

《Baidu to halt commercialization of Tieba health forums》

Baidu Inc said on Tuesday that it will stop monetizing all of its illness-related forums on Tieba, an online community-based group discussion service run by the Chinese search engine giant, after growing concern over the impact brought by commercialization.

The United States-listed Baidu said in a statement that it will stop commercialized operation of all of its Tieba forums, which focus on discussing the diagnosis and treatment of illnesses. And it said it will invite non-profit organizations to run these online discussion groups, which could influence patients' recovery and wellbeing.

Baidu's announcement came after some Tieba users accused the Internet giant of selling its hemophilia online community to some unqualified private hospitals, a move that could effectively help their reach to potential clients.

A user with the nickname "Mayicai" said about 5,000 netizens use the online community to discuss and share effective treatments for hemophilia on Tieba. But selling the online community to unqualified hospitals could endanger the health of those who suffer from the disease.

Dominating China's online search market means Baidu can easily help enterprises with marketing. And healthcare advertisements are one of the main powerhouses for Baidu's search business.

Baidu didn't reveal how many illness-related online discussion groups it has. But the Beijing-based company said Tieba has about 19 million online communities discussing various subjects and more than 1 billion registered users.