

SEO for China

Chinese Search Engine Optimization

Understanding
Search Engine Optimization
for Baidu & Co

One much underestimated
Online Marketing Channel
in China

Kun Tang & Marcus Pentzek

All information in this book is based on the authors' own experience and independently conducted analyses. Although the greatest care has been taken in the preparation of this book, English is not the native language of either of the authors. Also, clerical errors may have crept in. Furthermore, it must not be disregarded that Baidu & Co can evolve at any time and circumstances can change. The authors do not assume any legal responsibility or any liability for any damages that may occur in connection with the inclusion of advice on their own or other websites.

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Cover design by Locke Chen (Jademond Digital Limited)

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all people interested in SEO and in loving Chinese culture all over the world. This book is for you. We sincerely hope that we managed to do a good job to approach the art of Chinese SEO. We wish you a good time experiencing the similarities and differences with SEO for Google.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank our customers who have put their trust in us over the past 10 years and given us the opportunity to experience and explore the interesting behaviors of the Baidu search engine every day.

Together with you, we have grown and accumulated knowledge that has resulted in this book today.

We would also like to thank our colleagues who have made this journey with us and who have also contributed their part to this book: Matt Colebourn (CEO of Searchmetrics) for writing the foreword of the English version of this book, Locke Chen (Graphic Designer at Jademon / Jadegital) for creating the stunning cover image, Qing He (Head of SEM at Jademon / Jadegital) for his input and feedback and many more who motivated us, Kun and Marcus, to finally write this book.

Foreword by Matt Colebourne, CEO of Searchmetrics



There have been many books written, over the last decade, on SEO. The vast majority of which focus on Google Search, English language and Western Markets.

Marcus Pentzek is one of the few SEO experts who's not only stayed at the forefront of developments in Western Markets but also, with his

co-author, Kun Tang, has spent a huge amount of time and effort to research and understand the dynamics of the Chinese market; its scale, its players, its technical differences and, critically, the different strategies, tactics and people needed to succeed.

Many forecasters are predicting that the Chinese ecommerce market will exceed that of the US by 2023 on a value basis. That seems realistic to me given that as of 2021 there were already 1 billion internet users in China. Baidu, the largest Chinese search engine, was reputedly handling over 5 billion searches per day back in 2013. For comparison, in 2021, Google handled 5.6 billion per day worldwide.

And, one statistic that does appear largely common is the nature of those queries. In both cases, the percentage of traffic that is transactional, associated with a purchase of some kind, is around 10%. That's a lot of potential purchases.

If you wish to address this vast market then SEO will be a critical part of your digital marketing mix. Its highly attractive return on marketing spend means you don't have to risk

massive marketing budgets against potentially low-performing traffic. So, now I imagine that you're wondering how to make it work for you?

If so, then I commend this book to you wholeheartedly. To be successful in the Chinese market requires different strategies. Baidu, like Google, are continually looking to provide their users with better search results. Baidu, like Google, change their algorithms regularly. However, since they are different, the strategies required to be successful also differ.

This book sets out, clearly and simply but with the necessary details, how to make SEO work for you in China. It builds from the basics of SEO from a Chinese perspective and then takes you through planning your strategy, implementation and effectively managing for results. It also gives you the skills needed to evaluate your team or agency and avoid the, unfortunately many, companies who offer SEO services but then use spam and other short term effective but long term damaging approaches.

So whether you are considering entering the Chinese ecommerce market, have already done so but are struggling to gain traction or have already done so but suspect you could do better this is a book that you need to read written by people with huge experience and the data to back up their conclusions.

About the author: Kun Tang



In 1999, in his early 20s, Kun read about the disruption that e-commerce would bring to traditional businesses. Big changes would change people's lives. He wanted to be a part of that. However, due to a lack of technical knowledge, he was not optimistic that he could easily get into that business.

It was his MBA studies in Germany that gave him the chance as the employer there was less strict about the disciplines he studied but more caring about the enthusiasm and passion he has. However, he was unaware of SEO when he performed it in his first job at a Munich internet startup in 2005, which at the time was all about increasing visits to the website.

He was fully exposed to Baidu SEO knowledge and experienced it since his return to China in 2009, when he was hired to develop the business for the Hong Kong-based agency's SEO unit.

Later in 2013, he was involved in building and marketing an SEO tool for Asia, where he had the opportunity to work with various SEO agency partners.

After that, he slowly developed the idea of building an agency

solely focused on white hat SEO as he has seen too many agencies over the years trying to manipulate Baidu algorithms to make a quick profit on Baidu SERP to achieve while they were loose in the medium term.

Thus JademonD was founded by combining his personal experiences in China and Germany, with *Jade* representing China (the gemstone China is so famous for) and *Mond*, the German word for “moon” (which is also important for many Chinese tales) representing Germany and the German precision and work attitude, he had adopted for himself in his time Germany.

JademonD has now grown to a team of 34 people serving SEO in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai and Vietnamese for local search engines such as Baidu and Naver and Google.

As SEO is not the only important Digital Marketing Discipline, Kun hired experts to cover further areas as well, in order to offer an effective full scope China online marketing strategy to his clients.

About the author: Marcus Pentzek



His first contact with the Internet Marcus had in 1996 while living and working in Fayetteville, North Carolina in the USA. After starting with web design, coding websites and online shops for businesses, it was a logical consequence to find out how to get visitors to those websites.

Marcus has been working as an SEO Consultant since 2008. From 2012 he worked 2 years as Director Marketing for a Chinese Ecommerce company in Beijing, China, where he learned to work with Chinese Social Medias and of course with Baidu.

In 2014, after moving back to Germany, he went back to the consulting side and since then he helps businesses from Germany, UK, France and the USA to grow their organic traffic from Google, Bing and Baidu.

Since 2018 Marcus works for Searchmetrics, one of the leading SEO softwares for Online marketers working with SEO for Google, Baidu and Yandex. In his position as Chief SEO Consultant, Marcus helps developing new strategies and tools to help businesses all around the world improve their Search Engine Optimization.

Marcus has been consulting SEO for companies like B/S/H/, Bundesliga, EnBW, Halfar, Hansgrohe, Nestlé, QVC, Siemens, ThyssenKrupp, The Trainline and many more.

In 2020 Marcus did the world's first and by now only data based analysis on Baidu SEO Ranking Factors (a correlation study) together with Searchmetrics. Some of these insights support the recommendations in this book.

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1. The Internet Landscape in China

The internet landscape in China in general is not much different from the rest of the world.

There are websites which interlink between each other. Some people have their preferred website to start surfing (like a news website or clean Baidu homepage) - they have set this as their starting point when opening the browser.

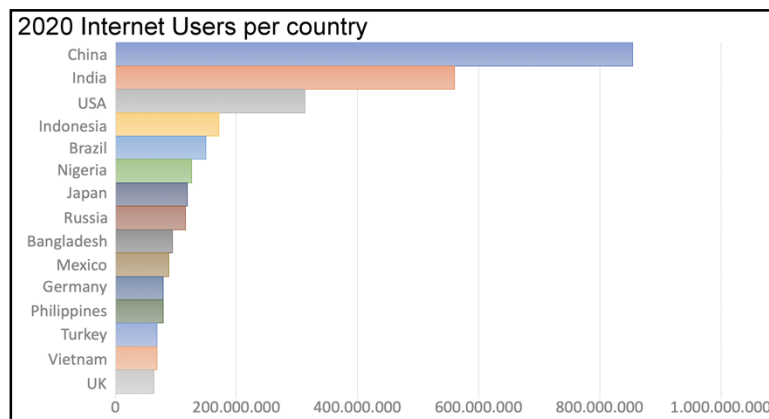
Often there is a preinstalled starting website after installing a browser on the computer. Other people know where they want to go when opening the browser and simply type it in.

There are also Social network services that are similar to MySpace, Facebook and Twitter. Then there are messenger services looking very similar to ICQ and Skype, others look like Whatsapp.

People use smartphones (usually Apple or Android based) with apps that they do not obtain from Google Playstore (as the Google Playstore is inaccessible in mainland China) but from many different other China based app stores and websites.

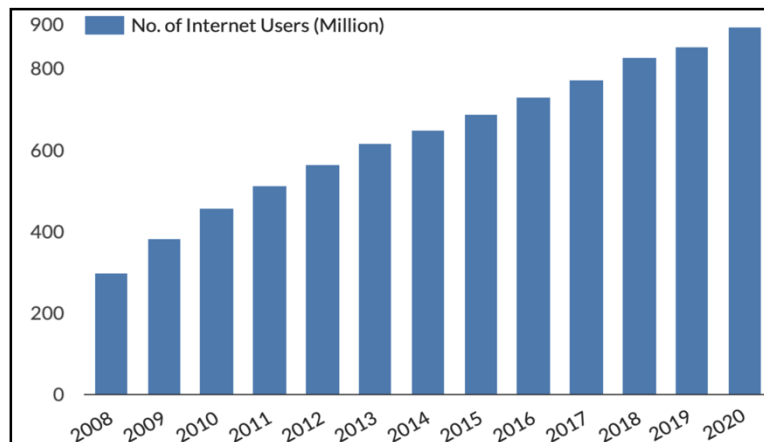
Despite all the similarities, there still is a difference between the world outside of China and the Mainland Chinese world.

The number of internet users is one of the highest (seen by country) in the world.



Source: internetworldstats.com/top20.htm

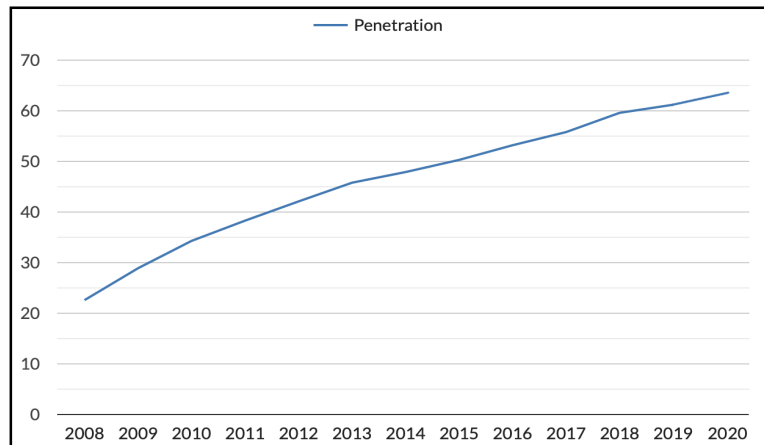
The number of China internet users grew to 904 million in the first quarter of 2020 with a China internet penetration of 64.5%. Check out the number of China internet users since the year 2008.



Internet users in China,

Source: www.chinainternetwatch.com/statistics/china-internet-users/

The internet penetration in China's population in 2020 is still as low as 64.5% leaving growth to another 497 million additional internet users in the upcoming years.

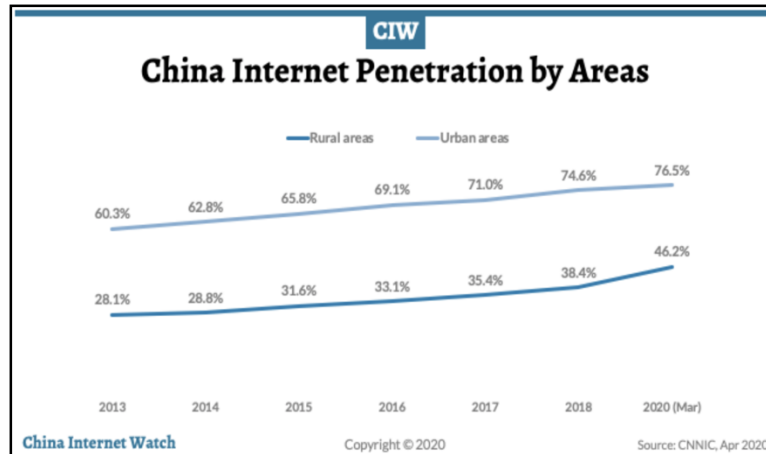


Source: www.chinainternetwatch.com/statistics/china-internet-penetration/

Internet penetration in urban areas rose from 71% to 74.6% as of December 2018. By comparison, internet penetration in rural areas increased from 35.4% to 38.4%.

With the rural areas being supported to start their own online businesses, so called “Taobao Villages” start to grow (see: blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/china-s-taobao-villages-e-commerce-one-way-bring-new-jobs-and-business-opportunities-rural-areas).

This will lead to a further increase of internet penetration in rural areas.



Source: www.chinainternetwatch.com/statistics/china-internet-users/

From 2018 to 2020 there was an increase in internet penetration in rural areas of 7.8% while the urban areas only gained 1.9%.

1.1 Websites in China

Visiting websites in China might overwhelm the western visitor a little. There is so much text and all is written in Chinese Characters. Very clean one character besides each other, one character under each other. All of them in the same squared size, neatly aligned. Not seldom you can find many tiles with such text - all looking alike, (to many westerners) almost like placeholders for real text.

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体育运动

Screenshot: Many internal links on the homepage of www.xuexila.com some even with different colors.

But it is real content - and it is colorful. Many links, many pictures, even animated gifs or movie ads are showing what HTML can do these days. That might not be within the visual range of what western designers think is beautiful - Chinese people however are used to it and can easily find what they are looking for.



Screenshot: Homepage of www.sina.com.cn



Screenshot: Homepage of www.iqiyi.com

This said, you already know that the Chinese website culture is a linking culture. You will find hundreds of links pointing from

one website to many other websites.

For the user that is good, because one can easily find and access many new websites.

For the search engine that is good, because following all these links, search engines will find new content in the blink of an eye.

For SEO that is good, because (back)links that lead people (and bots) from one page or website to another, also shows that the linked to pages are somewhat important (to each other).

1.2 Social Networks in China

China being kind of isolated from the rest of the internet (in terms of Social Networks), China has developed its very own range of social networks. Some of course seem to be copied from their proven to work siblings from the west. Others might have started as clones but fast developed their own life and soul.

1.2.1 Renren

When Facebook made it's way to conquer Europe after starting well in the USA, in China a very similar network called "Renren" started collecting the peoples profiles and helped them to share thoughts, connect with each other and to get social even being divided by many miles between those million people mega cities.

Today however, Renren is not the social network you get started with. It is losing users and is being replaced by the newcomers.



Screenshot: Baidu Image Search on RenRen Screenshots for better impressions

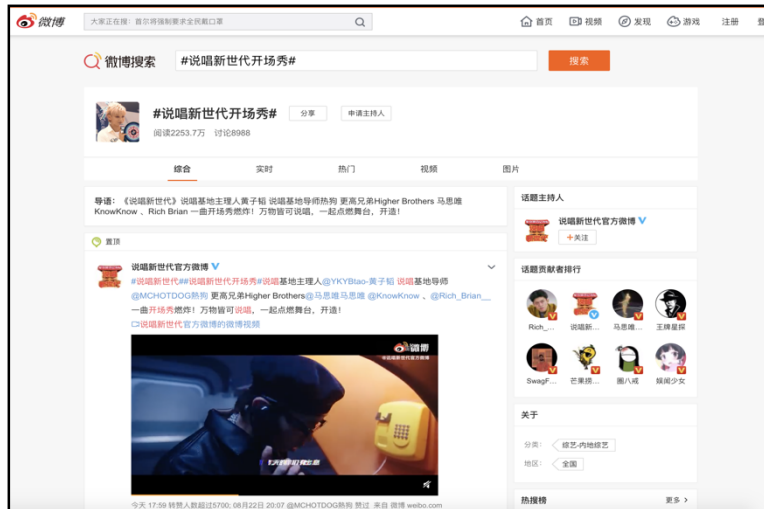
1.2.2 Sina Weibo

Twitter is the micro blogging service that easily conquered the world with only 140 characters per message status posts.

Sina Weibo does not have this limitation but still is functioning just like twitter.

You follow a bunch of people and get to read in your timeline their more or less interesting short messaged posts.

Sina will change their strategy soon as industry professionals know to report. And they have to as WeChat is taking over what used to be their terrain.



Screenshot: A Sina Weibo profile page with posts

1.2.3 QQ

QQ used to be the must have messenger to download onto your computer and interact with people. It still is quite popular today.

QQ is an instant messaging service just like the ICQ or AOL-Chat that was once popular in the west.

Chinese people would know their QQ-ID by heart and could easily share it with you by simply saying it or writing it down on a piece of paper.

Before you send an email - simply send a QQ message. On many websites you can still today find QQ service IDs which you can use to connect with their support. QQ offers a client for PC and Mac as well, as apps for iOS and Android.



Screenshot of QQ App on Windows.

1.2.4 WeChat / Weixin

The far most popular messenger service (today in 2022) is the Chinese App WeChat which looks just like WhatsApp on the first glance but is so much more than the little brother from the west.

WeChat offers an own payment system WeChat-Pay, which soon became one of China's most accepted mobile payment systems which you can even use out on the streets to pay your breakfast with at one of those street food vendors.

WeChat (of course) works as a web browser for surfing on websites as well and it offers developers to add this party apps to it. WeChat seems to be aiming to become an operating system within smartphone system (on top of Android or iOS), allowing to build mini programs within WeChat.

A user of WeChat shall not have the need to leave the app for the most important services you might need your smartphone for.

WeChat is basically a mobile app, but offers a PC and Mac client as well (which still needs a smartphone to verify).



Screenshots of Marcus' personal WeChat app installation

1.2.5 Douyin

You probably know Tiktok by the company ByteDance. This is probably one of the first Chinese apps, that made their way to the west. In China the original version is called “Douyin”, but the logo and functionality is (nearly) the same. People share and watch funny short videos.

In China though many brands discovered Douyin as a good platform for advertising their products. As a conclusion the services of Douyin in China were enhanced just recently for example by eshopping functionalities.

1.2.6 Xiaohongshu

Instagram is another app not being used in China, that you might miss if you move there. Xiaohongshu to the rescue. This app, which is clearly not Instagram, still has been described by

many people as the Chinese answer to Insta. However, “the little red book” is more than a social network to share images and videos on. It is also a social shopping platform.

1.2.7 Toutiao

Toutiao is another app by the company ByteDance (the inventor of Douyin and Tiktok). While Douyin is all about short videos, Toutiao is more a news curation platform, showing news from many different online resources within their own app.

1.2.8 and many more ...

Many other social networks are being developed every single year and enrich the internet world of China.

Your marketing mix shall definitely not only rely on SEO and SEA. You should look around which new trends make sense for your business and your target audience.

For B2C online shopping for example the trend of Live Streaming is the key in 2020 and 2021.

Live streaming is like TV shopping channels such as QVC - just online and on many more different channels, often getting KOLs - the Chinese version of Social Media Influencers called **Key Opinion Leaders** - involved.

1.3 Desktop and Mobile Usage in China

Older people still like using the computer very much. They would spend hours over hours in the sleeping room where a small desk is located with a mid tower standing below and a 32” TV on top, so they can see better - still with a 1024px

resolution (as experienced by Marcus with his Chinese In-Laws).

But they already started adopting voice powered search on their smartphones when sitting on the sofa and getting the idea for driving to some nice location to visit (also an example Marcus experienced with his Chinese In-Laws).

Instead of switching seats to their computer they would hold a smartphone in front of the face and speak where one intends to go. Then all the information would be visible on the smartphone screen.

Younger generations, spend 90% of their online time on the smartphone.

They would use WeChat for reading the news and looking what's going on and communicating with their friends.

They even watch TV on those small screens, while TV is not actual live program, but videos they find shared on the social medias such as Weibo, QQ and of course WeChat.

But also new apps come into the game and take some of the screen time like XiaoHongShu (little red book) or QiongYou (a social network specifically for travelling).

On WeChat there is even a specific group where a Chinese living in Germany offers his home made foods in Cologne. People order of what he is preparing this week on WeChat. They pay with WeChat-Pay. Then they meet in real life and get the food.

For Dragon Boat festival in June (before Covid) Marcus' wife arranged to get Zhongzi (traditional Chinese food for Dragon Boat festival) made by him. She bought them on WeChat and sent him to pick them up.

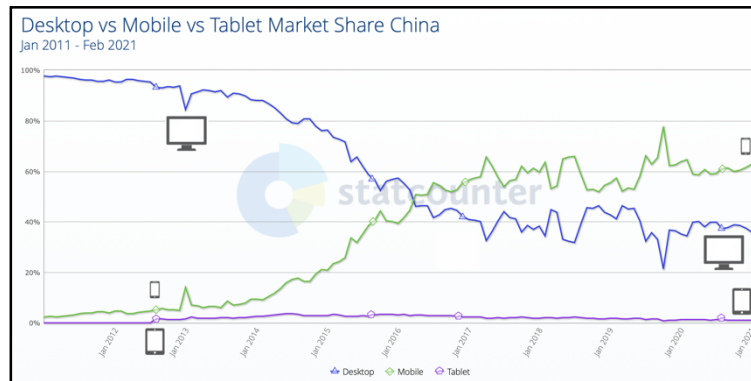
So Marcus was waiting like 10 minutes at a bus stop in Cologne, Germany, and the seller got walking by handing over the box with freshly steamed and still hot Zhongzi.



Screenshot: the number of Search Engine users is still growing year by year. Source: <https://www.chinainternetwatch.com/29466/search-engine-2013-2020e/>

Almost everything can be done on your mobile phone. But still, serious research as well as office work still often is performed at the laptop or regular desktop computer a lot.

Despite all the new mobile trends and apps that come up every year, classical internet search on search engines such as Baidu is not dead.



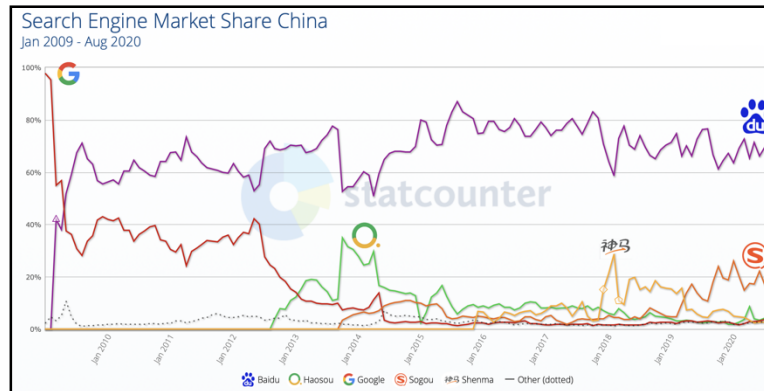
Source: gs.statcounter.com/platform-market-share/desktop-mobile-tablet/china/#monthly-201101-202102

On the end user device Chinese people tend to be much more using their smartphones over desktop computers (a little more than 65% smartphone usage in February 2021). The switch from mainly desktop usage over to mainly mobile usage happened in 2016 (see above chart).

In office of course the desktop computer is still preferred over mobile devices.

1.4 Search Engines in China

Every single day approximately 600 million Chinese people are using search engines such as Baidu and Sogou to find information, research on brands and products.



Source: gs.statcounter.com/search-engine-market-share/all/china/

1.4.1 International Search Engines

Just like in the rest of the world, Google used to be dominating the Chinese search market until January 2009.

But after struggles with the Chinese government they had no chance but to leave China.

Other western search engines like Microsoft's Bing and Yahoo could not use this chance effectively. They are still accessible in China but play only a minor role.

Bing holds 1.99% market share in February 2021, Yahoo is not playing a role at all.

1.4.2 Chinese Search Engines

Baidu was ready when Google left China and could soon place itself in the pole position to serve the People of China with quality search results.

But there are also complaints about Baidu to favor its own services too much in the search results and some even say organic positions can be actually bought, if you know the right people to bribe.

While the last is only a rumor and most likely not true, Baidu does seem to favor its own services like Baidu Baike, Baidu Wenku, Baidu Zhidao and many more over those websites that should be ranked if there were no such Baidu services.

In 2012 an all new search engine 360search (so.com - today “Qihoo”) stepped onto the market.

It was developed by the Chinese internet giant 360 known for a free anti virus software and a widely distributed free web browser.

In February 2021 Qihoo holds an overall market share of 2.21%.

In 2018 yet another player stepped into the game “Shenma”. A mobile app and mobile search engine in one.

It soon reached a 20% market share in mobile search but heavily lost in 2019. Today it only has 4% and has been overcome by Sogou which currently has 9.2%.

Total search market share in early 2022:

Baidu: 84%

Sogou: 5%

Qihoo: 2%

only looking at the desktop search market of early 2022:

Baidu: 54%

Sogou: 16%

Qihoo: 5%

only looking at the mobile search market of early 2022:

Baidu: 94%

Sogou: 1%

Shenma: 2%

Qihoo: 1%

1.4.2.1 Baidu

Baidu managed to take over the search engine lead when Google left China. Other companies are not sleeping and always will try getting their slice of the market and often they can succeed with some very special features.

But Baidu is a big company with lots of resources. While in 2018 many thought that Baidu would lose the battle towards Shenma and eventually further new mobile specific services, Baidu is back now with 94% market share in mobile search.

With Baidu still being the overall market leader in search, this book will focus on SEO for Baidu.





Screenshots: Baidu Mobile Homepage and Baidu Mobile search for “手表排行榜” (hand wrist watch rankings)

1.4.2.1.1 The Baidu SERP

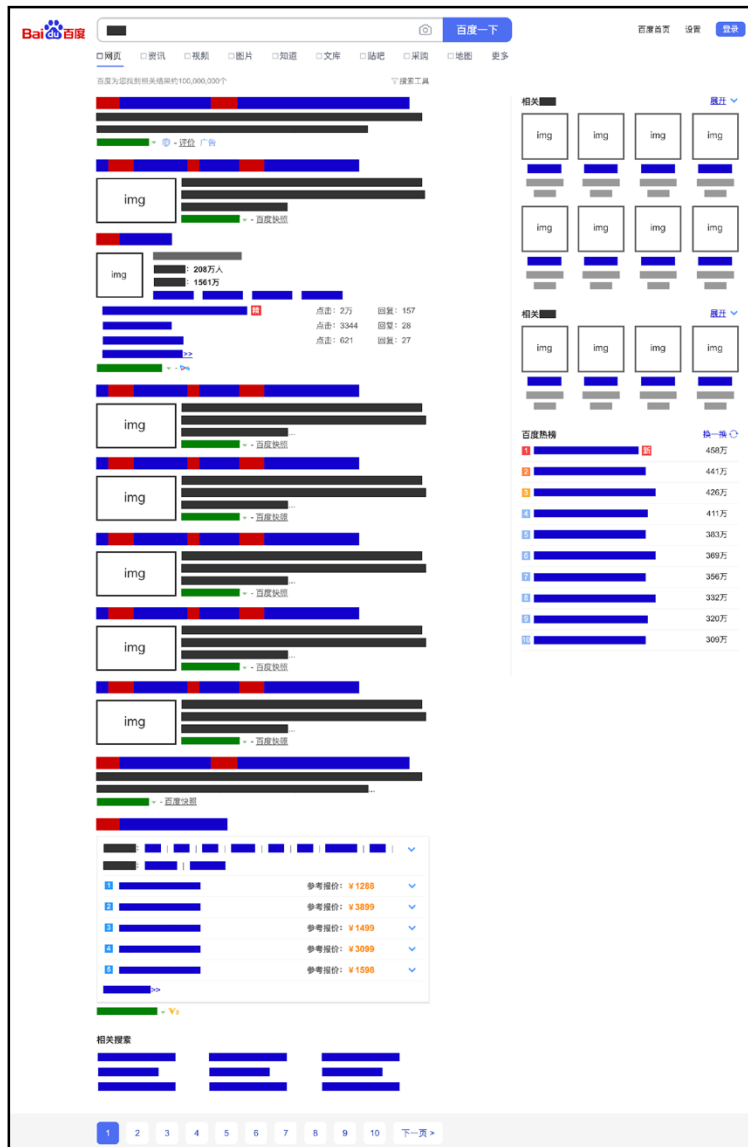


Image: Schematic view of Baidu Desktop SERP (in the ebook version you might see the color differences: red where the keyword is highlighted in the snippet titles)

The image shows the schematic view of how a Baidu Search Engine Result Page (Baidu SERP) on desktop computers could look like. Ads, regular results with and without images in the front, special results and on the right hand side a proof that Baidu also has a entity based system, helping the user to find related entities.

In the following we will introduce some different aspects of the Baidu SERP and explain some symbols special to the Baidu SERPs.

1.4.2.1.1.1 Ads above (or below) the organic results



Image: An add located above or below the regular search results looks just like a regular organic result. The one detail telling the user that it is an ad is the attached word “广告” in light blue.

The way for Baidu to earn money from their search product is by selling ads (just as Google and Bing do). These ads are marked with a “广告” (guǎnggào) added to the listing, which stands for “advertisement”.

1.4.2.1.1.2 Regular organic rankings

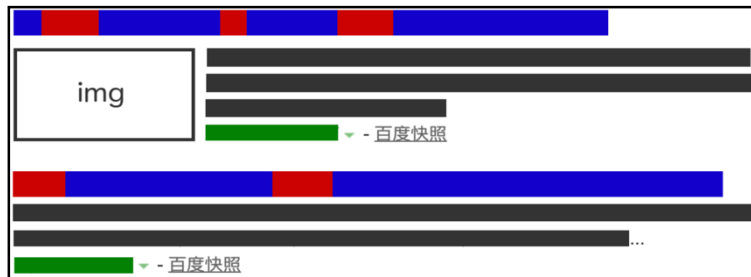


Image: Two Organic rankings. The first with and the second without image.

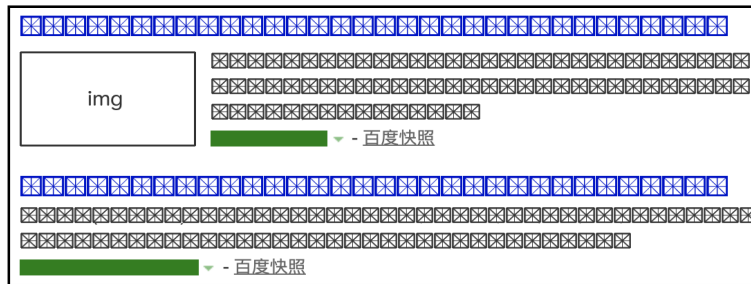


Image: The two standard organic rankings formats as designs with character grid

Approximately 50% of all organic rankings will be enhanced by Baidu with a little image.

There are not any specific hints how Baidu decides which rankings to promote with an image, nor are there any specific hints how Baidu decides which image from the website to use.

It is not about the image dimensions. Baidu would pick not exactly fitting images and would scale and crop them to fit. So far we suggest to apply all known image SEO optimization techniques to help Baidu deciding for an image - without any guarantee.

If the keyword (or parts of the keyword) are found within the

title or description, Baidu would highlight them in red colored characters in the search result snippet.

The Desktop snippet title length displayed in the SERPs is 32 characters in width, with longer titles being shortened by Baidu.

The snippet description (usually drawn from the meta description tag) is displayed in the SERP with a maximum of 75 standard Chinese Characters.

1.4.2.1.1.3 Image Search onebox



Screenshot: Image Search feature within the regular desktop search for the keyword “好吃的苹果” (tasty apple)

Whenever Baidu identifies the search intent of a query to be related to looking at images, they would include such an image search onebox in the search engine results page.

1.4.2.1.1.4 Video search onebox



Screenshot: Video search onebox in regular desktop search results for the keyword “小苹果” (little apple - a popular fun song in Chinese)

Whenever Baidu identifies the search intent of a query to be related to looking at videos, they would include such an video search onebox in the search engine results page.

1.4.2.1.1.5 Maps / Local business onebox



Screenshot: Maps / Local business listing within regular search results for the keyword “北京烤鸭饭店” (Beijing roasted duck restaurant)

Whenever Baidu identifies a possible local search intent, Baidu would include such a maps listing with locals businesses marked.

In the example search for “北京烤鸭饭店” seen in the screenshot there is only a small selection of restaurants shown, although there are many restaurants in Beijing offering Beijing duck.

Those few listed are using “烤鸭” (roasted duck) within their restaurant name with the one exact match name restaurant “北京烤鸭” closest to the city center listed with position A although the ratings is only 1 star, the other exact match name restaurant located between 4th and 5th ring road without rating listed as B. On position C is another restaurant close to the city center, not having the exact match keyword as a name, but containing “烤鸭” (roasted duck) in the name.

1.4.2.1.1.6 Music portal onebox

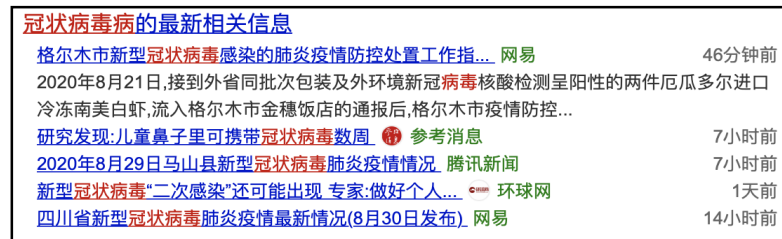


Screenshot: Special listing with tabs offering links to different music portal websites, offering the searched for song title “小苹果” (little apple - a popular fun song in Chinese) on their website

Whenever Baidu identifies the search intent of a query to be related to listening to songs, they would include such a music onebox in the search engine results page.

