

Pointofview



The Most Influential Brands in Canada 2013



Ipsos Reid

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Last year, we introduced our Most Influential Brands in Canada study – a comprehensive Ipsos study on the meaning behind brands and how they impact the daily lives of Canadians.

From the technology we use, to the food we eat, to the kind of car we drive, we turn to brands to help us through our daily lives. And while some brands help us fulfill needs and desires, others say something about ourselves, projecting and adding to our own identity, personal brand and sense of being. But with so many brands in the market, there are a select number that stand out as having much more influence over us than others.

Ipsos wanted to know what these brands are. So we set out to determine just that.

First, we determined a list of Canada's most important brands, beginning with the top 100 ad spending brands in this country (according to Nielsen). Then, following internal discussions between ourselves, ICA and Publicis, we added to that list other big brands (like many online brands) that are not heavy ad spenders but are still heavy hitters.

Once the list was established, we turned to consumers for their input. In October and November of 2012, we asked Canadians about these brands, how they view them, the way they interact with them in their daily lives and how they rate them on a variety of dimensions that drive influence. The Most Influential Brands Study examines these brands along the five key dimensions that define, determine and ultimately drive brand influence. In order of importance, these dimensions are: Trustworthy, Engagement Leading Edge, Corporate Citizenship, and Presence.

In this, the second annual Most Influential Brands study, we unveil and rank the most influential brands in Canada, and offer a case study perspective on the dimensions that drive each brand's influence. But more than this, the 2012 wave saw the launch of the Most Influential Brand in the World – consumers were surveyed in 8 other markets using the same approach: USA, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, UK, France, Germany, and China. In aggregate, these nine markets represent 53% of global GDP... more than half of the world's economy.



The Dimensions of Influence

Influence is not as simple as you might think. From the public's perspective, there are many angles to influence that make it complex. Indeed, influence is multi-dimensional.

In order for a brand to exert influence it needs to impact or change the way people shop, think, act, behave. It needs to become a fundamental part of life, shape their desires and help them get through their day. In their own ways, the most influential brands change the consumer's everyday life, they encourage them to make better and smarter choices and they help to make life a bit more interesting.

A brand must be seen to be really important in the world today and even impact the way people interact with one another. Even more than this, people need to identify with the brand, it needs to have relevancy in their life and it needs to become part of everyday language.

If there is one thing we have learned from this study, it's that it is very difficult for a brand to have influence. There are specific factors in the mix that drive influence - five of which Ipsos has identified for this study.

The five factors in order of overall importance are outlined and defined here.

Trustworthy

Trust is the cornerstone of any relationship and the most valued dimension of influence. Truly trustworthy brands inspire confidence, they are dependable and reliable. They are consistent in how they perform and in what they represent. Consumers use them regularly, even daily. And for the most trustworthy brands, consumers are transformed into believers. They willingly stand up for the brand, eagerly recommend it to their peers, and simply can't wait to see what they'll do next.

Brands that excel on the trustworthy dimension are those we bank on and those that nourish us. Indeed, credit card brands (specifically Visa and MasterCard) and some of the consumer packaged goods brands (such as Kraft, Kellogg's and Coca-Cola) score high points for the trust they have earned from consumers.

Engagement

Like any relationship, brand management is a two-way street. For a brand to be influential, people have to be engaged with it. This means wanting to get to know it better. And letting others know about it. Engaging brands inspire consumers to interact with it, to seek out more information about it, to support it online, and to share with their own networks. That can be difficult to achieve. Certainly brands in the entertainment sector and those that have strong loyalty programs generally score high on engagement – and higher engagement leads to greater influence.

Leading Edge

If you want to be a brand that has influence, you also have to be seen as leading edge. Leading edge brands are like the cool kid in school. They are trendy, unique and stand out. They are originals that are seen as innovative and ahead of their time. A bit edgy, sometimes unconventional, leading edge brands break the mould and set the standard by which all other brands measure themselves.

