keep surprising and delighting its faithful 700 million users.



Apple:

Almost 10 years has passed since the late CEO Steve Jobs announced the first iPhone in 2007; today, with every much anticipated product launch, Apple still keeps Chinese consumers captivated and curious. Although innovation on mobile devices may be losing momentum, Apple is focusing on reinventing user experience, leveraging its entire ecosystem including Apple Music, Apple TV and Apple Watch. That’s why Apple fans find it almost impossible to switch to other platforms.

Localize

Immerse and embrace in local culture and traditions to tailor their offer in a way that meets unique consumer needs



Marriott:

While it's true that everyone expects a supreme level of comfort and convenience in premier hotels, Marriott understands that the needs of Chinese travelers are different, so they provide highly localized experiences in all of their China properties. But they didn't just stop there! With a specially designed "Li-Yu" program introduced in 2012, Chinese travelers abroad will stay in rooms containing lucky numbers of "6" and "8", enjoy Chinese tea and TV channels, have better fitting slippers and bathrobes, and request services through WeChat as well as payments with Alipay.



Suntory:

Known for its alcoholic beverages for decades, Suntory didn't let that traditional strength stand in its way of growth in China. By truly focusing on what Chinese consumers love, Suntory is now well-known and loved for its herbal and oolong teas with both the young and old. With the increasingly health-conscious Chinese market, the brand also started a range of healthier beverages. Be it a bottle of fruit-flavored water after workout or a hot ginger honey infusion in the cold winter, Suntory's local beverages have infused itself into the China market.



Shangri-La:

As one of the first luxury hotel chains focusing on integrating Asian hospitality and experiences into every guest's experience, Shangri-La is world renowned for delivering world-class Asian service at its properties. At Shangri-La, you will see architecture reminiscent of a Chinese pagoda, in-room furniture symbolizing the history of Chinese fine carpentry, and lobby scent that's distinctively Chinese. At Qi Spa, the hotel even goes to the extent of integrating the ancient Chinese beliefs of 5 elements (fire, water, wood, earth and metal) to promote health and balance, a lifestyle practice once enjoyed by the Chinese royal families.

Elevate

Help consumers to aspire for more and empower them with the confidence to pursue their dreams and ambitions



Adidas:

Unlike other global markets, Adidas is forging ahead of its rival Nike in the Chinese market. Adidas has made meaningful strides by collaborating with government-led sporting initiatives and sponsoring major athletic events. Adidas not only got Chinese consumers, especially women, to embrace sports, the brand further empowers them to become fashion trendsetters with the launch of its Kanye West-branded Yeezy boots and other fashion forward designs in collaborations with trend-setting celebrities.



Lancôme:

Celebrating its presence in the 100th Chinese city in 2015, Lancôme has become an indispensable beauty brand for millions of Chinese women to become more confident with whitening, anti-aging, and make-up products. Now riding the waves of digital transformation in China, Lancôme further empowers the loyal Chinese consumers with its engaging online community, the Rose Beauty, where everyone shares cosmetic experiences and supporting each other's beauty dreams and aspirations.



Tmall:

Choice is a form of power, enabling people to select what they like. So it's no wonder that Tmall, an e-commerce platform that offers a broad selection of domestic and international brands, significantly empowered Chinese consumers toward a more stylish lifestyle. Moreover, for brands that do not live up to their promises, consumers are now able to vote with their wallets and voice by providing timely product reviews on the platform that influences purchases. Finally, what could be more fulfilling than using the collective power of consumers to bargain for a huge discount on Single's Day Festival?

Focus

Stay laser focused - Perfect what they are best at delivering and identify clear customer segments to build their brands around



Audi:

Gone are the days when Audi was an old-schooled, serious brand suitable only for the government officials. Today, Audi in China are trendy, colorful, and energetic, creating a new brand personality appealing to China's female and millennial consumers. While targeting a whole different set of consumers, Audi really focuses on staying true to the brand's essence and bringing the best offering of their vehicles – safety, comfort, and status – to a broader audience.



Huawei:

Once a B2B brand for telecom equipment, Huawei was known for its diligence and ambition. It wants to be the symbol and pride of China, as the name literally translates into "China does". Huawei quickly gained ground in consumer electronics, with beautifully designed yet reasonably priced devices. With its new partnership with Leica that inspires users and connects with them emotionally, Huawei continues to demonstrate its ambition, showing to the world what Chinese brands are capable of.



Herborist:

Established in an era when Western medicine was perceived to be more advanced, Herborist decided to look for wisdom in Chinese herbology when developing its gentle, high-quality skincare products. Building upon one of China's first modern consumer brands – Jahwa – established in Shanghai a century ago, Herborist not only fuses traditional knowledge with innovative formulas for the Chinese skin, but also preaches a lifestyle deeply rooted in Chinese classics: to learn to slow down, to eat in a balanced way, and to follow daily restorative rituals for mind and body. In line with a shift towards better, healthier living, this purpose has truly resonated with consumers, more so than any other local beauty brands in the market.

Simplify

Remove the complexities from daily life by making experiences easier, better and faster



Visa:

At the turn of the century, VISA cooperated with Chinese banks to launch “dual-currency” credit cards, allowing consumers to use VISA network abroad while still using UnionPay for domestic transactions, creating true convenience for the growing Chinese travelers. With the surging number of Chinese outbound travelers, Visa has further simplified consumers’ lives by ensuring that it is being readily available wherever and whenever you want it. With new offerings such as waiving currency conversion fee and Renminbi-based cards, VISA truly addresses the pain points of Chinese travelers, both at home and abroad.



