

SOHU COM INC
Form S-3
September 30, 2003
Table of Contents

As filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on September 30, 2003

Registration No. 333-

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Washington, DC 20549

FORM S-3

REGISTRATION STATEMENT

UNDER

THE SECURITIES ACT OF 1933

SOHU.COM INC.

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Delaware
(State or other jurisdiction
of incorporation)

98-0204667
(I.R.S. Employer
Identification No.)

7 Jianguomen Nei Avenue
Bright China Chang An Building
Tower 2, Room 1519
Beijing 100005
People's Republic of China

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

(011) 8610-6510-2160

(Address, including zip code, and telephone number, including area code, of registrant's principal executive offices)

CT Corporation System

111 Eighth Avenue

New York, New York 10011

212-590-9200

(Name, address, including zip code, and telephone number, including area code, of agent for service)

Copies of communications to:

Timothy B. Bancroft, Esq.

Goulston & Storrs, P.C.

400 Atlantic Avenue

Boston, Massachusetts 02110

Approximate date of commencement of proposed sale to the public: From time to time after the effective date of this registration statement.

If the only securities being registered on this form are being offered pursuant to dividend or interest reinvestment plans, check the following box.

If any of the securities being registered on this form are to be offered on a delayed or continuous basis pursuant to Rule 415 under the Securities Act of 1933, other than securities offered only in connection with dividend or reinvestment plans, check the following box.

If this form is filed to register additional securities for an offering pursuant to Rule 462(b) under the Securities Act, check the following box and list the Securities Act registration statement number of the earlier effective registration statement for the same offering. _____

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

If this form is a post-effective amendment filed pursuant to Rule 462(c) under the Securities Act, check the following box and list the Securities Act registration statement number of the earlier effective registration statement for the same offering. " _____

If delivery of the prospectus is expected to be made pursuant to Rule 434, check the following box. "

Table of Contents**CALCULATION OF REGISTRATION FEE**

Title of each class of securities to be Registered	Amount to be Registered(1)	Proposed	Proposed	Amount of Registration Fee
		Maximum Offering Price Per unit (3)	Maximum Aggregate Offering Price (3)	
Zero Coupon Convertible Senior Notes due 2023	\$90,000,000	91.75%	\$82,575,000	\$6,680.32
Common Stock, par value \$.001 per share (4)	2,010,722(2)	(5)	(5)	(5)

- (1) The Zero Coupon Convertible Senior Notes due 2023 (the "Notes") were issued at an original price of \$1,000 per \$1,000 principal amount at maturity, which represents an aggregate initial issue price and an aggregate principal amount at maturity of \$90,000,000.
- (2) Includes 2,010,722 shares of common stock initially issuable upon conversion of the Notes at a rate of 22.3414 shares of common stock per \$1,000 principal amount at maturity of the Notes, plus an indeterminate number of additional shares of common stock that may be issued from time to time upon conversion of the Notes as a result of certain adjustments, in circumstances described in the prospectus that is part of this registration statement.
- (3) Estimated solely for the purpose of calculating the registration fee, based on the average of the bid and ask prices for the Notes on September 29, 2003 in accordance with Rule 457(c) under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended.
- (4) This registration statement also relates to rights to purchase shares of the registrant's Series A Junior Participating Cumulative Preferred Stock (the "Rights") which are attached to all shares of common stock. Until the occurrence of certain prescribed events, the Rights are not exercisable, are evidenced by the certificates for common stock and will be transferable along with and only with the common stock. The value attributable to the Rights, if any, is reflected in the value of the common stock.
- (5) Pursuant to Rule 457(i) under the Securities Act, there is no filing fee with respect to the shares of common stock issuable upon conversion of the Notes because no additional consideration will be received in connection with the exercise of the conversion privilege.

THE REGISTRANT HEREBY AMENDS THIS REGISTRATION STATEMENT ON SUCH DATE OR DATES AS MAY BE NECESSARY TO DELAY ITS EFFECTIVE DATE UNTIL THE REGISTRANT SHALL FILE A FURTHER AMENDMENT WHICH SPECIFICALLY STATES THAT THIS REGISTRATION STATEMENT SHALL THEREAFTER BECOME EFFECTIVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 8(A) OF THE SECURITIES ACT OF 1933 OR UNTIL THE REGISTRATION STATEMENT SHALL BECOME EFFECTIVE ON SUCH DATE AS THE COMMISSION, ACTING PURSUANT TO SAID SECTION 8(A), MAY DETERMINE.

