

## **Item 4. Information on the Company**

### **A. History and Development of the Company**

SINA, our parent, launched Weibo in August 2009, originally as a microblogging service. In 2010, SINA incorporated a subsidiary, T.CN Corporation, in the Cayman Islands to hold the assets associated with the Weibo business. In 2011, Weibo was upgraded with social networking features and improved open platform architecture to support internally developed and third-party developer applications on our platform. In 2012, T.CN Corporation was renamed Weibo Corporation. In April 2013, Alibaba Group invested \$585.8 million through its wholly owned subsidiary, Ali WB, in our ordinary and preferred shares representing approximately 18% of Weibo Corporation's then total outstanding shares on a fully diluted basis.

In April 2014, our company completed the initial public offering and has been listed on the NASDAQ Global Selected Market since then. Our company was incorporated under the law of the Cayman Islands and is headquartered in Beijing, China. With offices throughout mainland China and Hong Kong, our principal place of operations is located at 7/F, Shuohuang Development Plaza, No. 6 Caihefang Road, Haidian District, Beijing, 100080, People's Republic of China. The telephone number of Weibo at this address is (86)10-6061-8000.

Weibo Corporation holds 100% of the equity of Weibo Hong Kong Limited, or Weibo HK, which in turn holds 100% of the equity in Weibo Internet Technology (China) Co., Ltd., or Weibo Technology, our wholly owned subsidiary in China.

We are a holding company, and we conduct our business in China through Weibo Technology and our VIE, Beijing Weimeng Technology Co., Ltd., or Weimeng, and Weimeng's subsidiary. See "Item 4.C. Information on the Company—Organizational Structure" and "Item 3.D. Key Information—Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Our Corporate Structure." We rely principally on dividends and other distributions from Weibo Technology for our cash needs, including the funds necessary to pay dividends to our shareholders or service any debt we may incur. Weimeng holds an Internet Content Provision License and other permits that are necessary for operating our business in China. We gained control and became the primary beneficiary of Weimeng in 2010 through a series of contractual arrangements between Weibo Technology and Weimeng and Weimeng's shareholders.

In December 2013, Weimeng acquired from SINA the entire equity interest in Beijing Weibo Interactive Internet Technology Co., Ltd., or Weibo Interactive, a PRC company engaged in the online game business, for a consideration of \$10.1 million.

## B. Business Overview

### Overview

As a leading social media platform for people to create, distribute and discover Chinese-language content, Weibo provides an unprecedented and simple way for people and organizations to publicly express themselves in real time, interact with others on a massive global platform and stay connected with the world. Since our inception in 2010, Weibo has amassed a large user base. In December 2014, Weibo had 175.7 million MAUs and 80.6 million average DAUs, increasing from 129.1 million MAUs and 61.4 million average DAUs in December 2013, and 96.7 million MAUs and 45.1 million average DAUs in December 2012. A microcosm of Chinese society, Weibo has attracted a wide range of users, including ordinary people, celebrities and other public figures, as well as organizations, such as media outlets, businesses, government agencies and charities.

Weibo combines the means of public self-expression in real time with a powerful platform for social interaction, as well as content aggregation and distribution. Any user can create and post a feed of up to 140 Chinese characters and attach multimedia or long-form content. User relationships on Weibo may be asymmetric; any user can follow any other user and add comments to a feed while reposting. The simple, asymmetric and distributed nature of Weibo allows an original feed to become a live viral conversation stream.

For many people in China, Weibo allows people to be heard publicly and exposed to the rich ideas, cultures and experiences of the broader world. Media outlets use Weibo as a source of news and a distribution channel for their headline news. Government agencies and officials use Weibo as an official communication channel for disseminating timely information and gauging public opinion to improve public services. Individuals and charities use Weibo to make the world a better place by launching charitable projects, seeking donations and volunteers and leveraging the celebrities and organizations on Weibo to amplify their social influence.

