

Google in china

Business



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In launching Google. cn, Google had to conform to the laws of China and self-censor their information. Google's senior policy counsel Andrew McLaughlin said that " In order to operate from China, we have removed some content from the search results available on Google. cn, in response to local law, regulation or policy. While removing search results is inconsistent with Google's mission, providing no information (or a heavily degraded user experience that amounts to no information) is more inconsistent with our mission." (Yang, 2006) In view of these conditions, Google used the following principles to develop Google.

cn. Firstly, Google decided to inform its users whenever search results were prohibited. Thus, the censorship was made transparent. Google succumbed to China's " Golden Shield Project", (Walton, 2001). Through testing and research of the Chinese censoring system, they developed and disclosed a list of keywords and topics such as " democracy", " Tibet", " Falong Gong", " Dalai Lama" and others.

All these keywords were blocked, when users would try to access this list. Google. cn displayed: " In accordance with local laws, regulations and policies, part of the search result is not shown". (Thompson, 2006) Second of all, Google. cn did not collect private information about users so that they would not be obliged to disclose this information to the government of China. Google decided not to offer e-mail or blog sites in China, given that Yahoo! was compelled to release private user's e-mail data to the Chinese government.

This led to an imprisonment of the Chinese web dissidents Jiang Lijun, Li Zhi, and Shi Tao (Birch, 2010). In 2007, Microsoft closed the blog of the famous Chinese political blogger Zhao Jing. Finally, Google. cn only expanded the information available to the Chinese users and did not to reduce it in any way.

Google describes Google. cn as “ an additional service, not a replacement for Google. com in China. (Schrage, 2006) I consider the steps taken by Google as appropriate because they aimed at protecting the rights of the Chinese users. Google tried to secure the privacy of their users by keeping Google’s email and blogging services out of the Chinese territory. Google’s mantra is “ Don’t do evil”, and its code of conduct is “ being a Googler means holding yourself to the highest possible standard of ethical business conduct”.

Therefore, the company needed to keep the trust of their users as an important asset. Despite the policies of the Chinese government, Google tried to stay true to their mission, which states that “ Google’s mission is to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful” (Company overview, 2007). Thus, they provided their users with the maximum information they were allowed to and also kept their users’ privacy intact. To my mind and from an ethical point of view, the actions taken by Google, Microsoft, Cisco, and some other companies facilitate Internet censorship.

In our digital world, these companies have the power to influence change and reduce suppression of the rights of freedom of speech and information. If these companies refused to comply with the censorship demand, China

would have been unable to sustain the censorship without totally cutting off the Internet. This would have handicapped the country's ability to keep up with its standing in the " G-20" (20 greatest world economies). Moreover, China would have been forced to allow the free flow of information or sign its own economic death.