Table of Contents

The information contained in this prospectus is not complete and may be changed. The selling stockholder may not sell these securities until the registration statement filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission is effective. This prospectus is not an offer to sell these securities or a solicitation of an offer to buy these securities in any state where the offer or sale is not permitted.

PRELIMINARY PROSPECTUS

SUBJECT TO COMPLETION, DATED SEPTEMBER 30, 2003

SOHU.COM, INC.

\$90,000,000 PRINCIPAL AMOUNT

ZERO COUPON CONVERTIBLE SENIOR NOTES DUE 2023

AND COMMON STOCK ISSUABLE UPON CONVERSION OF THE NOTES

The securities offered in this prospectus involve a high degree of risk. You should carefully consider the Risk Factors referenced on page 10 in determining whether to purchase the Sohu.com Inc. Zero Coupon Convertible Senior Notes or the common stock.

This prospectus covers resales from time to time by selling security holders of our Zero Coupon Convertible Senior Notes due July 14, 2023 held by certain selling security holders and 2,010,722 shares of our common stock issuable upon conversion of the notes held by certain security holders, plus such additional indeterminate number of shares as may become issuable upon conversion of the notes by reason of adjustment of the conversion price. The notes and the common stock may be sold from time to time by or on behalf of the selling security holders named in this prospectus or in supplements to this prospectus.

The selling security holders are offering these notes and shares of common stock. The selling security holders may sell all or a portion of the notes from time to time in market transactions, in negotiated transactions or otherwise, and at prices and at terms which will be determined by the then prevailing market price for the notes or at negotiated prices directly or through a broker or brokers, who may act as agent or as principal or by a combination of such methods of sale. The selling security holders may also sell all or a portion of the shares of common stock from time to time on the Nasdaq National Market, in negotiated transactions or otherwise, and at prices and at terms which will be determined by the then prevailing market price for the shares or at negotiated prices directly or through a broker or brokers, who may act as agent or as principal or by a combination of such methods of sale. The selling security holders will receive all proceeds from the sale of the notes or the sale of the shares of our common stock being registered in this registration statement. For additional information on the methods of sale, you should refer to the section entitled Plan of Distribution on page 25. We will not receive any portion of the proceeds from the sale of these notes or shares of common stock.

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

Our common stock is traded on the Nasdaq National Market under the symbol SOHU. On September 26, 2003, the last reported sales price for our common stock was \$31.60 per share. The notes are not listed on any national securities exchange or on Nasdaq, but the Notes are eligible for trading in the PORTAL Market of the Nasdaq Stock Market, Inc.

The Securities and Exchange Commission and state securities regulators have not approved or disapproved of these securities or determined if this prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The date of this prospectus is _____, 2003.

Table of Contents**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	Page
	Number
<u>Summary</u>	5
<u>Sohu.com Inc.</u>	5
<u>Terms of the Notes</u>	7
<u>Risk Factors</u>	10
<u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>	30
<u>Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges</u>	30
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	30
<u>Plan of Distribution</u>	31
<u>Description of the Notes</u>	33
<u>Description of Capital Stock</u>	44
<u>Certain United States Federal Tax Consequences</u>	47
<u>Selling Security Holders</u>	50
<u>Legal Matters</u>	51
<u>Experts</u>	51
<u>Information Incorporated by Reference</u>	52
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	52

You should rely only on the information contained in this prospectus. We have not authorized anyone to provide you with information different from that contained in this prospectus. This prospectus constitutes an offer to sell or a solicitation to buy shares only in jurisdictions where offers and sales are permitted. The information contained in this prospectus is accurate only as of the date of this prospectus, regardless of the time of delivery or of any sale of common stock.

Table of Contents

SUMMARY

SOHU.COM INC.

As used in this report, references to us, we, our, our company, Sohu and Sohu.com are to Sohu.com Inc., and, except where the context requires otherwise, our subsidiaries ChinaRen Inc. (or ChinaRen), Sohu.com (Hong Kong) Limited (or Sohu Hong Kong), Sohu ITC Information Technology (Beijing) Co., Ltd. (or Beijing ITC), Sohu.com Limited, and our affiliates Beijing Sohu Online Network Information Services, Ltd. (or Beijing Sohu), Beijing Century High Tech Investment Co., Ltd. (or High Century), Beijing Hengda Yitong Internet Technology Development Co., Ltd. (or Hengda), Sohu-Guolian Information Technology Co., Ltd. (or Sohu-Guolian), and Beijing Sohu Internet Service Co. Ltd. (or Sohu Internet) and these references should be interpreted accordingly. Unless otherwise specified, references to China or PRC refer to the People's Republic of China and do not include the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Macau Special Administrative Region or Taiwan.