In addition to users, Weibo's ecosystem includes customers and platform partners:

- *Customers.* We enable our advertising and marketing customers to promote their brands, products and services to our users. We offer a wide range of advertising and marketing solutions to customers ranging from large companies to small and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs, to individuals, including social display ads, native ads and event-based marketing offerings. Our performance-based native ads allow customers to reach a targeted audience based on the social interest graph, or SIG, of our users. In addition, our customers can benefit from the potentially viral effect of their promoted feeds generated from the public and distributed nature of our platform, commonly known as “earned media”.
- *Platform Partners.* We have attracted a large number of platform partners, including media outlets and developers of games and other applications. Our platform partners contribute a vast amount of content to Weibo, broadly distribute Weibo content across their properties and develop products and applications for our platform, enriching the experience of our users while increasing our monetization opportunities.

While we distinguish among users, customers and platform partners in classifying our products and analyzing our revenues, the same person or organization may simultaneously be included in two or more of the categories.

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Designed with a “mobile first” philosophy, Weibo displays content in a simple information feed format, and we have begun to offer native ads that conform to the information flow on our platform. To support the mobile format, we have developed a SIG recommendation engine that makes it easier for our users to discover content and allows advertisers to promote more relevant

advertisements to our users. With a limit of 140 Chinese characters per feed, the high information-density of Chinese characters and users' ability to personalize content information flow, Weibo is particularly suited for mobile use, and we have seen significant mobile adoption. Over 80% of our MAUs in December 2014 accessed Weibo from mobile devices at least once during the month, and mobile revenues accounted for 44% of our advertising and marketing revenues in 2014.

We began monetization of our platform in 2012, and we have since experienced rapid revenue growth. Our revenues increased from \$65.9 million in 2012 to \$188.3 million in 2013 and further to \$334.2 million in 2014. We generate revenues primarily from customers who purchase advertising and marketing services, and, to a lesser extent, from fee-based revenues, such as game-related services. Due to our limited operating history and evolving monetization model, comparisons of our results of operations from period to period may not be meaningful.

## Products and Services

Our product categories include those for users, advertising and marketing customers and platform partners.

### *Products for Users*

Our product development approach is centered on building simple and useful tools to enable our users to access Weibo to create, distribute and discover content and interact with others on our platform in real time. We employ a "mobile first" philosophy and have designed our platform around the capabilities of mobile devices. We introduced the first generation of Weibo mobile app in the first quarter of 2010. Our platform is compatible with all major mobile operating systems, including Android, iOS, Symbian, Windows and Blackberry, and is accessible through mobile apps, mobile websites, personal computer apps and personal computer websites. Our users range from ordinary people to celebrities, businesses, government agencies and other organizations.

*Self-Expression Products.* We offer the following products to enable our users to express themselves on our platform:

- *Feed.* Weibo enables users to express and share their ideas, opinions and stories in the form of text and attach multimedia, including photos, music, short videos and blogs. The text in a feed is limited to 140 Chinese characters. Since Chinese characters are much more information-dense than letters of the alphabet, more meaning can be conveyed in 140 Chinese characters than in the same number of letters. Feeds on Weibo, therefore, tend to be content-rich, descriptive and vivid, while still fitting onto the screen of a mobile device.
- *Individual Page.* Each user has a Page that displays the user's profile, feeds and album. Basic information about a user, including username, introduction, education, location, liked feeds, accounts followed, fans accounts and Weibo account number, is available on the user's Page. Users with verified authentic identity information will have an orange "V" mark on their profile picture. Users can personalize their Pages by selecting and changing their cover photo and profile picture at any time.
- *Enterprise Page.* Businesses and other organizations with verified identities can apply for enterprise accounts, which entitle them to enterprise services through the download of Page apps on our platform. Page apps enable organizations to customize their Weibo Pages and to perform marketing events, promotion activities, ad campaigns and payment processing on Weibo. For example, an e-commerce merchant can install Page apps to facilitate purchase activities through Weibo or offer "red envelop," lucky money, drawings to build a fan base.