Corporate Citizenship

People demand more from brands these days, so influential brands need to be good corporate citizens. And that means having a conscience and values that speak to, and connect with, the target consumer. Influential brands are brands that care. They are environmentally and socially responsible and support their respective communities. They inspire pride and represent something more than just products or profits. And ultimately, they represent traits and characteristics that the consumers see in themselves or aspire to.

Presence

To make an impact and to have influence, people have to know who you are. For brands, that means having a presence. This is where it pays to advertise. Brands that have a high presence generally advertise a lot and are seen and used everywhere. Brands with presence are well established, are a part of daily life, and are regularly supported by friends and family.

Canada's Most Influential Brands

Ipsos put up to 100 brands to the test in order to determine how these brands performed along the five dimensions that drive influence. Each survey respondent randomly assessed 10 of the 100 brands, by answering "yes" or "no" to a series of statements that underpin each of the five dimensions.

From there, we determined our list of the Top 10 Most Influential Brands in Canada. The results of our latest study for Canada are as follows:

1. Google
2. Microsoft
3. Apple
4. Facebook
5. Walmart
6. Visa
7. YouTube
8. Tim Hortons
9. Air Miles
10. CBC

These brands certainly make a statement about the daily lives of Canadians in 2013. Some are global brands, and some carry the banner for Canada. Some are brick-and-mortar brands and others are digital. But they all offer lessons, and no matter the size or scope of your brand, there are takeaways for all of us.

To get a better look at what makes for an influential brand, let's take a closer look at the top five, with results and measures on how and why these brands came out on top.

Number Five: Walmart

When you are the world's largest retailer, you're bound to be an influential brand. As it did last year, Walmart comes in fifth on our list of most influential brands in Canada. This year, Walmart's rank is driven first and foremost by its presence in the marketplace, and the trust consumers put in the brand.

In the fifty years since Sam Walton opened his first store in Arkansas, the Walmart brand has reached out from the American Deep South to have an enormous impact on the retail world. Now an international brand, Walmart is the number one American corporation on the Fortune 500, and the largest retailer on Earth. A brand like that no doubt wields enormous influence.

In our study, Walmart scores high marks for its presence. Canadians recognize the Walmart brand – 64% say it is established, 57% say it can be found almost everywhere, and 56% point it out as a brand that advertises frequently. There is a high degree of familiarity and recognition with the brand. In fact, of the Top 10 brands Walmart scored the highest marks on the presence dimension.

All that presence and recognition pays off, because consumers trust Walmart. Trustworthiness is a critical element for Walmart's brand influence and success. Consumers believe in Walmart's future, they shop there regularly, and they feel that Walmart understands and appreciates their needs.

More than this, Walmart delivers a consistent message of providing a wide choice of goods, low prices, and high value for the money. Year in and year out. That adds up to make it a very influential brand.

Number Four: Facebook

Did you “like” anything today? Perhaps you commented on a friend’s photo or status? Or maybe you reconnected with a schoolmate you haven’t seen in years? If so, your actions are part of the reason why Facebook rates as the fourth most influential brand in Canada. You could go so far as to say we don’t just like it, we are mad about Facebook!

If Hollywood made a movie about your life, what would it be called and who would play your part? Well, Facebook’s founder, Mark Zuckerberg, found that out a few years ago when ‘The Social Network’ hit the big screens. And from Hollywood to Wall Street, Facebook had another big year in 2012 – going public, acquiring Instagram, and signing up their billionth member.

With so many people and so many brands connecting through Facebook on a daily basis, it should be no surprise that this is one of our most influential brands.

Facebook’s influence is driven largely from being viewed as leading edge. This is a young brand, but it is a brand that has forever changed the consumer landscape, with millions interacting with and using Facebook daily. Facebook shapes consumer behaviour and sets trends. It certainly seems that anytime anything happens anywhere in the world, it ends up on Facebook. And for marketers, ignoring Facebook’s potential is something done at great risk.