We are a leading Internet portal in China in terms of brand recognition, page views and registered users. Our portal consists of sophisticated Chinese language Web navigational and search capabilities, 17 main content channels, Web-based communications and community services and a platform for e-subscriptions (including short message services) and e-commerce. Each of our interest-specific main channels contains multi-level sub-channels that cover a comprehensive range of topics, including news, business, entertainment, sports and career. We also offer free Web-based e-mail. We offer a universal registration system, whereby a user that has registered for our e-mail service is automatically registered for our chat, bulletin board, instant messaging and other services. Our portal attracts consumers and merchants alike because it is designed to meet the specific needs and interests of Internet users in China. Key features include proprietary Web navigational and search capabilities that reflect the unique cultural characteristics and thinking and viewing habits of PRC Internet users. Our subsidiary ChinaRen is an online portal located in China that targets mainland Chinese Internet users with its strong community products.

We derive revenues primarily through the sale of advertising, e-subscriptions (including short messaging services) and e-commerce.

We were organized in 1996 as Internet Technologies China Incorporated, and launched our original Web site, itc.com.cn, in January 1997. In February 1998, we re-launched our Web site under Sohu.com. In September 1999, we renamed our company Sohu.com Inc. Substantially all of our operations are conducted through our indirect wholly owned PRC subsidiary Beijing ITC. The address of our chief executive offices is 7 Jianguomen Nei Avenue, Bright China Chang An Building, Tower 2 Room 1519, Beijing, China 100005, and our phone number is (86-10) 6510-2160.

Recent Developments

On June 9, 2003, we entered into a loan and share pledge agreement with He Jinmei, one of our employees, for the purpose of financing the equity investment of \$121,000 by He Jinmei in Sohu Internet, a company incorporated in the PRC which engages in Internet information services in the PRC on our behalf. The \$121,000 investment represents a 20% interest in Sohu Internet, with High Century holding the remaining 80% interest. The agreement, which is subject to PRC laws, includes provisions that (i) the loan can only be repaid to us by transferring the shares of Sohu Internet to us, (ii) the shares of Sohu Internet cannot be transferred without our approval, and (iii) we have the right to appoint all directors and senior management personnel of Sohu Internet. He Jinmei has pledged all of her shares in Sohu Internet as collateral for the loan and the loan bears no interest and is due on demand after June 2004, or at such time as He Jinmei is not an employee of Sohu. We do not

Table of Contents

intend to request repayment of the loan as long as PRC regulations prohibit us from directly investing in businesses being undertaken by Sohu Internet.

Effective on July 18, 2003, we transferred various assets, including our domain names (including www.sohu.com and www.chinaren.com), our trademarks, all of the issued and outstanding shares of Beijing ITC and Sohu Hong Kong, and the rights under loans payable to Sohu.com Inc. by Beijing Sohu, High Century, Hengda, and Sohu Internet, to Sohu.com Limited, a Cayman Islands corporation which is a newly formed wholly-owned subsidiary of Sohu.com Inc. All of the issued and outstanding shares of Beijing ITC were subsequently transferred by Sohu.com Limited to Sohu Hong Kong, so that Beijing ITC is now a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sohu Hong Kong.

Also, effective September 1, 2003, Mary Ma and Ya-Qin Zhang were appointed to our Board of Directors.