*Social Products.* We offer the following mechanisms to promote social interaction between users on our platform:

- *Follow.* Users can establish relationships with other users by electing to follow them. Feeds that are posted or reposted by a user will automatically appear in the information feed of the user's follower. Relationships may be asymmetrical. The user being followed does not need to approve the follower's decision to follow them, although a user can choose to limit access to certain feeds or to blacklist a certain follower.

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- *Repost, Comment, Favorite, Like.* By clicking on the Repost button, users can repost feeds from other users. When a feed is reposted, the original author is able to virally reach and influence users beyond that author's own circle of followers, leveraging the network of the followers of the author's followers, sometimes many degrees away. Users can add their own comments when they repost and share their view on the original feed with their followers. Users can also leave comments on a feed by clicking on the Comment button. If they like a feed, they can click on the Like button to express their support for the feed. At the bottom of each feed, users can see how many people have Reposted, Commented on or Liked the feed. Users can also save feeds into their favorites by clicking on the Favorite button.
- *@Mention.* Users can view their history of interactions with other users by going to the @Mention Page, which allows users to access all the feeds in which they are mentioned by other users. In addition, users can see a list of comments from other users on their own feeds, as well as the Likes on their feeds.
- *Messenger.* Users can send private messages in the form of text or voice recordings and can attach photos, locations and group contact cards. In addition, users can also use messengers to hand out "red envelopes," lucky money, and receive payments from other users.
- *Group Chat.* Group Chat enables users to organize and participate in conversations based on common interest. For example, fans of a celebrity can establish chat rooms to share the latest gossips and tidbits, and the celebrity himself may choose to "drop in" to increase the livelihood of his fan base.

*Discovery Products.* We offer the following products to help users discover content on our platform:

- *Information Feed.* The information feed resides on the user's home page. Each user's information feed displays a regularly updating flow of feeds posted by that user and by other users he or she has decided to follow. Since Weibo allows users to follow other users without establishing a reciprocal relationship, users are able to personalize whom to follow based on their interests. In other words, users can as easily follow celebrities and strangers as they follow friends and acquaintances. The default setting for the information feed is the timeline, where the most recent feed is shown at the top. To improve user experience, promoted content, hot feeds and missed feeds are added to a user's information feed based on a user's social network as well as the level of engagement of feeds from accounts followed. Users can also customize their information feed by classifying followed accounts into different groups, e.g. friends, co-workers, e-commerce, fashion, media and photography, and view feeds from each group separately.
- *Search.* Our search function allows users to search our platform for feeds, users, apps and pictures by keyword and hashtag.
- *Object Page.* We work with companies with large online content libraries of videos, songs, mobile applications, books and points of interest (such as restaurants, hotels and movie theaters) and create Weibo Pages for their objects, known as Object Pages. Users can visit these Object Pages to find rich content on these objects and interact with other users of similar interest. For example, users can stream songs, watch movie trailers, read book excerpts and download apps from the respective Object Pages. With Weibo location-based services, users can locate popular points of interest, find information about them, such as show times for movie theaters and menus for restaurants, access coupons, post comments, and see reviews shared by other users. Some Object Pages also offer the sale of movie tickets and books and app downloads.
- *Trends.* Trends are lists of hot topics on Weibo. A user can start a topic discussion by adding hashtags (#) around a word or phrase in a feed. The key word or phrase then becomes searchable with a single click. Users may view feeds under each trending topic and participate in the discussion.

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- *Discovery Channel.* Our users can also explore the hottest trending topics being discussed on Weibo by visiting the discovery channel, where popular feeds are aggregated by category, such as humor, astrology, comics, food, technology, auto, sports, reading, recruiting, charity, news, travel, movie, songs, purchase, video, lottery and T-mall flash sales. The discovery channel also offers an online game center and app download center, as well as content discovery using location-based services functions.

*Notifications.* Users can choose to be notified of Weibo account activities through SMS or push notification on their device.

*Weibo Games.* We offer third-party online games, including role playing games, card games, strategy games and real life simulation games. Most Weibo games are offered for free and certain games allow users to purchase virtual currency, known as Weibo Credit, to redeem virtual items. Weibo receives part of the revenues from such purchases through arrangements with the game developers.

