

### **Suggested answers**

#### **1. To what extent have cultural characteristics affected Google's marketing strategy and performance in China?**

In the first place, Google's business success was affected by language problems. Google created a Chinese language interface to facilitate access to Google.com. Later the Google.cn website was launched. Notwithstanding this, the majority of search results, additional services and advertisements appeared in English. In addition, users were uncertain as to how to type the name 'Google' in Chinese characters. Furthermore, the chosen Chinese name for Google, 'Ge-Ge' was disliked and unacceptable among users due to differing interpretations **(for example: 'dog', 'shaving breasts', 'grasshopper' or 'groins')** and connotations. As a context is always important for the understanding and interpretation of information in foreign languages a simple translation is just not enough.

Another problem was Google's email service. Chinese users, preferred to chat and blog with several participants at a time via Messenger, rather than use single individual email messages. This aligns to Hofstede's 'individualism v. collectivism'. To socialise in an interactive group is typical for members of a collectivistic society, whereas people in individualistic countries like to send single separated information with emails.

From a marketing strategy perspective it was apparent that Google's target market had not been adequately explored prior to its first attempt at market entry. From a B2B perspective it is highly probable that Google's Western search capacity will enable Chinese business owners to research and develop a targeted market entry strategy.

#### **2. Compare and contrast Google's text-based and display marketing for business-to-business (B2B) marketers.**

Keyword text-based advertising was a revolutionary form of internet advertising at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The correct choice of keywords decided whether the web advertisement could be found ahead of the competitors. This search strategy was

based upon a ranking system (a very important issue for business-to-business marketing). Text-based advertisement styles delivered only single, isolated details on products or services, structured according typical Western information management systems.

In contrast, display advertising offers a comprehensive context of the product or service with details embedded in different types of representations, such as large text passages, lots of images, videos and additional rich-media formats. This display advertising is particularly important for business-to-business marketing via Google. This method of managing detailed advertising information is much more closely aligned to the Chinese way of surveying things in a certain context and looking at relationships of part to whole.

**3. Google's Chinese focus is now on B2B marketing. Did Google gain any competitive advantage in China between 2000 and 2011 in terms of business-to-business marketing?**

From 2000 to 2010, Google did not have a competitive advantage at all in comparison to its Chinese competitor. It was a Western styled and structured search engine delivering individualistic search results in a foreign language and offering a Western-oriented palette of services in a collectivistic country.

Google spent one year of observing China's internet market from its Hong Kong base, however in 2011 Google once more entered mainland China. This time, Google targeted display advertising in the rapidly developing export market sector. This proved to be an ideal area in which to develop its business-to-business strategy. Google's strategy moved from the individual consumer to the B2B (business-to-business) consumers, these being export companies wishing to promote their products globally. This gave Google a competitive advantage over Baidu, because the Chinese competitor only operates domestically, but Google is the leading search engine worldwide.

**4. Does Google's marketing experience in China demonstrate possible boundaries for internet globalisation?**

Google's example indicates major cultural differences between Western and Eastern views of ethical behaviour towards free access and use of information. Chinese companies are mostly unknown in the Western world, whereas Western companies tend to be rather unimportant in China. Other cultural differences led to diverse opinions in relation to the law and legal requirements which may create possible boundaries for internet globalisation. Notwithstanding this however, it would appear that these are not insurmountable. More trivial cultural difficulties, such as language, tend to become unimportant in the light of long-standing traditions on both sides.

**5. What is the importance of cultural empathy to international marketers such as Google? How could Google have more effectively acquired cultural empathy?**

The importance of 'cultural empathy' to a foreign marketer such as Google is that being culturally sensitive allows the business to objectively see, evaluate and appreciate another culture such as that of China. The Google marketing team should have spent more time developing its understanding of the Chinese culture. In order to do this Google needed to assist its team to develop empathy by giving support to studying the culture and living in it prior to launching its search engine. The latter is not always possible, and it may be expedient to hire native speakers who are bi-lingual. This procedure may have enabled Google staff to develop the intuition necessary for success.