Table of Contents

TERMS OF THE NOTES

Notes offered	\$90,000,000 principal amount of Zero Coupon Convertible Senior Notes due 2023.
Maturity date	July 14, 2023.
Principal Amount	The notes have a principal amount at maturity of \$1,000.
Interest	Interest on the notes is zero unless specified defaults under the registration rights agreement occur. See Description of the Notes Registration Rights.
Ranking	The notes are our senior unsecured obligations and rank equally in right of payment with all of our other unsecured and unsubordinated indebtedness. The notes rank senior to any of our subordinated indebtedness. At June 30, 2003, we had no outstanding senior indebtedness and we had total liabilities of approximately \$13.2 million. The notes are not guaranteed by any of our subsidiaries and, accordingly, will be effectively subordinated to the indebtedness and other liabilities of our subsidiaries, including trade payables. As of June 30, 2003, our subsidiaries had no outstanding indebtedness, other than intercompany indebtedness and trade debt.
Conversion	The notes are convertible at the option of the holders at any time on or prior to maturity into shares of our common stock at a conversion price of \$44.76 per share, which is equal to a conversion rate of 22.3414 shares per \$1,000 principal amount of notes. The conversion rate is subject to adjustment. See Description of the Notes Conversion Rights.
Redemption	We may redeem all or a portion of the notes for cash at any time on or after July 14, 2008, at 100% of the principal amount of the notes if (i) the closing price of our common stock as reported on the Nasdaq National Market for each of the 30 consecutive trading days prior to such time was at least 130% of the conversion price or (ii) at such time at least 90% of the initial aggregate principal amount of the notes have been converted, repurchased or redeemed. See Description of the Notes Redemption at the Option of the Company.
Repurchase at option of holder	Unless the notes have been previously redeemed, repurchased and cancelled, or converted, each holder shall have the right, at such holder's option, to require us to repurchase all (or any portion of the principal amount thereof which is \$1,000 or any integral multiple thereof) of such holder's notes, on July 14 in 2007, 2013 and 2018 at a price equal to 100% of the outstanding principal amount thereof. See Description of the Notes Repurchase at the Option of the Holder.
Sinking fund	None.

Table of Contents

Change of control	<p>Upon a change of control event, each holder of the notes may require us to repurchase some or all of its notes at a repurchase price equal to 100% of the principal amount of the notes plus accrued and unpaid interest. The repurchase price is payable:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">in cash; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">at our option, subject to the satisfaction of certain conditions, in our common stock. The number of shares of common stock will equal the repurchase price divided by 95% of the average of the closing sale prices of the common stock for the five consecutive trading days ending on and including the third day prior to the repurchase date.</p>
See Description of the Notes	<p>Repurchase at the Option of the Holder Upon Change of Control.</p>
Use of proceeds	<p>We will not receive any proceeds from the sale of the Notes or the shares of common stock offered by this prospectus.</p>
DTC eligibility	<p>The notes were issued in book entry form and are represented by permanent global certificates without coupons deposited with a custodian for and registered in the name of a nominee of The Depository Trust Company in New York, New York. Beneficial interests in the notes are shown on, and transfers will be effected only through, records maintained by The Depository Trust Company and its direct and indirect participants, and any such interest may not be exchanged for certificated securities, except in limited circumstances. See Description of the Notes Form, Denomination and Registration.</p>
Registration rights	<p>We agreed to file a shelf registration statement of which this prospectus is a part with the SEC covering the resale of the notes and the underlying common stock within 90 days after the closing date of the offering. We also agreed to use our reasonable best efforts to have the shelf registration statement declared effective within 180 days of the date of closing and to use our reasonable best efforts to keep the shelf registration statement effective, subject to specified black-out periods, until either of the following has occurred:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">all securities covered by the registration statement have been sold; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">the holders of the notes and the shares of our common stock issuable upon conversion of the notes that are not affiliates of Sohu are able to sell all such securities immediately pursuant to Rule 144(k) under the Securities Act or any successor rule thereto or otherwise.</p> <p>We will be required to pay holders liquidated damages if we fail to comply with our obligations to register the resale of the notes or the</p>

Table of Contents

common stock issuable upon conversion of the notes within specified time periods. See Description of Notes Registration Rights.

Trading

The notes are not currently listed and we do not intend to list the notes on any national securities exchange. The notes are eligible for trading in the PORTAL Market. Our common stock is traded on the Nasdaq Stock Market's National Market under the symbol "SOHU".

Absence of a public market

The notes are new securities for which there is currently no public market. An active or liquid market may not develop for the notes. See Plan of Distribution.

Table of Contents

RISK FACTORS

You should carefully consider the risks described below before making an investment decision. The risks described below are not the only ones facing our company. Additional risks not presently known to us or that we currently deem immaterial may also impair our business operations. Our business, financial condition or results of operations could be materially adversely affected by any of these risks. The trading price of the notes and our common stock could decline due to any of these risks, and you may lose all or part of your investment. The remainder of this prospectus and the incorporated documents also contain forward-looking statements that involve risks and uncertainties. Our actual results could differ materially from those anticipated in these forward-looking statements as a result of certain factors, including the risks faced by us described below and elsewhere in this prospectus.

Risks Related to Our Business

Except for each of the four quarters ended June 30, 2003, we have incurred net losses since inception and losses could continue in the future.

