

Website globalization and e-business for China

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China is an emerging global economic power with a gross domestic product of \$7.8 trillion in 2008. *The Economist* predicts that China's growth rate will be 8% in 2009. This means that China has a purchasing power parity second only to the United States and a population of 1.3 billion (www.cia.gov). Last year alone, Chinese online users spent almost \$12.5 billion on internet purchases. According to a Credit Suisse First Boston report, the Chinese consumer is going to replace the US consumer as a primary engine of global growth by 2014. In order to reach this potent market via the web, a company's website should be reviewed for both cultural customization and correctness.

	oracle bone jaguwen	greater seal dazhuan	lesser seal xiaozhuan	clerkly script lishu	standard script kaishu	running script xingshu	cursive script caoshu	modern simplified jiantizi
rén (*nin) human	𠤎	亼	𠤎	人	人	人	人	人
nǚ (*nra?) woman	𠤎	𠤎	𠤎	女	女	女	女	女
ěr (*nha?) ear	𠤎	𠤎	𠤎	耳	耳	耳	耳	耳
mǎ (*mrā?) horse	𠤎	𠤎	𠤎	馬	馬	馬	馬	馬
yú (*ŋha) fish	𠤎	𠤎	𠤎	魚	魚	魚	魚	魚
shān (*srān) mountain	𠤎	𠤎	𠤎	山	山	山	山	山
rì (*nit) sun	𠤎	𠤎	𠤎	日	日	日	日	日
yuè (*ŋot) moon	𠤎	𠤎	𠤎	月	月	月	月	月
yǔ (*wha?) rain	𠤎	𠤎	𠤎	雨	雨	雨	雨	雨
yún (*wan) cloud	𠤎	𠤎	𠤎	雲	雲	雲	雲	雲

Evolution of some of the approximately 50,000 characters found in the standard Chinese dictionary.

China is a group-oriented or collectivist society where relationships and harmony in relationships are valued over individual needs and goals. The Chinese may even appear to be cold to strangers with whom relationships have not been established. Such an obsession has caused much emphasis on relying on established relationships (*guanxi*) and relationship networks (*guanxiwang*).

The importance of hierarchical relationships in Chinese society can be traced back to Confucius' five cardinal relations: sovereign and minister; father and son; husband and wife; old and young; and among friends. Chinese tend

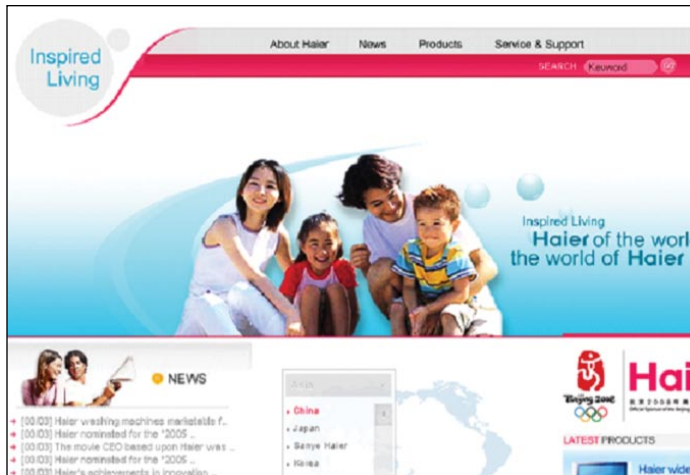
to balance the roles and harmonize their relationships based on these five cardinal relations. This may spill over into business, as well. In developed countries with a strong tradition of law, a



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Research suggests ways to make websites more appealing to collectivist cultures like China, including emphasizing a family theme.

contract may be of fundamental importance in defining a relationship. In China, it is more a symbol of the harmonious relationship between two sides. Among Chinese consumers, *xin* (trustworthiness) is a valuable philosophy. Chinese consumers generally rely on internal

research based on past purchase experiences to make future purchase decisions. They also frequently use word-of-mouth or referrals from friends, family and colleagues to gather market information.