When clicking on the different tabs, Baidu would switch the blue title of this ranking as well as the green URL / domain below the result.

1.4.2.1.1.7 News onebox



Screenshot: For news related topics, Baidu would provide a link towards the special Baidu News search (title line of this snippet) followed by links towards related news articles across different websites.

Whenever Baidu identifies the search intent of a query to be related to current news, they would include such an news onebox in the search engine results page.

1.4.2.1.1.8 Featured snippet

“月球距离地球平均为384,401公里。这段距离约为地球赤道周长的10倍。月球轨道呈椭圆形，近地点平均距离为363300公里,远地点平均距离为405500公里。月球直径为3476公里,约为地球直径的3/11。月球表面面积大约是地球表面面积的1/14，比亚洲面积稍小。月球的体积只相当于地球体积的1/49。月球质量约等于地球质量的1 / 81.3。月球物质的平均密度为每立方厘米3.34克,只相当于地球密度的3/5。月面上自由落体的重力加速度地球上表面重力加速度的1/6。月球上的逃逸速度约为每秒2.4公里,为地球上的逃逸速度的1/5左右。”

[月球地图_百度百科](#)
baike.baidu.com

Screenshot: Baidu showing a featured snippet direct answer for the keyword “到月球的距离” (distance to the moon)

Just as Google does, Baidu would try answering simple questions directly in the SERP. They do this for example with featured snippets, displaying content from a page like Baidu Baike, Baidu’s very own wiki page. The page the information is drawn from, would still be linked below the answer.

1.4.2.1.1.9 Baidu Tieba onebox

[苹果吧_百度贴吧](#)



万有引力,从苹果开始

关注用户: **142万人**

累计发帖: **826万**

[新人之路](#) [资源教程](#) [交流感悟](#) [帮助答疑](#) [体验评测](#)

[【教程】怎样最大化保护电池寿命](#) **精**

点击: 8万 回复: 571

[为防止小白被骗,本人以身试险,搞了一个11pro...](#) **精**

点击: 24万 回复: 1805

[#新iPhone发布#直播观看](#) **精**

点击: 3万 回复: 468

[查看更多苹果吧的内容>>](#)

[tieba.baidu.com/](#)

Screenshot: Tieba onebox for the keyword “苹果” (Apple) showing different discussions on the online forum about products of the company “Apple”

When Baidu recognizes that there are multiple discussions on their product discussion forum tieba-baidu.com on the keyword query, they would show the corresponding onebox as one of the search results.

1.4.2.1.1.10 Stock / Business information onebox

[苹果\[AAPL\]美股实时行情_东方财富网](#)

东方财富

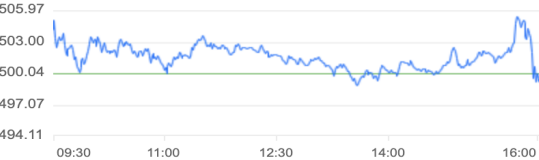
老虎证券

499.23 美元

↓ -0.81 (-0.16%)

2020/08/28 16:00:00 已收盘 (美东时间)

盘后 501.93 +2.70 +0.54%



今开 504.05

昨收 500.04

最高 505.77

最低 498.31

成交量 4690.75万

市盈率 36.54

每股收益 13.664

总市值 21345.25亿

分时

5日

1月

1年

[quote.eastmoney.com](#) - 给百度提建议

Screenshot: Similar to the music portal onebox, Baidu accesses stock data from different stock information websites, offering the direct view to each website's data by switching the tab. The title above the widget would switch when changing the tab, as well as the green source domain below. The user can still click to access

the source website.

If the search query is a company entity which listed at some stock exchange, Baidu would show this onebox, as this might serve one possible search intent the user might have.

1.4.2.1.1.11 Related Entities sidebar

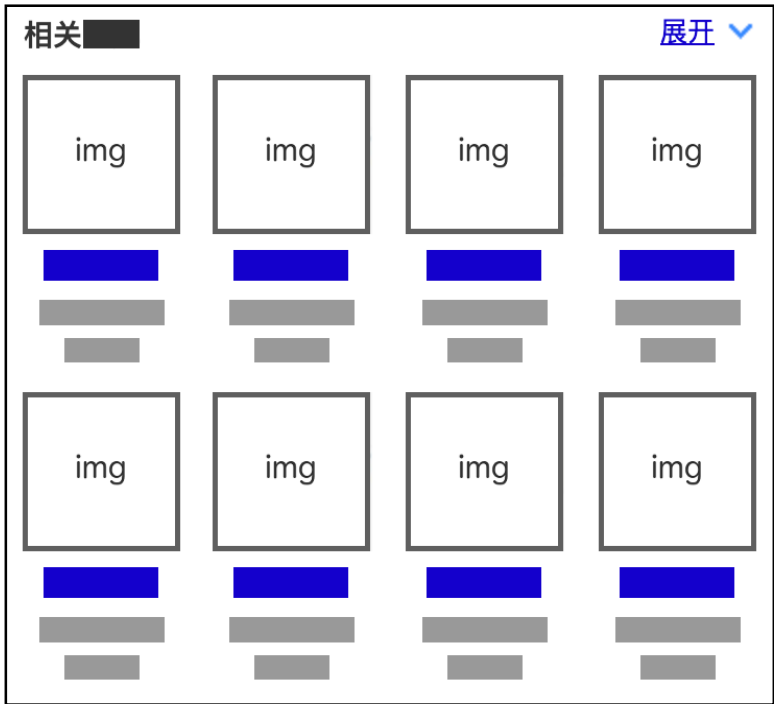


Image: Right hand sidebar offering related entity searches.

Whenever Baidu recognizes, that a search is related to a special entity like a person, animal or a thing, Baidu would dig deep into their entity databases and offer searches to related entities.

Baidu will tell you it is “related entities” by adding a small headline starting with the two characters “相关” followed by the name what kind of entity the keyword you searched for is.

Here are some examples of such related entity sidebars for the searches for “Elephant”, “Bruce Lee” and “TV” (all searches in Chinese of course):

Baidu

大象

百度一下

相关动物

展开



长毛象

石器时代的真猛犸象



猩猩

现存最大的奇蹄目动物



猛犸象

世界上最大的象之一



亚洲象

亚洲大陆最大的动物



长颈鹿

世界上最高的陆生动物



长鼻目

嗅觉听觉发达视觉较差



非洲森林象

现存最小的象类



河马

大型杂食性哺乳类动物



印度象

亚洲象的亚种



奶牛

肉牛海福特牛



野生

森林中真正的王者



蝴蝶

丑毛虫的成功逆袭

Baidu

李小龙

百度一下

相关艺人

展开



李国豪

李小龙之子



李香凝

李小龙之女



琳达·埃莫瑞

功夫巨星李小龙之妻



陈国梁

代表作品李小龙传奇



苗可秀

称为李小龙的银幕情侣



丁佩

台湾出品人监制演员



周比利

轻中量级搏击世界冠军



查克·诺里斯

空手道世界冠军



宾尼·尤奎德兹

WKA世界重量级王者



石天龙

截拳道武术精神的导师



成龙

国际功夫巨星兼慈善家



李振辉

李小龙的弟弟

Baidu

电视

百度一下

相关电器

展开



数字电视机顶盒

一种信号转换设备



彩电

简单说就是有颜色电视



高清电视机

能看见毛孔的电视机



卫星电视接收器

利用地球同步卫星



卫星电视接收机

目前比较常用的接收机



QLED

而LG将生产实际产品



OLED

薄膜多层器件



投影仪

投射图像或视频设备

Screenshots: Related Entity Sidebars for “大象” (elephant), “李小龙” (Bruce Lee) and “电视” (TV)

In case of “elephant” Baidu will give you “相关动物” (Related animals), for “Bruce Lee” it will give you “相关艺人” (Related artists) and for “TV” it will be “相关电器” (Related electrical appliances).

We can see, Baidu is able to recognize if the keyword we are looking for is an entity and to which group of entities it belongs. Based on this information Baidu would suggest other related entities. In case of “Bruce Lee” for example, not showing other people, but specifically other artists clearly with some preference to martial arts artists.

1.4.2.1.1.12 Baidu hot searches sidebar



Image: Baidu hot search keywords in the right hand sidebar

On every Baidu desktop SERP they would display the current most searched for keywords in the sidebar. These are not affected by the keyword the user searched for. The reload icon will help updating them, as this hot list can change minutely.

1.4.2.1.2 Baidu Ranking Algorithm Updates

Every search engine updates their algorithms all the time.

Google claims to update nearly every single day, but launching bigger “Core Updates” every couple of months.

Looking at how rankings on Baidu are changing every single day, we can assume Baidu isn’t much different with their updates.

But there is one bigger difference to Google. While Google very seldom announces an bigger algorithmic update in advance and even tell what it would be about, Baidu is much more open communicating the targets the bigger updates would have.

And that makes absolutely sense! Baidu is known to be less successful in identifying webspam, websites copying content, artificially built backlinks, original content, and so on.

With communicating the targets they intend to achieve, they help webmasters in China to better comply to what Baidu relates to as high quality.

This list of former Baidu Algorithmic Updates will help you as an SEO to optimize a website good enough in quality to achieve good rankings.

1.4.2.1.2.1 Baidu Scindapsus Aureus Algorithm Update

Release Date: Feb. 19, 2013

Target: Devalue websites selling or buying backlinks.

Scindapsus Aureus Algorithm is said to have affected more than 100,000 low quality websites.

Todo for your SEO: Do not sell backlinks from your website.
Do not buy backlinks for your website.

1.4.2.1.2.2 Baidu Pomegranate Algorithm Update

Release Date: May 17, 2013

Target: Devalue websites that hinder the users to easily consume the content. This especially concerns websites with extensive ads, popups and interstitials.

Todo for your SEO: Do not implement too many ads into your content. The main purpose of visitors to your website shall still be to consume the original content - not the ads, popups or interstitials.

1.4.2.1.2.3 Scindapsus Aureus Algorithm Update 2.0

Release Date: Jul. 1, 2013

Target: Devalue websites selling content placements

(advertorials) and websites buying links from advertorials.

Todo for your SEO: Do not sell advertorials on your website (yes, even if you label it as “advertorial”, it still is something Baidu doesn’t want to see) and do not buy advertorials with links to your website from other websites.

1.4.2.1.2.4 Baidu Ice Bucket Algorithm Update

Release Date: Aug. 30, 2014

Target: Devalue websites that try pushing their mobile visitors to download their mobile app instead of letting them surf on the mobile website. That especially targets websites with mobile app download interstitials.

Todo for your SEO: Do not nurture your mobile visitors to download the app instead of using the mobile version of your website.

1.4.2.1.2.5 Baidu Ice Bucket Algorithm Update 2.0

Release Date: Nov. 28, 2014

Target: Devalue websites that display too large ads on their mobile websites - especially when shown above the fold.

Todo for your SEO: Again, websites shall display their own content. Visitors of your website do want to see this content - not ads. Yes, selling ads is good for your business - but the

main purpose of the website shall still be to show your original content - not the ads. So (especially) the above the fold content shall not be all ads - but mostly your own original content.

1.4.2.1.2.6 Baidu Ice Bucket Algorithm Update 3.0

Release Date: Jul. 15, 2016

Target: Devalue websites that try forcing their users to leave the mobile websites in order to access their mobile apps, while for content distribution the websites should perfectly fit this purpose.

Todo for your SEO: While nurturing your visitors to download your mobile app instead of using the mobile website was not something Baidu wants to tolerate - even if one already downloaded the app, the visitor shall still not be pushed to use it instead of staying on the website.

Instead of forcing your mobile visitors to go the app, try providing them other benefits if they use your app regularly. Maybe they can find some daily videos and product discounts only in the app?

1.4.2.1.2.7 Baidu Skynet Algorithm Update

Release Date: Aug. 10, 2016

Target: Devalue websites that contain malicious code or tactics that try to collect the visitor's QQ IDs or mobile phone

numbers. Websites hit by this algorithmic change can ask for reconsideration after removing these codes.

Todo for your SEO: That should be a no-brainer: do not trick on your visitors. Do not build cheap lead generation platforms. Do not use malicious code. Secure your website, so it doesn't get abused by hackers that upload malicious code to your website.

1.4.2.1.2.8 Baidu Ice Bucket Algorithm Update 4.0

Release Date: Sep. 19, 2016

Target: Baidu continues their journey to penalize websites with too many and/or too big ads on the websites.

Todo for your SEO: Baidu sometimes gets forced to update their algorithms. The advice is not different from above: avoid too many or too big ads - especially above the fold.

1.4.2.1.2.9 Baidu Ice Bucket Algorithm Update 4.5

Release Date: Oct. 26, 2016

Target: Devalue websites with click baiting and illegal ads such as erotic ads, gamifying ads, animated gifs, graphics pretending to be legit buttons of the website.

Todo for your SEO: No-brainer - stick to the laws in China. Pornography is illegal and so is casino like gambling and

crypto currencies mining and trading like bitcoins. But also it is not wanted that your ads look like they are fun to click on - do not make them look like games or buttons. Do not try to trick your visitors to click on these ads. Avoid to accept such ads on your website.

1.4.2.1.2.10 Baidu Blue Sky Algorithm Update

Release Date: Nov. 21, 2016

Target: Devalue publisher websites that are listed on Baidu news, for selling advertorials on their domains. Publisher websites hit by this algorithmic penalty, would not be considered as news source for Baidu news any more.

Todo for your SEO: Baidu tries to keep their Baidu News platform clean. Websites listed their (or websites that are working on getting listed on Baidu News) shall provide good news, correct stories, not illegal stories and not advertorials (as they look like stories but actually are not bit ads).

1.4.2.1.2.11 Baidu Beacon-fire Program Update

Release Date: Feb. 23, 2017

Target: Penalize websites hijacking the user and leading them to a fake Baidu search website (for example when hitting the browser's "back" button). Such websites can "just" be websites trying to make money with automated ads - but often they are websites dangerous to the visitors.

Todo for your SEO: Well, do not build evil websites. Easy one,

right? Do not spam, scam or play tricks on your visitors or on Baidu.

1.4.2.1.2.12 Baidu Hurricane Algorithm Update

Release Date: Jul. 4, 2017

Target: Devalue websites with copied and plagiarized content. Although having introduced this algorithmic change, Baidu still needs a lot of improvement to get really good at identifying original content over plagiarized content.

Todo for your SEO: We know from Google, that they are not good at always finding the original sources of content. Baidu has a lot less resources for this task than Google (but Baidu also has a lot less websites to deal with as they are focusing on the Mainland Chinese market). You as a website publisher should make sure that all your content is originally created for your website, not curated or copied from other websites. To make sure Baidu picks up your original content fast, push it to Baidu over their API (your Chinese marketing agency can help you with that), because often Baidu considers that page being the owner of the content, that they first found it on.

1.4.2.1.2.13 Baiduspider Https Fetch Upgrade

Release Date: Aug. 30, 2017

Target: Promotion of websites using the more secure https protocol. Baidu announced to crawl https URLs faster, more often and to rank them better.

Todo for your SEO: Fun fact - although Baidu promotes to use SSL on your websites, they still allow you to visit Baidu search without https. Recommendation to be better than Baidu in this task: redirect all visitors to the http version of your website to the secured https version. Also make sure that all the resources (JS, CSS, images, fonts, ...) you use for your website, also come from secured URLs.

1.4.2.1.2.14 Baidu Breeze Algorithm Update

Release Date: Sep. 30, 2017

Target: Devalue websites that use clickbait title tags - especially titles pretending to provide services not existing on the actual website. The websites in focus usually pretended to offer downloads, webcasting or alike.

Todo for your SEO: MAke sure that you do not make false promises with your title tag. Avoid signal words like “download” if you do not provide a download on that very page, or “buy now” if there is no buying option on that specific page, ...

1.4.2.1.2.15 Baidu Lightning Algorithm Update

Release Date: Oct. 10, 2017

Target: Promote faster websites in mobile search results and devalue slower websites. In the first increment, websites loading in less than 2 seconds would get a promotion in

rankings, while websites with loading times or more than 3 seconds experiencing downgrading in the rankings. No effect would be experienced by websites loading between 2 and 3 seconds - mobile.

Todo for your SEO: Optimize the pages speed of the website. That is not only for loading time of the resources, but also for rendering, as Baidu more and more sends the Baidu rendering bot and we must assume, that not far in the future, Baidu will implement Google Core Web Vitals similar aspects into their pagespeed evaluation.

1.4.2.1.2.16 Baidu Thunder Algorithm Update

Release Date: Nov. 31, 2017

Target: Penalization of websites trying to gain better rankings with fake or forced clicks on the search results. In order to avoid manipulation through competitors by faking clicks, Baidu would take into consideration further aspects that are unique to high quality websites in order to decide if more clicks are likely or not.

Todo for your SEO: It is known by experts, that Baidu heavily responds to CTR in the search results and promote pages that get more clicks than others. But shady SEOs have started to use this knowledge to fake CTR by using bot services to click on these results and or by hiring people to click on the client's snippets.

That is a Blackhat method and should be avoided.

1.4.2.1.2.17 Baidu Breeze Algorithm Update 2.0

Release Date: Apr. 26, 2018

Target: Devalue websites officially offering downloads but actually offering a different download instead.

Example: announcing the download of a novel, but the actual download being an app. Also in focus are websites offering fake download links that either lead to “no resource found” or linking to other websites instead of providing the announced download.

Todo for your SEO: Simply stick to the truth. Do not announce downloads of stuff you do not really offer.

1.4.2.1.2.18 Baidu Beacon-Fire Algorithm Update 2.0

Release Date: May 18, 2018

Target: Further efforts to devalue websites that try stealing private user information such as mobile phone numbers and websites using malicious click fraud techniques.

Todo for your SEO: Keep the amount of information you request from users through forms to an absolute minimum. Do not use malicious techniques, to gather information you shall not have.

1.4.2.1.2.19 Baidu Aurora Algorithm Update 2.0

Release Date: May 31, 2018

Target: Penalizing websites that communicate fake or random publication dates in order to pretend being more up-to-date than it actually is the case. The way the publication and updating information are communicated to the crawler shall be through JSON-LD (not using Schema.org but Baidu own vocabulary:

<https://ziyuan.baidu.com/college/articleinfo?id=2210>).

1.4.2.1.2.20 Baidu Drizzle Algorithm Update 2.0

Release Date: Jul. 15, 2018

Target: Devalue websites using title fraud to trick users into visiting their websites from Baidu search results. This includes pretending to be official websites of brands, keyword stuffing and alike.

Todo for your SEO: Be careful with the use of brand names you are not owning. Avoid words like “official” in connection with brands you do not own.

For example if you sell Nike shoes and you sell the “official” collection created for basketball superstar Michael Jordan, you still avoid the word “official”.

1.4.2.1.2.21 Baidu Hurricane Algorithm Update 2.0

Release Date: Sep. 17, 2018

Target: Penalizing websites that copy content from other websites or WeChat accounts, as well as only curating websites collecting news content from various other sources, including rewriting original content from other sources.

Todo for your SEO: Create original content. If you are curating some content, make sure that the original content on every page is more than 60%.

1.4.2.1.2.22 Baidu Breeze Algorithm Update 3.0

Release Date: Oct. 25, 2018

Target: Penalize websites with fake download buttons, advertisements that pretend being download buttons and websites leading to downloading malware.

Todo for your SEO: Do not play foul tricks on your visitors.

1.4.2.1.2.23 Baidu Ice Bucket Algorithm Update 5.0

Release Date: Nov. 29, 2018

Target: Optimizing the search experience for users of the Baidu mobile app. Baidu didn't notice any specific aspects this update looks out for, but offers a link for general optimization practices for mobile websites:

<https://ziyuan.baidu.com/college/documentinfo?id=2492>

1.4.2.1.2.24 Baidu Beacon-Fire Algorithm Update 2.5

Release Date: Mar. 21, 2019

Target: Further efforts to penalize websites that hijack Baidu users through redirecting users after accessing the website from Baidu search results or redirecting the user when trying to click the “back” button of the browser.

Baidu claims that such websites often are harmful and might spread viruses and malware.

Todo for your SEO: Do not play foul tricks on your visitors.

1.4.2.1.2.25 Baidu Unknown Algorithm Update

Release Date: May 9, 2019

Uncommunicated update with heavy impacts on the Baidu SERPs, which we could recognize because of big websites dropping in Searchmetrics SEO Visibility in China.

1.4.2.1.2.26 Baidu Hurricane Algorithm Update 3.0

Release Date: Aug. 01, 2019

Target: Devalue websites without clear topical focus. In Baidu’s opinion a website high in quality would cover one

topical niche and not publish articles of unrelated topics. This is often the case with article directories that have the intent to build questionable links to other websites (a largely spread Black Hat SEO technique in China).

Critics: Many regular websites such as personal blogs also cover multiple topics without being spammy websites. Hopefully Baidu can recognize the difference by implementing different further factors to identify unfocused spammy websites.

Todo for your SEO: Build clear topical and functional silos. Do not mix too many of such silos on one domain. If using the same domain, separate such silos by publishing them on different sub domains.

Example: place the ecommerce on `shop.mydomain.com.cn` and the support forum on `board.mydomain.com.cn` and the magazin on `blog.mydomain.com.cn`

1.4.2.1.2.27 Baidu Unknown Algorithm Update

Release Date: Jan. 16, 2020

Uncommunicated update with heavy impacts on the Baidu SERPs, which we could recognize because of big websites dropping in Searchmetrics SEO Visibility in China.

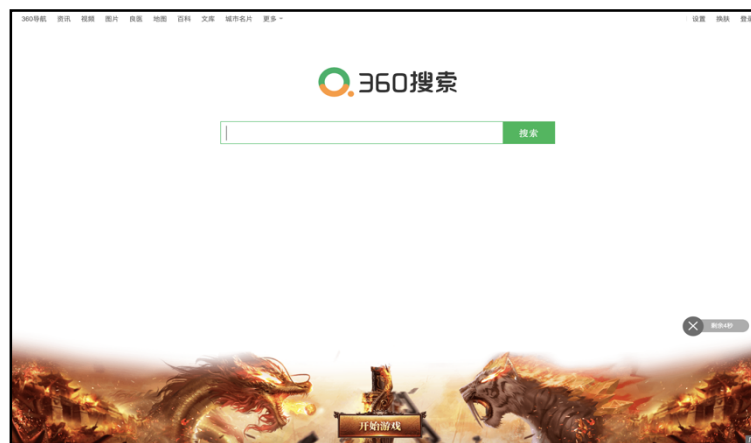
1.4.2.1.2.28 Baidu Unknown Algorithm Update

Release Date: Mar. 26, 2020

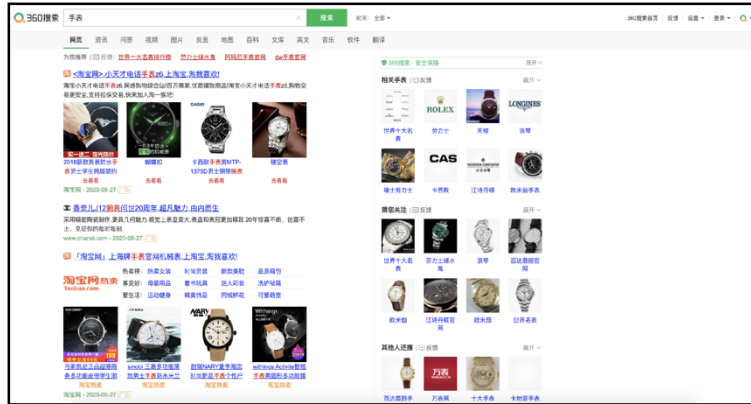
Uncommunicated update with heavy impacts on the Baidu SERPs, which we could recognize because of big websites dropping in Searchmetrics SEO Visibility in China.

1.4.2.2 Qihoo / 360search

360search was introduced to the Chinese users and quickly adopted by many in 2012. The internet company which was famous for their free anti virus software and also offers a popular browser software, made an important into more search engine diversity for the Chinese market with their search engine.



Screenshot: Qihoo Homepage



Screenshot: Qihoo Desktop search for “手表” (hand wrist watch)



Screenshots: Qihoo Mobile Homepage and Qihoo Mobile search for “手表排行榜” (hand wrist watch rankings)

The search engine result pages (SERPs) of Qihoo look very

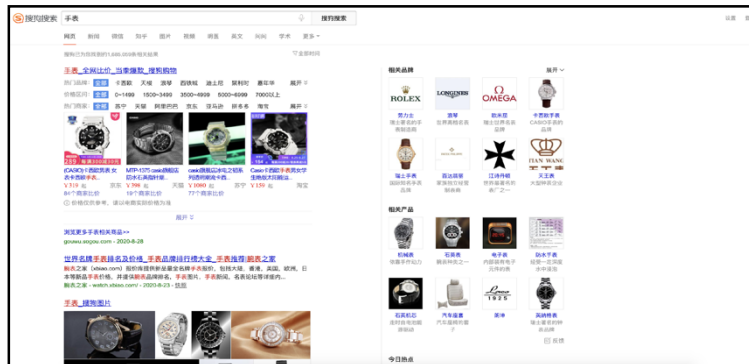
similar to those we know from Baidu.

1.4.2.3 Sogou

While the search engine Sogou.com was developed by the company Sohu.com, it was aquired by Tencent in 2020, is the only search engine that can search public WeChat accounts and is the default search engine to be used by QQ.



Screenshot: Sogou Desktop Homepage



Screenshot: Sogou Desktop search for “手表” (hand wrist watch)



Screenshots: Sogou Mobile Homepage and Sogou Mobile search for “手表排行榜” (hand wrist watch rankings)

The search engine result pages (SERPs) of Sogou look very similar to those we know from Baidu.

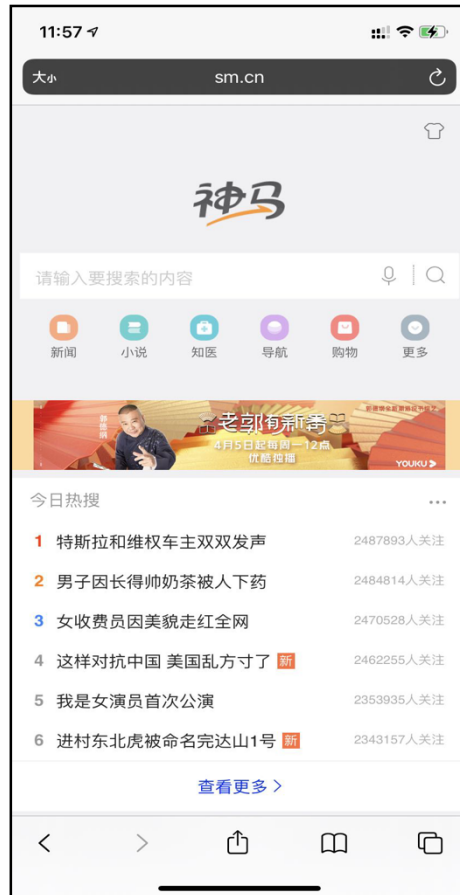
1.4.2.4 Shenma

Shenma dedicates to mobile search, so it's mobile only search engine, which can be used on mobile browser or its own APP.

Because of its mobile DNA its search features focus on providing navigator/map and novel search, as people on the public transportation like to read novel.

Secondly it's owned by Alibaba, so it owns a very strong shopping/product search.

Other decisions like medication search are also fitting to the competitive environment Shenma targets. Because Baidu is considered by many people to have a bad reputation in medical search, Shenma was able to gain some market share in this field as well.



Screenshot: Shenma Mobile Homepage

1.5 Ecommerce in China

Different from Europe and the USA, where you can find lots of online shops that can somehow compete in their niches against big players like Amazon and Ebay, the situation in Mainland China seems extremely different.

Big ecommerce platforms (comparable to Amazon) are offering businesses to run stores within the platform. For the client that is easy - they have one point of contact, no matter what they buy, pay through the platform and receive their goods.

There are brands selling directly through these platforms, bigger vendors offering their products but even smaller sellers, all on the same platform.

Of course, that is not only one platform - there are multiple. But they all have one thing in common: they are trusted by the Chinese people.

You will rarely find people shopping online in online shops that are not part of these platforms.

So if you plan to sell your products in China - you will have to choose one or a few of these ecommerce platforms to sell on.

Some of the most commonly used ones for B2C are:

- Taobao.com
- Tmall.com
- Jd.com

The most commonly used ones for B2B are:

- 1688.com
- b2b.baidu.com

Once your brand is well established, having your own eCommerce site in China is valid and works very well.

Brands can always have all the latest products at full price to loyal customers, who don't appreciate Tmall/JD's discounted products that their neighbors might have bought too.

However, for less well known brands, eCom platforms are a better idea to start with, as it is easier for users to complete the purchase, besides their higher trust on the platforms over the less known (eventually foreign) brand.

1.5.1 Customer life cycle in Ecommerce

Although online shoppers usually stay on the known platforms such as Taobao, Jindong and Tmall for shopping, turn to friends and peers as well to Social Media for getting inspired and exchanging ideas on what to shop, they still do their research online, using search engines like Baidu and visiting websites and articles they found on that way.

Particularly for foreign brands just embark on Tmall, where the algorithm pushes the products to customers, who don't know the brands usually turn to Baidu to search for 'Is this brand a well-known brand?', or 'Is this brand really from UK?', 'Is the brand's product produced in UK?', etc.

In the past, there were incidents that some Chinese companies created western style brand names, some even registered the trademark in Europe/US, and promoted their western origin, but with their products actually designed and produced in China.

This makes the searching on Baidu an indispensable step in the

customer journey, and ranking the brand website on the brand term search is critical on Baidu.

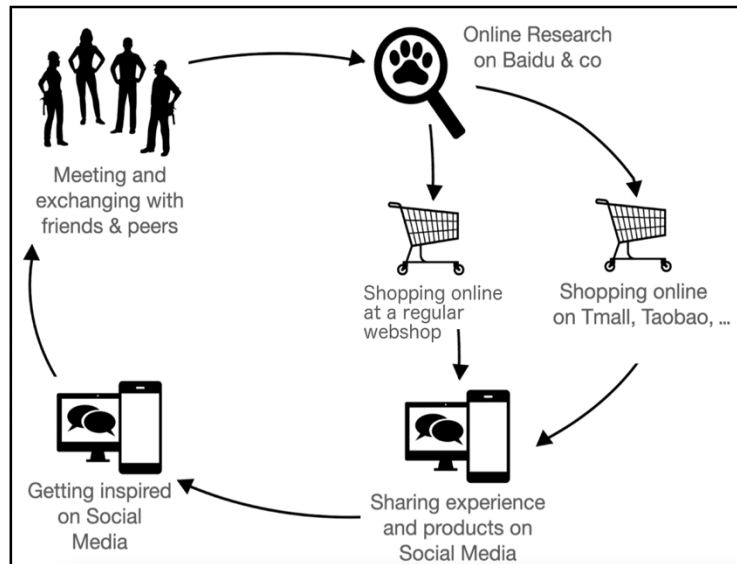


Image: Online Customer Life Cycle

Apart from the shopping platforms, established brands are recommended to run their own online shops, as loyal customers do value the benefits shopping directly from the brand have.

In order to sell well in China, one needs to be aware of this customer lifecycle and prepare not only the stores on Tmall, Taobao and Wechat, but also optimize the own website and invest in time, effort and money in PR (Public Relations), advertising, Social Media campaigns and KOL marketing.

SEO is needed in both situations:

1. Your own online shop needs to be well optimized in order to have a chance showing up for transactional

search queries on Baidu.

2. Your product listings on Taobao and other ecommerce platforms also need to be optimized (especially the right keyword choice is important) in order to have your listings show up not only in Taobao search but also in Baidu search results.

2. What is SEO

SEO is the English abbreviation of Search Engine Optimization and means the process of optimizing the (search engine's) search results for a specific website.

The target of SEO is to enhance the amount of organic search traffic (visitors from non paid search results on Baidu and alike) to the optimized website basically through achieving higher positions in the SERPs (Search Engine Result Pages).

An SEO (person who performs SEO) tries to understand how Baidu sees websites and how they decide which page needs to rank higher than others.

The areas an SEO can influence to get Baidu “think“ a website deserves better positions within the SERPs are

- Technical and Structural SEO - optimizing the Website structure to help Baidu crawling it easier and understanding the structure of it
- Technical Template SEO - optimizing a website's HTML template to better show Baidu which parts of the website play which role in describing the topic of a page well.
- Editorial OnPage SEO - optimizing the words that are used within the page elements and the main content to better describe what the page is about - usually by using keywords people might use as search terms.
- OffPage - Building links from other websites pointing to the own website in order to show Baidu that a website is well known and respected.

The techniques that SEOs use to influence these different areas of SEO are diverse. Some are within the guidelines that Baidu sees as legit. Others are clearly trying to game ranking factors Baidu uses.