Facebook also wins influence through engagement. Engagement is indeed the crux of social media. In our study, Facebook is a brand that Canadians very much engage with and interact with on a frequent basis. In fact, 37% of our respondents said they use Facebook. And they are using it as a medium for sharing and connecting with others, and that includes brands.

While Facebook is a relatively young brand – it has literally built a whole new medium that has taken the world by storm. And in a fragmented, diverse and fast-paced world, that is no small task. But it is Facebook’s ability to connect and engage people underpins their success and influence.

Number Three: Apple

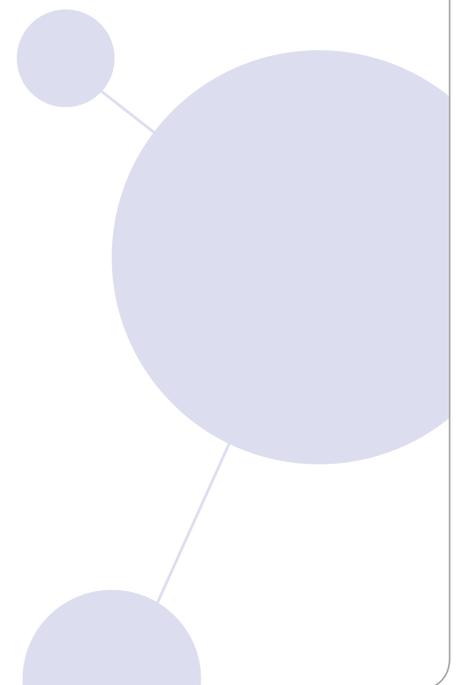
The passing of Steve Jobs may have ushered in a new era of leadership at Apple, but the brand remains as strong and influential as ever. This is a brand that Canadians view as a trendsetter, an innovator, one that is leading edge, trustworthy, and strong. And with the continual launch of new products and updates of existing ones, this is a brand holds the consumer’s interest. Indeed, Apple appears quite secure in its continuing influence over Canadians.

Apple is a game-changer. It has forever changed the way people engage with one another. And in the minds of Canadians, it is as fresh as ever.

Apple is a brand built off leading edge, revolutionary products that are highly functional, well designed, stylish yet simple and easy to use...and people want them! In the eyes of consumers, Apple is a winner. Six out of every ten respondents say the brand remains a trendsetter, an innovator and a leader among its competition. And given the increasing importance we place on tech devices and how many options there are in the market, it says a lot for the strength of Apple’s brand that they hold so much influence with Canadians.

With that, Apple remains a trusted brand. The majority of Canadian respondents (58%) believe they have a strong future and nearly half (47%) feel that they continue to get better and better.

That all adds up to one thing - Apple’s influence continues to shine.



Number Two: Microsoft

Coming in at number two this year, Microsoft is still golden. Microsoft scores points with Canadians for being a leading edge innovator that has forever changed the way we compute and for being a trustworthy brand that millions of Canadians use daily. With new products coming to market, the dynamic of Microsoft's influence will continue to be felt across the country, and indeed around the world.

In an era of disco, polyester and feathered hair, a group of self-admitted "computer geeks" started something that would outlast all of the madness and glitz of the mid-1970s. Indeed, when Bill Gates and company started Microsoft, they started something huge. Consistently ranked as one of the world's largest companies, offering some of the most valued computing services, you cannot deny Microsoft's influence – both now and for the future. This is a brand that will continue to Surface as strong, vibrant, relevant and influential.

Microsoft is seen as innovative. From their products in digital media, internet, Office, operating systems, server software, video games and mobile devices, Microsoft has a family of innovative products that continues to grow and consumers recognize that.

And consumers trust Microsoft. People turn to Microsoft to help them solve problems at home, at the office, online and from any number and type of devices. Exactly half of our respondents (50%) stated that they have bought or used a Microsoft product. They believe in the company's future and they have confidence in their products. And they readily engage and interact with Microsoft.

Microsoft offers high functionality and design of their products, with products that work seamlessly together. They invest in R&D to create new products and improve existing ones so as to continue to make our lives easier and more productive. Their influence on the daily lives of Canadians is felt far and wide.

