

Google's exit is not exactly a windfall for Baidu

In the week since Google began rerouting mainland traffic to its Hong Kong site, Google's Chinese users did not shift en masse to rival Baidu Inc.

But many of the company's domestic partners and advertisers were scared away on fears that Google's sour relationship with the government might impact them.

According to Alexa Internet, a United States-based online Web traffic tracker, traffic on Baidu only increased 1.3 percent in the past seven days since the world's largest search engine announced on March 23 it would stop censoring its Chinese search results.

That means most of Google's Chinese users are still using the US search engine although the accessibility of Google's uncensored Hong Kong website was interrupted on Tuesday.

Figures from Alexa show that most of the traffic from Google.cn has been picked up by Google.com.hk, of which user visits surged 2,056 percent over the past week.

It said an additional 3.2 percent of global Internet users have visited Google.com.hk in the past seven days, roughly equivalent to the total traffic of Google.cn before the company threatened to exit the mainland.

"For ordinary Chinese Internet users, visiting Google.com.hk has not been that much different from visiting Google.cn," said Edward Yu, president of Analysys International.

Conversely, commercial Google's partners in China have "panicked" on fears that Google's move may worsen their relationship with the Chinese government and thus affect their businesses.

Baidu on Thursday did not respond to a request for comment on this report.

On Tuesday, access to Google.com.hk was blocked for most of the day, but the service quickly resumed normal operations on Wednesday.

Google's spokesperson first said the accessibility issue was due to a global technical upgrade of its search engine, but later blamed it on the Chinese government.

Compared with ordinary users, Google's business partners and advertisers seem to be more unsettled. China's major Web portal Sina.com said it was reevaluating cooperation with the US Internet-search giant Google, according to a report from Xinhua News Agency, citing an anonymous company official.

Google's other domestic partners such as Tom.com, Tianya and China Unicom have all announced plans to steer clear of the search engine after it rerouted on its search services to Hong Kong.

Cheng Yu, general manager of Zoom Interactive, a Google advertising retailer in Beijing, said his business has dropped 20 to 30 percent after Google's announcement in January that it may pull out of the mainland.

He said many of his clients, especially big advertisers, have reduced their spending budgets on Google.

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