2.1 White Hat SEO

When SEOs follow the rules the search engines allow to optimize a website, they are called “White Hat“. That includes everything that changes the content of a website (including relevant text with keywords) and requesting links from business partners.

2.2 Black Hat SEO

In the moment an SEO tries to game the search engines and get to rank websites in the top positions that are clearly not worth ranking there by disrespecting the rules for webmasters that Baidu and co promote, we call it “Black Hat“.

Black hat can start as small as buying or exchanging links, not for the well being of the visitors, but only to get better rankings on the search engines result pages. Especially Baidu still seems to react positively on high amounts of links no matter what quality they have.

Some black hat SEOs go so far to not only buy links, but to use their own crawlers and bots to automatically place links in guestbooks, forums and blog comments.

Even more illegal it gets if they hack other peoples websites to inject their own links.

OnPage factors can be the target of Black Hat SEOs also.

Knowing Baidu values the usage of keywords on the website, they include keyword rich text in the source code but hide this “not well reading text“ from the eyes of a regular website visitor using different techniques like white font on white background, positioning the text out of the limitations of the computer screen, simply placing it behind an image and many more.

Baidu regularly works on their own algorithms to uncover such manipulation attempts and penalizes (or if the SEO is lucky, they simply degrade) a website using such techniques.

We clearly advice to learn to understand how Baidu values websites, but not to use Black Hat techniques at all.

This might result in slow (sometimes very slow) growth but keeps you on the safe side of the game.

2.3 How do Search Engines work?

The following lines are equally to be understood for most modern world search engines.

There are no special secrets on how Baidu works.

But still you need to understand what a search engine does in

order to understand how to help them rank your websites better (if they deserve better rankings).

2.3.1 The quest of a search engine

A search engine's target is to deliver the best results possible to the users searches.

They don't do that for good karma. They do that to make you happy and ensure you won't switch to another search engine soon. This again they do to sell their services. And this brings them money.

For most search engines the way to make money from search results is to sell ads on their search results pages. On Baidu you can see them marked with „广告“ (Advertisement).

If the search engines fail to satisfy their users with good search results, they will lose their users and won't make money.

2.3.2 The difference between crawling, indexing and ranking

2.3.2.1 Crawling

Crawling means to access and scan a document.

Within the crawling process Baidu also tries to understand your pages.

They will also compare your pages with what they already have in their index. And they will find new links and store them for crawling later.

Baidu tries to crawl the entire internet (focusing on the Chinese

speaking world - while not neglecting the other languages).

For 2022 onwards however, it is expected by experts, that Baidu will implement mechanisms to restrict the part of the internet they crawl to Chinese websites in Simplified Chinese and websites hosted close to or in China.

The reasons are obvious: Baidu is targeting mainly mainland Chinese users which are mainly searching in Chinese. Crawling and indexing websites in other languages or websites, that are potentially too slow for Chinese users (because they are hosted in other countries) adds on the effort to keep the index up to date.

2.3.2.2 Indexing

Baidu does not index everything they crawl.

Baidu does evaluate thoughtfully if a document they just crawled is worth it to become indexed.

They try to avoid too many duplicates.

They would deindex your pages if you violate their rules.

To store and maintain the index needs incredibly high resources. So it makes sense for Baidu to not index everything they crawl.

2.3.2.3 Ranking

Not everything Baidu has crawled and indexed will in the end show up in rankings when somebody is searching for keywords.

For each single search phrase (keyword) that is being searched

for, Baidu would check the most relevant documents and rank them in order of relevance.

This could mean that many indexed documents never get ranked at all, because they are not relevant for the currently searched for terms or are simply not relevant enough to get listed good enough to be seen by the actual user.

2.4 Creating Spider friendly websites ...

... is actually quite easy: stick to plain HTML, make use of `<a href>` links, avoid Javascript, Flash or similar for implementing content or links.

The following points are just for quick reference. Some of them will be discussed more detailed later in this book.

2.4.1 Javascript

Baidu has been known to not proceed Javascript. And although they started it in 2017 (we can see Baidu Rendering bot visiting pages), we can say from the experience with Google quite some years now executing Javascript on websites - they will not find every content or every link you “hide” within such scripts.

If you really want Baidu to see what you plan to display through Javascript (be it content or links) - do not do it. Use plain HTML text and you will be safe for the next couple of years.

If you decide to make use of Javascript frameworks, to implement content to your website, you must accept to get it crawled and indexed much slower.

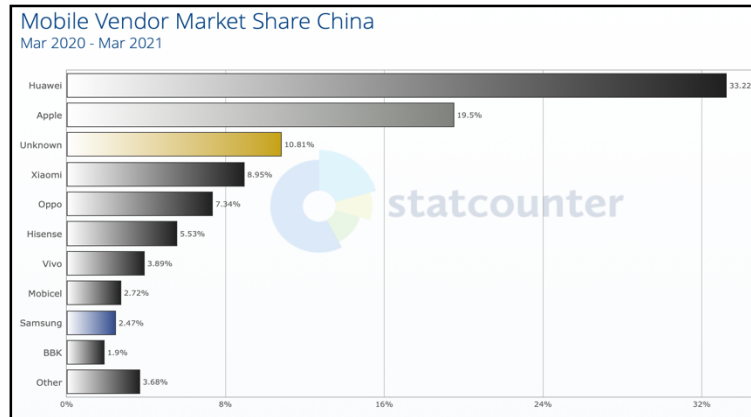
Baidu usually send their text based crawlers, which do not execute Javascript first, and send their JS rendering bot later, if they noticed it is needed (or just randomly).

2.4.2 Flash

MacOS and iOS banning Flash these days does not make it a good point to use it anyways.

And even if Baidu researchers could find ways to clearly interpret Flash and extract and analyze the content found within, they will not even start investigating right now.

The reason is Apple.



Screenshot: Apple has a 19.5% market share in smartphones in China; Source: <https://gs.statcounter.com/vendor-market-share/mobile/china/#monthly-202003-202103-bar>

Apple is such widely spread in computers and smartphones usage, that using flash on a website would make many users not fully be able to consume your websites with pleasure.

And Baidu wants to make their users happy.

So not paying attention to Flash at all makes sense for Baidu SEO.

2.4.3 Flat linking structure

Starting from your homepage a user / the bot shall be able to reach every other (important) page on your website within 3-5 clicks.

But be aware - flooding your pages with hundreds of links, making thousands of pages accessible within just a few clicks is not what that means.

Links still need to “show” which documents are more important than others. And this is stated through the click depth (how many clicks are at least needed to reach a page) and the number of internal links pointing to a specific page.

For reference please see the next point: “Hierarchical linking structure”.

2.4.4 Hierarchical linking structure

Linking from the homepage to any other page of your website might be helpful for Baidu to easily find every other page of your website.

But it does not help Baidu to understand your website structure.

Baidu will not understand which page is more important - product category (which stands for a whole topic of products) or a single product detail page (which might satisfy only one in a hundred visitors).

You should try to “explain“ the structure of your website by using your internal linking structure wisely:

- The homepage shall only link to the main sections of your website (shop, forum, ...)
- The shop homepage links to the main shopping categories only

- The main shopping categories of your shop have a sidebar linking to their sub categories
- The sub categories link to the products

Implementing such a (main) structure of internal links will help Baidu to understand which page of your website basically belongs to which section / sub topic.

2.4.5 Internal contextual links

Still, the homepage is usually the most powerful page on your website.

So if you have a product that really needs more SEO power, introduce it on the homepage already - this one link will have more power within such an internal structure than in an „let's link to everything from every page“ structure.

If you place such links from within the pages content (instead of the header, sidebar, footer or any other part, that clearly shows “I am not the main content but some supplemental part of the website layout“) they will even gain more power.

2.4.6 Content

The Baidu spider will need text content on a page in order to understand what this page is about.

The more you write about the page's topic, the better the search engine will understand.

For parts of your website which the spider (search engine bot) does not understand, you should help the spider to understand them.

Images for example deserve a name that shows what the image shows, they should get an alt attribute and possibly a title

attribute.

Do not avoid images because Baidu can not interpret them.

Actually Baidu can interpret them - an image tells Baidu, that this website is made for humans and not only for bots.

Now you only need to help the spider to understand the content of the image by wise usage of the image file name, alt attribute and title attribute as well the text content that can be found next to the image tag in your website source code.

3. SEO for China

With Baidu being the dominating search engine in China with roughly 70% market share, SEO for China means basically SEO for Baidu.

Luckily all major search engines use similar methods on judging a website's strength.

So optimizing your website for Baidu will likewise optimize your website for Sogou, Qihoo and even for Bing and Google.

However, it is a good idea having a look on what the other search engines do, say and provide in tools.

Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools can help you with information on how search engine bots see your website. This is also valuable information when optimizing your website for Baidu.

If Google can't recognize any content on your website - it is very much likely that Baidu also won't be able seeing content.

But do not blindly trust all the information other (western) search engines pass forward to you.

If for example Google lighthouse tool tells you your website would have bad response times, it might as well be because you are checking a website being hosted in Mainland China from a lighthouse powered user agent in USA or Europe.

Performing the same test from within China might state lightning fast server response time.

The other bigger search engines in China as well provide their own Zhanzhang (webmaster tools) you definitely should have a look into.

But Baidu SEO does have a few special topics to look into though. So do not stop reading here if you know Google SEO already.

SEO for Chinese web search engines like Baidu, Sogou and Qihoo

In this chapter we will explain in more detail what the aspects of SEO for China are. What do you need to pay attention to. What are the steps you need to perform. What you should not do. What can you expect to happen and what not.

Because Baidu is the dominating Chinese web search engine, many of the following practices are referring to Baidu.

But essentially all Chinese web search engines work in a similar way - although the dominance of some ranking factors might differ - you will always be on a good path when using our Baidu SEO best practices.

Some of our recommendations will be supported by data gathered for the Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study in late 2020, which can be downloaded for free [here](#):



Get your copy here: <https://www.searchmetrics.com/knowledge-hub/studies/baidu-ranking-factors-correlation-study/>

3.1 Domains and URLs

3.1.1 Toplevel Domain / TLD

To rank well in China you will need a .cn or .com.cn TLD. This myth you will easily find quoted on blogs all around the internet. We think this is because they all copy from each other without testing by themselves.

Actually this is untrue. You can rank on Baidu.com with nearly any TLD.

It can be .com or .net and even a foreign ccTLD like .co or .de would be possible to get ranked on Baidu.

Many of the biggest Chinese brands do use a .com domain instead of .cn or .com.cn even though they might only target the Chinese market.

Some well known western brands as well do use their .com domain and set up a section for the Chinese market - like Apple.com.

It is however true that it makes sense to use a TLD the Chinese people are used to.

So using Chinese TLDs like .cn and .com.cn makes as much sense as using a .com TLD for your website.

Rather uncommon TLDs tend to get less clicks even if ranked

well. This again will show Baidu that the website is not as much trusted as websites that get more clicks.

So although it is theoretically possible to rank with non-generic foreign TLDs, like .fr or .de you might not want to use them for your strategy.

We recommend to choose one of those TLDs for gaining good rankings and good CTR:

- .com
- .cn
- .com.cn
- .net
- .org

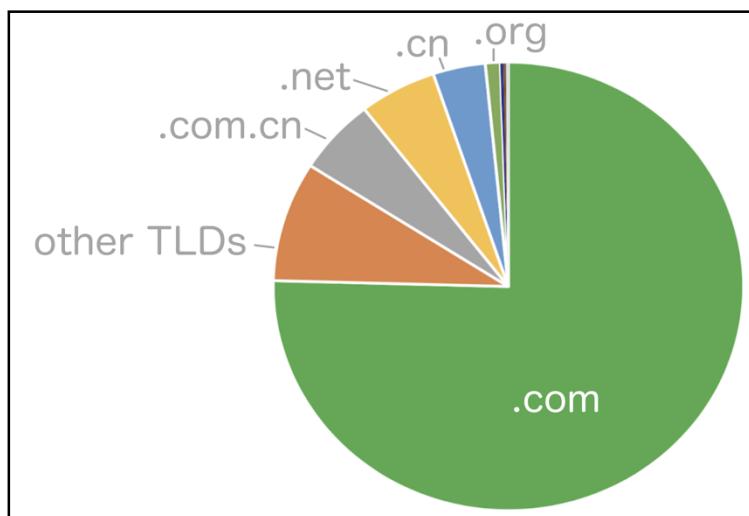


Image: Almost 75% of all rankings within Baidu Top 10 search results (already excluding results of baidu.com URL rankings like baike.baidu.com) are on .com domains followed by .com.cn, .net, .cn, org. Source: Searchmetrics 2020 Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study

Did you notice that many Chinese brands would use a .com address?

Whatever the reason is - they prove that you can be successful with .com domain on Baidu.

Here are a few examples of successful Chinese brands with a .com domain:

- baidu.com
- sogou.com
- xiaomi.com
- youku.com
- iqiyi.com
- zhihu.com
- bilibili.com
- douban.com
- 163.com
- tianqi.com
- cctv.com
- cntv.com

3.1.2 Domain Name

Choosing a domain name is not easy. You should use something that people can easily remember (such as apple.com) and that people understand (in China maybe pingguo.com might have been the better choice?).

You might have noticed that we chose only latin characters to

build these two examples - even the Chinese example. That is not because you couldn't register Chinese Character TLDs - you can! It is because you can more easily type in latin character URLs.

For the same syllables in latin letters you might come up with multiple possible Chinese Characters. So it is easier to use the latinized version from the beginning. But you may register the Chinese Characters version as well, just to protect (and redirect) it.

Another reason for using latinized Domain names over Chinese Character domain names is more true in the past than today: not all tools can flawlessly show Chinese Characters.

You might come up with some %UTF8-encoded strange looking URLs.

Marcus wrote a whole article on translating western brand names into Chinese. You might want to check it out on Searchmetrics: <https://blog.searchmetrics.com/us/branding-creating-chinese-company-names/>.

Whatever you decide - keeping your western brand name or choosing a new Chinese brand name - for your domain,

- Try to keep it short and simple.
- Do not use Chinese Characters but Pinyin without tone marks for the domain name
- You can use Pinyin/Chinese shortcuts (like the number 8 instead of “ba“ ... the word “Wuhan“ could as easily be written as “5han“).

- Avoid the number 4 as it sounds in Chinese similar to the word for “death“ which brings bad luck.
- Get the opinions of multiple Chinese native speakers you trust, before finally deciding for a domain name (make sure it is easy to remember, write and does not reflect bad luck to Chinese native speakers).

So which would be some good domain names of western Origin?

- apple.com
- bosch.cn
- siemens.cn

And some good domain names of Chinese origin?

- baidu.com
- sogou.com
- xiaomi.com

3.1.3 CN-Domain, Subdomain or Subfolder?

This is the typical question of an international website that needs to decide where to place multiple languages (or countries) on their website.

You already have an (international) website. Let's say it is a country- and language neutral .com-Domain like `www.example.com`. Where do you place the Chinese website?

- On a sub-domain like `cn.example.com`?
- Within a subfolder like `www.example.com/cn/`?

- Or would you rather use an all new domain like `www.example.cn` or `www.example.com.cn`?

This is a question asked from the western marketers point of view, eventually with some Google SEO experience.

But Baidu is not Google. While Google is a search engine that serves search results to many countries and languages, Baidu focuses clearly on a Chinese audience in Mainland China.

The Chinese audience in mainland China do read and write Simplified Chinese, they speak Mandarin.

Other languages and writing systems are uncommon. Even less common are they used to search the internet.

So for Baidu a website that hosts more than one language, might not be the best choice for a Chinese audience.

It is not so much that Baidu favors `.cn` or `.com.cn` domains (they don't).

It is more that they want to make sure their Chinese audience does have the best user experience possible on those websites that are listed on Baidu SERPs.

A website with many links towards other language pages, are less likely to provide a good user experience than a website being pure Chinese and linking mainly to other Chinese language pages.

So what is the best strategy now?

If you already go with international TLDs like .de for Germany or .fr for France, and you do not plan to combine them to one global .com-Domain in future, use a .cn or .com.cn domain for the Chinese website just for being consistent in your communication and structure (but also because a Chinese TLD helps gaining trust from the users).

If you are already using a subdomain approach like de.example.com for Germany or fr.example.com for France, it is possible to use cn.example.com for your Chinese website - if you can not go with ccTLD for the Chinese website.

If you are already using a subfolder structure like www.example.com/de/ for Germany or www.example.com/ch/fr/ for the French language (fr) being spoken in Switzerland (ch), you could use the same structure for China and the Chinese language as well.

You could - but it should not be your first choice.

A website using a sub folder structure for displaying different languages will naturally have at least 50% amount of pages in another language but Chinese (if two languages are represented).

Even more than 50% non-Chinese pages if the domain hosts more than 2 languages.

Setting up a subdomain for the Chinese version of the website would clearly show that the whole (subdomain hosted) website is mainly built for Chinese speaking visitors.

And even more clear would be a Chinese TLD.

We recommend Chinese ccTLD, which

- firstly gives more flexibility and autonomy to the SEO team to manage the local content, site hosting, Baidu webmaster tools
- secondly a Chinese ccTLD helps building higher trust on Chinese visitors, who tend to view the company has acquired extra web properties for the market and should have more local presence and support for local customers too.
- thirdly, a local Chinese ccTLD is even more “Chinese only” than a subdomain could be.

Our preference on the Chinese ccTLD, ranking from high to low:

1. .cn
2. .com.cn
3. .net.cn
4. .org.cn (for organizations)

We don't recommend on TLD with Chinese characters, like

- yourdomain.中国
- yourdomain.网址
- etc.

As of which needs visitors to switch from typing letters to Chinese.

Both solutions have in common that the (sub)domain clearly only contains Chinese content, while other language content is banned to other (sub)domains.

There might be situations when it is not easy to gain any valuable links any time soon from Chinese websites in order to build authority for your young new Chinese website.

If that is the case you might want to go with the subdomain strategy, as Baidu considers the main domain passing on (some) authority to subdomains.

Baidu (different from Google) does not see subdomains as unique standing websites, but as part of the domain.

This means that subdomains inherit some of the whole domain's link earned authority. This gives your Chinese website a little head start, compared to starting all by itself on a fresh cn-domain.

While Baidu (naturally) favors links from Chinese websites, even links from other language websites still count in building some authority.

But this point of view from Baidu - not taking subdomains as individual domains, also means that Baidu would see all the Non-Chinese content on your website - which certainly does not help a Mandarin only speaker to get along well with the website.

You see - how controversially one can look at this topic and

that it is not easy to make a good decision.

If you do not have a good consultant to support you with this decision, you might want to go with one of our preferred setups:

Our preferred international setup would look like this:

www.example.com	
www.example.com/uk/	(United Kingdom)
www.example.com/de/	(Germany)
www.example.com/be/	(Belgium)
www.example.com/be/fr/	(French for Belgium)
www.example.com/be/nl/	(Netherlands for Belgium)
www.example.com/hk/	(Hongkong)
www.example.com/hk/en/	(English for Hongkong)
www.example.com/hk/zh/	(Chinese for Hongkong)
www.example.cn/	(Chinese for China)
or	
www.example.com.cn/	(Chinese for China)
www.example.net.cn/	(Chinese for China)
www.example.org.cn/	(Chinese for China)

The second best solution for an international setup from SEO perspective: (number two, because Baidu would find other language content on the same domain - although it is other subdomains - at least one hint)

www.example.com	
www.example.com/uk/	(United Kingdom)
www.example.com/de/	(Germany)
www.example.com/be/	(Belgium)
www.example.com/be/fr/	(French for Belgium)
www.example.com/be/nl/	(Netherlands for Belgium)
www.example.com/hk/	(Hongkong)
www.example.com/hk/en/	(English for Hongkong)
www.example.com/hk/zh/	(Chinese for Hongkong)
cn.example.com/	(Chinese for China)

Probably the least technical issues you will have with this international setup only using ccTLDs (because of easier distribution of the international and the Chinese websites to separate servers):

www.example.com
(International distributor to the other websites)

www.example.co.uk	(United Kingdom)
www.example.de	(Germany)
www.example.be/	(Belgium)
www.example.be/fr/	(French for Belgium)
www.example.be/nl/	(Netherlands for Belgium)
www.example.com.hk	(Hongkong)
www.example.com.cn	(or .cn for China)

Still possible, but definitely not the number one solution
(because Baidu would find other language content not only on the same domain but even on the same subdomain):

www.example.com
www.example.com/uk/ (United Kingdom)
www.example.com/cn/ (Chinese for China)

This solution, which leads to having non-Chinese content on the same domain as Chinese content might lead to your Chinese content not ranking as well, as it could, if you are running an all-Chinese website.

3.1.3.1 A few words on links between different language pages

You will often read (because one blogger copies it from another) that Baidu doesn't like, if you link to foreign language websites.

They say you shall not link to your international websites. Even having your international websites are on the same domain would that not be good for your Baidu SEO.

Sometimes you will read Baidu doesn't like subdomains.

Well, do not believe all those blog posts from people just copying from each other.

They couldn't be more wrong with most of the above cited

statements.

- It is true that the link juice which enters one page will get distributed evenly (more or less) among the links pointing away from the page.
- It is true that a search engine will judge a page also based upon the pages it links to.

One could play Sherlock Holmes now and say if those last two statements are true, Baidu wouldn't like you to link to your international pages, as Baidu favors Chinese content all the way.

Now here is the truth:

If you really point to 20 different language pages and have another 20 internal links to further Chinese content, you will draw away attention from the important Chinese content.

There is a way around this dilemma: Do it like Apple.com.

They link from every page to one special international distribution page from where they link to every country's Apple-Website.

This makes it is only one link from all those Chinese pages to only one foreign content page. And quickly you will get both

1. A chance to jump to the country version websites from every single Chinese page

2. No distraction of Baidu bot from the important Chinese content (because it is only one link to a foreign content page - compared to many links to Chinese pages)

Hosting your Chinese content on the same domain as your other countries websites can be OK (see our discussion of the different setups above).

As long as you clearly show to Baidu which part is Chinese and which is for different language users, so they can easily not crawl and index the non-Chinese version.

1. Using a Chinese sub domain helps best on that topic (second best choice - if you stick to one domain is the language sub folder)
2. Implementing the right language tags (configure all of them correctly - even if you know Google wouldn't interpret them at all - Baidu and Bing do - so you should maintain them as exact as you can)
3. Implement Hreflang. Baidu doesn't use them (yet). But if they will some day, your site will be ready. And - the other search engines (Google, Bing) use them, so you don't do it for nothing.
 - But we recommend to **not** implement them in the source code of the Chinese pages - but in the XML-Sitemaps instead. That is because Hreflang tags in the source codes can be treated as links - and you do not want too many links to non-Chinese pages from your Chinese pages.

4. Keep your content language crystal clear: On the Chinese pages only use Chinese language! Avoid any English (or other language) word, you can avoid.

Baidu officially state that they do value subdomains and that subdomains gain a small part of the trust of the main domain. So different from Google, Baidu will give you a little power bonus on your subdomains, if you start with them.

3.1.3.2 Usage of Subdomains

Actually, Baidu even likes you to use subdomains. Using subdomains for Baidu SEO always makes sense, if the content you want to publish is not too closely related to the content of your main website - either in topics or in intention.

For example, if you focus on ecommerce on your `www.example.com.cn` and now you want to start a customer support bulletin board, it might make sense to publish it to `service.example.com.cn`.

The intention of your ecommerce website is to display products that people can buy. The topic of your ecommerce website is product focused.

The intention of your bulletin board is to allow people to post their questions (User Generated Content) and discuss with you over some problems. The topic of your bulletin board is problem solving.

Placing different topics and user intention to subdomains

instead of keeping them all on the same subdomain, makes it easier for Baidu to understand which part of your website serves which intention and which keywords.

Here are some examples of the hundreds of subdomains qq.com uses and ranks for:

- www.qq.com
- auto.qq.com
- bbs.qq.com
- book.qq.com
- browser.qq.com
- daxue.qq.com
- ebook.qq.com
- edu.qq.com
- egame.qq.com
- fashion.qq.com
- film.qq.com
- finance.qq.com
- games.qq.com
- news.qq.com
- sports.qq.com
- support.qq.com
- tech.qq.com
- weixin.qq.com
- weread.qq.com

Here are some examples of the 79 subdomains the video platform iqiyi.com uses and ranks for:

- www.iqiyi.com
- auto.iqiyi.com
- baby.iqiyi.com

- child.iqiyi.com
- echannel.iqiyi.com
- edu.iqiyi.com
- fun.iqiyi.com
- games.iqiyi.com
- help.iqiyi.com
- henan.iqiyi.com
- music.iqiyi.com
- pc.game.iqiyi.com
- sports.iqiyi.com
- store.iqiyi.com
- talkshow.iqiyi.com
- tech.iqiyi.com
- trailer.iqiyi.com
- wenxue.iqiyi.com
- zhaopin.iqiyi.com
- ...

Do you really have to use subdomains for different topic / intentional content?

No, you can still use different folder structures to get the same result: a clear structure. Baidu could as well understand that

- www.example.com.cn/shop/ is the ecommerce part of your website
- www.example.com.cn/service/ is the service bulletin board part of your website

Your most important content - the content that really is the DNA of your website - should be positioned on the www. subdomain. There is a clear correlation between good rankings

and the URL ranking is a www-URL:

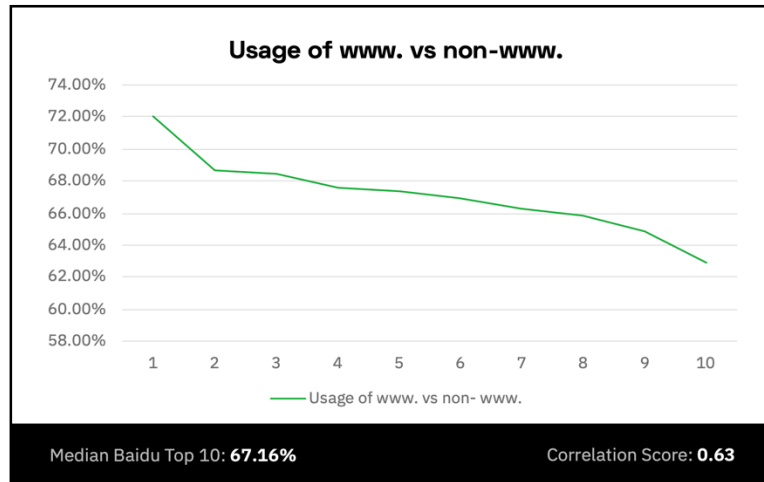


Image: 72% of all URLs ranking on position one on Baidu.com are on a www subdomain. In average 67.16% of all top 10 ranking URLs are on the www subdomain of a website. Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study of 2020.

Using subdomains for separating clearly different intentional parts of the website will help Baidu understand the structure a little better.

You can help Baidu to understand these differences even better clearly *siloing* your website.

With proper siloing Baidu can not only read from the structure of your URL but as well of your internal linking structure.

See **3.10.11.7 Siloing** for details on using internal linking strategies for siloing purposes.

If you decide for a Chinese only website, when to place a topic / area onto a new sub domain and when into a new sub folder?

Our recommendation:

Use sub domains when the user intention is absolutely different:

- bulletin board / forum
- ecommerce shop
- blog
- ...

Use sub folders when the user intention is the same but only the topic is different:

- men's clothes
- women's clothes
- a special brand's shopping products
- for sale products
- children's toy products
- ...

3.1.4 Which Mobile Website Setup?

We are living not only in a digital age. We are already living in an mobile age. Everyone uses smartphones all day long for chatting on apps, stalking their friends social profiles and for surfing the internet.

Only a website which displays well on smartphones will get used by smartphone users. So we need to think about our mobile website.

There are different types how you can set up a mobile websites:

- Separate mobile website on a Subdomain like `m.example.com.cn`
- Dynamic serving your mobile website to mobile users
- Responsive web design

3.1.4.1 Mobile Subdomain

You will need to build two different web designs. One for your desktop website and one for your mobile website.

Depending on the user agent you will either keep the user on the desktop version of the website, or you suggest the user to go to the mobile version instead (or the other way around if the user visits the mobile version first).

You will have to maintain not only those two designs but the structure and the content of the two websites as well.

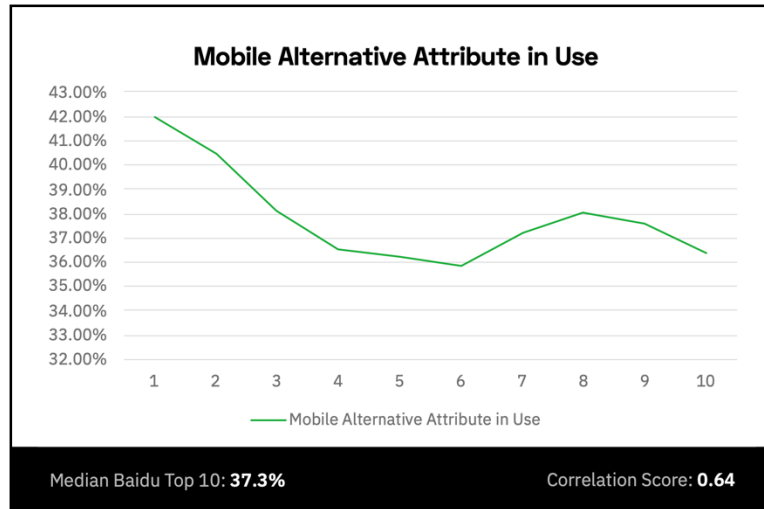


Image: 37.3% of all URLs ranking on page one of Baidu.com are do have a separate Desktop and Mobile website. This we can conclude from the “alternate” link in the source code. Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study

Although still many Chinese websites run on that structure of a separate mobile and desktop version, less than half of all URLs ranking on Baidu position one uses this approach. It is outdated and should not be implemented if you start with a new website.

3.1.4.2 Dynamic serving

This practically means that you only hold one set of URLs and depending on the user agent you will either serve the mobile or the desktop version of the website.

For this you will need to build two different web designs. One for your desktop website and one for your mobile website.

You will have to maintain not only those two designs but the structure and the content of the website as well.

3.1.4.3 Responsive Webdesign

For this type of website you will only maintain one website. There is no different mobile or desktop version. The content for both websites is the same. So will only have one place to maintain the content.

Your webdesign will need to be built to fit all devices. This is a little effort but it is worth it. Because once coded you will never get problems with screen devices again.

Your website will automatically be displayed in the right resolution, floating design,

Just take care of the “how“. You should ask your coders to only rely on breaking points, floating and CSS. There shall no javascript be necessary to layout your website to the right device.

Not only from the maintenance point of view the responsive web design approach is suggested. Also from the SEO point of view the responsive web design makes sense.

Search engines like Baidu can easily recognize it. They will also not be confused by multiple URL sets. They have clear focus on ranking the same URLs for all devices within their search results.

And even the official recommendations of Baidu (and Google)

are to use responsive web design.

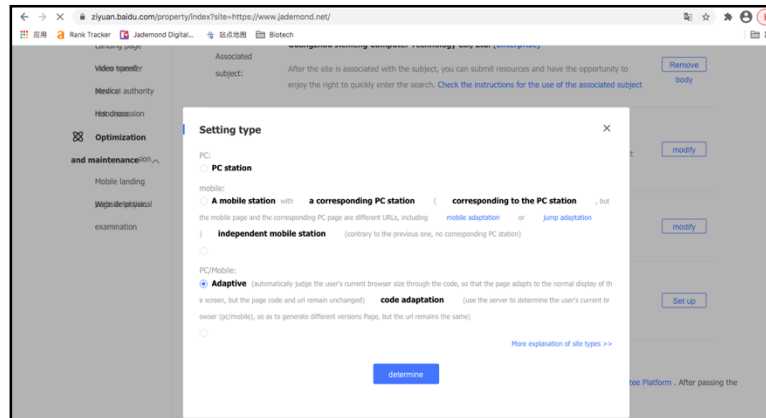


Image: Screenshot from Baidu webmaster tools settings page. The website owner gets to assign if the property is a Desktop type, mobile type or “adaptive” (responsive) type website

3.1.5 URL Design

3.1.5.1 Speaking URLs

Did you ever hear of “speaking URLs”? That basically means that you can see from the URL already what the page it relates to is about.

An URL saying

www.domain.com/clothes/

will easily tell you it is about clothes, right?!

An URL saying

www.domain.com/clothes/shirts/

is not just about clothes but shirts.

An URL saying

www.domain.com/clothes/shirts/red-lady-style-vneck.html

is a red lady style V-neck shirt.

Technically you can build speaking URLs in Chinese as well.

<https://www.example.com.cn/精品店/男/鞋/>

Image: URL with Chinese Characters

The recommendation however is to not use Chinese Characters.

While Baidu could easily handle and rank such URLs well, not every software might be able showing it correctly. Some softwares might display the UTF8 codes instead of Characters (which is good, because Baidu understands this as well and would retransform them to Chinese Characters).