Chinese consumers predominantly look for monetary value. There is a Chinese



China is high on power distance, placing emphasis on hierarchical roles. Customization may include displaying awards a company has received.

saying recommending that you “never make a purchase until you have compared three shops.” Shoppers tend to consciously look for well-known brands that have high prestige or are considered high quality, and they tend to be somewhat risk-averse when shopping. Providing free trials and demos may reduce this anxiety.

In China, more than 400 million people live on less than \$2 a day, but there is an emerging and fast-growing elite class that shops at Armani, Gucci, Cartier, Ferrari, Bentley and Hugo Boss. These people are highly brand-conscious and prestige-oriented, and they like to indulge in conspicuous consumption.

Market segmentation is an interesting phenomenon, and besides these *nouveau riche*, China’s Generation Y may appeal to vendors. They are success-driven, educated, information savvy and surprisingly loyal to Chinese values and culture, but at the same time they are open to western ideas. They are good candidates for western brands and are fashion-conscious.

There are other types of shoppers, including traditional, pragmatic consumers. They may not like to shop much and basically look for products based on price, not style. These consumers tend to be predominantly male and generally go for less expensive local brands rather than pricey or foreign brands.

The Chinese language belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family of languages and is spoken by more than a billion people, thus making it the most widely spoken language in the world. Mandarin happens to be the most widely spoken Chinese dialect, followed by Wu (Shanghaiese), Yue (Cantonese), Min, Xiang, Gan and Hakka.



China's culture leans toward traditional male-female roles.



China is a high context culture. Harmony and aesthetics help achieve cultural customization.

Chinese is written using characters called ideographs. There are approximately 50,000 characters found in the standard Chinese dictionary. The majority of Chinese characters consist of two elements: 1) a signfic, which indicates the meaning of the word, and 2) a phonetic, which indicates the sound.

Website globalization

Whether you are trying to launch a multilingual website in order to expand the markets for your products and services, or you are trying to increase your company's global operational efficiencies by developing multilingual extranets and intranets, website globalization is a requirement to make either a reality. In order to enable your web presence to communicate, conduct and complete international e-business, you need to translate (globalize) your website.

Once you have identified a country's predominant cultural values, the next step in customizing your website is to evaluate it on the relevant cultural values. The cultural values of interest for China are collectivism, traditional gender roles, high power distance (hierarchy) and high context.

Any ancient culture like China has a long list of symbols and icons that carry special cultural meaning. It is important

to be aware of them to avoid any cultural blunders and inadvertent use of offensive symbols. Some examples are:

- Number 8 tends to be a lucky number.
- Avoid the use of the numbers 4 and 7, which may relate to death.
- Animals: 2007 was the Year of the Pig, which is considered lucky. Other good luck symbols are the dragon (yang) and tortoise (yin) that bring good luck and health. A three-legged frog is a symbol for good luck, too.
- Clocks may symbolize death.
- The color red generally expresses joy, prosperity, luck and happiness and may have a good impact on the visual imagery of a site.

Internet and search engine marketing for China

The key to promoting a website internationally is to create localized content, localized keywords, register local domains and then promote through local search engines, affiliate marketing, online and offline branding and promotions.

According to the Chinese Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), the top level CN domains registered have reached more than a million. Now i-DNS.net International Pte. Ltd., in partnership with CNNIC, is offering internet domain names completely in Chinese characters. According to CNNIC guidelines, the Chinese domain name must have at least one Chinese character. One may select from Chinese characters, ASCII letters (A-Z same as a-z), numbers (0-9) or hyphen (-) to compose your Chinese domain name. The length shall be limited to 20 characters (letters).

It is recommended that firms plan on and conduct some form of global search engine marketing (SEM) in order to drive traffic to their new language sites. This may include global search engine optimization of localized web content, submission of pages to key country (locale) search engines, and pay-per-click marketing campaigns through services such as Google AdWords or Overture.

Alexa.com ranks Baidu, a search engine, as the most visited site in China, followed by qq.com, sina.com.cn, and sohu.com. On the other hand, among high-end users, age 25 and above, educated and with a good income, Google seems to be the clear search engine of choice. At the very least, these estimates on top search engines help

identify where to promote a site when targeting Chinese online markets. Companies can furthermore explore key word development, paid submission, manual submission, paid inclusion to top search engines and directories such as Baidu. **M**

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