

2023

+ IN SPIRIT B2B[♥] SCORE

Welcome to Inspired B2B 2023,
Wunderman Thompson's latest update on the world's
most inspiring B2B brands. This report is grounded in
our evidence-based Inspire methodology, a powerful
tool that helps us deliver on our purpose of inspiring
growth for ambitious brands.

B2B brands are seeing the power of emotion
to drive growth and that is a key factor in creating
an inspiring B2B brand.

what is inspiration?

In a personal context, that's an easy question to answer. Inspiration is the feeling that new possibilities are in front of us and that we can make a change or do something exciting and personally meaningful.

what is inspiration in a brand context?

Inspire is a global research initiative that uncovers a never-before-identified connection between brand growth and human inspiration.

The foundation of Inspire is a rigorous, multidimensional research methodology that includes qualitative and quantitative research across four continents and sophisticated data analytics. Based on over 20,000 interviews, we've identified the qualities a brand must embody, the narratives it should weave and the experiences it can design to spark people's inspiration.

The platform launched in 2020 with the "Inspiring Growth" study that explored what makes brands inspiring and how inspiration drives tangible brand growth. The result? A now annual list of the Top 100 Most Inspiring Brands in the World, with a specific B2B Top 50 published in 2021, now extended to the Inspired B2B Top 100 in 2023.

inspire →

This study shows that inspiration is a process, where the brand puts forward a new, positive possibility for people, one that they feel compelled to take advantage of. Based on research into inspiration in the field of motivational psychology, we determined that inspirational brands score highly on three factors:

Elevating. We feel good when we think and act in an altruistic way. Elevating brands demonstrate a positive impact on society and a caring approach to their customers. This in turn creates a sense that choosing them would help us be the sort of person we aspire to be. It's measured in our dataset by looking at scores for "cares for its customers," "socially responsible" and "helpful."

Magnetic. This speaks to the social power of a brand; people feel pulled to the brand. We derive the Magnetic score by using the scores for "leader," "best brand," "would recommend to a friend" and "gaining in popularity."

Motivating. Motivating says that the brand offers something different that will help you accomplish your goals. The metrics that make up Motivating are "good value," "high performance," "simple" and "distinctive."

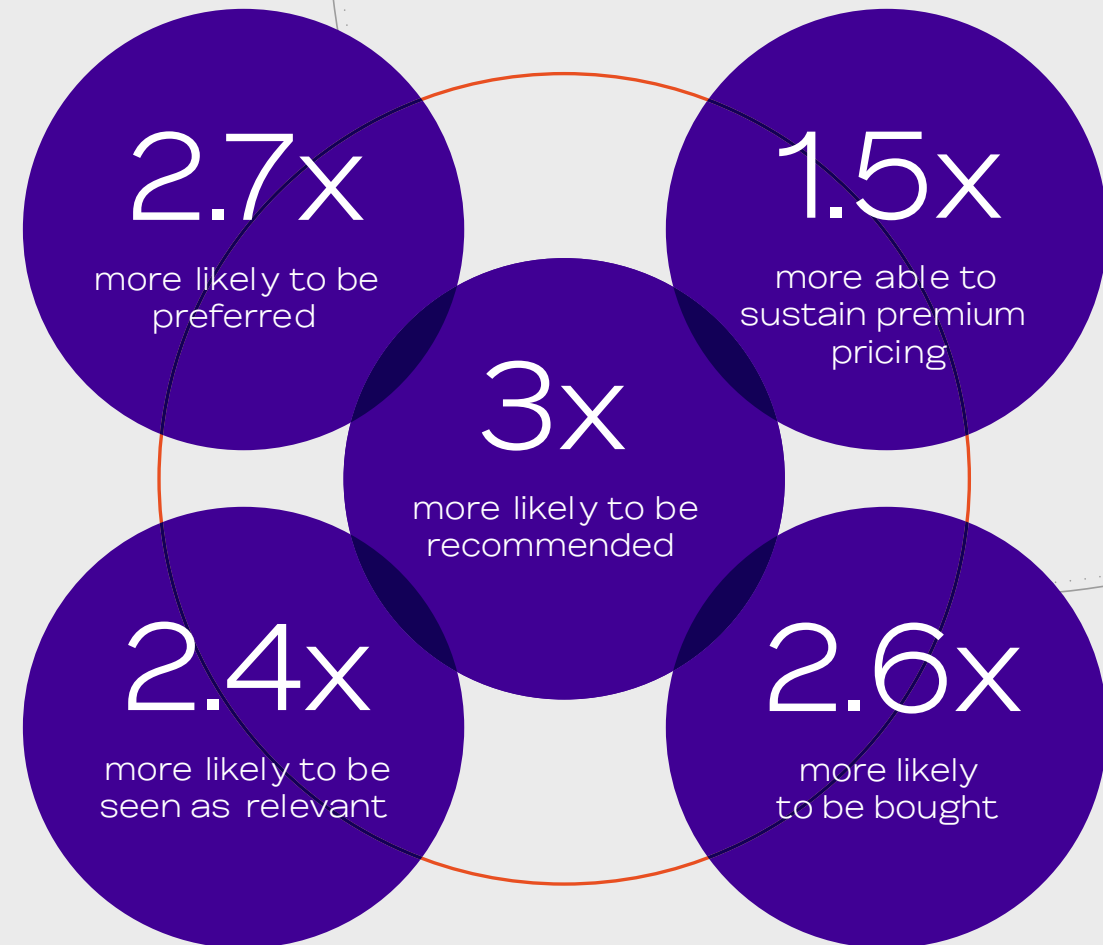
The study showed that a brand's Inspiration Score, based on how strong it is across those three factors, is highly predictive of its ability to drive growth in market share and command a price premium.