Some other softwares however would only display an empty square instead of a character. This won't enable a user to copy and paste such a malformed URL into a browser.

[https://www.example.com.cn/ □□□/□/□/](https://www.example.com.cn/)

Image: URL with Chinese Characters how it might show up in some softwares

<https://www.example.com.cn/%E7%B2%BE%E5%93%81%E5%BA%97/%E7%94%B7/%E9%9E%8B/>

Image: URL with Chinese Characters how it might show up UTF-encoded in some softwares

Both cases will lead to users not being able to read the URL.

But this is different with latinized URLs.

Chinese users are used to type Pinyin with their English standard keyword and smartphone in order to get the right Chinese Characters suggested (just like the t8 autocomplete on your smartphone - the tool simply guesses what you want to write).



Screenshot: Typing Chinese Characters using latin letters (called Pinyin) with an Chinese Pinyin input method.

So Pinyin style URLs (latinized Chinese Characters are just Pinyin) can also easily be recognized by the human users as well.

<https://www.example.com.cn/shangdian/nan/xie/>

Image: Example how an URL could look like if using Pinyin to form readable latin character URLs.

Baidu also understands Pinyin. You could simply check by typing Pinyin into the Baidu search bar. You will get results matching the Chinese characters Baidu thinks you wanted to type in.



Screenshot: Baidu input suggest “knows” which Chinese Characters you might mean even if you only type Chinese words in Pinyin. The first suggestion in the screenshot “苹果” is exactly what “pingguo” means.

But you will also often find English URLs on Chinese websites or mixed URLs between English and Pinyin.

<https://www.example.com.cn/shop/men/shoes/>

Screenshot: Typing Chinese Characters using latin letters (called Pinyin) with an Chinese Pinyin input method.

3.1.5.2 URL structures

Do you have a very complex website? Do you have a web shop with multiple categories? Do you have products with little information (especially when importing large product catalogues from external databases you will not always have the best content for each single product)? Do you publish content

on a blog? Do you offer customer support on a bulletin board?

Mixing all these contents on the same website can make it difficult for Baidu to clearly understand the intention of your website.

You should build a clear structure that makes it easy for Baidu to understand which part of the website serves which intention and topic.

3.1.5.2.1 Using structures to communicate page types

You could set up multiple subdomains with one subdomain serving one clear purpose.

The popular shopping website 1688.com for example makes use of different sub domains for the different shopping-categories, for product listing pages and for product detail pages:

- <https://www.1688.com/> (home page)
- <https://fuzhuang.1688.com/> (clothes)
- <https://sport.1688.com/> (sports articles)
- <https://muying.1688.com/> (baby articles)
- <https://home.1688.com/> (articles for the home)
- <https://show.1688.com/> (product listing pages)
- <https://detail.1688.com/> (product detail pages)
- <https://s.1688.com/> (search pages)

You could as well set up multiple folders clearly dividing the purposes of the different content parts of your website -

especially if you are staying in the main purpose of your website, it makes sense to stay on the www subdomain (see above).

The above introduced structure helps Baidu to understand that all pages on this subdomain / folder are of a specific page type.

3.1.5.2.2 Using structures to communicate topical relevance

Another approach in building URL structures is to show the path one can use to navigate towards the current page. Look at the URL as a kind of breadcrumb navigation.

If you placed your product in this folder `www.example.com.cn/shop/ladies/shirts/13232323.html`, Baidu would easily see from the URL structure, that your product with the ID 13232323 most likely is a ladies short which is for sale.

This is not because Baidu can find “shop“ and “ladies“ and “shirts“ in the URL, but because below each of these folders Baidu will find a lot of content belonging to these categories:

/shop/

- might have some text telling that you can buy things
- might have product lists with prices
- might have payment options
- might tell about the shipping costs

These all are signals for Baidu that the content within the folder

/shop/ is about shopping / ecommerce.

/ladies/

- will most likely contain the word ladies, female or similar in the content
- will display further categories or products that are more female products like (among others more unisex type products)
 - dresses
 - skirts
 - high heels
 - or simply products or categories which hold the word “ladies“ in them

These all are clear hints for Baidu that even the other content within the folder /ladies/ is about products for ladies.

/shirts/

- will most likely list other products that say “shirt“
- will display images, which Baidu knows are similar to what Baidu knows as “shirt“
- will hold related words like “top“ or “v-neck“ which are typical for shirts

These hints will help Baidu to understand that content within the folder /shirts/ is about shirts.

All these hints in combination (because one folder is nested within the other) will help Baidu to understand that a product with the name of “Prod ID 13232323“ which has no text (because some product manager assistant failed to give it a proper name and description) is actually a product which can be bought from the type of shirts for females.

All these information are guessed by Baidu only because you are using a logical and hierarchical folder structure for your URL. For this one reason it is recommended to place product detail pages within the appropriate URL-folder structure.

So the next time you get asked to place product detail pages on root level of your domain - you will know why this is not the very best idea.

Some SEOs might comment, that Baidu does not like to rank pages with folders.

You can easily confront them with the fact, that in average all URLs ranking on Baidu page one have 2.34 folders in their URL - some have more, some less.

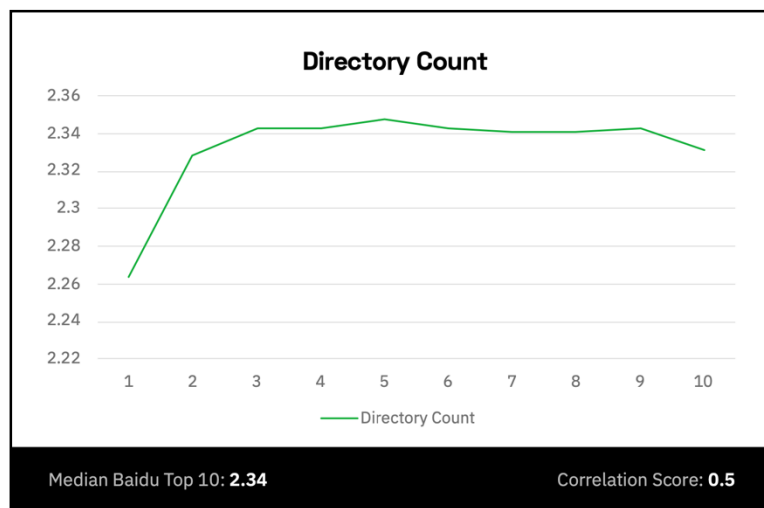


Image: In average any URL ranking in Baidu's Top 10 has between 2.26 and 2.36 folders. Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study

3.1.5.2.1 Trailing Slash and file extensions

A very common question asked by web developers is, if URLs shall end without / or with / or with file extensions like .html, .htm or .php.

Honestly? It doesn't matter at all if it comes to ranking criteria. But your choice can help Baidu understand your website structure better.

Trailing / means there might be other URLs on your website with this path. A trailing slash generally signals that it is a folder. And a folder can still contain more folders or files. Just like in your computers file system.

Examples:

```
http://www.domain.cn/  
http://www.domain.cn/folder/  
http://www.domain.cn/category/  
http://www.domain.cn/shirts/
```

Ending without / signals that beginning with this path there most likely won't be any more URLs. It usually is a file.

Examples:

```
http://www.domain.cn/folder/file  
http://www.domain.cn/category/product  
http://www.domain.cn/shirts/red-shirt-size22
```

Ending an URL with a file extension is a very clear signal that this the final URL with exactly this path. There won't be any

more URLs beginning with this path (except maybe parameterized URLs).

Examples:

`http://www.domain.cn/folder/file.aspx`

`http://www.domain.cn/category/product.php`

`http://www.domain.cn/shirts/red-shirt-size22.html`

So if you really want to help the search engine understand your website structure as good as possible, choose the right URL ending, which (from the examples above) should be either with trailing / or with a file extension.

Ending an URL open (no file extension / no trailing /) would leave it open to interpretation if this is a folder or final URL.

3.1.6 Intention of your website

Before you start choosing your keywords and optimizing the website to rank for them, you should be clear what you are trying to achieve with the website. What is your goal? Is it brand awareness? Is product introduction your goal without intention to directly sell or do you want to sell products directly from the website?

Depending on the targets of your website you need to implement different keywords and strategies.

In SEO you usually focus on ranking for keywords within the Baidu SERP. But which keywords mirror best the intention of your website? Is it really useful for Adidas to rank for “shoes“?

What is the intention of someone searching for “shoes“ and is that what Adidas has to offer the visitor of the website?

Depending on what exactly is the intention of users you want to visit your website, you have to choose the keywords that best go with this intention. Which keywords are people searching for if they have the intention your website can satisfy?

3.1.6.1 Keywords

Everything in SEO is about keywords. Keywords resemble the search terms people type into the Search Engine to look for website lists fitting to their intention. So we measure keyword rankings in SEO and implement keywords in websites and links. But how do you know if the keywords you are targeting are the ones people expect your website to rank for?

The more trendy SEOs will tell you “SEO is not about keywords, SEO is about content“ or “SEO is about intention“. They are true - but think deeper: what is it people use search engines for? They use them to type in keywords and get results. Or currently growing amount: they speak in their search phrase into voice search device and get again delivered the websites corresponding to their search.

Get it? You still want your website to rank for these search phrases or keywords. SEO is about ranking well for certain keywords.

OK, the search results pages may currently look all alike for the same keywords for different people - but soon they will

differ. And still - you want to rank for those keywords - for the right people you can satisfy with your website, right?!

3.1.6.1.1 Know-Keywords

Some keywords are clearly information oriented. People looking for those keywords usually do not convert in any form. They have the intention to find more information on a certain topic. Sometimes the information they seek can be served by the SERP directly through One-Boxes (information that answers a search query directly in the SERP). Some search queries need more complex answers are well served with wikipedia-like pages like Baidu-Baike or intensive explanations on regular websites. Some of these Know-search terms may even be answered with a short information already. But they all have one in common - ranking websites get traffic but no leads or conversions.

3.1.6.1.2 Do-Keywords

Transactionable search terms are the ones that clearly show what the user is up to. The more easy ones include an action word already. “buy nike shoes“ is a very typical example of such a Do-search term. No user would expect Baidu Baike to rank for such a keyword but some online shops offering Nike shoes. Some search phrases like “blue nike sneakers size 43“ are used by people who already exactly know what they want. It is very likely that such a user will buy the product if the #no1 ranking website can provide what the user is looking for.

3.1.6.1.3 Go-Keywords

Navigational search terms are the third kind of common search queries. Marcus' dad for example uses navigational search terms every time he opens the browser. He exactly knows he wants to visit his online mail service. He knows the name of the domain and types into the search engine "nameofthewebmailservice.com". The SERP then displays his mail service in the first position and he clicks on it.

But not only complete domain-type-ins are navigational search terms. Another very common navigational keyword is the brand name without TLD of the website you are looking for. Looking on Baidu for „Porsche“ will present the official Porsche website in #no1 position and you will most likely click on this first result, right?

Other Go-search terms are single words like "maps" or "translate". You know what search results you can expect and click on the result you knew that would show up. Navigating through search is very common and even I do it many times a day.

3.1.6.2 Defining User Intent more closely

But there is much more to differentiate than just Know-Do-Go. What exactly does a user expect to see when searching for a keyword? Does someone looking for "sneakers" really want to see websites of sneaker brands? Or rather a definition of what a sneaker is? Or a list of brands that produce sneakers? Or a shop that offer sneakers?

Some of these intentions can broadly be placed within the three overall categories of Know-Do-Go. But some might belong to one and the same basic form but still the user might want to see completely different kind of contents.

So how does the search engine decide which content is the right to rank? How could Baidu possibly know what the users really want to see?

Here comes the user himself into play. How does he react when being faced with the SERPs? Which websites do get clicked on? Which websites create bounces? What content do have websites in common that lead to bounces or extended time of visits? Are the users clicking on other search results after bouncing? Or do they redefine their search queries?

All these information in relation to each other and to the keyword define for Baidu what kind of results does a user expect to see when searching for this (or a related) search query.

Search queries Baidu sees the first time or does not have explicit defined values for which kind of content the user seeks to see, you will notice a variety of different kinds of content.

An SEO should search for the intended search queries on Baidu (and possibly on the other search engines popular in China) to define what Baidu thinks is the users intention.

- Is it a clear intention?
- If the intention is quite clear - does that resemble what

your website wants to show?

- If not ... you should possibly not concentrate too much on exactly this keyword.
- Try finding a variation or long tail of the keywords that better mirrors the websites intentions.

Do the SERPs serve multiple intentions?

Baidu might have noticed that people have different intentions when searching for this search term. Then you have the best chances on ranking with your intention as well.

3.1.6.3 Pages Types

Do you know this old school approach to simply place everything you can on one page and hope it gets ranked well? Well, nowadays search engines get smarter and smarter. They use artificial intelligence and machine learning to find out which might be the reasons people bounce off your pages. And these reasons might even be that people expect a certain type of page for some search phrases.

Let's make it a little easy. Someone looking for “耐克特价男运动鞋白色鞋面46码” (English: *white nike special men's sneakers size 46*) will most likely not be satisfied landing on the homepage of a website. They want a product detail page which allows them to buy the sneakers right away.



Image: Baidu SERP for “耐克特价男运动鞋白色鞋面46码” (English: white nike special men's sneakers size 46); Source: Baidu.com

So it is not just thinking if your domain fits to the user intention of a keyword. You also shall think about which page type might be the one a user wants to see. From this point you should think about which of your pages (already existing ones or the pages you will need to build) fit to which keywords.

Think about page types like

- Homepage
- Category page
- Topic hub page
- Tag pages
- Specific detail page
- Article page
- Product detail page

3.1.6.4 OnPage optimization for user intent

Which words and phrases are to be found on at least two of the currently on Baidu ranking websites? Use them in your content as well. Try brainstorming for similar words and include them as well.

- Which content elements can be found on at least two of the ranking websites?
- Do they use images, infographics, animated gifs, videos or a like? Use them as well.
- Do they implement tables for comparison? You might do better doing this as well.
- How much written content do you find? You should probably have similar much content.
- Which questions do the ranking websites answer? Answer the same or similar questions - and more.
- Which positions on the pages do these content elements usually have?
- Are the video clips always found on top or rather after 200 characters of text? If you can see a pattern, copy it. But please do not get it wrong - do not copy the whole currently winning webpages. Be better!

Fulfilling the user intent Baidu has found a search query needs to satisfy is one thing.

Doing “more than requested“ is the king-side of the content coin.

If you for example see, that many of the top ranking websites

for your search phrase are using pricing tables - you should try using a pricing table as well. Baidu might have noticed that websites with low bounce rates for that (or similar) search phrases usually contain a pricing table. Baidu will have figured that a pricing table could be a “have to” content element for satisfying webpages for these kind of search phrases.

But let's say only few websites in the top ranking positions are making use of large scale images. Baidu might have found that large scale images are not bad (but maybe also not a necessary element). Including a large scale image into the content will help you to be one single step better than most of the top ranking pages.

What if no one of the top ranking webpages is using large scale images? Should we then avoid large scale images?

Content elements like videos and images today are like blind spots for Baidu. They see that there is content but they need you to explain what this content says. They simply can not (yet) interpret the content of images or videos. You will need to use alt and title attributes using descriptive text that tells Google what this element stands for. Make sure to use keywords as well.

But such blind spots deliver another message as well: they are not included into the website in order to optimize it for the search engine. Because obviously Baidu does not scan the images to find out if they show people, things or what ever message they have to deliver. They technically could certainly do that. Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning are far enough to teach Baidu such abilities. But they are also quite

hungry in resources. This alone makes it a “nope - we currently don’t do that“ for Baidu. Even without image interpretation or turning the audio line of videos into text they can work with, they can deliver really good and satisfying search results.

So what is the message images and videos provide to the search engine if we are not talking about alt and title attributes? It simply says “This website is not built for SEO reasons but built with the user in mind“. A website that contains content elements that can’t be used to benefit your Baidu SEO might actually benefit your Baidu SEO. Of course you can’t expect wonders. Your website will not rocket from zero to hero just because you include images. But they can be a small step towards the top of the mountain.

3.1.7 Keyword Research

We already learned how important keywords are for your SEO approach. But how exactly do you get an extensive and qualified list of keywords you can successfully work with? Well, this process is usually clustered in three steps:

1. Collecting keywords
2. Qualifying keywords (technically)
3. Qualifying keywords (by hand)

Collecting keywords

For collecting keywords you should use a large variety of sources. The more the better, because not every tool uses the same sources. Using different tools will ensure that you have a good base to work with.

Tools we usually use for collecting keywords are:

3.1.7.1 The Human Brain - Brainstorming 1

The first tools you should access are the brains and minds of your (Chinese) colleagues, partners, spouses, friends and possibly customers.

It is important that keyword research starts with native speakers. Explain them the topic and ask them to write down (on a computer) whatever they can think of is related to your business. If they even can come up with words and phrases they would use searching for your website / products or services, that would be a good thing.

Let them brainstorm. To not place boundaries in which they are allowed to think. Every thought is legit (if you will use every word that comes up is the last step to take in the keyword research journey).

3.1.7.2 The Human Brain 2.0 - Brainstorming 2

You are not the first person thinking about keywords for your branch. Did you know that?

Every competitor running a website might have done this step for you already!

Visit their websites and see which words they are using in the navigational elements, in the texts, in the source code of the website. Many people still think Baidu pays attention to Meta-

Keywords. So they would fill in this tag what they want to be ranked for on Baidu. That is a really valuable source.

You can even perform this step before using your friends' and colleagues brains. After they put down on the computer their initial ideas, you can show them what words competitors are using - they might get inspired and find even new words and potential search phrases. That is Brainstorming phase 2.

3.1.7.3 Internal Website Search

Your website is already running for some time? You already have visitors? Great! Use their ideas as well - without them knowing. If you don't have an internal search function yet, implement one and track what people visiting your website are typing into the internal search. If people can not find easily what they are searching for on your website, many of them would use the internal search option, if it is easily available.

Using tools like Analytics (my friend Gordon Choi is a good choice to address if you are looking for a good tracking solution for Chinese websites) to monitor which words and phrases people are searching while surfing on your website.

3.1.7.4 Competing Websites

Since you already entered the keyword into Baidu Search, you could as well work with what Baidu returns to you, right?! Open the websites turning up on the first two results pages.

You could go deeper, but we usually stick to the first two Baidu SERPs.

For each of those opened websites press Control+F4 (on Windows Chrome ... you can look up the corresponding function for your browser) and get presented with the website source code.

Within this source code look for the Meta-Keywords tag (Control+F - then type in “keywords“) and have a look what the “content“ part of the tag says.

Many webmaster still think that Baidu pays attention to the Meta-Keywords Tag. So they really put some labor into it and fill out the keywords they intend to rank for in the tags of each single page.

Why not use their „brains“ and brainstorming results to enhance your own keyword strategy?

3.1.7.5 Keyword Tools

You could use specific SEO tools such as Searchmetrics, Dragon Metrics, Aizhan or Chinaz to look at the top ranking / relevant keywords for a specific URL:

Keyword	Position	Traffic Index	Traffic Index...	Δ Traffic Index...	Traffic Value	Traffic Value...	Δ Traffic Value...	Search Volume	Seasonality
手表	1	9,638	9,638	0	€ 40,190	€ 40,190	€ 0	58,982	
腕表之家	1	5,720	5,720	0	€ 5,892	€ 5,892	€ 0	35,002	
手表	1	3,031	3,031	0	€ 7,183	€ 7,183	€ 0	18,546	
名表	1	1,409	1,409	0	€ 4,269	€ 4,269	€ 0	8,624	
腕表之家	1	1,025	1,025	0	€ 1,722	€ 1,722	€ 0	6,270	
xbiao	1	971	971	0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	5,940	
腕表之家	1	647	647	0	€ 1,436	€ 1,436	€ 0	3,960	
手表品牌	2	590	1,634	1,044	€ 2,030	€ 5,621	€ 3,591	11,550	
腕表	1	542	542	0	€ 1,106	€ 1,106	€ 0	3,828	
名表	1	475	475	0	€ 384.75	€ 384.75	€ 0	2,904	
手表网	4	166	794	628	€ 240.70	€ 1,151	€ 910.60	4,862	
世界名表	1	134	134	0	€ 117.92	€ 117.92	€ 0	946	
手表品牌大全	1	115	115	0	€ 263.35	€ 263.35	€ 0	704	
腕表品牌	1	90	90	0	€ 129.60	€ 129.60	€ 0	550	n/a
陀陀牌手表	5	89	498	409	€ 238.52	€ 1,335	€ 1,096	3,520	n/a
手表品牌	6	75	485	410	€ 61.50	€ 397.70	€ 336.20	2,970	
手表知识	1	54	54	0	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0	330	n/a
手表之家	1	54	54	0	€ 2.70	€ 2.70	€ 0	330	

Image: Rankings on Baidu.com for the domain xbiao.com
Source: Searchmetrics.com

Keyword	Translation	MSV	Position	Traffic Index	Ranking URL	MSV Trend
宝珀手表维修	Breguet Watch Repair	721,034	3	65,854	http://shop.xbiao.com/breguet/hangzhouweixiu/	
手表保养	Watch maintenance	1,751,772	6	47,798	http://www.xbiao.com/20120229/2862.html	
名表维修	Patel Philippe	439,597	3	37,583	http://watch.xbiao.com/patel/	
gucci 官网	gucci official website	368,514	2	33,226	http://www.xbiao.com/gucci/	
腕表之家	Watch House	231,165	1	31,833	https://www.xbiao.com/	
宝珀手表维修	Breguet watch repair	330,888	2	35,438	http://shop.xbiao.com/breguet/weixiu/	
手表保养	Watch maintenance	1,751,772	11	27,586	http://baixie.xbiao.com/779.html	
手表保养	Watch maintenance	1,751,772	12	26,289	http://baixie.xbiao.com/1246.html	
腕表之家	Watch House	231,165	2	25,069	http://watch.xbiao.com/vaib/	
手表保养	Watch maintenance	1,751,772	14	24,696	http://www.xbiao.com/r1709/	
星座	constellation	2,695,994	27	24,365	http://www.xbiao.com/constellation/1000115/	
世界名表排行	World Watch rankings	277,140	2	23,044	http://shop.xbiao.com/	
腕表之家	Watch House	231,165	3	20,544	http://www.xbiao.com/app.html	
爱彼手表维修中心	Audemars Piguet Watch A...	1,505,045	18	20,331	http://www.xbiao.com/20121128/14455.html	
手表网	to official website	1,508,141	12	20,319	http://www.xbiao.com/cn/	

Image: Rankings on Baidu.com for the domain xbiao.com
Source: Dragon Metrics.com

META关键词		关键词权重		SEO优化上首页权重		
关键词	百度排名	百度指数	PC指数	移动指数	收录量	
欧米茄机械表	第1页 第1位	129	42	87	<10	
精工手表型号	第1页 第1位	54	25	29	<10	
名表店	第1页 第2位	66	43	23	<10	
seiko手表怎么样	第1页 第2位	41	18	23	<10	+ 综合信息
天梭手表官网	第1页 第3位	246	68	178	<10	+ 关键词
卡西欧手表专卖	第1页 第3位	131	43	88	<10	+ 收录率
奢侈品牌欧米茄	第1页 第3位	28	20	<10	<10	+ 页面信息
dior的手表	第1页 第3位	47	47	<10	<10	+ alexa
西铁城手表怎么样	第1页 第4位	152	41	111	<10	原创文化 品牌网
浪陀手表	第1页 第4位	<10	<10	<10	<10	

描述 (Description)

100 个字符 (一般不超过200个字符)

腕表之王Casio.com为您推荐最新手表品牌排名,最新手表报价信息,手表品牌官方网站,并包括手表新闻,手表图片,手表资讯,手表购买,手表品牌排行榜内容,为购买手表品牌提供有价值的参考,是爱表人士的绝佳交流平台。

一键查看

添加关键词

关键词 (KeyWords)	出现频率	2%~密度<4%	全网指数	百度指数	百度排名	预估流量
手表	40	0.5 %	379449	2948	查询	查询
腕表之家	16	0.4 %	4994	4079	查询	查询
手表之家	1	0.0 %	269	238	查询	查询
手表网	2	0.0 %	1197	209	查询	查询
手表品牌排名	2	0.1 %	401	222	查询	查询
手表品牌大全	2	0.1 %	1097	194	查询	查询
品牌	27	0.3 %	123701	1609	查询	查询
报价	5	0.1 %	1062482	482	查询	查询
论坛	14	0.2 %	263988	1672	查询	查询
腕表	143	1.8 %	8895	807	查询	查询
官网	10	0.1 %	2906952	1270	查询	查询

3.1.8 Qualifying the Keywords

Since this book targets (mainly) Non-Chinese natives wanting to start with Baidu SEO. That might even mean that you do not speak or read any Chinese word at all.

For the tool based steps this might not even make a difference. You can easily use tools to collect large amounts of data (in this case keywords) to work with.

But if you finally really want to work with them, you will need a native speaker to qualify those keywords.

Depending on the amount of keywords you collected it might still make sense to use just another tool based approach to reduce the amount of keywords your native speaking partner might have to look through.

3.1.8.1 Baidu Keyword Tool

If you have access to the Baidu Keyword Tool, you will get the average daily search volume of the past 30 days for each keyword. Multiply that with 30 and you get a good impression how many people a month might use this keyword.

Keep in mind though, that you might be under rating the search volume if the past 30 days were low season days. The high season days might still be ahead. If you can determine if your topic of research is somehow seasonal, you might want to

apply a factor X to the search volume to get closer to an 360 days average.

3.1.8.2 Dragon Metrics / Searchmetrics

If you do not have access to the Baidu Keyword Tool (you only will have access, if you run PPC campaigns with Baidu) your second best chance is to use one of the two tools Dragon Metrics or Searchmetrics.

While Searchmetrics will only show you the (average monthly) search volume for those keywords they have in their database, with Dragon Metrics you will have a research option which directly connects you to the data of Baidu Keyword Tool.

So you will be able to get search volume information on any keyword.

3.1.8.3 Google Keyword Tool

While I would not recommend using this tool for China targeted marketing, if you do not have any access to any of the above tools, using Google might be better than nothing.

At least if you have a rather broad topic of which you might think people in China and people in Hongkong, Taiwan or Singapore might search for in the same relations (probably not the same numbers but relations will give you a feeling if it is worth it) the Google Keyword Tool (within Google Adwords) might be of some help.

Make sure to “translate” your keywords to from Simplified Chinese Characters to Traditional Chinese Characters before submitting them to Google’s keyword planner - we suggest to not pick a specific country, but use world wide - then afterwards transform the keywords back to Simplified Chinese Characters.

But be aware that using this approach does not take into consideration that wordings might be different in Mainland China and the other Chinese speaking regions.

Localization through Chinese native speakers from the region you intend to do SEO for, is still key.

3.1.8.4 Baidu Dominance

After you know which keywords to focus your SEO on based on search volume, you might want to know which keywords you do have a realistical chance of ranking for within Baidu’s Top 10 (first SERP).

We already have talked about Baidu acquiring large amounts of the SERP real estate. Sometimes Baidu covers 8 to 10 positions out of 10. Even covering “only“ five positions out of 10 will lead to heavy work to even get the slightest chance on gaining 1 visitor a month from ranking in these left over positions.

So one more way qualifying you keywords is to check how many positions are acquired by Baidu itself.

3.1.8.5 Big Players Dominance

While Baidu's own websites simply steal the number of positions you could acquire for your website, the number of big players within the top 10 search results shows you how competitive the keyword might be.

The more big players, the harder it will get even getting close to the first result page.

Many really big players set up subdomains for specific topics (we get to that point why this might be a good strategy later).

What are those big players?

We do have three different sources online available:

1. Alexa.com's Top Sites of China
2. Searchmetrics Top Domains by SEO Visibility
3. Dragon Metrics Top visible

While I rather look at the domains that are strong because of their appearance in Baidu search (the Searchmetrics.com list), you can also go with the free resource of sites strong in traffic (the Alexa.com list).

The Alexa Top 50 Sites in February 2022 China are:

Top Sites in China

	Site	Daily Time on Site 	Daily Pageviews per Visitor 	% of Traffic From Search 	Total Sites Linking In 
1	Baidu.com	10:53	6.12	5.60%	324,019
2	Qq.com	4:41	3.91	4.10%	600,135
3	Taobao.com	4:48	4.24	4.10%	76,700
4	Zhihu.com	7:20	6.04	16.00%	17,134
5	Tmall.com	8:26	5.36	0.90%	25,249
6	Bilibili.com	14:31	11.70	6.90%	17,569
7	Sohu.com	3:27	4.25	5.00%	35,294
8	Sina.com.cn	2:49	2.95	5.00%	54,537
9	Weibo.com	4:40	3.89	2.60%	135,299
10	jd.com	4:17	5.55	2.90%	25,178
11	163.com	6:26	6.32	6.10%	43,301
12	360.cn	3:20	4.01	0.40%	19,945
13	Csdn.net	4:00	4.71	14.40%	10,015
14	1688.com	14:23	9.46	6.10%	41,045
15	Sogou.com	32:32	5.16	1.20%	82,496
16	Alipay.com	2:52	2.98	1.50%	8,587
17	So.com	5:54	4.21	0.30%	44,464

	Site	Daily Time on Site ?	Daily Pageviews per Visitor ?	% of Traffic From Search ?	Total Sites Linking In ?
18	Google.com.hk	5:37	7.62	2.90%	13,256
19	Hao123.com	2:08	2.39	1.60%	5,993
20	Douban.com	6:42	8.86	16.10%	13,985
21	Soso.com	6:32	5.25	0.10%	2,643
22	Cnblogs.com	3:24	3.15	11.60%	7,091
23	Tianya.cn	3:44	4.70	0.50%	4,345
24	Youdao.com	21:13	2.78	2.90%	7,078
25	Aliyun.com	11:09	13.00	5.00%	42,813
26	Iqiyi.com	3:37	4.38	5.00%	12,956
27	Google.cn	6:56	1.22	8.30%	15,240
28	Zhanqi.tv	2:53	5.59	0.70%	368
29	Cctv.com	2:42	4.03	6.50%	20,805
30	Panda.tv	2:47	5.40	0.90%	350
31	Google.com	17:11	18.47	0.20%	6,458,120
32	Tencent.com	5:09	5.38	15.60%	14,480
33	Youku.com	5:17	4.40	6.20%	27,584
34	Eastmoney.com	11:21	8.39	6.90%	5,990
35	Xinhuanet.com	2:43	5.42	6.00%	36,307
36	Toutiao.com	7:59	6.42	11.30%	15,721
37	Douyu.com	7:31	5.60	3.40%	1,921















	Site	Daily Time on Site ?	Daily Pageviews per Visitor ?	% of Traffic From Search ?	Total Sites Linking In ?
38	Xueqiu.com	12:24	7.80	5.70%	1,390
39	Youtube.com	19:20	10.92	13.20%	4,562,408
40	Huanqiu.com	2:51	5.20	2.50%	8,024
41	Hupu.com	16:01	16.00	5.00%	1,708
42	Autohome.com.cn	7:16	14.00	8.80%	4,581
43	Jianshu.com	2:23	1.74	20.70%	7,126
44	Yy.com	2:49	5.35	1.10%	2,222
45	Smzdm.com	5:05	5.00	12.60%	2,502
46	Shimo.im	7:34	7.00	4.40%	1,212
47	Ifeng.com	4:22	3.80	9.40%	22,828
48	360doc.com	1:58	1.95	11.90%	2,395
49	Chinaz.com	3:45	4.30	6.30%	19,004
50	17ok.com	2:16	4.08	0.60%	125














Source: <https://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/CN> , February 2022 (the service will not be available any longer after May 2022)















The Searchmetrics Top 50 Sites in China are:





🇨🇳 Top 50 SEO Visibility - Desktop 1 to 50 ?

