

# Performance Analysis: Major international sports brands on the Web in China

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## Li Ning ahead of Nike, Adidas, Puma and Reebok on the Web

L'Atelier BNP Paribas, in collaboration with the specialist in performance measurement [ip-label.newtest](http://ip-label.newtest), gives you an analysis of the Web in Asia each month.

Today we are concentrating on analysing the performance of **major international sports brands** on the Web in China: [Li Ning](#), [Nike](#), [Adidas](#), [Reebok](#) and [Puma](#).

It bears reminding that Li Ning is a former Chinese gymnast who won six medals at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. An emblematic figure in China, Li Ning lit the flame at the Olympic stadium for the Games in Beijing.

Li Ning made a brilliant transition to company director at the end of his sports career, founding the [Li Ning Company](#), which specialises in the sale of sports apparel, apparatus and equipment.

After swiftly conquering the Chinese market, Li Ning took on the rest of the world, becoming serious competition to the few Western companies that were sharing the market up until then, namely the two major rivals we all know: Nike and Adidas.

With image being a major issue for these brands, the marketing budgets allocated to developing them are some of the largest, with huge investments made in advertising as well as offline and online sponsorship.

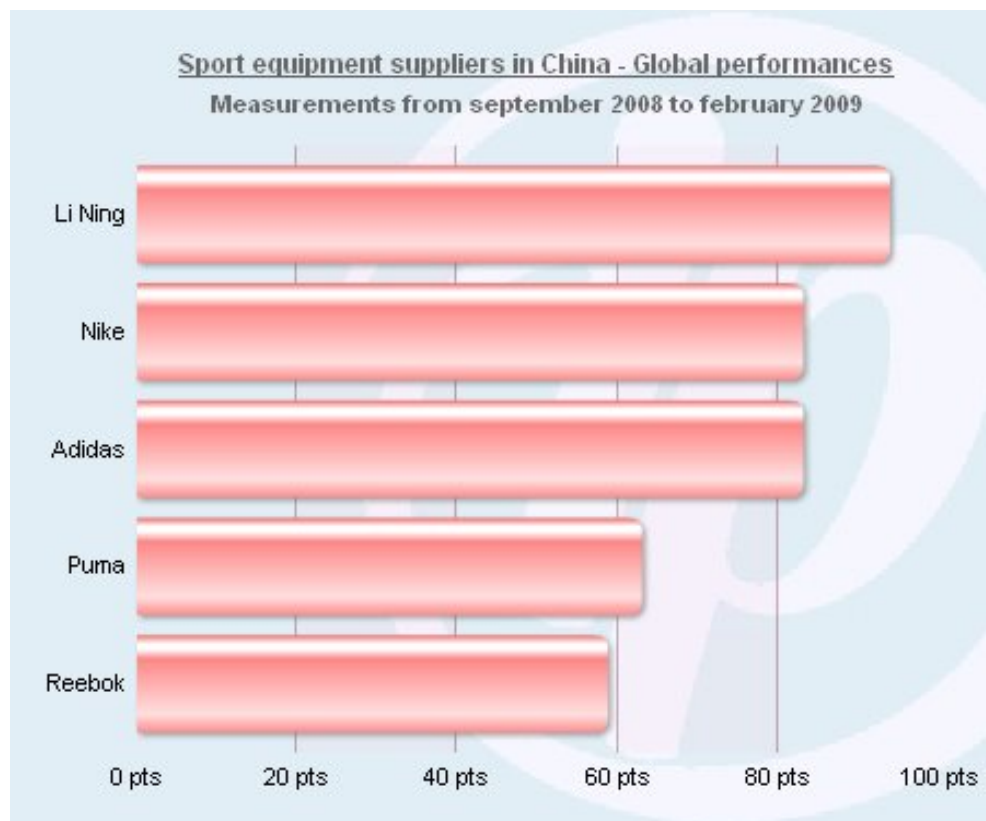
Henceforth, every product launch, every new communications campaign, every major sporting event gives rise to digital strategies designed to bring the most traffic possible to advertisers' respective websites.

### Li Ning, a master in his own country

The internet makes it possible to quickly go to a virtual boutique or a site dedicated to a new product, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from anywhere on the planet, as long as one has an internet connection. But do these websites perform as well as the champions we admire?

In an attempt to answer to these questions, ip-label.newtest measured, from 11 of the largest Chinese cities\*, the performance of the websites of the largest sports manufacturers implanted in this immense country, in an end-user environment, the way an internet user would perceive it.