Number One: Google

If Google were a person, it wouldn't even be old enough to drive a car. But today, it is Canada's most influential brand. Since being incorporated in 1998, the company that started off as a graduate school research project for Larry Page and Sergey Brin has grown in size, power, capability, and indeed, influence. This is a brand that has built a reputation for being trustworthy, for being leading edge, and for engaging with its users. And there are many of those, using Google to look up, research and find almost anything imaginable.

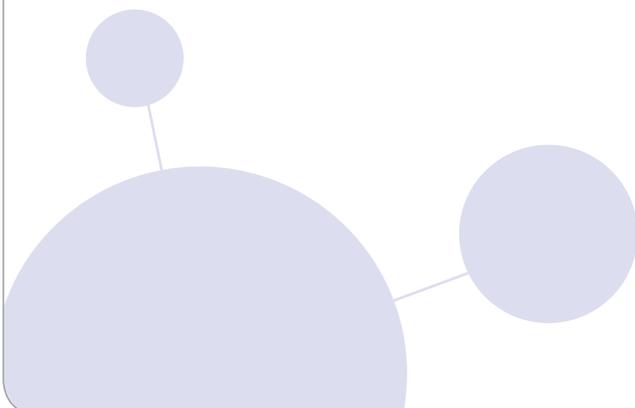
Google has revolutionized the way people search for and share information, and this being the Information Age, that puts Google in a highly influential position. .

So how did Google achieve this? Certainly, trust is a critical element. The majority of respondents in our Canadian study give Google high marks on key areas of trustworthiness such as having a strong future (59% agreed), being a brand they used today (52% said yes) and being a reliable resource (52% agreed).

Google set out "to organize the world's information making it universally accessible and useful". Along the way, they practically created the online advertising industry. Internet searches are now like cash. And thanks to their search technology, users can find almost everything – the proverbial needle in a haystack. People rely so much on Google today that it could be considered an essential service.

In the eyes of users, Google is a leading edge brand. They are innovative, they lead their competitors, and they have forever changed the way online searches are conducted. In mere seconds, you can find out almost anything you could ever want to find. And maybe a few things you couldn't even imagine. The portfolio of product offerings and services include innovations such as Google Chrome, Google Earth, Google Maps, Gmail, Picasa, Google Translate, YouTube, and Google+. And the list will continue to grow!

Ultimately, Google influences consumers on many levels and in many forms. It is their 'go to' source for information, entertainment, product reviews, email, social media, and just about everything else. And it remains uncomplicated, easy to use, reliable, and relevant. All the key ingredients that make for our Most Influential Brand.



We Brand on Guard for Thee

We would be remiss if we didn't point out the success and influence of some of Canada's home brewed brands. While much of our top ten could be defined as 'made in America' brands that went on to global dominance, three of the top ten are as Canadian as beavers, hockey and maple syrup.

Tim Hortons, Air Miles and the CBC hold on to positions eight, nine and ten on our list of top ten Most Influential Brands.

There's no doubt that Tim Hortons bills itself as a Canadian brand. Indeed, this is a brand you can find all over the country and Canadians clearly respond and relate to it. A vast majority (71%) of our respondents point out Tim Hortons' presence – you see it everywhere! And they see it as a brand that inspires a sense of Canadian pride (so say 52% of respondents). There aren't many Canadians who don't know what a Timbit or a double-double are.

For ninth ranked Air Miles, the brand wins influence through trust and engagement. Nearly four in ten (39%) respondents say they use it today and another three in ten have interacted with the brand in some way online.

And finally, number ten on the top ten is a brand that casts a broad canvas of influence over the whole nation. As a national broadcaster, the CBC scores high for being a trusted and reliable resource (37% of respondents agree) and for doing its part for the country by inspiring a sense of Canadian pride (according to 35% of respondents).