Position	Domain	Visibility 02/17/2022
1	 baidu.com	482,595,490
2	 sohu.com	41,841,998
3	 qq.com	39,415,237
4	 iqiyi.com	34,129,837
5	 zhihu.com	26,960,583
6	 sina.com.cn	24,087,690
7	 bilibili.com	22,499,119
8	 douban.com	21,028,307
9	 163.com	19,043,257
10	 youku.com	16,312,420
11	 weibo.com	14,832,882
12	 xilu.com	12,913,026
13	 tianqi.com	9,758,738
14	 2345.com	9,079,071


Position	Domain	Visibility 02/17/2022
15	 weather.com.cn	8,733,386
16	 1905.com	7,713,228
17	 zol.com.cn	7,201,258
18	 chinaz.com	6,268,307
19	 autohome.com.cn	6,240,148
20	qidian.com	5,850,222
21	china.com.cn	5,738,339
22	haiwainet.cn	5,571,829
23	 le.com	5,480,673
24	 jd.com	5,468,139
25	 cctv.com	5,258,100
26	 360doc.com	5,253,906
27	 pconline.com.cn	5,253,249
28	jjwxc.net	5,221,094
29	 ifeng.com	5,218,493
30	 120ask.com	5,217,172
31	 xbiquge.la	5,201,086

Position	Domain	Visibility 02/17/2022
32	 eastmoney.com	4,715,512
33	 guancha.cn	4,685,568
34	 ruiwen.com	4,510,675
35	39.net	4,381,817
36	 pcbaby.com.cn	4,284,731
37	 tvmao.com	4,246,289
38	 pclady.com.cn	4,091,389
39	 xinhuanet.com	3,961,727
40	 mgtv.com	3,852,886
41	 shangc.net	3,748,126
42	pptv.com	3,556,869
43	 58.com	3,395,866
44	 xianzhaiwang.cn	3,341,462
45	 people.com.cn	3,339,622
46	zongheng.com	3,244,700
47	 mipang.com	3,185,968
48	 56.com	2,948,214

Position	Domain	Visibility 02/17/2022
49	 ctrip.com	2,931,630
50	 xuexila.com	2,930,829

Source: Searchmetrics.com Research Cloud "World Rankings" for China, February 2022 (online accessible are the Top 100 domains by SEO Visibility, users can export the Top 1,000 up to Top 10,000 Domains as Excel)

The Dragon Metrics Top 50 Sites in China are:



Top Sites
Research > Top Lists > Sites

所有类别 (All Categories)

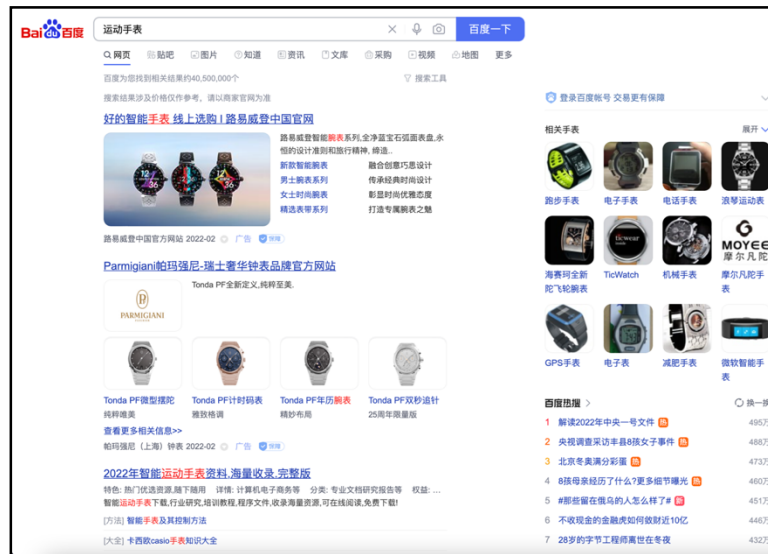
Traffic Rank	Domain	Dragon Rank	Traffic Index	Keywords	Position	Domain Authority
1	baidu.com	100	5,138,260,167	21,736,545	161,110,029	75
2	zhihu.com	100	318,238,624	9,915,170	19,789,598	85
3	qq.com	100	240,162,664	5,413,842	8,942,871	93
4	sohu.com	100	194,625,476	8,698,606	13,907,241	87
5	bilibili.com	100	172,200,716	4,085,092	6,793,748	88
6	120ask.com	100	166,937,905	2,620,158	13,855,454	11
7	sina.com.cn	100	164,988,149	10,053,782	15,539,510	92
8	163.com	100	156,753,359	2,740,249	3,776,646	36
9	iqiyi.com	100	140,144,201	2,622,509	5,467,531	85
10	douban.com	100	100,921,190	3,089,401	4,601,828	84
11	eastmoney.com	100	92,544,190	349,844	991,316	69
12	youku.com	100	79,338,794	3,387,344	6,147,955	90
13	jd.com	99	75,013,021	3,019,226	10,664,205	88
14	360doc.com	99	69,515,560	3,784,382	4,772,020	60
15	39.net	99	67,247,829	2,351,717	5,503,636	27
16	youlai.cn	99	63,075,422	1,655,256	3,095,528	1
17	ruiwen.com	99	61,127,655	953,317	2,045,267	3
18	csdn.net	99	50,062,559	1,495,460	4,760,021	73
19	weibo.com	99	48,861,683	1,715,988	2,209,189	93
20	pconline.com.cn	99	43,258,950	1,465,501	2,501,520	80
21	futunn.com	99	42,190,749	21,789	22,382	33
22	5156edu.com	99	41,498,117	208,777	285,596	23
23	zol.com.cn	99	38,579,892	1,755,732	3,837,282	78
24	xuexila.com	99	38,236,752	1,746,608	2,364,811	6
25	jwxc.net	98	37,124,889	230,875	593,058	43
26	mama.cn	98	36,720,827	1,221,932	2,476,108	15
27	1688.com	98	36,074,220	3,018,582	6,336,230	79
28	autohome.com.cn	98	35,242,651	723,244	2,394,123	76
29	pcbaby.com.cn	98	34,453,174	951,932	1,858,568	16
30	dict.cn	98	33,805,400	476,077	680,234	27
31	51xiazai.cn	97	33,024,232	57,663	58,208	6
32	chazidian.com	97	32,592,770	411,304	587,856	2
33	chinaz.com	97	32,247,972	1,054,711	1,385,039	72
34	kuaidi100.com	97	31,668,670	37,332	96,462	5
35	qidian.com	97	30,652,774	92,430	154,158	54
36	1905.com	97	28,469,910	261,200	465,268	44
37	xlady.com	97	27,472,996	1,461,838	1,727,662	15
38	hujiang.com	97	26,405,097	429,760	675,503	52
39	cctv.com	97	26,403,303	251,211	452,587	87
40	4399.com	96	25,551,381	240,273	535,605	56
41	apple.com	96	24,923,483	224,232	437,814	99
42	fang.com	96	24,207,902	1,356,085	3,323,654	60
43	911cha.com	96	23,842,130	405,122	495,077	5
44	onlinedown.net	96	23,524,332	377,990	600,991	34
45	zybang.com	96	22,492,632	514,614	698,765	25
46	liuxue86.com	96	22,452,530	726,192	985,111	11
47	58.com	96	22,037,761	842,663	2,748,978	16
48	tvmao.com	96	21,194,221	131,967	247,139	6
49	51240.com	96	20,655,937	23,442	41,736	5
50	tianqi.com	96	20,371,708	375,985	497,320	4

Source: Dragon Metrics “Top Sites” for February 2022 (online accessible are the Top 500 domains)

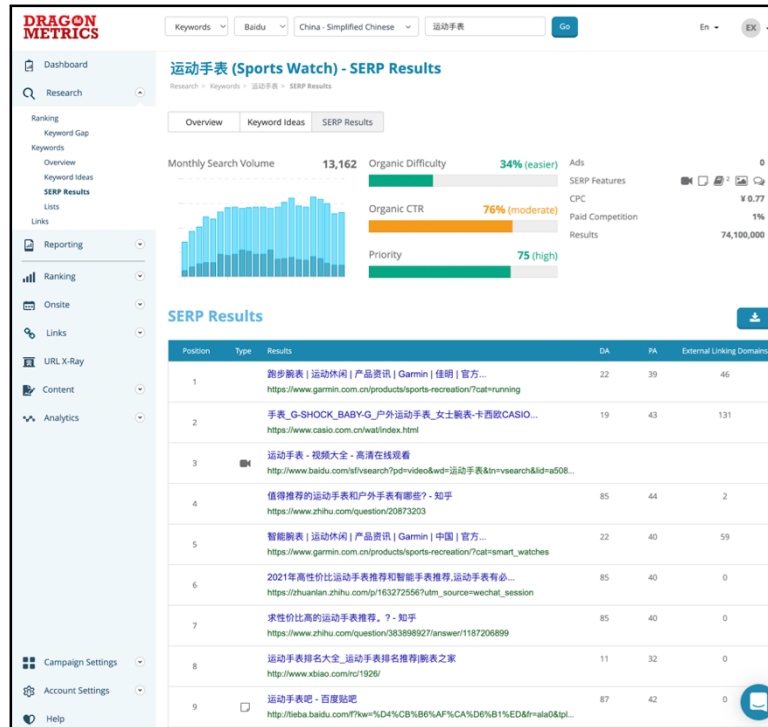
3.1.8.6 Existing Rankings

Does your website already have rankings for the researched keywords?

You can type in those keywords into Baidu.com search by yourself or use either *Searchmetrics* or *Dragon Metrics* to check if and at which position your website is ranking for the researched keywords.



Screenshot: Baidu Search Results for “运动手表” (sports watch) directly on Baidu.com



Screenshot: Dragon Metrics.com; Baidu Search Results for “运动手表” (sports watch) together with some additional information on the keyword such as Search Volume, Organic Difficulty and Organic CTR



Screenshot: for the search query “苹果电脑” (Apple computer) there are approximately 100 Million pages listed on Baidu.com;
Source: Baidu.com

3.1.8.8 Number of Search Results with Keyword “intitle”

The search operator “intitle:” will result in only pages that are using the searched for keyword in the title tag. The title tag being one of the most important ranking factors will tell you how hard you have to fight in terms of SEO to rank well for this keyword.



Screenshot: for the intitle search query “苹果电脑” (Apple computer) there are approximately 3.15 Million pages listed on Baidu.com; Maybe not the easiest keyword to go after. Source: Baidu.com

3.1.8.9 Conclusion

The more factors are “positive“, the more difficult it will be to rank well for exactly this keyword. Actually this will most likely be the case for most of the “interesting“ keywords you will find within the keyword research process.

That does not mean that you shall not optimize for such keywords. It just means that you might not need to expect to rank well for them too soon.

So why should you optimize for them at all? It is about the longtail keywords.

3.1.8.10 Longtail Keywords

Most likely you will have found many long tail keywords during your keyword research already. Those keywords you marked as “not interesting“ because they lack of search volume, are usually what we call longtail.

The name “longtail keywords“ comes from the chart below, which shows how many keywords you can find with which search volume each. The higher the search volume, the less keywords you will find matching with your search intention.

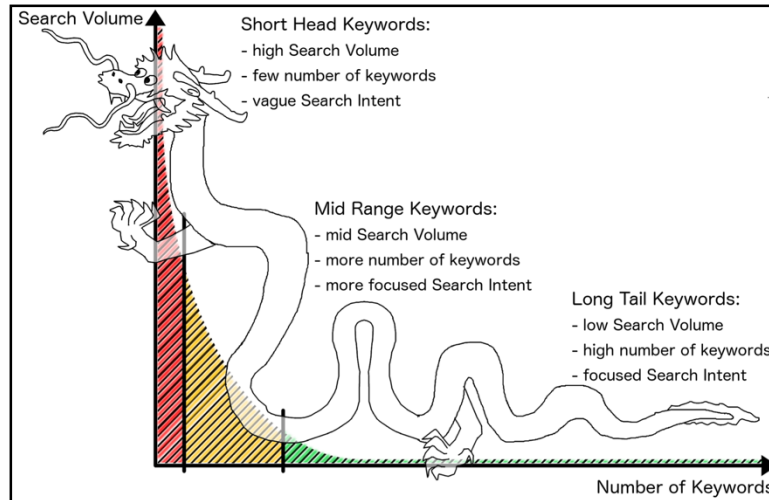


Image: Longtail Schema Chart demonstrating, that there are only few high search volume keywords (short head), more mid range keywords and a lot of keywords (long tail) with few or nearly to none monthly searches, which can make up a lot more in sum, than a single short head keyword. © Marcus Pentzek

The more keywords you can find matching your desired search intention, the less will be the search volume for each of them.

In total the combined number of people you could gain from all possible long tail keywords for your niche (assuming each one keyword might be able to result in one visitor a month) could exceed the number of visitors you can gain from one “shorthead“ keyword.

So the “long tail“ makes up the secret of gaining a lot of visitors from organic search on Baidu.

3.1.8.11 Most important qualification step: the Chinese Native Speaker

You already know you will need a Chinese native speaker to qualify your keywords one last time. Only a native speaker will be able to tell you, what people really mean if they say/write/search for a search term, what you have to offer in content.

Sometimes you simply think of something else, so just altering your content a little will satisfy both the user and you (for getting the user).

Sometimes the meaning is so far away from what you have to offer, that you might rather want to skip that keyword before upsetting the users and having the users bounce back to Baidu SERPs which Baidu might value as negative ranking factor against your favor.

But not only bounces but even people not even clicking on your search result can be valued as negative because of two reasons:

1. Obviously a person not clicking is a visitor you will miss ;-)
2. If you get less CTR (Click Through Rate) than the other website's results, Baidu will notice that your snippet doesn't provide what users expect and devalue your ranking.

But implementing a Chinese native speaker in this process is simply not enough. You have to pick the right Chinese speaker.

1. People from Hongkong are Chinese - some might even speak Mandarin (their mother tongue is Cantonese), but they are not daily exposed to Mandarin and they are not daily exposed to the surroundings and lifestyle of mainland China. So the vocabulary they use might be different - even limited.
2. People from Taiwan and Singapore do speak Mandarin. But their countries are so different from what you experience in China.

Their countries did not experience the cultural revolution.

Their ways of living developed absolutely different from what people in China went through.

And even though today's China might seem (to us foreigners visiting China) absolutely westernized, the Generations that experienced cultural revolution still live. Families still are not as religious as Chinese families in Taiwan or Singapore.

And same as for Hongkong people. They might use different vocabularies just due to separated evolution of the language within the last 70-80 years. For Taiwanese they are more used to Traditional Chinese Characters (while some might most likely be able to read Simplified Chinese Characters).

3. People from mainland China that are not living in China might seem like a legit choice. And this is right

in parts.

But if you are not daily exposed to your mother tongue, the quality of your language skills will slowly decrease.

If you are not surrounded by Chinese media, you might miss some new creations that turn up.

If you have to check highly complicated topic specific vocabulary you will most likely not know them and will have to research by yourself.

This research process will be so much more efficient, if you have other native speakers around for some quick brainstorming.

So the best choice you can take is to ask Chinese native speakers currently living in China.

The second best choice will be Chinese native speakers from China living in other countries.

You should avoid Chinese native speakers from other countries but China if you are optimizing for China.

In case you will have to optimize Chinese content for other countries like USA - do some research which Chinese most of your target audience use and get a native speaker from a corresponding country (many US Chinese come from Hongkong which would result in Cantonese as your target Chinese language written in Traditional Chinese Characters).

3.1.9 Keyword Strategy

You researched many keywords that are relevant to your topic. These keywords as well reflect the intention the user is in you want to guide to your website. You defined which of these keywords you have chances to rank for. And you know which of the researched keywords you have no big chance ranking for.

You should keep all of those keywords in your strategy - just keep in mind which of them to use for KPI measuring and which not.

Hint: Don't use those keywords for KPI measuring you have little chances ranking well for.

Next step you need to do is clustering those keywords. Prepare clusters which tell you, which of these keywords are close enough to be handled on one single page or even text.

Next is bringing those keyword clusters into a relation to each other. Which cluster comes logically first, which clusters would need to be next in line.

Think about it like branches of a tree.

- The tree stem being your very broad overall topic.
- From there you will find different sub topics, not each sub topic only being related to one single keyword, but to a cluster of keywords. These being the first branches

of your tree.

- The more specific you get, the smaller the branches will become.
- Some topics are complex enough to deserve a whole branch, while others are small enough to go on a single leaf.

3.10 OnPage

OnPage optimization means to us all those parts that the user and bot can see on your website. For the bot that is HTML source code, for bot and user it is layout and content including headlines, images and so on.

3.10.1 Page Title

The page title is the most important content element of your website. It is shown in the top bar of the web browser, when moving your window around. It is shown in the browsers tabs, if you opened multiple ones. It is shown in your Microsoft Windows start bar (usually on the bottom of your screen) to show what is currently shown on your browser. And Baidu uses it to give your search snippet within Baidu search results a heading, which people can click on to get to your website.

That's how the page title looks like in your HTML source:

```
<title>This is your page title</title>
```

Being so important, granting a first glance on what your page

is about it probably gets obvious to you, that Baidu gives a big deal on the page title as well.

You should include your main keyword in the page title. That is not only because Baidu will highlight your keyword red colored when noticed. That is because Baidu values the exact match keyword usage in your page title as a strong ranking signal. Baidu even recognizes if your keyword is used split up in your title and will highlight both parts of it.

Whatever you do in OnPage SEO - you should always focus on finding the right title first.

The Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Study of 2020 shows that almost 30% of all pages ranking in the Baidu Top 10, carry the exact match keyword in the title tag.

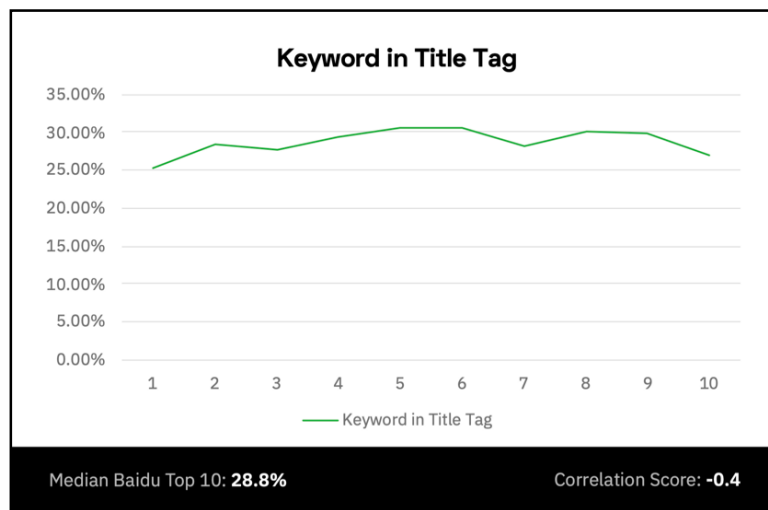
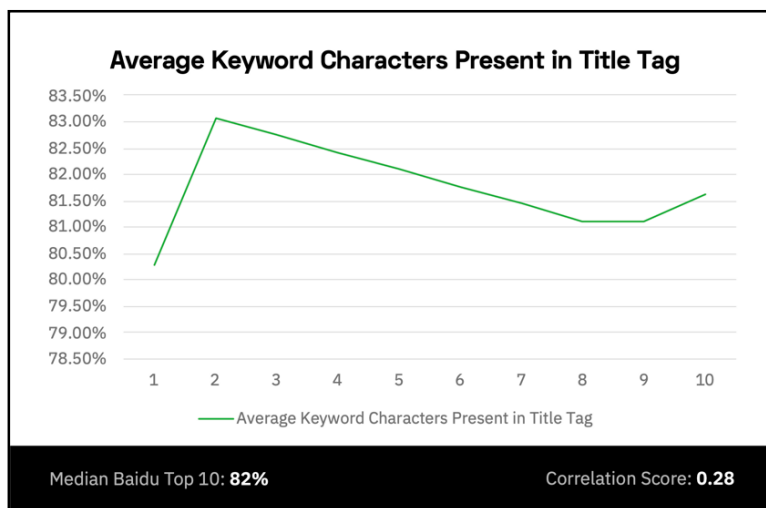


Chart: On average 28.8% of the results ranking in Baidu's top 10, are using the exact match keyword they are ranking for in it.

Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study of 2020

But you need to consider, that although the keyword is not exact match in the title tag of the top ranking pages, they might still be split up and used in a different order.

On average the title tags of the top ranking pages contain 82% of the characters used in the keywords they are ranking for.

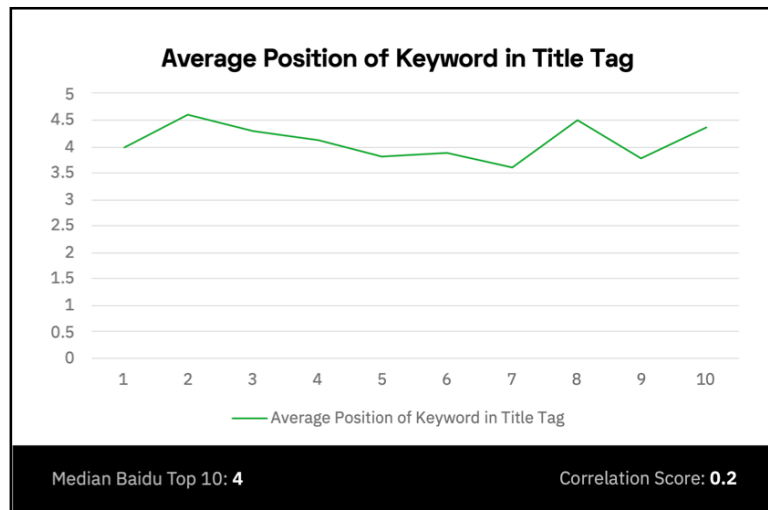


*Chart: On average the title tags of the top ranking pages contain 82% of the characters used in the keywords they are ranking for.
Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study of 2020*

The keyword shall be positioned as close to the beginning of the title as possible.

On average you will find the keyword not later than position 5

within the title tag.



*Chart: On average is position from position 4 within the title tag.
Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study of 2020*

Baidu would display titles up to 27 Chinese characters.

Recommendation:

- Build titles with a length between 15 and 27 characters.
- Include exact match keyword as close to the beginning as possible.
- Use split match keywords only if exact match is not possible.

3.10.2 Meta Description

While most international search engines do not count the meta description into account for calculating the strength or ranking

of a website for a keyword, many Baidu SEOs think the usage of exact and split match keywords in your pages meta descriptions is a ranking factor.

That's how the Meta Description looks like in your HTML source:

```
<meta name =“description“ content=“This is your Meta  
Description“ />
```

Baidu will show the meta description in your page's snippet in the SERPs.

Users will be able to see from your meta description, what your page is about. If you promise something the users will not find, they will bounce (and this way “tell“ Baidu that your page did not satisfy their needs).

Bouncing back to the SERP might be a negative signal for Baidu. You do not want that. So describing your page's content as good as possible makes sense.

Statistics do not support a correlation of using the exact match keyword in the meta description with better rankings.

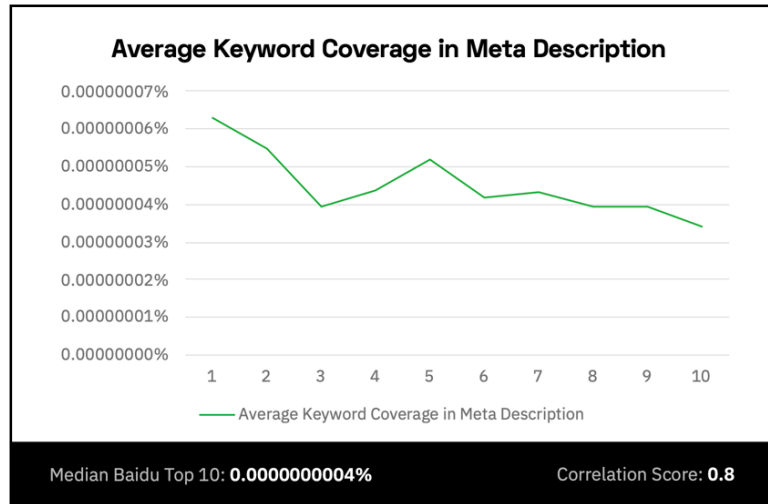


Chart: Top ranking pages show no evidence of the exact match keyword, they are ranking for in the meta description. Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study of 2020

Baidu would display meta descriptions up to 74 Chinese characters.

The keyword will be highlighted by Baidu in red color if found in the meta description.

Recommendation:

- Build meta descriptions with a length between 50 and 74 characters.
- Although there is no correlation to better rankings, include your exact match keyword somewhere in the meta description.
- Use split match keywords only if exact match is not possible.

3.10.3 Meta Keywords

Rumors were a long time that Baidu pays attention to the Meta Keywords tag for evaluating if and which keywords a page may rank for.

From all we have seen we do not believe this is true.

And a lot of respected Baidu SEOs share our opinion that the meta keywords tag has no influence on whether or not a keyword might rank well on Baidu.

Just imagine, the meta keywords tag is only seen by the search engine. The user will at no point see what is written in there.

But still the page shall be relevant for the user, right?!

Why should Baidu pay attention to a tag, that is only seen by the bot and not the user, telling Baidu which keywords the page shall be relevant for? It simply doesn't make sense.

In 2012 Baidu even stated - through their spokes person named Lee - that they wouldn't use the Meta Keywords tag:



Screenshot: Question from user "athens912" if Baidu would pay

attention to content in Meta Keywords tag. Original question: “<meta name=“keywords“ content=“百度”> 内容是否还会参与排名?”. The answer from Lee states that Baidu since long time ignores the Meta Keywords tag. Original Answer: “译就进历史的垃圾堆了，我们会直接忽略。”.

But because many people still believe the meta keywords tag could effect their SEO in a positive way, they use it and provide you (the keyword researcher) with valuable input for your own keyword strategy (if you look at your competitors HTML source code).

3.10.4 Headlines H1 to H6

Although Baidu is heavily researching in Artificial Intelligence, they still do not employ highly intelligent cyborgs, but very dumb crawlers and bots to find out what your website is about.

This makes it important that the webmaster (you) helps Baidu to discover what is important about your website.

Using headlines is a good way to prioritize what is most important to you, what is second most important and so on.

To achieve that you must use the headlines in hierarchical order and semantically correct. That means that you can only have one H1 headline and it shall be the first headline on your page (because this is the main headline of your page).

The next headline following must be an H2. You can have

multiple H2 headlines. You must have implemented an H2 before you can use a H3 headline.

Your headlines shall be used to structure your content. The content is what your page wants to tell the visitor. That again means that header, sidebar, navigation and footer are not really part of your content but part of your template.

They usually do not tell the user what a page is about - but some more broad information about the whole website (like it's name, navigational points, maybe address, ...). To make your headlines matter, do not use them within the template areas but only to structure your page's main content.

Now the content of your headlines shall not only introduce the sections nice catching and sounding (like newspaper headlines) but also using words that for themselves can say something about the topic of the following content.

It is best SEO practice to include your main keyword into the H1 headline and a relevant (main or secondary) keyword in at least one H2 headline. Further H2 and H3 headlines may include supplementary or assisting keywords.

Text content directly following a headline is sunbathing in it's glow. Including words here that are highly important to your webpage's topic, will help Baidu to understand better what your website is about.

In total try to draw a red line from H1 down to the bottom of your page touching other headlines and their text blocks.

That means, the keywords, secondary keywords, synonyms and assisting keywords in headlines and in the text blocks following the headlines.

This will make your page absolutely “round“ for the topic it shall stand for. Remember what “assisting keywords“ are?

These are not words or phrases you intend to rank for, but words that proof to Baidu that you know your topic.

For example you want to rank for “internet“ the words “computer“ and “browser“ may assist in Baidu understanding that you really know what you are talking about.

3.10.4.1 Keyword usage in H1

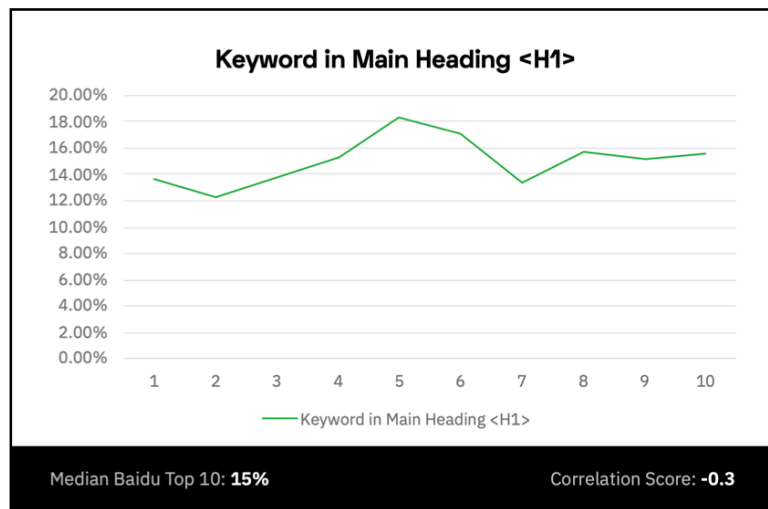


Chart: On average 15% of all top ranking pages do contain the exact match keyword. Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study of 2020

15% of the top ranking pages use the exact match keyword in their H1 headlines. Those that do not, use variations of it.

3.10.4.2 Keyword usage in H2

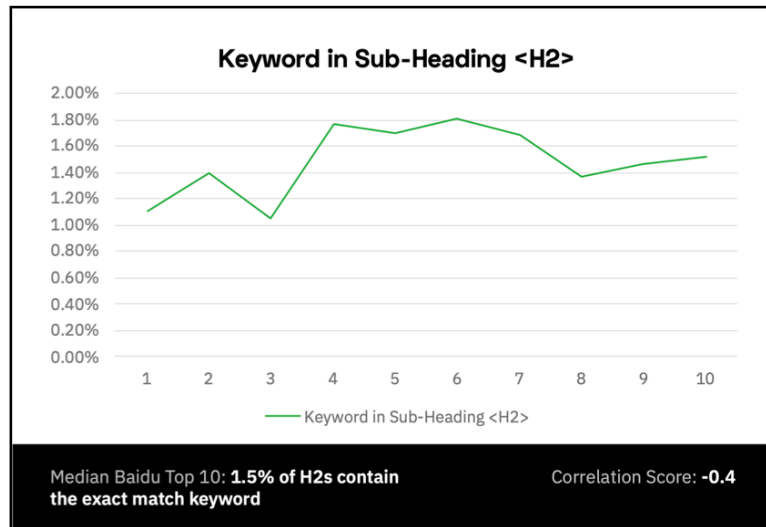


Chart: Only 1.5% of all top ranking pages do contain the exact match keyword. Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study of 2020

That only 1.5% of all top ranking pages are using the exact match keyword in their H2 headlines, may suggest that the H2 is not a strong ranking factor.

We however see a chance in this circumstance. Implementing your exact match keyword, a variation of it or a supplementary keyword, in your H2 headlines, will help to make your page more relevant for it.

3.10.4.3 Headlines and Links

Very often you will see web designers to use an `<a href>` tag around (or nested within) a headline. This is actually an opposing meaning you are communicating that way.

Is the surrounded text a link, telling the user and bot what the linked to page is about?

Or is the surrounded text a headline introducing the paragraph just happening to be published below it?

What shall the bot count it for?

Here is what we do in such situations: We will decide for the bot.

We will either remove the `<h>` tag from the link and let it just be a link.

Or we will remove the `<a>` tag from the headline and let it just be a headline.

Using both at the same time is the same as using multiple H1 or having an H5 before there even is an H1.

It will send one simple message to Baidu: the web designer simply doesn't know how to use headlines semantically correct.

Baidu will only have the chance to not value these headlines.

They will not punish you for not knowing how to use HTML semantically correctly. They will simply value all text the same - not paying special attention to headlines and alike.

So by using HTML correctly you will just assist Baidu in understanding your content better, because of highlighting some phrases and words. Not more - but also not less.

3.10.5 Text content

Search engines read text and they value text. If you don't use text - they can not value it. It is that easy.

The more text you write - the more Baidu has to evaluate.

That is actually a very clever thing about texting for Baidu. If you provide a lot of text, Baidu can actually rank you for much more search phrases than you purposely include exact match keywords.

Baidu might rank your website for synonyms even if you don't use them.

Baidu might rank your website for related terms even if you don't use them.

Both depends not only on the keywords you might include ... it also depends on the assisting keywords you are including.

Baidu had the chance to analyze millions of documents and they do analyze new documents day by day.

If they find that people talking about 手表 (handwrist watch) often also use the word 腕表 (wrist watch) as well, then texts using the word 腕表 might be relevant for 手表 even if they rather use the word 腕表 than 手表.

Sounds a little confusing? It is just about alternative keywords - synonyms. Baidu does learn that they are being used synonymously - that they do have the same meaning - so they can rank documents for their synonyms even if not used in the text.

But usually Baidu will rank documents better using the exact match keyword at least somewhere in their content.

So if you know of synonyms of your keyword, it is good practice for SEO to include them in the content somewhere.

Your target language: Mandarin Chinese

If you are optimizing your website for the mainland Chinese market, you are optimizing it for Mandarin Chinese.

Mandarin Chinese is also spoken in Taiwan. They do have a few local words different than in China. But the main difference between Taiwan and mainland China is basically the writing system. In China Simplified Chinese Characters are the writing system to choose. In Taiwan they use Traditional Chinese Characters.

Traditional Chinese Characters are not only used in Taiwan but

in Hongkong as well. The difference between Hongkong and Taiwan is the Chinese dialect. While in Taiwan people speak Mandarin Chinese, in Hongkong people speak Cantonese.

While in written form many words among Taiwan's Mandarin and Hongkong's Cantonese are the same, there are still quite some words differently used between written Cantonese and written Mandarin in Traditional Chinese Characters.