The table below is built on a 100-point index on the basis of two indicators: the rate of successful connection to the brand's website, and how fast the pages loaded.

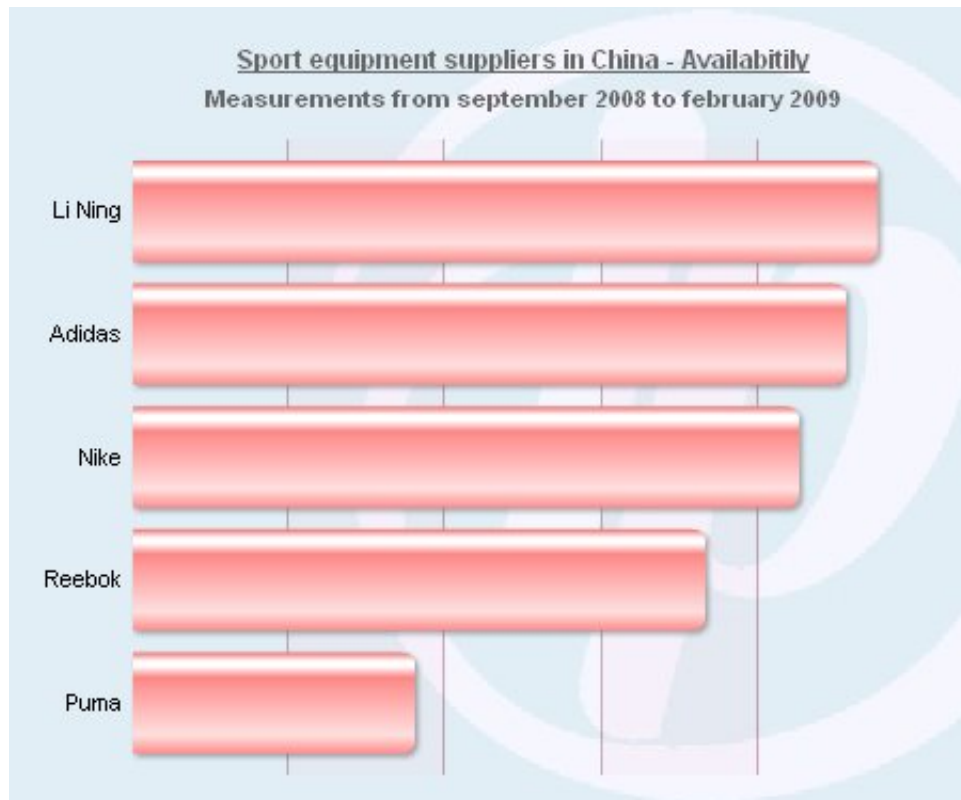


Li Ning shows the best overall performance over Nike and Adidas, whose perceived qualities are similar on the whole. [Puma](#) and [Reebok](#) lag behind the three others at the head of the pack.

### Go fast or go the distance?

Just like athletes, the website has to combine accessibility – responding quickly to enquiries by internet users, with availability – allowing users to see the expected pages displayed in their entirety.

Besides the brand, it is only by combining these two basic principles that these companies' websites will succeed in gaining the confidence and loyalty of internet users.