7-Eleven:

As a convenient store brand, 7-Eleven keeps pushing the boundaries of being a one-stop shop for simplicity that makes life so much easier and better. If you need a fulfilling lunch, they are there; if you run out of shampoo at mid-night, they are there; if you need someone to receive a package on your behalf when you are traveling, they are also there! Accessibility, convenience and being 24/7/365 makes 7-Eleven one of the leading brands that have truly removed complexities from consumers’ lives.



Baidu:

“Ask Du Niang (nickname for Baidu) if you have any questions” - originally a marketing catch phrase from the brand, it has already become reality for millions of Chinese consumers. With more than 75% market share among all search engines in China, Baidu has made access to knowledge and information much easier than before. Now Baidu continues to simplify our lives with all sorts of living services like food delivery, as well as next-generation artificial intelligence that can make autonomous driving come true.

Industry Leaders:

It means

LEADING









the industry, and charting new paths for growth

Companies that rose to the top within each of their industries have a lot to teach us about how to be relentlessly relevant as consumer preferences change and expectations rise.

IN AT #1

<p>Airlines</p> 	<p>Apparel (sports)</p> 	<p>Automotive</p> 
<p>Beauty</p> 	<p>Beverage (non-alcoholic)</p> 	<p>Beer</p> 
<p>Consumer Electronics</p> 	<p>Dairy</p> 	<p>Durables</p> 

Industry Leaders

<p>Entertainment</p> 	<p>Financial Data Service</p> 	<p>Food Services</p> 	<p>Gasoline</p> 	<p>Hospitality</p> 
<p>Household & Personal</p> 	<p>Insurance: Life & Healthcare</p> 	<p>Insurance: Property & Car</p> 	<p>Internet Services</p> 	<p>Personal Computing</p> 
<p>Retailer</p> 	<p>Retail Banking & Investing</p> 	<p>Telecommunications</p> 	<p>Online Gaming</p> 	<p>Wealth Management</p> 

Methodology:

Relevance is the single

GREATEST

determining factor for a brand's long-term success

The methodology behind the Brand Relevance Index™

Prophet is in the business of helping organizations grow better brands and businesses.

Our clients have often asked for our perspective on the value of other brand rankings. And while there are several brand lists and rankings out there today, none speak directly to consumers to find out which brands are the most indispensable to their lives – the ones consumers simply cannot imagine living without.

We created the Brand Relevance Index to help business and brand leaders measure the relevance of their brands, and provide them ways to improve it.

How were the included companies selected?

Companies from all industries that contribute materially to Chinese household spend were included in the study. Their contribution to household spend was sourced from McKinsey's Macroeconomic China Model Update for 2015. Within each industry, the companies that were included achieved outsize business performance (MRY revenues and trailing 3-year revenue growth) within their respective industries. In some instances, smaller companies that have been driving change in these industries were also included given their significant traction with consumers.

What was the primary research objective?

To understand the principles that great brands execute against — in customers' minds — in order to establish themselves as relentlessly relevant.

How many brands were rated?

279 brands were rated in total. Brands not included were those in the tobacco and firearms categories and companies engaged solely or primarily in business-to-business (B2B) categories.

What does it mean for a brand to be relevant?

At Prophet, we believe that the strongest brands are relentlessly relevant, and they do four things well — first, they're customer obsessed. Everything they invest in, create, and bring to market is designed to meet important needs in peoples' lives. Second, they're pervasively innovative. They don't rest on their laurels, even as industry leaders — they push the status quo, engage with customers in new and creative ways, and find new ways to address unmet needs. Third, they're ruthlessly pragmatic. They make sure their products are available where and when customers need them, deliver consistent experiences, and just make life that much easier for people. And, finally, they're distinctively inspired. They've made emotional connections, earned trust and often exist to fulfill a larger purpose.

To what extent does this build on David Aaker's IP?

To a significant extent. Of all the characteristics of a brand, the one that is necessary for its success is relevance. Brand "preference" and "differentiation" long ago ceased being central to the calculus of success because of the speed at which markets and customer needs change. Aaker's core point, that brands have to create new subcategories and dominate them so no other alternatives are even considered, is central to the idea of relevance.

Want to learn how Prophet can help you unlock growth by building a relentlessly relevant brand?

Prophet is a consultancy that helps clients find better ways to grow by focusing on three important areas: creating relevant brand and customer experiences, driving accelerated growth strategies and leveraging digital as a transformative force in their business.

Custom Index & Actionable Work Session

Like what you see in the Brand Relevance Index? Seeking to apply it to your customer targets to learn how your brand measures up among the audiences you care about most? Join up with us using an agile, analytical, and actionable hackathon-style approach to identify a series of ideas to drive growth for your business.

Contact [Jay Milliken](#) for more details on our custom research and co-creation session.

Our core work:

Brand & Experience

Digital Transformation

Growth Acceleration

Let's talk.

We'd love to continue the dialogue or sit down and talk about how you too can build a relentlessly relevant brand.

Contact us today.

For media inquiries, please contact Lisa Gamreklidze at Prophet.

Want to know more about Prophet or the Brand Relevance Index? Please feel free to get in touch with us at one of our offices below.

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SSI is the premier global provider of data solutions and technology for consumer and business-to-business survey research. SSI reaches participants in 90+ sample countries via Internet, telephone, mobile/wireless and mixed-access offerings. SSI staff operates from 40 offices and remote staff in 20 countries, offering sample, data collection, CATI, questionnaire design consultation, programming and hosting, online custom reporting and data processing. SSI's 4,000+ employees serve more than 3,000 clients worldwide.