Many of the Chinese Characters between Simplified and Traditional writing system are the same. About 35% of the most commonly used Simplified Characters in China (Source: list of most commonly used Simplified Characters published in 2004 by the Ministry of Education, China) are different in Traditional Chinese. The older mainland Chinese people even learned Traditional Chinese Characters in school as the Simplified characters were introduced during the cultural revolution.

So many Chinese people all around the world could probably communicate by writing. Many Cantonese and Mandarin words are alike when written. Many mainland Chinese can recognize Traditional Characters as well.

But putting it straight, only the combination of Mandarin Chinese with Simplified Chinese Characters actually targets the mainland Chinese market specifically.

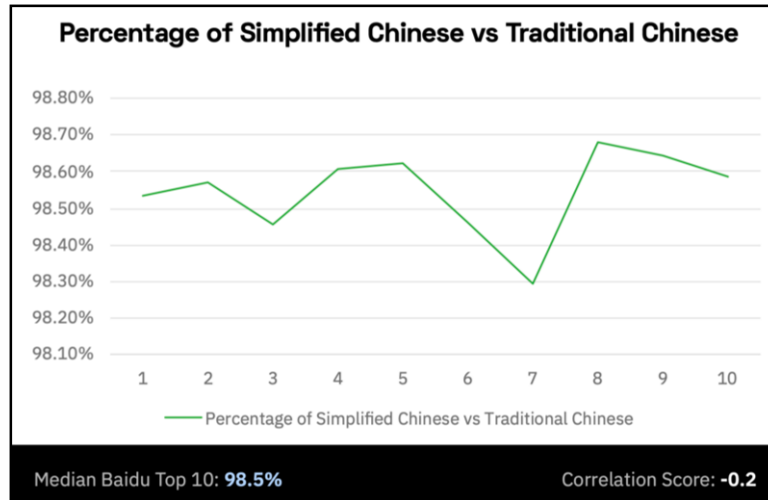


Chart: 98.5% of all Chinese Characters used among the top ranking pages, are Simplified, versus 1.5% Traditional. Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study of 2020

Baidu knows that and honors that such kind of content should have better chances of good rankings in China over the same content in other Chinese dialects or writing systems.

3.10.5.1 English content

Some websites do implement English (or other language) words within their content or website template. If you have a close look at all Chinese websites, you will notice that they usually do not. The more non-chinese content (and even if it is simply words) you include, the more you will lose the focus on your target group.

3.10.5.2 Size of needed content

If you tell your texter to write some text on topic X for your website, focusing it on keyword Y (you will need to tell him to focus is not to reach high keyword density), to use related keywords U, V and W and to include assisting keywords A, B and C, he will ask you how big the text shall be. How do you answer that question?

You could say “as much as it needs, while still producing a well written, interesting and catchy text“ (and you should definitely say this!). But still he will look at you puzzled and ask “how many characters“?

Good luck, that Baidu can answer this question for you. You just need to look up the top ranking websites and measure the text they have written on the desired topic. You could ask your texter to write about that much. Or you could tell your tester to not write less than that. You will usually not have a good chance of outranking the already ranking content too fast. But you could try ranking for as much longtail as possible. Ranking for a much “longer tail” usually gets easier the longer your text is. That is because the amount of combinations Baidu can up with is much higher with the count of different keywords phrases and characters they can find on the page.

3.10.5.3 Keyword Density

Now we get a little deeper into the science of search. You might have heard from your SEO specialists about a technique called “keyword density“.

The idea of this concept is to repeat a word that you want to rank well for on Baidu as often as possible within your content. The more often Baidu will find it in your content - the more they must think of this keyword being what this content is about and w´rank you well.

Now this is a very simplified explanation of this idea. Even a couple of years ago the SEO tricksters were already not keyword stuffing too much any more.

But the idea still remains among many SEO practitioners.

Nowadays they think to be more clever using a less offensive keyword density of like 2% to 3%, meaning for every 100 words they write they would include 2 or 3 times the keyword they intend to rank well for.

With Chinese not being a word by word but a phrase by phrase language (you will have a blank character dividing not words but phrases) you will have a hard time to figure out how many words are being used. And thus you will have a hard time to create a keyword density of like 2% to 3%.

So the calculation is rather “number of characters of the

content“ divided by “number of characters of the keyword“ results in what comes closest to “number of words“ (ok, not really being words - but you get the point, right?).

Now divide the amount how often the keyword is found within the text (not paying attention if there are or are not blank characters dividing the words) by the “number of words“ and you get a “keyword density“ like number.

$$\frac{(\text{keyword length}) \times (\text{count of keyword in content})}{(\text{number of characters in content})}$$

Chart: Formula to calculate a Keyword Density like value for Chinese content

But this is still not what Baidu really pays attention to. A healthy keyword density (meaning not repeating a keyword too often but still often enough to show Baidu that this text is about the keyword) may still be helpful.

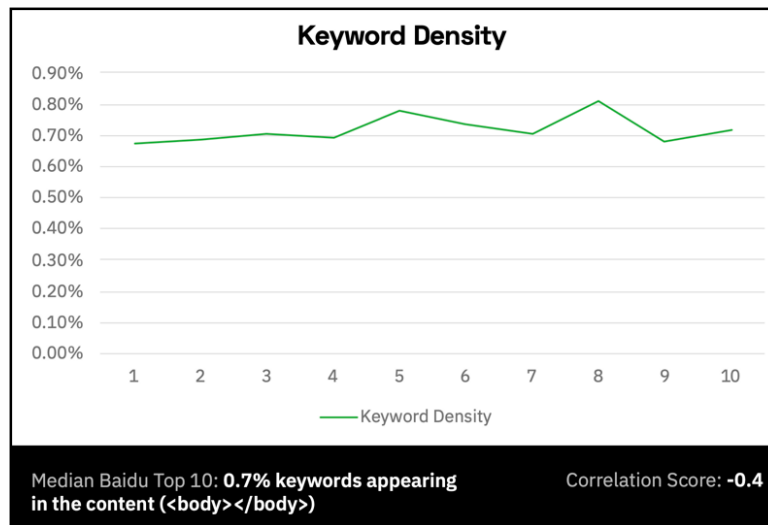


Chart: The average keyword density of the exact match keyword in Chinese content of the top ranking pages on Baidu.com is less than 1%. Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study of 2020

So instead of recommending a keyword density of like 1%, we usually recommend to include the main keyword three times distributed evenly throughout the content, using it once close to the beginning, once somewhere in the middle and once close to the end.

Also using relevant and related words/characters in a natural way evenly distributed throughout the content, helps building highly relevant content.

This “red line“ or “clear trace“ Baidu can follow and recognize that the whole content (and not just one small paragraph) is telling the user about the topic and the keyword.

3.10.5.4 Assisting Keywords

But we want to go one step further beyond keyword density. In 2010 or so a German SEO, who goes by the name of Karl Kratz, introduced to the SEO community a concept called “WDF x P x IDF“. This highly mathematical formula is not really new. Actually forms of it are around even longer than computers even exist.

The idea basically is to find out how important a word is for a certain context. WDF stands for “word document frequency“ and IDF stands for “inverse document frequency“. Without explaining you the details about the formula itself, it is basically to find out the following points:

- Which words do more often appear within text documents that Baidu ranks well for the keyword?
- Which of these words are fairly seldom found in all of the documents that rank for many other and unrelated keywords?

Example:

You want to optimize for “horse riding“.

Some (key)words more often found in related documents are for example “horse“, “saddle“, “stirrup“, “walk“, “trot“, “gallop“.

Although you might not want to optimize for any of these assisting keywords, they will help the search engine to understand the topic just right.

The more of such assisting keywords the search engine can find, the more it will be convinced that this document really is about “horse riding“.

For western languages like English or German, there are tools that can easily analyze the ranking documents for such proof terms. For the Chinese language this gets a little more complicated as you know the language is not about words but phrases (which do not contain blank space characters between single words).

However, if you set up a brainstorming process that your native speaking colleagues will go through, every time they intend to optimize an article for a certain keyword, you will still be able to come up with such assisting keywords, which can be easily implemented by the copywriters.

Just make sure they understand well, what you want. They need to understand that it is about assisting keywords, not necessarily words you might want to rank for.

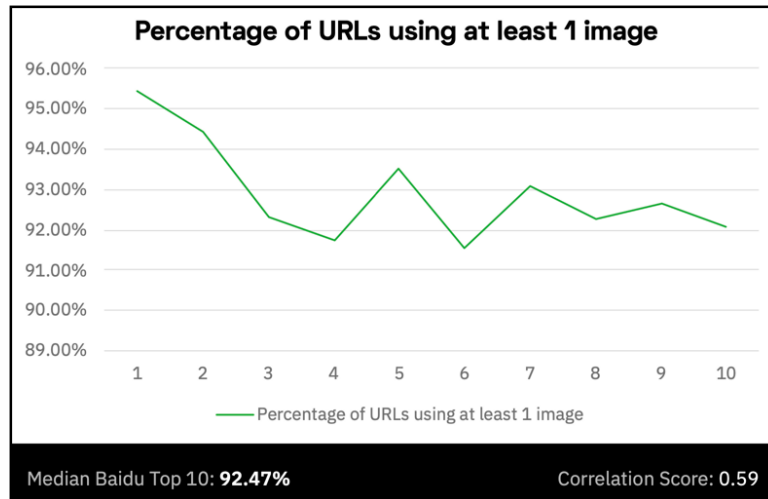
Such a brainstorming process may find one, two or more such assisting keywords. Not every topic is as easy to manually brainstorm as “horse riding“ though.

A “tool” of assistance might be the already ranking websites. Let your brainstormers open these websites, skim them and then brainstorm for such terms (in the best the websites are closed again before they start brainstorming - otherwise they might come up with all copied phrases, which is not the sense

of this task).

3.10.5.7 Images

95.5% of all pages ranking on position #1 in Baidu search results, are using at least one image in their content.



*Chart: Almost all pages ranking well on Baidu use images.
Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study of 2020*

Even if you do not intend to rank well on Baidu image search, optimizing your images still makes sense.

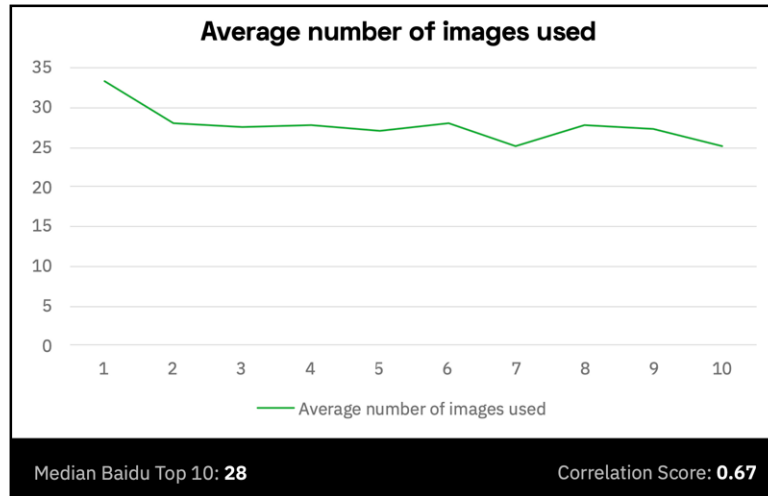


Chart: Using more images (28 images on average) seems to correlate with better ranking on Baidu. Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study of 2020

Baidu does not scan the content of images, so they do not pay too much attention to the images content value for the user.

But including visual additives like images just show Baidu that you care about your visitors.

This again is a point that Baidu does pay attention to: are you building a website containing only information Baidu bot does pay attention to or are you building it for the human user?

Baidu could however scan images and see what can be found on there. But they currently do not do that. Why is that? Well, that has two reasons:

1. They don't need to do it, because they still are the most

used search engine in China. If they need to get better, one day they will implement scanning and interpreting of pictures as well.

2. Resources. Crawling the Chinese web already takes a lot of resources for the crawling process itself and for calculating all the information into chewable chunks Baidu search algorithm can actually work with. For processing all the images on such a high level of interpreting what you can find on these images and value the information seen as being part of the bigger content cluster of the page would need 10 to 100 times the resources Baidu is using already only for contextual processing (at least for doing it right and efficiently).

But what can you do to still transport valuable information about the images content that Baidu will already process? What can you do to optimize images for Baidu?

- Implement images big enough to be seen
 - Only images that are likely to be noticed by the user are valuable enough to be taken into account for using the attached text information for evaluating which topics the page should be relevant about.
- Optimize images for speed
 - Heavy size images would load slowly - not good for the users experience on your website. Baidu will know that.
- Position your images where they can be seen
 - You know Baidu is able to render your website. They can see where exactly an image is

included:

- Is it easily to be seen at all?
 - What is the surrounding text (in the rendered layout)?
 - Which headlines are close to the image?
- Use a “speaking“ file name.
 - Include a word that tells the bot what the image is about.
 - The more relevant for your content (maybe a keyword), the better.
 - Do not use Chinese Characters. Use Pinyin without tonemarks.
 - You can however include hyphens and numbers as well.
- Implement an alt attribute and fill it.
 - Use simplified Chinese Characters.
 - Write in Mandarin for mainland China.
 - Using text that tells the bot about the image and the topic of your page (maybe even using a keyword) makes sense.
 - A maximum of 20 to 50 Chinese Characters shall do the trick
 - The alt attribute is only to be seen by bots and read out aloud to blind or visually handicapped people by special web browsers.
- Implementing a title attribute might be useful
 - You know when hovering with your mouse over an image the title attribute would show as some kind of tooltip.
 - Do not use the exact same text as the alt

attribute.

- Include some text that gives additional information on the image or why you included this image.
- If that is not helpful for your user - do not use the title attribute for this image.
- Watch the surrounding text.
 - This is a little more important if you intend to rank on Baidu image search.
 - Try to include keywords you intend to rank the image for on Baidu image search close to the image.
 - Of course the closest places are filename, alt and title attributes.
- Do not spam!
 - You know Baidu could process your image and see what is on there.
 - They currently don't do it ...
 - ... but that doesn't mean they never do.
 - Baidu might from time to time check if what is seen on your images is corresponding to what you say is seen ...
 - ... or if you show something illegal like porn.

3.10.6 Marking Up

Being a mark up language rather than a coding language (which too many people say), HTML provides a couple of semantical tags that can help a webmaster to explain their content better to users and to Baidu.

- `` meaning to highlight something strong (by default HTML would bold it).
- `` is often used to indicate an implicit or explicit contrast
- `<cite>` meaning citation
- `` introducing an unsorted list
- `` introducing an ordered list (step by step)

HTML5 introduces even more possibilities to explain to Baidu which part of the website is what. They introduce tags like

- `<small>` represents side content such as small print
- `<s>` represents contents that are no longer accurate or no longer relevant.
- `<q>` stands for quotation and shall be used for small quoted texts
- `<dfn>` is used for displaying definitions
- `<abbr>` stands for an abbreviation or acronym
- `<time>` helps the bots understanding more easily if you want to display time, date or alike
- `<code>` represents a fragment of computer code (like a programming language)
- `<object>` which can be a video, audio or image

- `<nav>` saying that the surrounded content is a kind of navigation
- `<header>` being the heading part of the page (like the header of the website with logo, top banner, top navigation, ...) or of a smaller part of the website (like the header of a `<section>` or the header of a `<aside>` container).
- `<footer>` is the counterpart of `<header>`
- `<main>` will (hopefully) frame your main content part

There are many more elements you can use now to help bots to understand the details of your content much better.

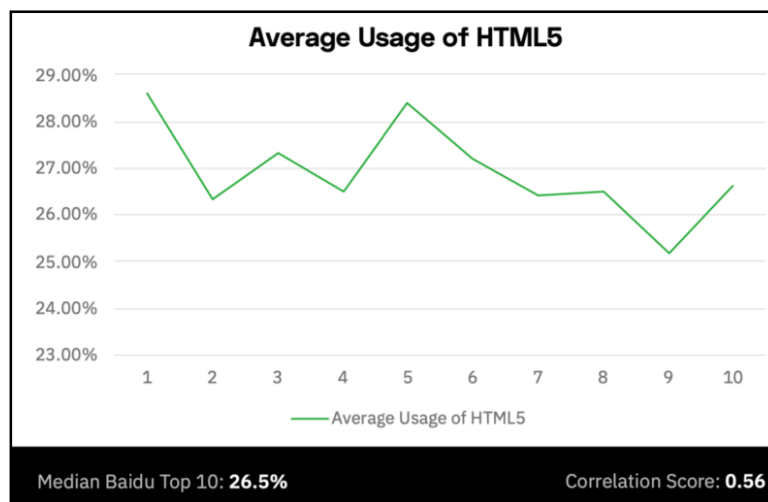


Chart: More than a quarter of the currently top ranking websites on Baidu are already using HTML5. Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation Study of 2020

With HTML5 the inventors allow the first time to use multiple `<h1>` headlines. While HTML5 rules allow that, they do not

request that you must do it. In fact, we do not know yet if Baidu already interpreted HTML5 in a way that understands than an `<h1>` headline somewhere on the webpage might not mean `<h1>` to the whole website.

As long we do not get any official statements from Baidu, we will advice to still use only one `<h1>` headline - directly in the beginning of your `<main>` content.

With HTML5 being in place we actually would advice to not use any h1 to h6 headlines somewhere different but within the `<main>` area. The `<main>` area is where your main content shall be places - so this is the place that should get structured by headlines.

Use your HTML wisely and do not overreact. Baidu will not pay too much attention to your markups if you markup too much.

But they will better understand your website content if you really think about what needs to be semantically marked up (and what doesn't necessarily need any special markup at all).

3.10.7 Flash, Javascript and more

Flash already is yesterdays snow. Apple abandoned support for Adobe Flash on their iPhones and even Android doesn't support Flash any longer. Why should you count on Flash, if no device supports it? You shouldn't.

But there are more techniques that got adopted by many browsers all around the world and 99% of all users are able to see what these techniques build: Javascript and everything related with JS, like Ajax, dynamically loaded content, manipulated DOMs during runtime, either onLoad or based on the users actions such as scrolling, mouseOver or click.

If everyone is able to see such generated content, you could as well use it right? Well, you can use it, but if you do you can not count on ranking well on Baidu. That is because Baidu does only support Javascript for a short time yet.

But Baidu currently does not distribute enough resources for JS rendering and similar for a large amounts of websites. There are way more websites, pages and documents than Baidu does crawl and analyze in a short time.

Even with only text content and being highly authoritative, websites can not count on getting visited by Baidu frequently in short periods of time.

Websites that moved to other domains and did everything right with setting up their 301 redirects would still after 6 months

and more get ranked by Baidu with their old domain and their old URLs.

Baidu at the current point of time does still have excellent search results for Chinese websites.

But as long as they do not get more powerful competition than currently with 360so and Sogou (only taking up 20% of the market share), they are not forced to power up their performance.

So we should get used to support good old fashioned HTML content, by still keeping in mind that they technically could do so much more.

So do not try to trick and fool them. They might every now and then use more powerful rendering based crawlers to detect hidden content, doorway pages and alike.

So play fair and safe, but old fashioned.

3.10.8 Like, Share, Login and external resources

Are you using Social Network Services like the Facebook like button, like counter, share function or even Facebook or Google login? Or are you relying on external JQuery sources, Google fonts and similar?

Skip it!

There are some services that simply do not work in China.

Services like Facebook, twitter, Google and alike are being blocked by the Great Chinese Firewall.

You might now think, what is blocked doesn't hurt, because it simply doesn't get shown. Well, for the Chinese users that might be true. They simply see what can be accessed. They might not be able to see Google based fonts - they will get the standard fonts. They might not be able to see the Facebook share button - so what?

Well, the Chinese search engine bot might think differently - one day. They can recognize that they can not access all sources. They might even "think" that the website simply isn't built Mainland Chinese people.

Something that is not built for Chinese people, should better not get the best positions in Chinese SERPs or the users might not be satisfied with the broken website they will see.

Do you get the point?

Try not to rely on sources and services coming from

- Google
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Youtube
- jQuery (sometimes got blocked)
- ...

We would actually recommend not to include any non-chinese sources as the chance exists that they (for whatever reason)

might get blocked one day.

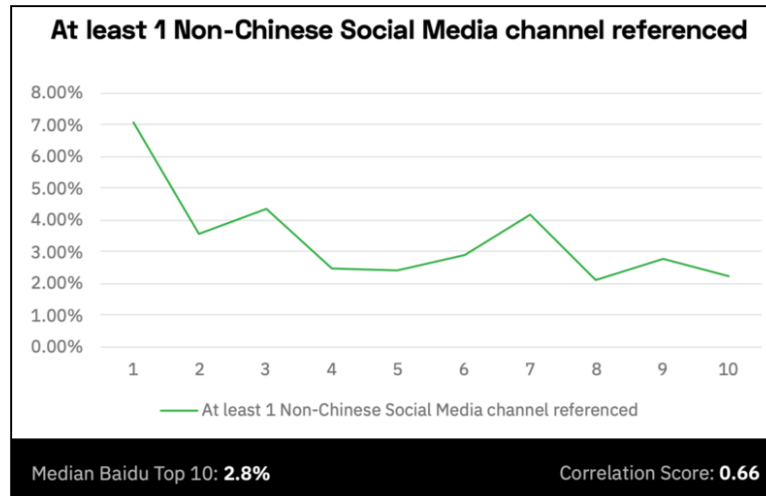
It could even not be the files specifically blocked but the serving IP because there have been found illegal stuff like for example porn on it.

In the best case such resources simply load slowly because of the distance they have to cover or because of being scanned by the GCF (Great Chinese Firewall) before being admitted.

However some sources like Google fonts or jQuery files you can download and host on your own server. Those would work and are ok to use - then.

3.10.9 Social Medias

Not to include facebook share button and alike does have another reason. This is about your target group. Baidu of course knows that facebook and alike are being blocked in China.



*Chart: You can find quite some pages ranking on Baidu although, they refer to Facebook, Twitter and other blocked websites.
Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation*

It looks like, that Baidu does not mind currently. In fact, 2.8% of all websites ranking on Baidu, currently refer to Facebook, Twitter or other western social medias.

So is it still ok to include them?

That one is an easy answer to guess: you do want to target Chinese people not living in China but somewhere else in the world. If you were targeting Mainland Chinese people, why the heck would you include Facebook and twitter sharing options?

Even setting links to blocked websites might count as a signal that your target market is not China itself but Chinese living in other countries.

If you transfer your English or German website for the Chinese market, make sure that you understand the market. Only include what really is useful for your Chinese visitors.

3.10.11 Internal links

You want your website crawled by Baidu and Baidu wants to crawl your website. The most obvious way to get this done is by providing enough opportunities to the bot: use internal links.

Links to other pages are meant for leading the user to more detailed or relevant information that is found on the current page. The link text will show the user what he or she can find on the targeted page.

Links from within content are more relevant than links from navigational or footer sections. That is because Baidu must not only value the link text itself, but Baidu could take into account surrounding texts as well.

3.10.11.1 What are internal links for?

You probably do know that Baidu does not magically find your websites and its pages and simply ranks them in its search result pages.

Baidu need to crawl the internet in order to find new websites.

They check the links on pages they know and look where they

point to.

If they point to other websites, they will find them and visit them.

In order to find all pages on these websites, they follow the internal links (like navigational links) and crawl the website as deep they can. So your website needs internal links for Baidu to find all your (internally linked) pages.

But internal links can also tell Baidu a lot about your website and the pages within your website.

First of all the anchor texts / link text these links are using help Baidu to know the most important keyword the linked to page is about.

3.10.11.2 Link text

So if you set a navigational point saying “女装” (women’s clothes) Baidu will know the linked page is about women’s clothes.

If you set an internal link saying “click here“ the linked page might most likely about the topic “click here“?

Is it? Is it not?

Well, you know it’s not. But Baidu will believe it is. After all Baidu is just a machine. They need to believe what you tell them.

To be fair, most likely not all links pointing to your “click here“ page will say “click here“. Hopefully only a few do and the others are using words that actually mean a topic. The more links share the same link text, the more obvious it gets for Baidu that the mostly used link text describes your target page best.

Your first and most important task in internal linking is to make sure Baidu will easily understand what the linked to pages are about by choosing proper link texts.

Try to only use one link text for all links pointing to the same target page. That makes it much easier for Baidu to understand.

Avoid multiple pages which get links with the same link text. There must be one difference between those pages right? Point out the difference in using different anchor texts.

These two pages are different but cover the same topic? This is why they get the same anchor text? Well, then you most likely do not need both pages! Combine both pages into one and redirect the deleted page to the combined page. Now you again only have one page with the all same link anchor text.

3.10.11.3 Link depth

Did you ever think about how Baidu determines which is the most, second most, third most, ... important page on your website?

It is about link depth. How many links does Baidu need to

follow in your internal linking structure to reach a certain page?
The less links needed the more important this page must be.

You start counting from the strongest page of your website.

Usually the homepage tends to be the strongest URL on your website. So it is easy to say start counting from the homepage.

So how many clicks on your website does it need to easily get to your target page?

Make sure that you build a logical and hierarchical linking structure.

Your homepage shall be linked to from every other page.

Your different website sections (shop, support forum, blog, ...) shall be reached with the first click.

The category pages of your shop shall be within a range of two clicks (if you only run a shop and nothing else, it shall be the first click). The product detail pages than shall be on the next level (or one deeper if you go with sub categories first).

All for SEO important pages shall be easily to be reached within 2 to 5 clicks. The deeper Baidu needs to crawl, the more they might think the pages are not too relevant any more.

At least you, the webmaster, might seem to think they are not too relevant. Otherwise you would have linked to them earlier, right?!

Of course in this logic a product detail page can not be a very important page. You will always need multiple clicks starting from the homepage to reach it.

Well, if there is a special product, which you are extremely proud of, you should link to it earlier:

- Teaser it on the main category page (and link to it)
- Teaser it from the homepage (and link to it)
- Introduce it on your blog (and link to it)
- Write about it on your support forum (and link to it)

The more important a page is for you and your SEO, the easier it will be for you to find multiple ways featuring and linking to it.

This way the click path gets shorter and your product gets more important.

3.10.11.4 Link position

Did you know that Baidu can render your website? They can build it just like your web browser renders the page so you can nicely look at it. They will see where exactly the link on your website is placed.

Baidu will know if the user needs to scroll down before he can see the link, which means that the user needs to scroll down before he can click a link. This again means it is less likely that a user clicks on the link.

So Baidu can evaluate which internal links are more valuable than others. The more important your page is, the more likely

it should be that a link to it gets clicked.

That is why you place a link to your homepage on the logo of the website, which often is found in the upper left corner. Every user will easily see and be able to click it.

That is why you place links to your important category pages into your main navigation: users can easily find and click it.

That's also why you place links to imprint and legal information in the footer section: mostly no user really wants to visit those pages. If they want they know they just have to scroll down and find them.

Sometimes you will hear an SEOs advice to build pages that are just meant for SEO (so you don't want to bother your usual visitors with them) and place links pointing to them in your footer section.

This is a rather common method. But with all you just learned you will easily know that this is a terrible idea, because search engines can easily recognize your trick.

Pages linked from your footer will not get the same power as pages linked from places that are more likely to be seen by users and clicked upon.

3.10.11.5 Contextual links

One of the best positions to place links if they do not fit into the main navigation is placing them directly within your content.

Content above the fold (the area one can see without the need of scrolling down the screen) is more likely to be seen in this way more likely to be clicked by users. So these links are more valuable for linking those pages that are important for your SEO than links found below the fold.

We highly recommend to link all those pages that are important for your SEO internally from within the content of other pages.

No matter if these are category pages which are already linked to from the main navigation or not. Placing in-content links pointing to your high value pages will show Baidu how important they are and pass some more link value to them.

But do not overdo it.

The more pages you link to from within content - the less your in-content links will be worth.

The more links you place on a page the less one link is worth. Focus on the really worthy ones.

3.10.11.6 Link hierarchy

So the links to your most important hub pages shall be placed in the main navigation. Just don't overdo it - Baidu will never believe you that 50% of your website is that important.

The next important links you may place in sub navigations which only will be there if you already are on an important hub page (like the "ladies"-main category) ... the place could be a

sidebar sub-navigation.

The very concrete links to detail pages will be from within the content. Your products are linked from within the category and subcategory pages, right?!

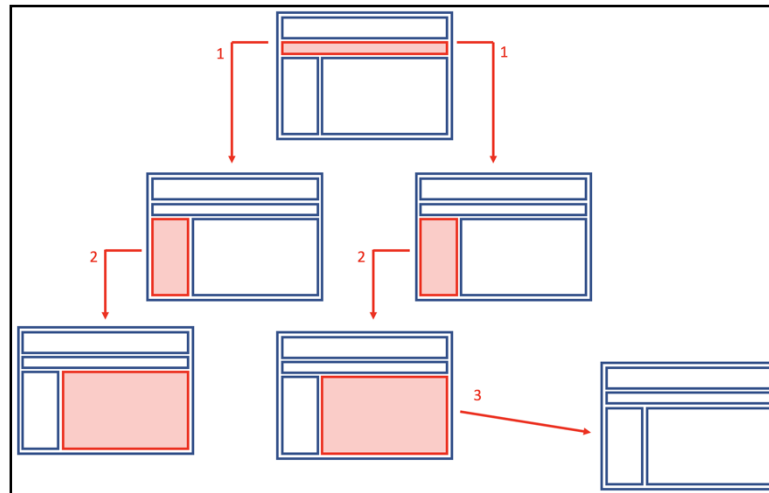


Chart: Common link hierarchy distribution

Now there will still be pages that you consider highly important for your SEO but that would be 3 to 5 clicks away from the home page if you proceed like we suggest in our example?

These are the pages that you link to from within text content on homepage, category pages, article pages on the blog, ... you just inject such deep links wherever it makes sense.

It doesn't make sense on your homepage? Then your SEO goal might not be aligned well enough with your website intention ... place the link on layer below within the text

content on one of the hub pages.

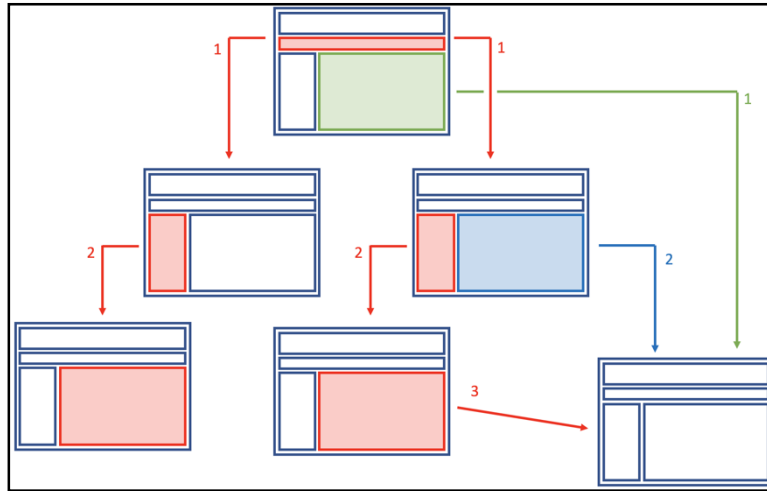


Chart: Common link hierarchy distribution with additional contextual link from the home page

3.10.11.7 Siloing

When talking about URL design we already mentioned that it makes sense to structure your website just right. Baidu will love finding structures like this:

www.example.com.cn/shop/ladies/

All pages nested “below” /ladies/ most likely being shopping related pages for women.

What has started for the URL structure can be repeated for internal linking structure as well. From the homepage you link to your main categories. From there you link to your sub categories. From there you link to detail pages.

Baidu will see that all pages that are kind of linked in a row do belong together.

We mentioned this kind of hierarchical linking structure in the last chapter already.

But this is not siloing yet.

Siloing literally means that you build topical silos within your website. Once the user followed a link to the ladies section of the website, there is no direct link to the mens section. All the use can do is follow deeper into the topic of the silo - or climb up the silo again.

While usually there is always the chance to simply use the main navigation to jump from women's clothing to men's clothing category, a very strictly planned silo would only allow to climb up one step and choose a different silo from there. But there would not be a link aside to the other silo directly.