why inspired B2B[♥] brands always win.

To succeed, B2B brands must engage and inspire diverse buying groups. Work done by Binet and Field, and the LinkedIn B2B Institute has identified that B2B brands that make an emotional connection and drive “fame” are just as successful as B2C brands.

Digging into the Inspire database, we see the same powerful relationships between B2B brands’ Inspire Scores (across the three key factors of Elevating, Magnetic and Motivating) and their ability to perform in the marketplace, grow faster and command premium prices.

inspired B2B[♥]
brands outperform
the market



Source: Wunderman Thompson Global Inspire Study, B2B brands, 2023. Top-quintile vs. bottom-quintile Inspire Score performers.



inspired B2B[♥] playbook

This latest Inspired B2B Top 100 update builds on a growing body of learnings about how B2B brands can inspire growth and win.

We call them the three S's.



Stand out when others can't. Make distinctiveness a primary goal. Too often B2B represents a sea of sameness in terms of what brands say and how they say it – and if you can't stand out and inspire buyers in a company to think and talk about your brand or service, you face an uphill struggle to being chosen. Being memorable is the first step to getting there, which means that you need to present your brand or service in a distinctly human way. Start with a clear view of your customers' needs and then simplify everything else. After all, 51% of global B2B buyers say that B2B sellers don't understand the friction points in the online buying experience.



Show up where others don't. Be known and notable before buyers need to know you. Just as with any other purchase, it matters that you have inspired B2B customers to consider your brand or service long before they make a buying decision – after all, only 5% of tech buyers are in the market in any given quarter. Stay in their view by showing your innovative spirit in what might at first seem to be surprising places, but where your important decision-makers spend their time.