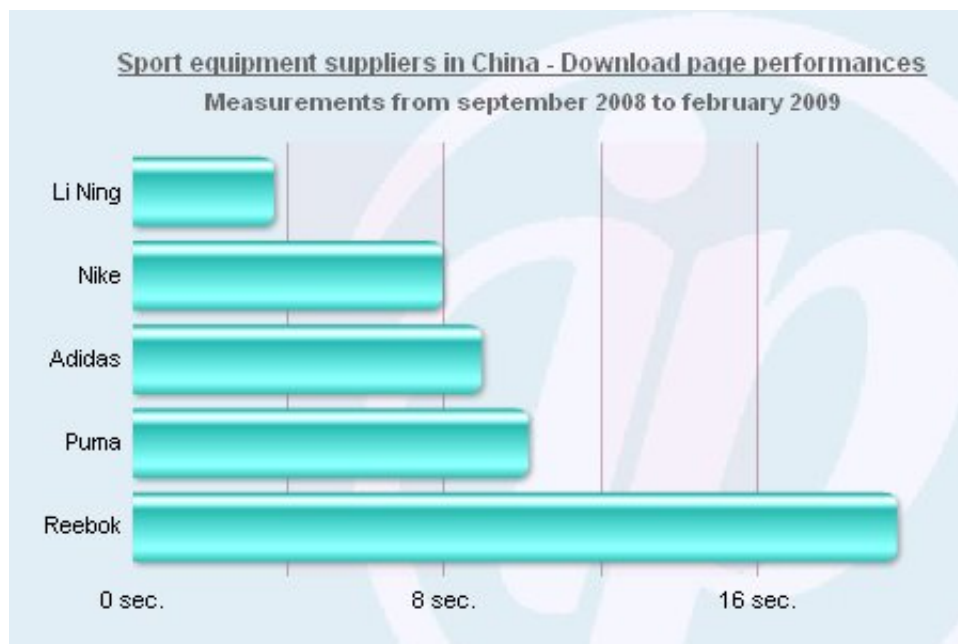


With a success rate of more than **99.5 %** for accessing the site, Li Ning dominates the sector, offering a site that is more or less systematically available. A little farther behind, Adidas and Nike show respectable performance. However, 1 out of every 100 internet users fail to see the homepage of these sites displayed.

Reebok and Puma do not perform as well. For Reebok, the failure rate is 3 %, while for Puma, there are an average of 6 internet users out of 100 who cannot hope to connect to the site.

### Arriving at the finish line – but in what place?

An internet user who wants to connect to a website expects to get there. However, in order to see the homepage displayed, some will need a lot of patience. The distances separating the starting line from the finish line can look vastly different when performances are so variable.



Using these criteria, Li Ning demonstrates the best performance. Not only does the homepage open virtually every time, but it is displayed very quickly, in 3.6 seconds, whereas Nike, Adidas and Puma take 8 to 10 seconds.

It's worse for Reebok, whose internet user must wait an average of 19.5 seconds, or 5 times longer than for a visit to the site of the Chinese champion.

When clicking on one page after another, this delay becomes a real handicap, which can lead to access failures and result in visitors giving up and going to the more effective site of a competitor.

### How can such a difference be explained?

Contrary to what we usually see in other sectors of activity, the technical choices that are made to design and capitalise on the sites of sports manufacturers are all very different.

The geographical location of the site's web host is essential in order to be effective in China. This is not the case in Western countries, which benefit from a state-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure. China is an immense country, technologically separated into two zones, the north and the south. Each zone is served by a specific network operator, and the network connection between the two has not been sufficiently optimised. This characteristic creates a disparity in performance for internet users, depending on their location.

Where Nike and Adidas err, it is not through a lack of means, but simply because of their global technical strategy as opposed to Li Ning's local technical strategy.

In fact, Nike offers a homepage hosted in China that is quite effective, but then, all the sections and online services are hosted in the United States. It's the same diagnosis for Adidas, except that its websites are hosted in Germany.

Each player has integrated content acceleration (Content Delivery Network or CDN) on a worldwide scale, making it possible to deliver content to the points closest to internet users. However, the solutions that have been implemented rely on Western players that are unable to service China properly.

As a result, their performance is not as good as that of the local competition – Li Ning, hosted in China, with technological choices that help it to deal effectively with the technical issues of the internet in that country.

Another element is the design of the pages on the site. Too many sites use graphics that are elegant but too bulky. They do not hesitate to use flash technology, for example, to make a site look more dynamic.

The “heavier” the page is, the longer it takes to load, and the more it will be subjected to variations in performance linked to the telecom operators’ networks.

It is precisely according to this second set of criteria that Li Ning makes a difference here as well. By choosing a simple, streamlined graphic design, the manufacturer succeeds in limiting the number of elements that internet users are obliged to load on their internet navigator, thus accelerating the display speed. Contrary to this, Puma has a homepage that is seven times more voluminous than Li Ning’s site.

As for Reebok, its homepage is also very heavy, consisting of a large number of elements to display, some of which are small flash animations that cause a slowdown – “clots” in the network that prevent any new objects from displaying as long as they haven’t finished loading.

Li Ning’s many victories in the gym have helped him become a celebrity. These victories have also taught him that, in order to be the best, one has to know how to make a difference.

Twenty years after retiring from sports, Li Ning has not forgotten this experience, and has managed to bring it to other fields of endeavour. His company’s website has benefited equally. Clearly making a difference, the website helps make Li Ning yet again a gold medal winner in his category.

*\*Measurements made from Beijing, Chengdu, Fuzhou, Guangzhou (Canton), Hangzhou, Nanjing, Qingdao, Shanghai, Shenyang, Shenzhen, and Zhengzhou*

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