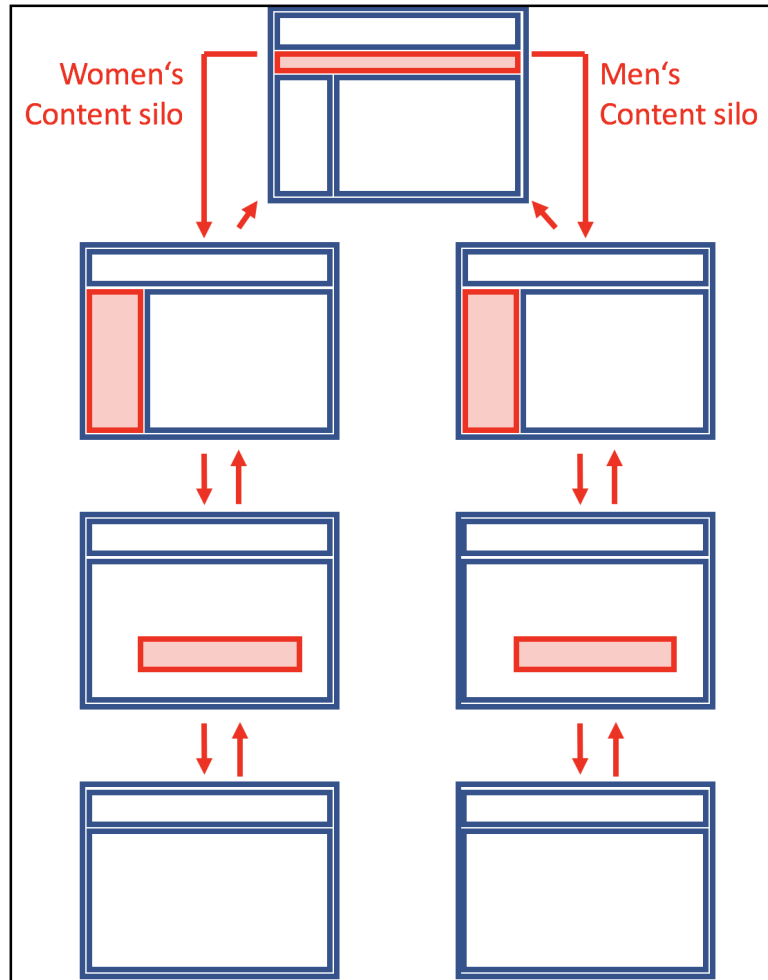


Chart: A classical silo-approach link hierarchy only linking up/down within the specific silos.

From the homepage the user (and Baidu) can decide for a silo (category) and stick with this category as long not following a link back to the pages one already knows.

This way any further link will get the user just deeper into

details of a topic (silo). There is no chance for distraction. Baidu will easily recognize what exactly this silo is about.

Technically you do it this way:

- Provide main navigation only on the home page.
- On the next level the main navigation will not be there - but only a new sub navigation which leads deeper into the silo.
- On the next level the just used sub navigation will not be there but a new sub navigation or in-content links towards the next level.
- There should however be a breadcrumb navigation allowing the user to get back up to any level above.
- There should as well always be a link back to the homepage.

If you do a perfectly leveled and hierarchical URL structure, the URL structure and the navigational silo flow would be the same.

Baidu would have two perfectly aligned structure signals (URL structure and silo navigation) to understand what the website is about and what which part of the website is about in detail.

3.10.11.8 Let's get realistic about silos

Of course, dropping the main navigation from the sub pages is not really possible and doesn't make much sense from a usability point of view.

To get as close as possible towards a silo style website navigation, you should at least avoid so called Mega Dropdown menus, which host a big number of links to sub categories and eventually pages.

Instead only present your main level of navigation in the main navigational area. Have the users click them to reach further hubpages (like category pages) and have them provide further links to pages further down in the informational architecture.

It is a myth that Baidu doesn't follow deeper navigational structures. Pages deeper than 3 or even 5 click levels are still found by Baidu - you just need to give them time (as Baidu still crawls slower than Google).

To speed up crawling and indexing, you can always use their push to index service which is recommended anyways for all pages containing rank worthy content in order to have your pages indexed faster by Baidu than those copycats stealing your content and becoming the "original source" if earlier crawled by Baidu.

3.10.12 External links

The whole internet only works because websites link to each other. A user finds a nice text on a topic he is interested in. Then he finds a link (maybe to the source of information) and follows that link to get even more or different information on a topic.

That is how the internet works.

That is how Baidu expects the webmaster to act. An external link to another website is the backbone of the whole internet.

Whenever you can not provide all possible information on a topic or if there is another view on the topic that is worth sharing, you should implement a link. This helps the user and the bot in two ways:

1. The user can decide if he or she is fine with what they could read on your website, or if they decide to read more on this topic (or on another related topic) following the link you provide.
2. Baidu takes into account the targeted page to value your page as well. You linked to that page - so you want your visitors to follow this link, because it enhances what you already provided in information. Therefore the linked to content extends your content. Therefore a little shadow of the linked to content falls onto your page as well. Acknowledged - it is only a small shadow - but still it is.

So doing SEO you actually want to reference other pages using their own words talking about your topic. It will support your SEO as well. Sharing is Caring ;-).

3.10.12.1 External links to foreign language content

You might have read in some blog posts that links to other language websites will not be beneficial for your Baidu SEO.

Maybe such rumors even originate from Marcus' own blog posts at blog.searchmetrics.com. But let us clarify.

It is not about links to other language websites hurting your Baidu SEO generally. It is all about the intention and how and where they are linking to.

It's not about not linking to different language websites and pages - it is about not blurring the focus on Chinese language websites.

The more often you link to different language websites or pages, the more Baidu crawlers must get the picture that you are not targeting a Chinese language speaker. This way you might not be targeting Baidu's target market.

Some bloggers might have misinterpreted Marcus' opinion by simply saying Baidu doesn't like you linking to different language websites. Some even said that you should not even link to your own different language pages.

True is - don't overdo it and find the right strategy while still focusing on Chinese content.

3.10.12.2 Multi-Language Websites

If you are running a multinational business, you might have a multinational website. Or you have multiple websites in different countries. Of course you want to show that to all of your visitors: you are an international company and you can offer services in different countries and languages. And there is nothing wrong with showing that.

It is even ok linking to them. Even a Chinese visitor might want to read the English version of your website - although they might have initially found the Chinese version on Baidu.

What you should pay attention to, is that most of your Chinese visitors will most likely stay on the Chinese version.

So placing such links too much in the focus space of your visitors, doesn't make too much sense - it would only distract them.

Place such links not in the header, main or sidebar sections, but in the footer area. That is the place most people might look if they looked for other language versions.

If you run not just an English and a Chinese version of your website but multiple languages, you might not want to link to all of them from every page of your Chinese website.

But the more links to non-chinese pages Baidu can find, the less value will be brought to your Chinese internal links.

Your focus on the Chinese audience is blurring with every non-chinese website you are linking to.

Baidu must think the more you are linking to non-chinese websites (or pages) the more your focus is not within the mainland Chinese market (which generally only responds to Mandarin Chinese).

So how to link to your multiple different language versions?

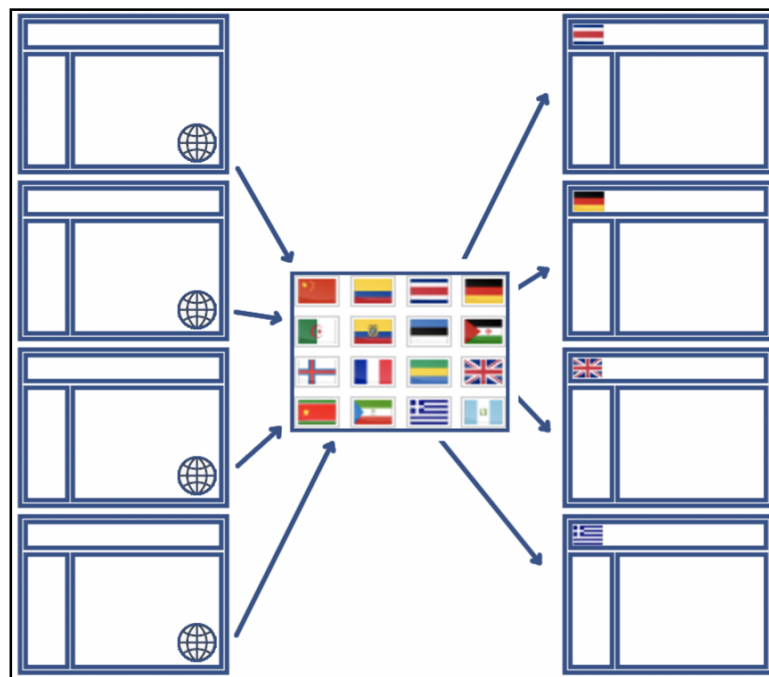


Chart: How to link international variants of the Chinese website

with only one outgoing link per page.

Linking to single country selector page from where visitors can switch to any country you offer a specialized website for avoids adding multiple links to non-chinese pages.

3.2 Technical SEO

Making sure that Baidu can easily access and crawl your website is the broad summary of what technical Baidu SEO is about. With this said, technical SEO for Baidu starts with the choice of the server location. But let's start with the reason why.

3.2.1 Pagespeed

The loading time of a website matters to the user. This is even more true the slower a website loads. With Chinese people using the internet mostly from their smartphone, website speed matters even more.

So shrinking the (mobile) loading time of a website is one fundamental way to increase the user's happiness.

Baidu knows this as well and made page speed one important ranking factor. A ranking factor many foreign websites suck at.

The pagespeed of a website is based on multiple factors.

- Internet connection speed
- DNS reaction time
- Server response time (also influenced by server location)

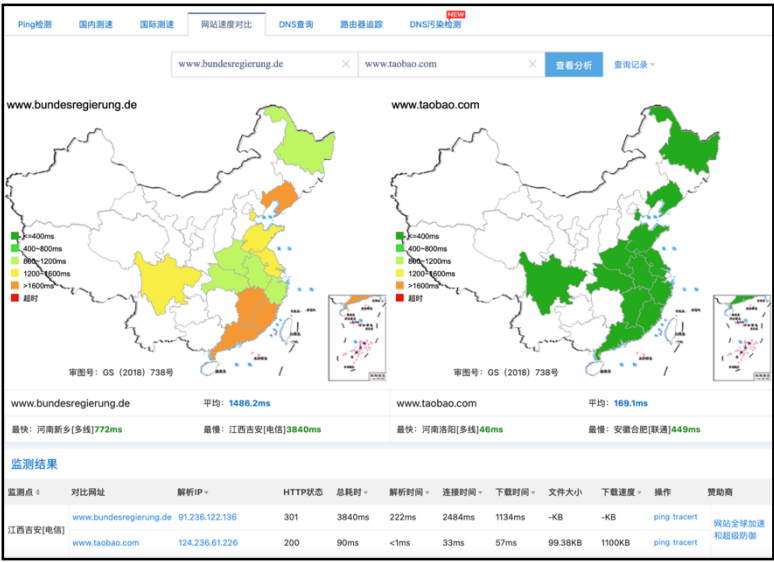
- Server speed (also influenced by server location)
- Resources hosted on your own server
 - External JS, CSS and fonts
 - Images, Videos, other objects
- Resources hosted on external servers
 - External JS, CSS and fonts
 - Images, Videos, other objects

While some factors can not be influenced by the webmaster at all (internet connection speed, DNS reaction time), the right choice of hosting performance optimized web servers do play a big role.

But there are still some ways web design and coding can for optimizing a websites speed.

3.2.1.1 Pagespeed Analysis Tools

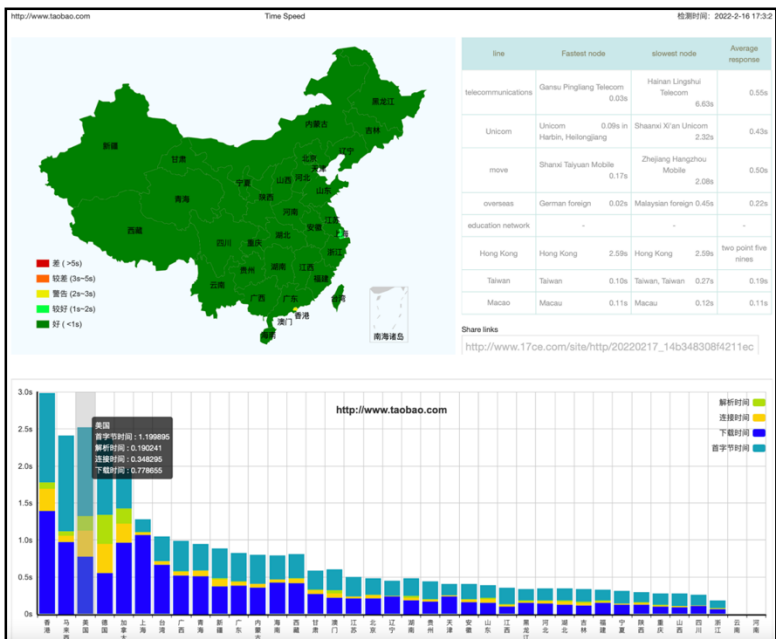
3.2.1.1.1 Chinaz Pagespeed Analysis



Screenshot: Pagespeed comparison between two websites.

Source: <http://tool.chinaz.com/speedcom/>

3.2.1.1.1 17ce Pagespeed Analysis



Screenshot: Pagespeed of taobao.com in China. Source: <https://www.17ce.com>

3.2.1.2 The Great Chinese Firewall

If you ever visited China you might have noticed that opening western based websites load much slower than usual.

Even if you are in Europe visiting websites from the USA, they will usually open much faster than in China.

The reason is not the distance alone, but much more likely the Great Chinese Firewall.

Any website not being hosted on Mainland Chinese servers will

have to pass this firewall.

It basically live scans any traffic entering China if it contains content which is potentially harmful to the Chinese people. This includes porn and politically sensitive contents.

Scanning such masses of data in live mode, eats up some of the speed that the websites might usually have. Some websites might even get completely blocked.

This does not necessarily need to be related to the website itself. It could be just because Chinese safety systems have decided to block an whole IP address or even IP range and you are just unlucky to be hosted on these IPs (or being rooted over blocked IPs before entering the Chinese networks).

3.2.1.3 Server location

Knowing that distance to the server is one key to website speed, you might want to host your website on Asian web servers.

Knowing about the Great Chinese Firewall, you might want to use a Mainland Chinese web server. Being aware that some areas might be better connected to high speed internet than others, you might want to pick such locations within China (Beijing, Shanghai and Chengdu are some examples).

3.2.1.4 Content Delivery Network

Sometimes an even better solution to hosting your website on one server (especially for multinational websites) is the choice of an international CDN provider.

An international CDN provider would run several servers all over the world. You should choose one with at least two server locations in China.

The CDN logic would always choose the server location nearest to your users surfing location or a server location serving fastest to your users surfing location.

This will grant you best website performance all over the world without the need of your own load balancing measures.

3.2.1.5 ICP license and local address

Not being a technical element, owning an ICP license is still needed for being allowed to rent a web server in China or to join a CDN program which uses servers in China.

But you will need a local company address to be able to apply for an ICP license.

While being soft factors, a local company address and an ICP license are necessary for gaining up some server speed for your Chinese website.

3.2.1.6 Resource Hosting

What is true for your own sources is true as well for other resources like fonts, CSS or Javascript.

Some web designers prefer to load them from external services like jQuery website or fonts from Google fonts.

If you do that you are always at the risk that your website doesn't load at full speed, because those resources might load slow or even do not load at all in China.

It is recommended to host your resources on your own (Chinese) server or CDN or at least find hosted services within mainland China, giving you a higher chance on faster load times.

If Baidu finds a website doesn't fully load due to being slowed down too much having some resources blocked at all, they must believe that this website is not optimized for the mainland Chinese market.

3.2.1.7 Social Network Plugins

This one is much like the previous point about resources. If you are linking to social networks that are not commonly used in China, that is one important point (see external linking chapter for this point).

The other point is that including social media plugins like a facebook counter, sharing buttons or alike usually need

external resources from the social network servers in order to function. But if these resources load very slow or are being blocked (which will be more likely), Baidu will find that not all functionality of the website would work. This again will make them “think“ that the website is not built for the mainland Chinese audience.

3.2.1.8 MIP

Facebook introduced their Instant Stories technology. Google introduced AMP (Accelerated Mobile Pages). Both services do not work as intended (speeding up load times of internet content) in China.

Shortly after AMP was introduced, Baidu offered their own, very similar version called MIP - Mobile Instant Pages.

But Baidu suspended support of MIP in 2020, which means it is not a viable technique for speeding up your websites, any longer.

3.2.1.9 HTML Sourcecode

Build as lean and clean source code as possible. The less KB need to be loaded for knowing the full source code of a webpage, the better.

The less HTML mistakes your code has (even if they do not show as mistakes when the website is rendered), the less a bot must “think“ that your website might not fully look pleasant to the visitors. A website that Baidu thinks might display “broken“ to the user, might not rank as well as it could.

The less HTML source is needed, the better. Smaller source code, less nodes, less nesting of elements, the easier will the website render for the user - and for Baidu.

3.2.1.10 Javascript

Use as little javascript as possible. For building a fully 100% responsive website which is mobile friendly and still looks great on desktop computers, is possible entirely without JS.

Baidu is not 100% compatible with Javascript yet (although it improves every year), so using as less and simple JS as possible, helps at this point.

If your website still needs to use JS (for whatever reason), there are ways to give your website a little speed up:

Exclude it to further files if it is the same script on all your website's pages. This way the web browser is able to cache the JS code and doesn't need to load it new every time a new page loads. That saves time. Instead of placing them in the head-section of your website, you could load these in the very end of your source code (old fashioned way) so the website will start to render in the users browser even before the JS is loaded.

Or use asynchronous loading of JS (modern way).

You are already using multiple external JS files? Combine those that are used by all of your pages. This reduces the number of

connections needed by the visitors web browser to open for getting all necessary information. This again might speed up the website because other resources get requested faster.

But if some of the javascript code is needed for rendering the website - especially above the fold - you should include these few lines of code directly to your websites head-section, to make sure the page renders quickly.

Some Javascript can also be optimized in size using some shrinking scripts that help to delete unnecessary lines or commands.

3.2.1.11 CSS

CSS is usually necessary to render a website pleasantly. You could still divide the CSS of a website into two sections:

1. The CSS needed to be rendered correctly above the fold (of most devices)
2. The rest of CSS which will be necessary for all the other parts (like floating of images if these usually get displayed below the fold or formatting of contact forms, ... whatever is not initially seen by a user before scrolling down the website.

Then place the necessary CSS directly into the head-section of the website while excluding the rest to external files which can be loaded in the end of the website.

This has three advantages: Your website will render quickly and still your source code stays as small as possible.

Furthermore the CSS which is being included from another CSS file will be cached by the web browser so all further pages using these files will load faster.

You are already using multiple external CSS files? Combine those that are used by all of our pages. This reduces the number of connections needed by the visitors web browser to open for getting all necessary information. This again might speed up the website because other resources get requested faster.

Some CSS can also be optimized using some shrinking scripts that help to delete unnecessary lines or commands.

3.2.1.12 Images

A very common mistake is to use oversized images. Some editors might upload their full size smartphone taken pictures to their blog article. Such files can take up to several MB in file size.

By scaling them to the size needed for the website, the loading time (of these images) can be shortened quite a bit.

Then most images can still be packed or shrunk in quality without a visual difference for the common user. Such shrinking algorithms are so smart that they for example combine pixels of a very similar color and make them the same color. This result in less information which results in smaller filesize.

Further more it makes sense to let the browser know about the

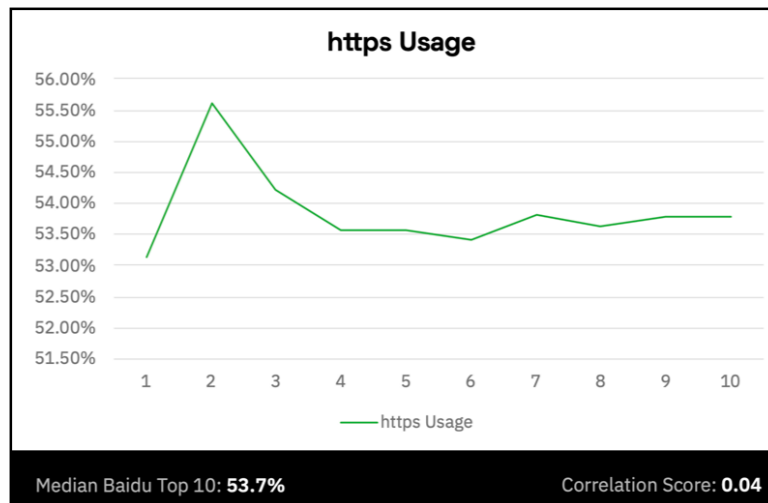
displaying dimensions of the image - this way it can reserve space while rendering the page and the image is still loading. This will result in less layout shifting (jumping of elements while the user watches the page building up).

3.2.3 SSL / https / http

More and more user focused websites do implement SSL certificates to secure the users personal information when using the website.

Might it not be that relevant for news and content websites that do not allow any further interaction than clicking some links, it does help to protect the users input on contact forms, login forms, payment forms and alike when using them on a secured website.

Baidu does support https for quite some years. But it is not until the second quarter of 2017 that we see Baidu actually adapting more and more SSL secured websites into their index and search results.



*Chart: More than 50% of the top ranking pages are https URLs.
Source: Searchmetrics Baidu Ranking Factors Correlation*

Already more than 50% of all top ranking pages are https-URLs. We can surely see not being on https, to be a negative ranking factor somewhere soon.

3.2.4 Robots.txt

Baidu bots usually follow the rules set up in the robots.txt file. That means if you do not allow Baidu to crawl certain resources needed for fully displaying the website, Baidu might get the impression that they are not allowed to view the “whole picture” of a website.

So it makes sense to allow Baidu to crawl everything a regular web browser would need as well in order to fully display a webpage.

It is just a matter of time Baidu will start rendering the web pages with the resources delivered to Baidu bot and coming incognito to compare what a regular user would see. That is a common cloaking detection technique used by crawlers. I'd be surprised if Baidu wouldn't do that (or start doing that soon).

3.2.5 XML Sitemap

The Chinese internet is that large, Baidu simply does not have the resources to crawl all websites as regularly as it would be necessary to get a good and always up to date impression of a website.

This means that Baidu will most likely not crawl too deep into the depths of your website by themselves. So providing an up to date XML sitemap definitely makes sense to introduce Baidu to fresh URLs they might not have found yet. This way Baidu can even find pages that are not easily accessible via internal linking structure.

Please be aware that Baidu will lose one very important signal to really calculate the value of such pages (if they didn't find it through internal links as well).

The only way for Baidu to see the relevance of such deeply hidden pages is by comparing the OnPage and content only to those other documents Baidu might already know from other websites concerning the covered topics and keywords.

It would be more beneficial for your SEO if Baidu found your

pages through internal links as well.

3.2.6 Pushing URLs through Baidu Webmaster Tools

Baidu offers the function to push the Baidu bot directly onto an URL in order to crawl and evaluate it fast. This is relevant for new pages or freshly updated content.

Before you wait weeks for Baidu to naturally crawl your pages again and find the new content, you simply submit the URLs to Baidu directly.

This is important because this way Baidu hopefully crawls your page before that copycat webmaster who steals your content and publishes it to his website. The page Baidu crawls first will be the one they usually take as the original source and rank it first.

Pro tip: You already know that simply pushing a page to be crawled through Baidu Zhanzhang or through submitting it through an XML sitemap, will not help you getting it valued by internal links.

Now, if you additionally update another (older and already indexed) page which is highly relevant for the topic related to your new page and you add a link into this page pointing to your absolutely new and fresh page and you submit through Baidu Zhanzhang to be crawled again, Baidu will be able to identify the link and with that the hierarchy the new page is placed in the internal link structure.

3.2.7 Ajax, AngularJS and Single Page Applications

Baidu is a rather innovative tech company in China. It does see trends and they know that their crawlers have to adapt and develop for being able to see all content a usual person would see visiting a website.

But crawling new technologies is rather complicated. It is much more effort to successfully crawl a javascript DOM manipulating webpage over regular web pages. And noticing that even crawling the regular HTML source based Chinese internet is a challenge for Baidu's resources, we have to face the fact that it will not be Baidu's first priority to dig too deep into javascript crawling in any form.

That means that any content that you really want Baidu to see, read, interpret and evaluate for ranking, should be hard coded into the regular HTML source code.

But be aware: Baidu does know how javascript crawling works and they might have already developed undercover bots that are visiting your website JS enabled.

So If you intend to implement black hat SEO strategies showing one content to Baidu and manipulating the DOM by showing different content to the regular human user, will be something Baidu will most likely implement into one of their next Baidu algorithm updates.

That they do not have the resources doing this live and for every crawled web page does not mean they don't do it to a

selection of suspicious pages and place some penalties on them if they play on the dark side of SEO.

3.3 Baidu is not Google

While many SEO techniques that work for Google also are beneficial for Baidu as well, there are some techniques, Baidu does not support today. Here is an overview of the most important ones:

3.3.1 Canonical

Baidu does support the Canonical-Link tag. But while Google might follow recommendations across multiple domains (one domain canonicals to another domain), Baidu does not support cross domain canonicals.

3.3.2 Hreflang

Google being an international search engine tries its best to understand relations between different language websites as its best. Baidu does not have too much international ambitions. While they do crawl and index non Chinese websites and you can use English and other language search phrases on Baidu.com to search for relevant websites, Baidu does not support Hreflang tags (yet).

3.3.3 Schema.org

Although Baidu currently doesn't support Schema.org structured data markup, it is no mistake adding them if

prepared already for the other country versions. But if your schema.org extensions require manual editing of the information, you might want to skip those structured markups.

3.4 Local SEO

Your whole website or some of your websites pages are relevant for rankings in special regions of China? There are ways to show Baidu which regions might need to display your pages rather than other regions. The more different signals pointing to one location you are combining on your website, the better Baidu will understand your intention. IN the best case you will use all three of them.

3.4.1 GEO Localization tags

If your website is especially relevant for a specific location, you might want to help Baidu understand that by adding the Location Meta Tag:

```
<meta name="location" content="province=天津;city=天津;coord=117.191266,39.140796">
```

In this example, the province and city are 天津 (Tianjin). These information are mandatory, while the coordinates longitude and latitude are optional.

Anjuke.com (a real estate / apartment website) for example implements the location metatag on it's different location pages like

```
<meta name="location" content="province=上海;city=上
```

海;coord=121.478125,31.234342">

on it's Shanghai page (<https://shanghai.anjoke.com>).

3.4.2 Postal address

Placing a postal address on the relevant pages also helps to show Baidu which city a page is relevant for. You could use your footer section to place the address. On certain pages only, if they should be ranking locally better than other pages or site wide.

This method is not officially confirmed to be successful in Local SEO, but it does make sense for visitors of those local relevant pages even if Baidu does not pay attention.

3.4.3 Local (mobile) phone number

Did you know that even mobile phone numbers bought in Beijing are starting with another regional code than mobile phone numbers bought in Tianjin (which is only like 50km away)? Placing your regional (mobile) phone also is one possible signal to tell Baidu about the preferred region for the page.

This method is not officially confirmed to be successful in Local SEO, but it does make sense for visitors of those local relevant pages even if Baidu does not pay attention.

3.5 Expertise, Authority and Trust (E.A.T.)

E.A.T. is a concept introduced by Google, not Baidu. But the idea that a website shall proof all those three concepts is already in the DNA of every modern website. Because it might

be familiar for you to think in these concepts, we want to introduce you to ideas how Baidu might identify Expertise, Authority and Trust.

It is important to keep in mind, that we are not saying, Baidu does pay attention to the following ideas - but they certainly could.

3.5.1 Expertise

Expertise demonstrated on a website is understood to mean that the author is so familiar with the subject matter presented and that he can assess the user's intention so well that he provides the visitor with exactly the content that he expects.

This means that the author uses exactly the terminology that is appropriate to the topic and that an attentive reader with a little background knowledge would expect.

Tables, lists and pictures are used if this is appropriate for the topic and the expectations of the visitor.

The search engine works out the certainty about the necessary vocabulary and depth by observing how relevant documents for a search phrase or topic perform in the user behavior in the search results. Documents that have better user signals must have something that the other documents do not have or have too much. The search engine recognizes the similarities of well-performing content on a topic and the differences to the less well-performing content.

The Baidu SERPs for the individual search terms change much more intensely every day than one is used to from Google.

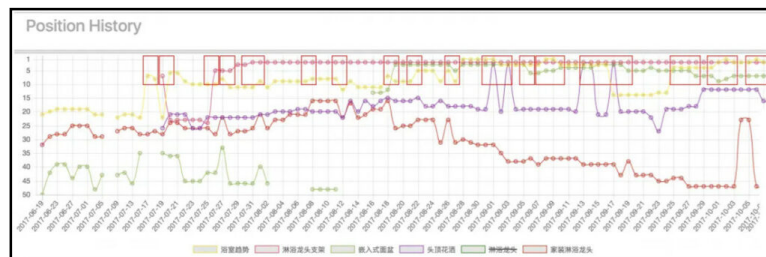


Image: Rankings of a website with sometimes strong fluctuations. The most noticeable fluctuations in the top 10 are shown in red boxes. You can see how Baidu sometimes carries out extreme tests. The purple line shows a keyword for which the domain may not only rank in the top 19, but also in position 1 on a few days. The green and yellow lines show keywords for which the rankings are changed by individual positions within the top 10 and then tested again for several days. Image source: internal position tracking monitor by Kun's Chinese Online Marketing agency Jadigital.com

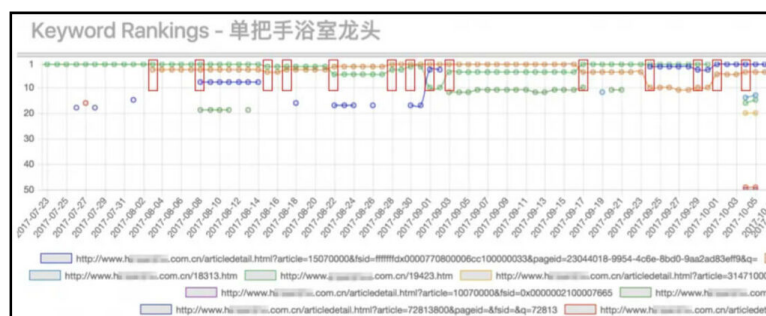


Image: Rankings of potentially relevant pages on a website on a keyword. The website consistently holds a position 1 ranking, but the composition of the URLs that Baidu ranks in the top 10 changes by an average of every 5.3 days. Baidu has (depending on the number of users) new data every 5.3 days in order to test

it against new constellations. The fact that Baidu currently still has a problem with the selection of the correct canonical URLs (despite the correctly selected target in the canonical tag – see parameter URLs) can be neglected here, as the article IDs clearly show that there are definitely different ones. Is content that is thrown into the ranking race for this website. Image source: internal position tracking monitor by Kun's Chinese Online Marketing agency Jadigital.com

3.5.1.1 How can SEOs know whether a content demonstrates sufficient depth to proof expertise?

The SEO / editor can now make use of the preparatory work done by the search engine. The composition of the Baidu Top 10 to Top 20 rankings are (at this point in time) the most thematically relevant documents for a search query.

It is therefore necessary to have a native speaker determine which terms are used in these documents. What level of detail do the individual articles experience? Which content formats are used and what are the individual content formats used for?

For example, it is not enough to recognize that a table is used in 5 out of 10 relevant documents. It is also necessary to recognize what kind of information is presented in the table.

This is not about copying information. The information communicated in the table on your website can deviate (and should also do so if it is not generally recognized values, such as the information from how many degrees and at what height above sea level water freezes). Rather, it is about meeting user

expectations as to which type of information should be presented in which content form. Baidu has already analyzed this (by testing which URLs are best received by the searchers).

Especially with evergreen content, i.e. with all pages that you intend to achieve good rankings over the years – these do not have to be editorial / informative pages, but can also be, for example, product category pages – it applies regularly to test whether the content can still keep up with the expertise offered on competitor websites. Whether the content corresponds to what the user expects.

3.5.2 Authority

Website authority is an old concept based on Google's first PageRank patents. The guys from Mountain View were among the first to calculate a kind of authority – the PageRank – based on how often a website was referenced and how “strong” those referring pages were (i.e. how often they were referenced) .

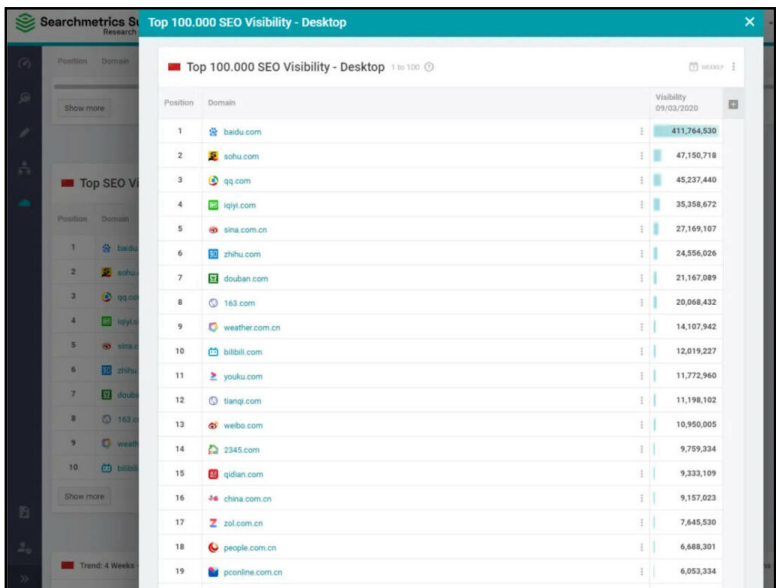
Since then, all the major search engines such as Microsoft, Yahoo, Yandex, Bing and also Baidu have developed their own concepts, but these basically go back to this idea: if a website is often linked – and especially by “strong” websites, it must have a certain reputation / Have authority.