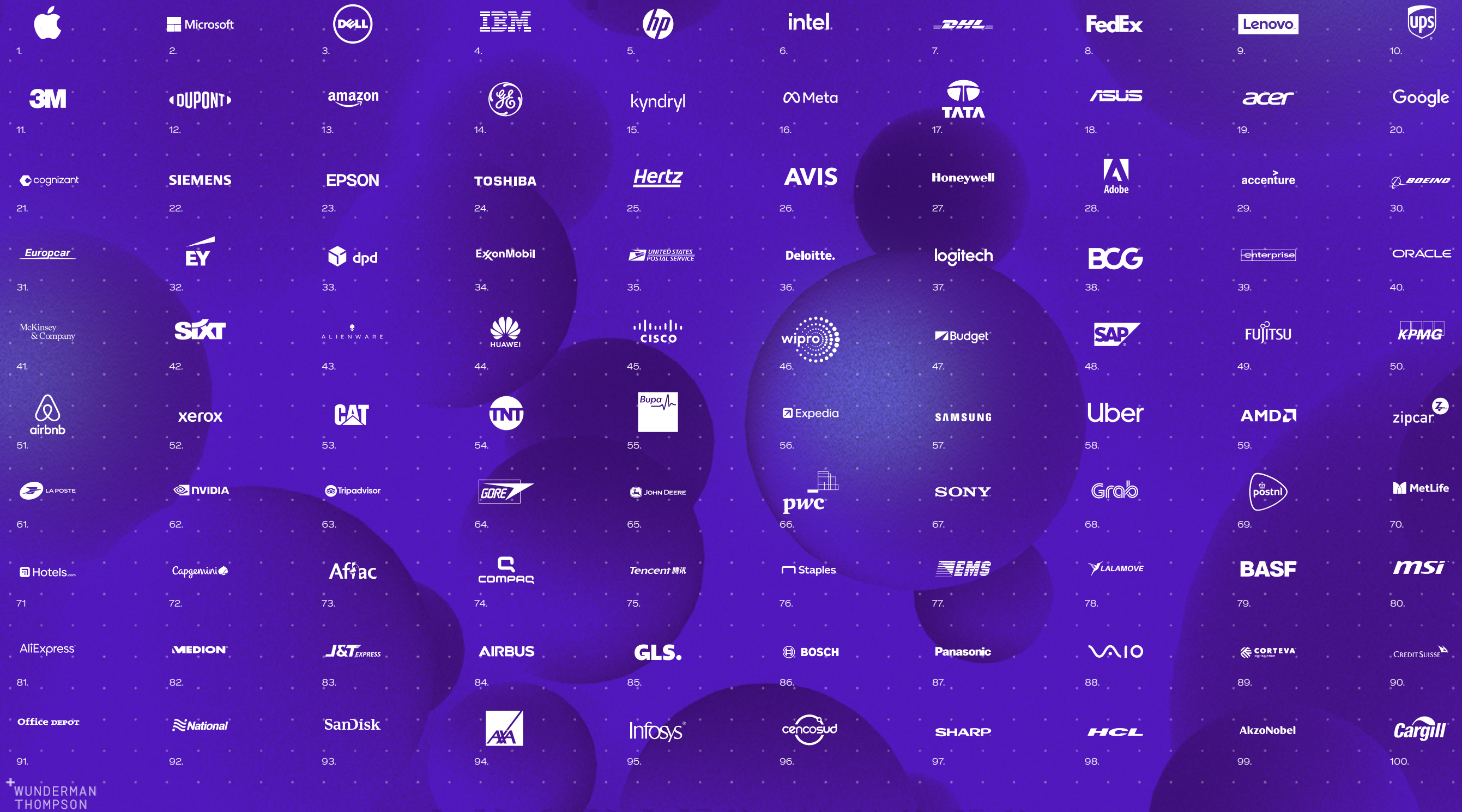


Say what others won't. B2B marketing has too long been an area where marketers have played it safe, to fit in rather than stand out and inspire. B2B brands should have a point of view about the markets in which they operate and their role in them – anything that lacks a unique perspective or repeats the current consensus is probably better left unsaid.

There is of course a time to make a logical argument for your product or service, even if your competition is making one that's remarkably similar. But that won't get your brand noticed, talked about or bought. Your customers are ultimately human, and you still need to meet them in human ways, to make a true emotional connection. Inspiring them with warmth, humor and creativity is just as important as making a sound business case.

TOP 100

MOST INSPIRING B2B BRANDS
IN THE WORLD



Perhaps reflecting the still-turbulent business environment, the established tech, tech services and logistics brands that provide dependable structure and stability continue to represent the B2B power brands dominating the Inspire Top 20.

Seventeen of the 2023 Top 20 were also Top 20 in our last rankings in 2021, and positions within the Top 20 have been relatively stable. These brands remain the inspiration engines with the ability to place themselves at the center of business people's lives, and stay there.



But look more deeply into the Top 100, and the 2023 rankings show that it's all to play for when it comes to inspiration. Many brands beyond the top 20 have dramatically changed their ranking, showing that these are metrics that brands can move, shifting the needle on growth.

It reminds us that while established brands dominate, new brands have a unique window of opportunity to inspire, with two new brands (albeit restaged established businesses) going straight into the Top 20 – Kyndryl (IBM spinoff) at No. 15, and Meta (Facebook) at No. 16.

Other tech brands are among the big movers who are successfully inspiring business audiences to create the conditions for accelerated growth. Dell overtook IBM, HP and Intel moved from No. 7 to No. 3, Adobe leapt from No. 98 to No. 28 and Huawei took a massive leap - moving from outside the Top 100 to No. 44.