The Global View

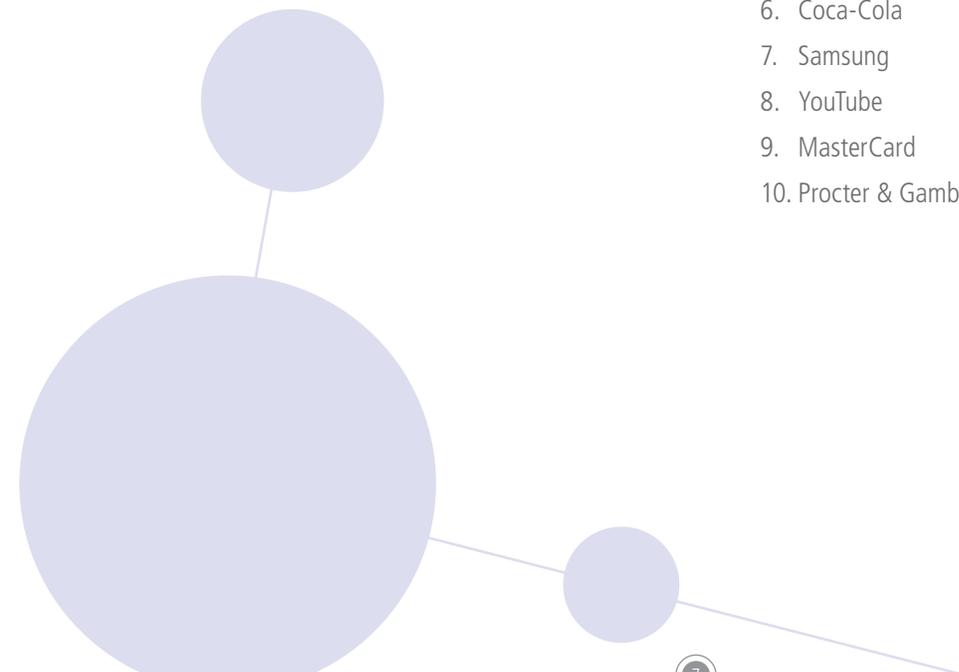
Those are the top indicators and top brands in Canada. But certainly, many brands have global appeal and influence. While you may be hard pressed to find a Timbit in Paris or a pub airing Hockey Night in Canada in Buenos Aires, there are a number of far reaching global brands that influence the lives of people in countries all over the world.

Building off last year's Canada-only study, we expanded our study and have launched an index of the Most Influential Brand in the World. Using the exact same approach as our Canadian study, we surveyed consumers in 8 other markets: USA, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, UK, France, Germany, and China. Including Canada, these nine markets represent more than half of the world's economy.

When looking at our list of the Top 10 Most Influential Brands in the World, many of them appeared as Canada's most influential brands – not surprising. And in fact, the top four are identical. This list of highly influential brands covers a full range of sectors: information, technology, financial services, beverage, consumer products. And no doubt, you've heard of and used these brands at some point.

Here is our list of the 10 Most Influential Brands in the World:

1. Google
2. Microsoft
3. Apple
4. Facebook
5. Visa
6. Coca-Cola
7. Samsung
8. YouTube
9. MasterCard
10. Procter & Gamble (P&G)



Conclusion

Brands have meaning. Brands have personality. Brands have attitude. And because people so often identify with, relate to, and define themselves by them, brands have influence.

But for a brand to truly succeed and gain influence, it has to reach out to its audience, connect with them, and get them to buy into the brand's promise. It has to build believers who will support the brand and advocate for it. That simply does not come overnight. Certainly, time is a major factor when it comes to building an influential brand.

To be influential, you have to be trustworthy, engaging, leading edge, play your part in the world and have a definite presence. That takes vision, dedication, leadership and know-how. Just look at the brands we presented here – world leaders that have made a difference and will continue to do so.

The most influential brands have all these dimensions. And they have many lessons to offer. Your brand may not be a Google, a Microsoft, an Apple, a Facebook or a Walmart but the principles they excel at and the values they live by act as examples for all other brands. After all, they all started out with nothing more than a promise and a dream.