Of course, it is far too short-sighted and usually belongs in the SEO moth box to only look at numbers like “number of links” or “number of linked domains”. However, there is often a lack of sophisticated PageRank-imitating concepts that also cover topics (travel, automotive, food, ...), niches (camping vs.

hotels vs. holiday apartments, club vacations vs. city tours vs. individual trips, ...) and user intent (informational vs. Transactional vs. Navigational), which would be available to SEOs outside of the AI laboratories of the search engine giants.

So unfortunately we SEOs don't have much choice but to look at such KPIs.

Accordingly, we selected 45 domains from the top 100,000 domains in the Baidu SERPs according to Searchmetrics SEO-Visibility, randomly from "top" to "bottom" from the list and subjected them to a KPI-based analysis.



Position	Domains	Visibility
1	baidu.com	411,764,530
2	sohu.com	47,190,718
3	qq.com	45,237,440
4	qq.com	35,358,672
5	sina.com.cn	27,169,107
6	zhuo.com	24,556,026
7	douban.com	21,167,889
8	163.com	20,068,432
9	weather.com.cn	14,107,842
10	lailai.com	12,019,227
11	youku.com	11,772,960
12	tiang.com	11,198,102
13	weibo.com	10,950,005
14	2345.com	9,799,334
15	qq.com	9,332,109
16	china.com.cn	9,157,023
17	zol.com.cn	7,645,530
18	people.com.cn	6,688,301
19	pconline.com.cn	6,953,334

Screenshot: Extract of the strongest domains according to Searchmetrics SEO Visibility on Baidu for China

Although Searchmetrics' own backlink crawler has made a quantum leap forward in recent years, a backlink KPI based on data from just one source can never be as good as the KPIs of an aggregator like LinkResearchTools.

So, in addition to our own Searchmetrics Page Strength (SPS), we also included the LinkResearchTools Power * Trust and the number of linked domains, which were aggregated by the *LinkResearchTools.com* from more than 20 backlink sources, in the comparison.

Domain	Searchmetrics SEO Visibility	LRT Power*Trust	Domain Pop	Searchmetrics Page Strength
baidu.com	416,889,283	24	521,093	7.79
qq.com	45,095,595	81	15,052,988	6.7
sohu.com	40,185,662	63	2,454,170	6.89
iqiyi.com	32,092,620	20	7,815	6.61
sina.com.cn	25,825,238	72	3,687,408	6.99
zhihu.com	22,724,547	30	407,209	5.92
163.com	21,628,620	72	2,798,909	6.58
douban.com	19,098,412	42	956,297	6.75
weather.com.cn	13,506,600	48	651,671	6.53
2345.com	11,892,357	30	533,321	5.31
dm5.com	351,672	15	66,118	4.49
photophoto.cn	351,264	20	17,550	5.52
findlaw.cn	348,098	30	147,687	4.97
aqtour.com	347,268	3	1,928	3.5
ckd.cc	345,477	6	5,128	3.57
925g.com	345,117	12	2,165	2.67
xinshipu.com	344,712	30	39,773	4.35
blackidea.cn	17,546	20	564	2.52
sipo.gov.cn	17,543	40	170,693	5.83
shisu.edu.cn	17,543	35	63,393	4.38
jidujiao.com	17,516	20	14,186	4.12
boaoforum.org	1,440	20	12,329	4.16
shenghuochn.com	1,440	3	458	3.85
dostor.com	1,440	16	7,176	3.91
cwrnk.com	1,439	9	3,121	2.78
szlawyers.com	1,439	20	13,788	4.13
deskier.com	1,439	6	1,030	3.37
dongpo.net	494	6	10,443	3.78
chengyang.gov.cn	494	6	8,893	2.82
dynamicpcb.com	494	2	247	1.53
pilotautomotive.com	494	8	4,083	2.95
mofa.gov.vn	494	16	31,167	4.33
cdwx1.com	494	4	1,355	2.56
cnbg.com.cn	308	6	3,823	4.09
shufadashi.com	308	2	723	3.21
qx-kj.com	308	3	841	3.06
msckobe.com	308	3	4,419	2.56

Table: Extract of the domains for which Strength KPIs from different tools were compared for this test

3.5.2.1 Explanation of the KPIs:

3.5.2.1.1 SEO Visibility (for China)

... is a KPI calculated by Searchmetrics in which, based on a fixed representative keyword set for China, the top 50 rankings per keyword are collected, analyzed and based on the ranking position, the expected CTR (also influenced by ads and SERP Features) and the search volume for each domain an aggregated integer value is calculated that can demonstrate the visibility of a domain in the organic Baidu search results compared to competitors. The higher the value, the more visible the domain is.

3.5.2.1.2 Domain Popularity

... is synonymous with the number of domains whose websites link to URLs of a target domain. The more referring domains (domain pop), the more likely the linked domain is an authority.

3.5.2.1.3 Searchmetrics Page Strength (SPS)

... is the attempt to express the strength of a link profile of a domain using a KPI with a value between 0 (weak) and 10 (strong). This is done based on the backlink profile of a domain collected by the Searchmetrics link crawler.

3.5.2.1.4 LRT Power * Trust

... is a long-established, two-dimensional (strength and trust)

replacing Google PageRank strength and trust rank KPI from the *Link Research Tools* by Christoph Cemper since 2012. The minimum value is 0 while 100 corresponds to the maximum achievable value.

Not surprisingly for many SEOs, we find a clear correlation between all these authority metrics on the visibility of the domains in the Baidu SERPs:

	LRT Power*Trust	Domain Pop	Searchmetrics Page Strength
Korrelation:	0.21	0.14	0.46

Table: Result of the Excel function CORREL () for the individual backlink profile authority KPIs compared to the SEO Visibility

While we can only see a relatively weak positive correlation between the number of linking domains (domain pop) and the SEO visibility, the correlation increases when looking at LRT Power * Trust and SPS.

We can therefore assume without further ado that Baidu also takes the authority of a website into account when evaluating domains and making the decision based on them for which content gets which rankings in the search results.

3.5.3 Trust

“Trust” translates into “to trust someone”, “to believe what they say”, “to trust that they do not betray you” and is certainly the most difficult aspect of an E.A.T. concept to assess. We think, we as humans can agree that, depending on the situation in which you are currently, you base a different level of trust in

your counterpart in order to follow the statement of the other and to align the next steps accordingly.

Example 1: When it comes to deciding whether you want to have your gallbladder removed, you will not trust the statement of the grandmother of the construction worker, who is currently pulling up the neighbour's wall and who you complain about your pain in passing, and therefore not directly. Make an appointment for an operation, but get the opinion of a specialist doctor.

Example 2: Nor will you ask the surgeon to name the ratio of cement to sand to water that you need to cement the curbs of the path, but rather put your trust in the neighbour's construction worker at this point.

As people, we make the difference when we trust whom we turn to, depending on the expertise (see above) we need.

Even if we can perhaps deduce from this that trust results from the combination of expertise and authority, we still know very specific trust signals for SEO in China.

Some of these are theoretical and cannot be clearly proven.

Others are no less theoretical – but at least under Baidu's direct control.

3.5.3.1 ICP-License

The Internet Content Publishing license is issued by the Chinese government on application. The license asks you to

obey the Chinese law in terms of content creation and publishing. You may not say untruth or “alternative facts“. You may not criticize the government or the political party or their actions. You may not publish violence or sexually offensive content. You may not disturb the peace of the Chinese people. You may not glorify or support illegal activities.

Furthermore you can only apply for an ICP license if you are a China based company or run a branch in China. This means you do have a physical address in China.

Often you can hear the rumor that one can not get indexed by Baidu or rank well if you do not have an ICP license. But that is not true.

An ICP license helps you with many hurdles. For example you can get Chinese web hosting only if you have an ICP license. But certainly there are websites ranking well without an ICP license.

3.5.3.2 Baidu Official Website



Screenshot: Ranking of the official website of UNIQLO with the blue inverted [官方] besides the snippet title which stands for “official website”

Baidu grants Baidu Official Site badge to websites that have been verified through Baidu Trust Vstar Program

(https://trust.baidu.com/vstar/official/intro?type=gw).

For nonprofit organization websites, they need to submit their Chinese registration, or ICP license and email to guanwang@baidu.com to file the application.

For company websites, they have to pay 3,000 RMB per year extra (as of April 2021).

3.5.3.3 Baidu Bao Zhang



Screenshot: Baidu “Official Website” (blue icon in the right of the title line) “Brand Advertising” and “BaoZhang” icons (below aside from the URL) on the same snippet; Source: Baidu.com



Screenshot: Baozhang icon

Let us quote this part from Veronique Dư^ơng-Nguyen’s article for SinoAnalytics.com:

“Until 2018-2019, it was the “Verified” icons (with three levels of validation: V1, V2, V3) that indicated the trust and reputation of a website. However, since 2019-2020, the BaoZhang icon (保障 baozhang means “warranty”) has replaced all authentication and certification icons on Baidu.

[...] The presence of the BaoZhang icon in the snippet of a website means that the brand or the company has joined Baidu’s “Guarantee Plan”: if an Internet user is the victim of a scam on this site, he will be able to request compensation by clicking on the BaoZhang icon, available in mobile and computer versions.

[...] The BaoZhang icon of a site aims to reassure Internet users of its authenticity and credibility.

The icon directs Internet users to a site for consulting official documents related to the brand and obtaining certified information on a company. Thus, BaoZhang increases the chances of a site being visited by users.

Baidu has always employed an icon strategy to authenticate and certify its SERPs. Until the “Verified” icons, the strategy was as valid for paid results as for organic results. But with the implementation of BaoZhang, it is mainly the paid results that are concerned. Among the organic results, we can still find the presence of the icon “Official Site”.

With a trend in China for an increasingly domestic consumption (the consumption of Western products is limited), having websites certified within the country is a strategy for Baidu to keep as many local Internet users as possible on its search engine. The evolution of paid icons is one of the Baidu SEO trends to watch for 2022 and beyond.”

Source: <https://www.sinoanalytics.com/seo/baozhang-the-warranty-icon-marks-a-turning-point-in-baidus-strategy-582.html>

3.5.3.4 Email

Email is one of the most relevant ways of communication in Europe and US. But it is not the most important communication method in China.

Still offering an openly accessible email address (for example in the footer area of the website) is one small step to gain the users and eventually Baidu’s trust.

3.5.3.5 Phone number

What is really commonly used for communication is the old fashioned telephone. OK, maybe not the old fashioned stationary telephone but a mobile phone.

Every person has one and you even can see in which city they are registered. It can give you a good feeling already seeing that you are calling Beijing or Shanghai (if you are in Beijing or Shanghai and might want to pick up your product later).

3.5.3.6 WeChat

Weixin or WeChat is a rather new communication app for iPhone, Android and even computers (while it still needs you to verify your computer app by scanning a QR code with your mobile WeChat app).

This is probably the most widely spread communication method allowing text messages as well as voice messages, voice calls or video calls. You should offer a customer service WeChat ID website visitors can add to their app in order to ask questions.

3.5.3.7 QQ

The QQ app was the most popular chat app before WeChat started its glorious victory entry into the Chinese market.

Although most people nowadays use WeChat, QQ still has many users and connecting via QQ is fairly easy to be done.

Adding your QQ ID on the website gives visitors and Baidu a good feeling you care about them.

3.5.3.8 Weibo

Setting up an official Weibo company account is not only showing that you are caring about Chinese clients, but it also will help in your digital marketing strategy.

Weibo can be a really strong channel for driving traffic to your website. For building trust signals, put your Weibo-ID on your website.

3.5.3.9 Server location

Although you do not need a Chinese server location for being indexed and ranked by Baidu, it can help to build trust towards the bot.

The reason is that for being able to get a Chinese server hosting your website, you do need to have a real Chinese company with physical address provided.

This might be a strong signal that you are targeting the mainland Chinese market.

3.5.3.10 Local signals

Just like the server location shows that you are a Chinese company (or at least have a Chinese branch), other local signals can help to convince Baidu that you are really targeting the mainland Chinese market.

If you have an office in Beijing, Shanghai or alike, you should

put your address and phone number to the footer of your website.

The more Tier1 city based is your location (like Beijing or Shanghai) the less you have to fear to be limited in local rankings.

3.5.3.11 Alipay

Are you selling online in China? You should get signed up with an Alipay partnership. Alipay is an online payment system. It is strongly connected with Taobao (as both are owned by Alibaba).

Alipay is probably the most widely spread online payment solution in China, while closely followed by rather new WeChat-Pay. If you can display their logo on your website as a trusted partner, you earn a small part of the trust fame yourself.

3.5.3.12 Wechat Pay

Even WeChat offers their own payment system which has about the same acceptance (if not already more acceptance) than Alipay.

3.5.3.13 Age

A trust signal you can rather not buy but you need to earn over time is the age of your website. The older it gets the more likely you are a serious business which can be trusted. This might be something the user can not see but Baidu will know when they

first saw your website.

3.5.3.14 Backlinks from trusted websites

If you can earn links from trusted websites, this can be an incredible trust factor for Baidu (and some visitors as well).

If you are a well known business you should definitely have Baidu Baike (the Baidu Wikipedia) have a page about you.

The other Baike websites (like baike.com) will also not hurt.

Getting entries on some other Baidu services will help as well gaining some trust from users and Baidu themselves. This is because you will not be able to simply spam your content to Baidu ... they will delete content they do not think is worth being published on their own services.

3.6 Backlinks as a ranking signal

The main idea of the internet is websites publishing information on some topics and providing links to other websites when the linked to website offers more detailed information. That means that the link to the website is kind of a recommendation to take a visit to, if you want to learn more.

This is how search engines like Baidu are seeing the web. They crawl a website by following the internal links from page to page. And they find those external recommendations pointing to other websites.

If the referring website is somewhat important, the

recommendation will be more valuable than a recommendation of a less important website.

Baidu even goes further and does not only value a website from (let's say) 0 to 100 but also takes into consideration what topic the website is a good resource for. If a high quality food related website links to a restaurant website that is more important than a high quality food website linking to a industrial solutions website.

It is said, that Baidu still takes into consideration a website gaining loads of less quality or less related links to be more valuable than only a very few higher quality links.

Masses beats quality. But be careful. Although it might be easier to earn low quality and unrelated links, this kind of strategy might very soon backfire and get you into some Baidu penalties or devalued in some Baidu ranking updates.

Already in 2013, Baidu published two rounds of the *Scindapsus Aureus Algorithm Update* publishing link selling websites and websites buying links from these websites.

We recommend following a sustainable OffPage strategy.

3.6.1 Which links are desirable?

If you are building links in order to gain better rankings on Baidu, you should look out for a couple of factors you should try to optimize your backlink profile for.

3.6.1.1 Backlinks from China

A website being hosted in China helps you to show Baidu that your website is relevant for the Chinese market. The more links from Chinese hosted websites you can get, the better.

Second best are links from Hongkong based websites, as many Chinese websites are hosted on Hongkong servers (mostly if the company can not get an ICP license in order to apply for a mainland Chinese hosting solution).

Next in line are servers from other Chinese speaking countries like Taiwan and Singapur.

3.6.1.2 Backlinks from Chinese websites

Getting links from websites hosted in China does not mean that you get links from Chinese websites. These websites could still be English content websites. So another point to look out for is getting links from websites with Chinese content.

The strongest language signal that states “the linked website targets China“ is if the linking website uses Mandarin Chinese through Simplified Characters. So the language matters.

For non Chinese readers that might not be too easy to recognize if a text is written in Simplified or Traditional Chinese Characters.

The next best (if the links are not from Mandarin Chinese Simplified Characters websites) is probably if the text is in

Mandarin Chinese with Traditional characters (as written in Taiwan) and next level would be Cantonese Chinese with Traditional characters as it is written in Hongkong.

Any of those Chinese languages is better for your Baidu SEO than links from non-chinese websites.

3.6.1.3 Backlinks not everyone can get

Talking about valuable links, Baidu can easily see which links many websites get (these are most likely easy to get) and which websites only link to a limited amount of other websites (these you most likely can not obtain that easily).

Hopefully it is a no-brainer that the links not that easy to get are most likely the ones granting more power.

Backlinks that make sense for the linking party

Let's remember what links are actually for in the world of the internet. A link shall give the reader a way to obtain even more information on a topic he is just reading about. It might be that a website talking about horses mentions that men can ride on horses. But the website itself doesn't focus on horseback riding but let's say on those wonderful creatures in general. That it would make sense to implement a link that points to a website that informs more about that specific topic of horse back riding.

What you should try to get is backlinks that make sense. The chances that people actually click on those links that you are earning are highly important to give value to your link. Baidu

does have ways (calculation based algorithms) to help them guess if a link makes sense or not. These calculations are based on topic of the linking and the linked to website, on the link text and position of the link. Although it is questionable if they trust their own possibilities yet too much (I mentioned still Baidu pays more attention to masses of links than to the quality) - they will one day. And with the recent updates in mind this one day may not be so far.

3.6.1.4 Backlinks that actually drive traffic

Let's remember again what links are for: they shall lead visitors from one website to another. A backlink that actually drives traffic to your website is the most valuable link of them all. Because this link is not built for Baidu but for getting you new visitors independent from Baidu SEO.

Now guess what - Baidu even sees that. They do have ways to see if links do really lead visitors from one website to another. Since Baidu doesn't control the internet, they might not be able to monitor all the traffic - but they can monitor enough traffic to at least give some links a bonus mark on the traffic they generate.

So for this most valuable link of them all, we have two reasons: real traffic and Baidu SEO value.

In summary the perfect backlink for your Baidu SEO is one that ...

- ... is from an in China hosted website ...

- ... written in Mandarin Chinese ...
- ... in Simplified Chinese Characters ...
- ... from websites not everyone can get a link from ...
- ... is a link that makes sense to the linking websites visitors ...
- ... and really drives traffic to your website.

3.6.2 Which links are not desirable

Non variabel links do not have to be all bad. But it helps your link profile to have more desirable than non desirable links. Well, actually some links might really be bad as well.

3.6.2.1 Backlinks from out of China

A website not being hosted in China, could give a glimpse of a signal that the linked to page might not be too much targeting the mainland Chinese audience (as the linking page might be very slow to open from China).

But links from websites hosted in other Chinese speaking countries might still be better than websites hosted in other Asian countries and Australia might be better than websites hosted in the Middle East might be better than Websites hosted in Africa and Europe might be better than links from websites hosted in the Americas.

3.6.2.2 Backlinks from foreign language websites

You probably guessed already that links from English, German

or French language websites might not give Baidu the signal that the linked to website is targeting the Chinese market. The more links from foreign language sources, the higher the probability that the target website is not Chinese.

3.6.2.3 Link anchor text is not Chinese

If you are linking to a Chinese website using an English, German or other language link text, you are probably not trying to convince Chinese users to click the link but English, German or other language speakers. That will be the impression Baidu gets, if they find that link. The more such links, the less the target website will be meant for Chinese people.

3.6.2.4 Backlinks everyone can get

Getting links from forums and blog comments might be nice and sometimes it might even lead to some traffic. But let's be honest: every little spammer can get them. They are necessary - if they make sense and bring some traffic, they are even cool links. But they shouldn't be too valuable after all, since any spammy webmaster could simply go out there and spam the hell around to get such links. So, do not spam around - only build such links if they are valuable for you from any other perspective but SEO. Do not build them for Baidu SEO but for awareness and traffic. And only build those easy-to-get links that will actually pay off in positive awareness and traffic.

3.6.2.5 Backlinks that do not make sense for the linking websites users

Some link builders simply are searching for content already being published on some websites already including the keyword they intend to rank for. They then contact the webmaster and ask to get this keyword linked to their website. This makes them get a backlink with the exact match anchor text they want. But very often this link simply doesn't make sense for the reader of the linking website.

Example to show more visually what that means.

“After reading the last Harry Potter novel, I decided to become a magician myself. So I went out to buy a book on ancient mysteries, a book on ancient runes, a book on tarot scrying and one on magical spells from all Harry Potter books.”

In this example the keyword “book“ might be linked to some online bookstore that bought this link in order to gain better rankings for the keyword “book”. See what we mean? There is a link. The link text makes sense for the linked to websites SEO. But the link doesn't make any sense for reader of the text. This is not some kind of link you would like.

Taking the same text example for showing a link that might make sense:

“After reading the last Harry Potter novel, I decided to become a magician myself. So I went out to buy a book on ancient mysteries, a book on ancient runes, a book on tarot scrying and one on magical spells from all Harry Potter books.”

In this example the text “book on tarot“ being linked to a specific book on tarot on Amazon might be beneficial for the reader after all.

3.6.2.6 Backlinks that do not drive traffic

On forums and other resources one can find loads of suppliers of backlinks. They might be in charge of some blogs that no one knows, place comments and guest book entries that no one reads or publishes content on (not popular) subdomains of high authority websites. The last offer might even sound interesting (wow, a link from Alibaba itself) but in the end doesn't help you at all, because the Alibaba entry you get the link of might not get any traffic itself because it is such an unpopular topic (and therefore less watched after and easier to drop a link). Do not be a fool to think that such a link is valuable at all. A link that has no chance on driving traffic is not a useful link.

Be aware, since more and more SEOs are looking at traffic as a quality signal for backlinks, link sellers artificially “enhance” the links they sell with bot traffic. This might fool your internal quality assurance tools, but will not help to make this backlink worth it.

3.6.2.7 Obviously paid for links

Some links are so obviously unnatural (no webmaster would put them there if not paid for) that Baidu one day simply will have to recognize they were bought for manipulating your SEO results.

Links from other websites navigational elements

The navigational elements of a website are meant to help the user to navigate on the website. If there is a link to another website in these elements, it might drive loads of traffic to the linked to website, but it is rather unnatural to be happening. This might get Baidu suspicious if the link is a naturally grown one.

3.6.2.8 Links from sidebars and footers

The main points of interest for a website visitor are header, main navigation and the main content of course. A place not all visitors look at is the sidebar. A place really few visitors look at is the website footer. Including links to other websites in these places helps to keep the visitor within the website, because the links barely get noticed. But still a bot like Baidu bot can find the link within the source code and put some value on it. But will they? Currently they do. But also they do have the technologies recognizing that these links barely get seen or clicked. So building too many of such links might help your SEO results now but are not safe to build a serious and important website on.

3.6.2.9 Sitewide links

A naturally grown link is one that makes sense for the website visitor. But is it likely that such a link makes sense on every single page of the whole website? Most likely not. And this is even easier for Baidu to see and devalue than any other bad

style links.

3.6.2.10 New links in old content

Valuable links are placed from within the main content. But guess what happens if you take a valuable good piece of content that is highly ranked on Baidu and you include a link. Well, what probably happens is that the linked to website will get visitors from it. Sounds like a good link, doesn't it? Well, what happens as well is that Baidu notices that a content which stood unchanged for a long time get's changed and what changed is that there is a link included now. What might Baidu "think"? They might think that this link was included to manipulate the SEO results of the linked to website. Something Baidu doesn't want you to do.

3.6.3 Baidu Disavow tool

Your SEO agency is not the only person who can intentionally build links for a website. There are mean and criminal people who build intentionally low quality and even harmful links for websites they want to be removed or deranked from Baidu search results.

To avoid getting into trouble if a webmaster finds such harmful links pointing to one's website, Baidu implemented a tool that allows users to submit such links for not being valued at all (if the SEO in charge managed to find those harmful links with some backlink checking tools).

3.6.3.1 No Disavowing any more

But unfortunately Baidu shut down this function within Baidu Zhanzhang (Baidu webmaster tools). They state that their algorithms are intelligent enough to recognize such harmful links by themselves now and simply not take into consideration when judging a website.

Google was on this level as well in the past, saying that there is no such thing as a “harmful“ link. There would only be useful or zero-value links. But Google had to notice that they could not go on with such a manner. So they installed bad link penalties and updates and installed the Disavow tool for webmasters who were target of negative link SEO attacks.

We take a guess that Baidu as well will reintroduce some kind of disavowing function for links again in future. Because “simply“ looking after all those good link signals (see chapter “which links are desirable“) are not easy resources but identifying negative links is way easier.

3.6.4 Backlink Audit

A backlink audit helps to understand how a website is set up in the OffPage area. Does the website have a lot of backlinks? Are they from Chinese websites or from foreign websites? If they are from foreign hosted websites, are they at least from Chinese language websites? If the domain has foreign backlinks - how many are they in relation to Chinese backlinks? What is the strength distribution of backlinks?

All in all you want to gain an impression of the backlink profile looks healthy or somewhat inappropriate for the website and industry.

3.6.5 Backlink tools

There are plenty of backlink tools out there. They all are crawling the internet with the mission to find as many links from one page to another as possible. Most of those backlink tools are focusing on the western market. And to be honest, although there are some Chinese tools, I too prefer to look at the western tools. The reason is quite simple - they in addition deliver more links than other tools. Even for the Chinese market.

Popular (western) backlink tools are for example:

- Opensiteexplorer (moz.com)
- MajesticSEO (majestic.com)
- Ahres (ahrefs.com)
- SEOkicks (seokicks.com)
- LinkResearchTool (linkresearchtools.com)
- Searchmetrics (searchmetrics.com)
- Semrush (semrush.com)

3.6.6 Export based Backlink Audit

For being able to turn the data delivered by the backlink tools at your hand into something that can be used for a Chinese focused backlink audit, they need to be enhanced with some

analysis and tests.

What you should do is the following:

- Identify all hints on proper Chinese backlinks
 - Server location
 - TLD of the linking domains
 - Language used for link text
 - Language used on the linking page itself
 - Language used on title tag of the linking page
- Calculate a “*Chinese value*” which ranges from 0.01 to 1.00
- Take the quality and power metrics from your backlink tool and multiply them with the *Chinese value*.

In the end we can see which links might be really juicy and powerful for the Chinese market and will help our China SEO more than probably the others.

At least for those links in questions we still recommend having a native speaker take a look at the link on the live website and decide if it is a good or a bad link.

But the whole backlink audit is not meant for identifying a list of bad links - because there is no solution for disavowing them anyway.

It also is not for identifying those links you could optimize - because we should not optimize (manipulate) links.

The backlink audit is to simply see if the analyzed website does have a healthy looking profile and if it has got enough “Chinese” links.

If you notice that everything is fine and the profile strength is similar to the strength of the closest and most challenging competitors, everything is cool and you can focus on some other SEO topics.

But if you find out that the website has too little “Chinese” backlinks or the backlink profile is too weak compared to the most challenging competitors, you should start planning a backlink building strategy which can help the website to grow stronger.

3.6.7 Link Building

Artificially building links is against the webmaster guidelines of all big search engines. But still backlinks remain the strongest signals for the search engines to understand if a website is not only containing good content but if real people think that as well. So doing some kind of link building is beneficial to every Baidu SEO campaign. In the following paragraphs we will give you some hints on Dos and Don'ts.

3.6.7.1 Your professional network

Other businesses that do business with your company are already in some kind of relationship with you. It is easy for them to put your website up into their “Our partners” page. You could set up a list of clients, customers, deliverers and vendors that have the closest connection to your business (in relationship as well as in topic) and ask them for a link

exchange.

3.6.7.2 Discussions

Get involved into forum discussions around your companies topics. There surely are questions out there or discussions being held that you could deliver answers and valuable insights for. Such forums usually allow to place a link into your profile or your answers footer. If people like your comments, advice and answers, they will find and click such a link. Not all of these forums implement real `<a href>` links but might input some javascript `onClick` event links. Even though Baidu doesn't follow and value them - you should not skip such forums if there are valuable discussions for your companies topic. Do not think about if Baidu values the link but think about if you can gain traffic to your website from it.

Places of discussions are online bulletin boards or forums but blog posts that allow comments as well. Just make sure to either find well ranked or very new discussions that would gain value if you added your content. Skip those that are ranked well or very old. If you there place a new comment Baidu and readers will think it to be weird and you wouldn't gain any traffic (or SEO value) from them.

3.6.7.3 Buzzword "content marketing"

Content marketing is a wide field which contains many different disciplines. Summarized it means to build content that valuable for people and therefor they like it and link to it.

Just in a few bullet points this can be:

- Writing good and valuable blog posts. These can be published on your own website or as guest blogs on other websites.
- Creating good and valuable videos. These can be implemented on your website or published on social media websites such as Youku or similar).
- Offering online tools, eBooks and other downloads for free. You could combine this with “social payment” like a share on WeChat or with the signup to your newsletter.
- Build and publish infographics. You could offer others to use them in exchange of a link to the original source. Do not make the same mistake as many infographic publishers do and simply post the image with little text. You should write loads of text to explain the graphic - because this text will help you get ranked with the infographic page on Baidu.
- Linkbaits are any of those above actions but built to attract massive attention. You could choose a highly controversial topic and build some discussion potential on it. You could pick a topic everyone is afraid to build content about. You could make something extremely funny or gorgeous. Anything will work as long it makes people say “WTF” or “WOW”.
- The most important point for content marketing using any of the methods above which most link builders forget is the seeding process. You should have the manpower and connections to have your awesome piece of content to be seeded to as many interested

people as possible. This point is crucial and your content marketing activities will fail if you fail in seeding.

3.6.7.4 Buying or renting links

First thing I need to remind you that buying or renting links is against Baidu guidelines. It is a manipulative activity in your SEO strategy and shall be carefully used (if at all).

We do not recommend buying or renting links for your SEO.

But we do know, some of you will still do. If so, you should try to do it in a clever and non spammy way:

- Links shall look as natural as possible.
- Links shall potentially bring visitors to your website.
- Do not use too hard keyword anchor texts. That means that you should not go for your main keywords (although this strategy might still work). Use anchor texts positioned “around“ your topic. Use long tail keywords. Use different keywords for each anchor text. Use your brand name or website URL as anchor. Do not give a reason for Baidu to get suspicious if the link is unnatural.
- Only buy links from out of real content.
- Do not buy links from old content, as this might look to Baidu as manipulation.
- And again: do not buy links at all, because some day Baidu might find out some way.

3.6.7.5 Optimizing existing links

You might have earned many natural links already. Webmasters linking to your website simply because they want to recommend it. Webmasters implementing your company logo (and linking the logo image to your website) without setting a proper alt attribute text. Very cool naturally grown links without any specific keyword value. Some SEO consultants might now say “let’s optimize those links“. The idea is to ask those webmasters to change the link text from “to the website“ to something like “to the website about xyz“.

This SEO technique does actually work quite well. Baidu will recognize the new link anchor texts and might rank you better for the desired keywords.

But if you do that, Baidu might recognize that someone is trying to manipulate old established content by changing only the links within. Not a very natural signal, is it?

It might even get worse. It might have been an old very high valued link from the authority perspective only. In the manipulation of it, Baidu notices it is new and drops the high authority long history of the link and values it as an all new link without history. The power might be much less than before.

Our recommendation: do not optimize old links. But again - you ask 3 SEO consultants, you will get 5 answers. Our opinion is not everything.

Final words

After reading this book, you can probably easily guess that both Kun and Marcus are extreme fans of search engine optimization.

If you talk to other China marketing experts, you will often hear them recommend that there is no point in bothering with SEO.

These experts are fans of their own marketing discipline, just as Marcus and Kun are fans of theirs. As a result, their own perception (or perhaps even motivation) is very much focused on their area of expertise - and they think that the other areas are no longer important.

Well, the truth (as always) lies somewhere in between.

The modern Chinese Internet is dominated by smartphone usage. Smartphones work best when you don't use the normal web browser for everything, but apps that are specifically designed to be fun.

We briefly introduced some of these apps at the beginning of this book. WeChat, for example, is one such app. Within WeChat, there is a whole universe of functionalities and in-app purchases that make it almost unnecessary to ever leave this app. So there is a lot of information surfing, socializing, and entertainment happening in these apps.

In addition, Baidu also has such an app - the Baidu app - that connects users to web search (yes, SEO is still a thing) and

the many different vertical Baidu services such as Zhidao and Baike.

Most online sales in China are made on popular marketplaces like JD, Taobao and Tmall, all of which also offer APS for ease of use on smartphones.

But even though so much information search, experience sharing, and even e-commerce takes place through these apps, there are still a large number of people who use the traditional "Baidu Search" web interface (and the Baidu app) to search for information and find new websites, brands, and online stores.

The large number of Internet users in China makes it worthwhile to invest in search optimization (SEA and SEO) and in optimizing your website for real visitors even if only a small percentage would use it - because a small percentage of people in China is still as much as the entire population in other countries.

It is definitely recommended to research where your target audience uses the internet - but it would be a very bad strategy to focus on only one of these channels - and it would not really be wise to neglect the "free traffic" that a good SEO strategy can deliver.

This is true for the rest of the world - and it is true for China.

Yours sincerely,
Kun Tang & Marcus Pentzek