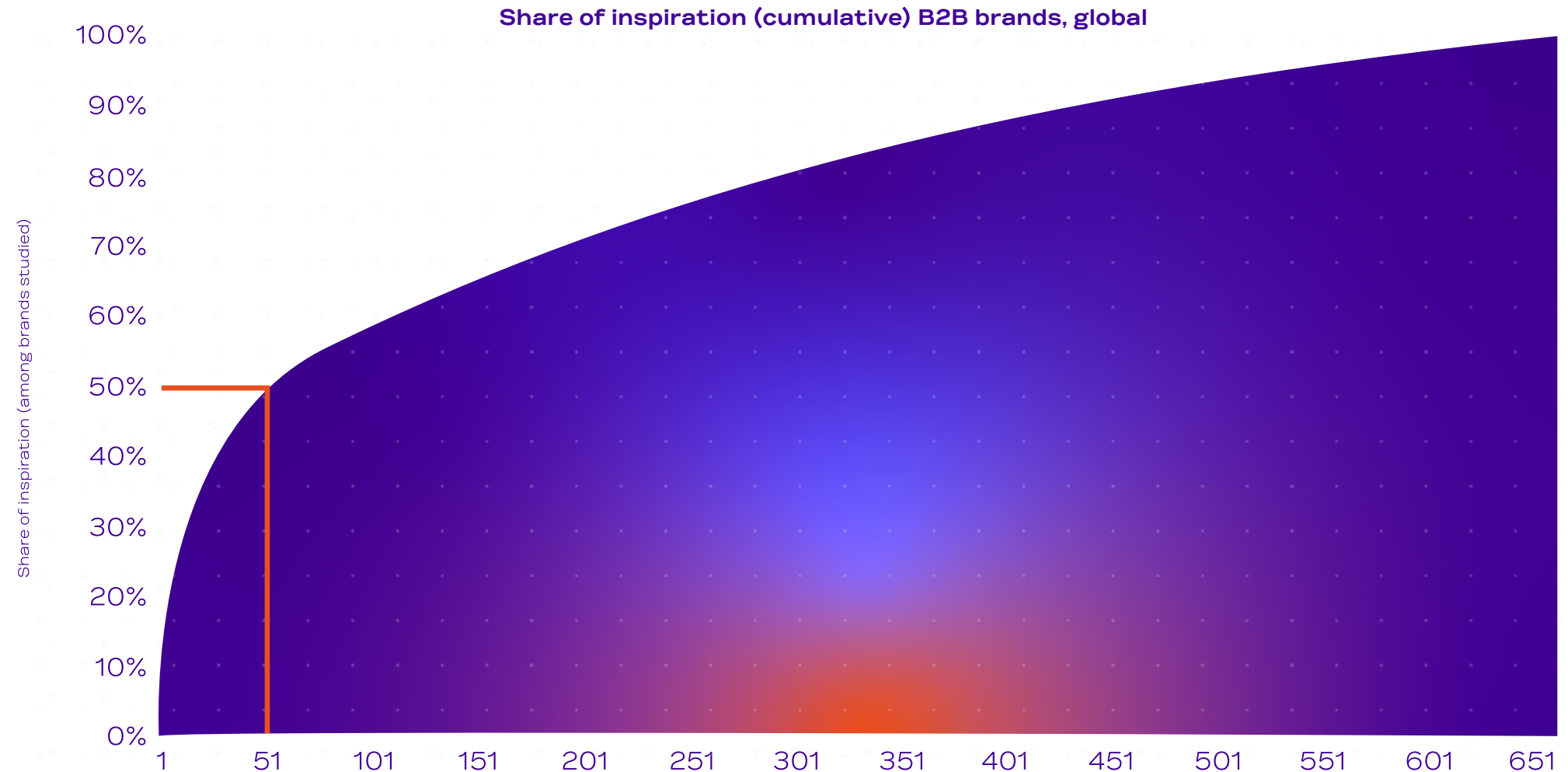
A major trend this year is the rise of consulting and accounting businesses – in part because of an economic environment where businesses are increasingly looking outside themselves for inspiration, but also reflective of the sector’s broadening offering and growing mission to inspire. Accenture leads this trend (No. 29 in 2023), followed by EY (No. 32), Deloitte (No. 36), Boston Consulting Group (No. 38), McKinsey (No. 41) and KPMG (No. 50). All have significantly improved their inspiration status since 2021, with PWC (down from No. 39 to No. 66) the only faller.

