Internet surf is up in China

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China has definitively eclipsed the United States as the nation with the largest population of online citizens in the world, reaching in excess of 298 million users last year, according to the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC).

The CNNIC also reported the number of mobile internet users increased to 117.6 million by the end of 2008, with mobile internet usage expected to explode over the next few years due to the recent issuing of 3G licenses.

Compared to the rest of the world, China’s internet penetration rate of 22.6% is slightly higher than the average of 21.9%.

Due to the scale and impending growth of China’s internet-fluent population, it is essential Thai businesses looking to expand their operations in China closely assess their web strategy - reinforcing their website design, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), advertising strategy and mobile internet functionality.

Developing a Chinese language arm of your main website could be a good investment for Thai businesses operating in China. It is also important for businesses not to have a mirror-image of their main website, making sure that the China arm is tailor-made for the Chinese market.

Behind the scenes, SEO is just as important as website design. SEO is the technical process of structuring your website and web-content to make it more attractive to search engines. Employing the expertise of a web-designer fluent in this side of online architecture will pay dividends, as consumers and businesspeople crawl the internet in search of your products or services.

From a marketing perspective, large-scale Chinese events, such as the Beijing 2008 Olympics and the most recent New Year celebrations, have further increased the exposure and opportunities for businesses to advertise and conduct promotions online. Smart Thai business people will recognize and leverage this trend.

Lastly, the recent introduction of 3G services in China and the country's high penetration rate of mobile phone usage have created enormous opportunities for rich mobile internet content, online gaming and advertising to be implemented alongside business strategies. China’s web-population is now mobile - a business’ website functionality should reflect this movement. Internet usage in China will only be further improved by greater access to wireless technologies and the increased uptake of mobile internet surfing.

Already, China’s internet-surfing population is booming – Thai businesses looking for success in China should paddle out and ride the wave.

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