*VIP Membership.* Weibo VIP membership offers our users certain services and functions that are not available to regular users. With these additional functions, VIP members can follow more users, have more ways to personalize their Pages, can send voice feeds, enjoy more cloud storage, receive additional options to manage information flow and followers, receive SMS notification of Weibo account activity and have access to premium games. VIP membership is available through monthly or annual subscriptions.

*Weibo Apps.* We have developed a suite of mobile apps to further enrich the service offerings of Weibo. For example, Weibo Headlines aggregates news and information from Weibo and other online sources based on an article's popularity and enables users to comment, like and share to their fans on Weibo. Another example is Weibo Weather (Tianqitong), a leading weather app in China that features weather condition, particle matter index (PMI) and other information, such as scenic photos from cities that the users selected to follow.

### ***Products for Advertising and Marketing Customers***

We seek to provide advertising and marketing solutions to enable our customers to promote their brands and conduct effective marketing activities. We provide our customers with analytical tools to enable them to track and improve the effectiveness of their marketing campaigns on our platform. Our advertising and marketing customers include key accounts, Alibaba/e-commerce merchants, SMEs and individuals that seek a full spectrum of online advertising and marketing services ranging from brand awareness to interest generation, sales conversion and loyalty marketing.

*Social Display Ads.* Social display ads appear on a user's home page and other pages. When users click on the social ad, they may be redirected to the advertiser's Weibo Page for further engagement.

*Promoted Marketing.* Our promoted marketing offerings include the following:

- *Promoted Feeds.* Promoted feeds appear in the user's information feed alongside organic feeds. We encourage our customers to produce feeds that have relevant information value similar to that of the users' organic feeds. Customers may use our SIG recommendation engine to better target their audience and improve the relevancy of the ad to the users. As with other feeds, users can Repost, Comment on and Like promoted feeds, amplifying the visibility and reach of the original promoted feed and generating earned media to our customers. We offer promoted feeds tailored to different customer segments such as:
  - FST is a customizable and self-service marketing solution offered mostly to SMEs under a bidding system. Customers are able to target users based on gender, age, geographic location, interests and device type. They can also target users by their social interaction on our platform. For example, they may target all of the followers of a given user. SMEs can place FST ads either through our authorized distributors, who have expertise in social media marketing, or directly by themselves using our self-service advertising system;

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- Fans Headline is a promoted service that guarantees a certain feed from the customer will appear at the top of the information feeds of the customer's followers;
- Weibo Select is a highly customizable version of promoted feeds offered to large brand advertisers, or key account customers. We work directly with the customer or the customer's ad agency to define the parameters of the targeted marketing. For example, in addition to targeting users based on demographics and social relationships, customers can target users who have engaged with feeds using a specific keyword during a specified time period; and
- Weibo Express is a promoted service offered to key accounts for them to reach and engage with a broad range of Weibo users.
- *Promoted Accounts.* Promoted accounts appear either in a column next to the information feed on PC or directly in the information feed on both PC and mobile devices. Promoted accounts are labeled but otherwise appear in the same format as other accounts that we recommend to our users. Promoted accounts provide customers a way to grow their followers, with whom they can then drive engagement using their Weibo Pages.
- *Promoted Trends.* Promoted trends, which are labeled as "promoted," appear at the top of the list of trending topics. When a user clicks on a promoted trend, he will be redirected to the sponsor's landing page.

We provide our advertising and marketing customers with analytical tools to enable them to track and improve the effectiveness of their campaigns on our platform.