As the world opens up post-COVID, it’s also interesting to note the strong presence of travel brands in the InspireB2B Top 100. Of course, the long-established car rental brands (Hertz, et al.) are still there, but 2023 sees the rise of primarily B2C travel brands among B2B audiences, as these brands increasingly ramp up their B2B offering to bring more inspiration to the business travel category. New top 2023 entrants include Airbnb (No. 51), Expedia (No. 56) and Tripadvisor (No. 63).



more inspiration: paths to grow

While the InspiredB2B Top 100 showcases success, it's perhaps a reflection on the state of B2B brand marketing more broadly that the average Top 100 brand delivers four times the inspiration of the average B2B brand (across the total of 662 brands covered in 2023). In fact, about half of total brand inspiration is delivered by the Top 50 brands.



So, for B2B brands outside the Top 100, the fundamental issue is how to address the failure to inspire audiences in any significant way or scale.

Top 100 brands are delivering inspiration – the challenge is more strategic in terms of how best to grow their inspiration power. And it's still a steep gradient to climb; within the Top 100 the power to inspire is heavily skewed to the Top 10, with the average Top 10 brand delivering 16 times the inspiration of the average B2B brand.

It's here that the more granular Elevating, Magnetic, Motivating data (components of the overall Inspire Score) can provide valuable, brand-specific insights.



For example, the most inspiring B2B brand, Apple, has a 12% lead overall versus the second-placed brand, Microsoft, in 2023 (up from 7% in 2021) – this is largely down to a 31% lead on Magnetic (leadership, etc.), up from a 19% lead in 2021. Microsoft is already relatively strong on Elevating, but has room to grow, on Magnetic and to a lesser extent, Motivating.

Dell's rise from No. 7 in 2021 to No. 3 in 2023 can be largely explained by a big increase on scores for Elevating (cares for its customers, etc.). Now it holds a strong lead versus IBM, HP and Intel on this Inspire factor, where it was well behind in 2023.

Kyndryl's ascent to No. 15 has been powered by Motivating (understanding of the high performance it delivers). As a young brand, its relative weakness is Magnetic (leadership, etc.), and this will be the focus for further growing its inspiration power.

about inspire

Inspire is a proprietary global platform that explores what makes brands inspiring and what inspires consumers, making Wunderman Thompson the world's leading researcher into inspiration. The foundation of Inspire is a rigorous, multidimensional research methodology, including qualitative and quantitative research across four continents, and sophisticated data analytics that identify the qualities a brand must embody, the narratives it should weave and the experiences it can design to spark people's inspiration.

Inspire has two core components:

Inspire InFocus: the world's largest social study on inspiration that maps the psychological link between people's deep rooted, often subconscious value systems and their inspiration preferences, enabling us to predict how humanity will be inspired. Inspire InFocus feeds our proprietary syndicated motivational segmentation, which enables brands to apply these powerful insights to target audiences and strengthen their marketing strategies.

Inspire Score: a proprietary brand diagnostic tool that identifies the brand attributes that fuel growth through their power to inspire people, culminating in an annual list of the Top 100 Most Inspiring Brands in the World. Validated by consumer analysis and powered by WPP's Brand Asset Valuator (BAV) database which contains more than 340,000 brand perception studies covering 63,000 brands worldwide, from over 1,000 categories across 25 industries and 52 markets, over 30 years. The 2022-23 B2B data is made up of over 13,000 studies of over 600 brands among managers in 15 business-focused categories and 32 markets.

about us

At Wunderman Thompson we exist to inspire growth for ambitious brands. Part creative agency, part consultancy and part technology company, our experts provide end-to-end capabilities at a global scale to deliver inspiration across the entire brand and customer experience.

We are 20,000 strong in 90 markets around the world, where our people bring together creative storytelling, diverse perspectives, inclusive thinking and highly specialized vertical capabilities to drive growth for our clients. We offer deep expertise across the entire customer journey, including communications, commerce, consultancy, CRM, CX, data, production and technology.

Wunderman Thompson is a WPP agency (NYSE: WPP).

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