**No ethical bidding ranking mechanism**

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In this article, the author tells the tragic story of Wei Zexi and studies the problems of the bidding ranking mechanism that led to his death at that time. It analyzes the network ethics of all parties involved in the event and summarizes the reasons for the tragedy and how to prevent it from happening again in the future.

**Event Introduction**

On April 12, 2016, Wei Zexi died due to advanced synovial sarcoma. He had published an article on Zhihu.com about his experience of being misled by the Baidu search engine and receiving the wrong treatment. He said he had a rare form of synovial sarcoma, and after failing to find an effective method at multiple hospitals, he found a hospital through a Baidu search that claimed to work with Stanford University. As it turned out, this hospital used outdated and dangerous techniques and charged exorbitant fees. By the time he found out he had been cheated, he had already missed the best time for treatment and the cancer had metastasized to his lungs. He said helplessly, "I am now hospitalized and found a real reliable technology, but my family is almost at the end of the mountain. To write so much is to hope that people will not be cheated anymore. During this period of time, many tumor patients and family members contacted me asking about this hospital and this treatment for quite a number of people, and I hope no more people will be cheated."

**Baidu bidding ranking mechanism**

After Wei Zexi's death, the incident has attracted a lot of attention and discussion. People found that the top-ranking search results that appeared on Baidu search for some niche diseases were medical advertisements, and the companies behind these medical advertisements were all held by a private pharmaceutical company. These medical advertisements all had problems such as paying too much for bidding weight, unclear commercial promotion labels, and publishing false information.

These problems are due to Baidu's bidding ranking mechanism, which refers to the service that companies pay to Baidu Inc. to advertise their products and goods by adjusting the order of search results by adjusting the weight of business-related search results. Due to the late start of the Internet in China and the imperfection of relevant laws, the Chinese legislature and judiciary always considered that Baidu promotion was not an advertising service, but an "information retrieval" service. Therefore, at that time, the legislature and the judiciary considered that the advertising law of the People's Republic of China did not apply to search engines, which gave these gray industries a chance to take advantage of.

On May 9, 2016, the Chinese government's investigation team released a report called the State Internet Information Office Joint Investigation Group announced the results of its investigation into Baidu, in which the investigation team concluded that Baidu's search-related keyword bidding ranking results had objectively influenced Wei Zexi's choice of medical treatment, and that Baidu's bidding ranking mechanism had excessive weighting of paid bids and unclear identification of commercial promotions, which affected the impartiality and objectivity of the search results. The search results of the fairness and objectivity, easy to mislead netizens, must immediately rectify.

The investigation team demanded that: First Baidu immediately review and clean up medical advertisements and other illegal information without qualification. Second, the ranking criteria of the bidding ranking mechanism should be changed to a ranking algorithm with credibility as the main weight; commercial promotion information should be marked with a prominent logo and risk tips; and the proportion of commercial promotion information should be strictly limited to no more than 30% per page. Third, to establish and improve the early payment of compensation and other rights and interests of Internet users protection mechanism. Open up channels for the supervision and reporting of netizens, improve the efficiency of the acceptance and disposal of netizens' reports; immediately terminate the services of illegal and illegal information and infringement of netizens' rights and interests once found; establish and improve the relevant mechanisms to pay for losses caused by misleading commercial promotion information (Zhongguo wang xin wang [China Internet Information Network], 2016).

**IT Ethics and Benefits**

IT ethics refers to the ethical principles that should be followed when using information technology, such as protecting data privacy, respecting intellectual property rights, preventing cybercrime, etc. In this incident, as an Internet company, Baidu should abide by IT ethics more. If it abides by IT ethics, Baidu can gain the favor of the community, increase user satisfaction; protect the organization and its employees from legal litigation; avoid unfavorable public opinion and propaganda; create a sustainable enterprise. As the ruling government, the Chinese government should quickly follow up on Internet development, avoid Internet companies’ barbaric growth, and prevent gray industries that affect citizens’ lives. Speed up the legislation and revision of Internet-related laws to prevent network unethical events and cybercrime from happening.

**Event Analysis**

In this incident, Baidu’s bidding ranking mechanism exploited a legal loophole and did not break the law, but in fact there is no difference between bidding ranking mechanism and advertising. Just because an activity is defined as legal does not mean that it is ethical. Baidu has failed to fulfill its review obligation for the content of bidding ranking while making a lot of money through this way. One cannot guarantee the authenticity of information, two did not clearly distinguish between advertising and search results, three did not have a sense of social responsibility as a network platform, so Baidu search was ordered to rectify (Wangyi keji [NetEase Technology], 2016). And these hospitals that publish illegal advertisements have lost their morals for money, using network platforms to publish false advertisements for propaganda, and finally also get punished.

Even so, the reason why netizens are deceived by these false advertisements also has a lot to do with the low information literacy of China’s early Internet. The government should improve netizens’ critical reading ability of network information, understand the relationship between information, media and people, form more judgmental and critical positive audiences; strengthen the social responsibility of network platforms, and strive to improve the network security awareness and level of the whole society.

**Conclusion**

The Wei Zexi incident triggered public anger and criticized Baidu’s ethical responsibility and credibility as an information provider. Therefore, the Chinese government investigated Baidu’s practices and issued new regulations to limit medical advertising and improve online supervision. At the same time, this incident also aroused people’s attention to IT ethics, how to improve information literacy and judgment ability to obtain correct and needed information from search engines. Finally, internet platforms are also more cautious about their platform social responsibility. **References**

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**\* Note**: The reference list should be on a new page and references should be in alphabetical order following APA style. All in-text citations should match the reference list (excluding indirect citations and personal communications). Hanging indents are required for all citations.