### ***Products for Platform Partners***

We seek to provide our platform partners with tools and APIs that they can use to share their content to our platform, distribute Weibo content across their properties and enhance their websites and applications with Weibo content, and to build social apps on Weibo or integrate their products with Weibo. Our platform partners include traditional and online media outlets as well as developers of games and other applications. Products offered for our platform partners include:

*Weibo Connect.* The following products allow our platform partners to link their websites and mobile apps to our platform, enabling their users to share content to Weibo:

- *Single Sign-on Registration.* Users can register for access to our platform partners' websites and apps with their Weibo accounts instead of creating new accounts online. This feature eliminates the need for users to register and create a new log-in identity for each website or app they visit, making it easier to explore new websites and apps requiring log-in.
- *Social Plugins.* Social plugins are a set of embedded widgets, such as Share, Like, Comment and Follow, that allow users to access the functionality of Weibo from third-party websites and mobile apps. By installing Weibo social plugins on their websites or mobile apps, our partners enable their users to share content to Weibo, which may direct traffic of interested Weibo users back to their properties.
- *Multimedia Cards.* Multimedia cards allow our mobile app partners to enable their users to share multimedia content, such as photos, songs and short videos, in a feed to Weibo. Content shared on multimedia cards is tagged and can be discovered by users who search for the tagged keywords.

*Weibo Service.* Our open application programming interfaces allow third-party developers to build apps to serve individual and organization users.

- *App Application Programming Interfaces.* We provide our platform partners a set of application programming interfaces that they can use to develop apps for our platform. Currently, the most popular category of these apps is Weibo games.

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- *Page App Application Programming Interfaces.* Our Page app application programming interfaces allow platform partners to develop apps that improve the features and functionalities of Weibo Pages. For example, an e-commerce merchant can install a Page app that enables users to view and purchase its goods on Weibo. Page apps created by platform partners are becoming increasingly popular. We allow app developers to charge for the Page apps, but we currently do not have revenue share on these apps.
- *Enterprise Application Programming Interfaces.* We offer enterprise services to businesses and other organizations through enterprise application programming interfaces. For example, our enhanced messaging application programming interfaces facilitate more convenient interaction between users and their followers. Using the application programming interfaces, third-party developers enable organizations to send private bulk messages, also known as DY, to followers who have opted in to such subscriptions. For example, many followers of the China Earthquake Networks Center have subscribed for earthquake news alerts. With the DY subscription function, the Center is able to send timely earthquake news through Weibo's messenger to all of its subscribers at once. We also provide data application programming interfaces to third-party developers for them to provide data analytics services to brands and businesses.

*Weibo Credit.* Weibo Credit allows our users to purchase in-game virtual items and other types of fee-based services on Weibo and for our platform partners to receive payment in an easy-to-use, secure and trusted environment.

*Weibo Wallet.* Weibo wallet enables individuals and businesses to hand out “red envelopes” to build a bigger and more active fan base.

## Competition

Major Chinese internet companies, including Sohu and Tencent as well as other microblogging services and new players in China who offer online media, including content aggregation and distribution services, compete directly with us for user traffic and user engagement, content, talent and marketing resources. As a media platform in nature, we also compete with offline media companies for audiences and content.

In addition, as a form of social media featuring social networking services and messenger features, we are subject to intense competition from providers of similar services as well as potential new types of online services, including interest-based social products. These services include (i) mobile messengers, such as Miliiao, Weixin/WeChat, QQ Mobile, Yixin, Laiwang, Douban and Momo; (ii) news applications, such as Jinritoutiao and news apps operated by other major internet companies, such as Sohu, NetEase, Tencent and Phoenix New Media; and (iii) multi-media apps, such as In, Nice, Paipai and Meipai. We also compete with both offline and online games for the time and money of gamers. We have begun to offer social commerce solutions to our customers that enable them to conduct e-commerce on our platform. Consequently, our offerings compete with e-commerce companies and online verticals that enable merchants to conduct e-commerce, including location-based services and online-to-offline services. In addition to direct competition, we face indirect competition from companies that sponsor or maintain high traffic volume websites or provide an initial point of entry for internet users, including but not limited to providers of search services, web browser and navigation pages, such as Baidu, UCWeb and Qihoo 360. We may also face increasing competition from global social media, social networking services and messengers, such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Line, Kakao Talk and Snapchat. Some of our competitors may have substantially more cash, traffic, technical and other resources than we do. See “Item 3.D. Key Information—Risk Factors—Risks Relating to Our Business—If we are unable to compete effectively for user traffic or user engagement, our business and operating results may be materially and adversely affected.”