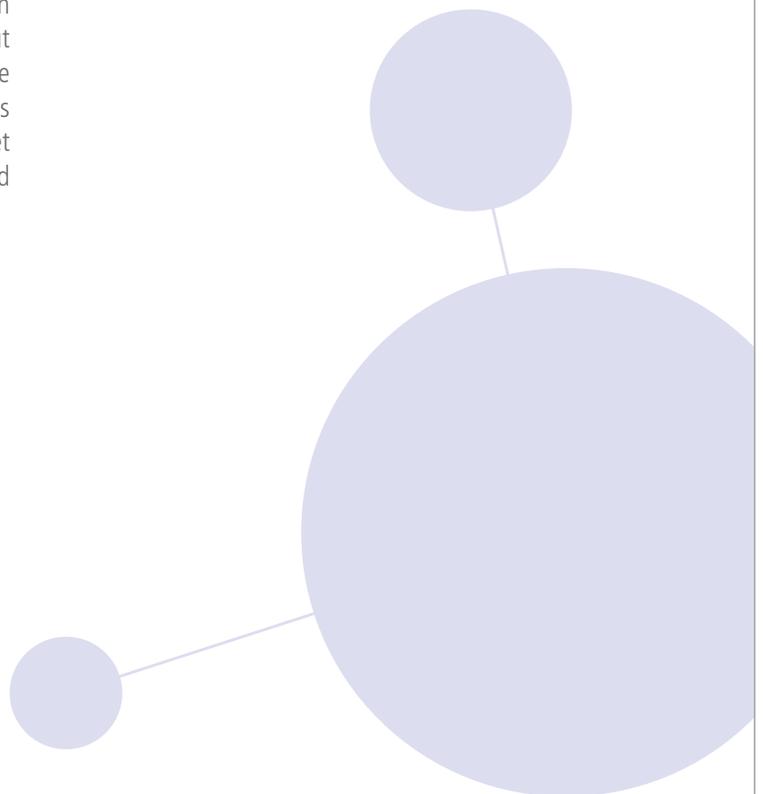
Ultimately, making your brand succeed requires achieving the level of influence that fits your need. You can learn from the top brands and aspire to their level of success, but to secure your own success you have get informed, devise your strategy, execute and re-evaluate constantly. And as always, deliver on your brand's promise. That will help set you apart in gaining influence with your consumers and target markets.

Methodology

The study was conducted between October 25th and November 6th, 2012. This online survey of 5,014 adult residents of Canada was conducted using the Ipsos iSay Panel. The results are based on a sample where weighting was employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/-1.39 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had the entire population of adults in Canada been polled.

The same survey was conducted in 8 other markets with the following sample sizes: US (n=3,010), UK (n=1,004), France (n=1,100), Germany (n=1,011), Brazil (n=1,001), Argentina (n=1,000), Mexico (n=1,010), and China (n=1,002), for a total Global sample size of n=15,152.

All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to, coverage error, and measurement error.





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As President of Ipsos Reid East, Steve Levy directs the company's Marketing, Loyalty, and Media CT research business which involves a number of specific responsibilities including managing a staff of almost 100 marketers and researchers, local product development, innovation, and R&D.

About Ipsos Reid

Ipsos Reid is Canada's market intelligence leader, the country's leading provider of public opinion research, and research partner for loyalty and forecasting and modelling insights.

With operations in eight cities, Ipsos Reid employs more than 600 research professionals and support staff in Canada. The company has the biggest network of telephone call centres in the country, as well as the largest pre-recruited household and online panels.

Ipsos Reid's marketing research and public affairs practices offer the premier suite of research vehicles in Canada, all of which provide clients with actionable and relevant information. Staffed with seasoned research consultants with extensive industry-specific backgrounds, Ipsos Reid offers syndicated information or custom solutions across key sectors of the Canadian economy, including consumer packaged goods, financial services, automotive, retail, health and technology & telecommunications.

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