Except for each of the four quarters ended June 30, 2003, we have incurred significant net losses since our inception in August 1996. In addition, we had an accumulated deficit of approximately \$61.1 million at June 30, 2003. We may incur substantial net losses in the future due to the relative high risk associated with our revenue and the high level of planned operating and capital expenditures, including sales and marketing costs, personnel hires, and product development. Although we have recorded a net income for each of the four consecutive quarters ended June 30, 2003, we may not sustain profitability.

We have a limited operating history, which may make it difficult for investors to evaluate our business.

We began offering products and services under the www.Sohu.com Web site in February 1998. Accordingly, we have a limited operating history upon which investors can evaluate our business. In addition, our senior management and employees have worked together at our company for only a relatively short period of time. As an early stage company in the new and rapidly evolving PRC Internet market, we face numerous risks and uncertainties. Some of these risks relate to our ability to:

increase our online advertising revenues and successfully build our e-commerce and e-subscription services (including short messaging services) businesses, given the early stage of development of the PRC Internet industry;

continue to attract a larger audience to our portal by expanding the type and technical sophistication of the content and services we offer; and

maintain our current, and develop new, strategic relationships to increase our revenue streams as well as product and service offerings.

PRC Internet laws and regulations are unclear and will likely change in the near future. If we are found to be in violation of current or future PRC laws or regulations, we could be subject to severe penalties.

We conduct our Internet operations solely in the PRC through our indirect wholly owned subsidiary, Beijing ITC. Beijing ITC is a wholly foreign owned enterprise, or WFOE, under PRC law. We are a Delaware corporation, Sohu Hong Kong, our indirect wholly owned subsidiary and the parent company of Beijing ITC, is a Hong Kong corporation, and Sohu and Sohu Hong Kong are foreign persons under PRC law. Accordingly, our Internet business is 100% foreign-owned. In order to meet ownership requirements under PRC law which restrict or prohibit Sohu from operating in certain industries such as Internet content provider, online stock trading and internet access, we have established Beijing Sohu, High Century, Hengda and Sohu Internet which are companies incorporated in the PRC and owned by Dr. Charles Zhang, our president and chief executive officer and a major Sohu shareholder, and certain other employees of Sohu. As of June 30, 2003, Sohu had invested \$5.2 million in

Table of Contents

Beijing Sohu, High Century, Hengda and Sohu Internet through loans to related parties. In 2000, we extended loans of \$242,000 to Dr. Charles Zhang and a Sohu employee to set up Beijing Sohu. Pursuant to a restructuring in May 2000, we transferred certain of our assets and operations to Beijing Sohu, a PRC company that is 80% owned by Dr. Charles Zhang. In 2001 and 2002, we made loans totaling \$4.6 million to Dr. Charles Zhang and an employee of the company to establish High Century for the purposes of undertaking additional investments in the PRC where foreign ownership is prohibited or restricted. In 2002, we loaned \$242,000 to an employee of the company for the purpose of funding an investment in Hengda, a company incorporated in the PRC which engages in Internet access services in the PRC on behalf of Sohu. The \$242,000 investment represents a 20% interest in Hengda, with High Century holding the remaining 80% interest. In March 2002, High Century entered into a joint venture agreement with Guolian Securities Co., Ltd., pursuant to which High Century has invested \$3.1 million in Sohu-Guolian in return for a 51% equity interest in and joint control of Sohu-Guolian. Sohu-Guolian was established to provide technical services to the PRC online securities trading and financial services industries. In June 2003, we loaned \$121,000 to an employee of the company for the purpose of funding an investment in Sohu Internet, a company incorporated in the PRC which engages in Internet information services in the PRC on behalf of Sohu. The \$121,000 investment represents a 20% interest in Sohu Internet with High Century holding the remaining 80% interest. We do not have any direct ownership interest in Beijing Sohu, High Century, Hengda, Sohu-Guolian or Sohu Internet.

The PRC has recently begun to regulate its Internet sector by making pronouncements or enacting regulations regarding the legality of foreign investment in the PRC Internet sector and the existence and enforcement of content restrictions on the Internet. We believe that our current ownership structure complies with all existing PRC laws, rules and regulations. There are, however, substantial uncertainties regarding the interpretation of current PRC Internet laws and regulations. In addition, new PRC Internet laws and regulations were recently adopted. Accordingly, it is possible that the PRC government will ultimately take a view contrary to ours.

Issues, risks and uncertainties relating to PRC government regulation of the PRC Internet sector include the following:

The PRC recently enacted regulations applying to Internet-related services and telecom-related activities. While many aspects of these regulations remain unclear, they purport to limit and require licensing of various aspects of the provision of Internet information services. If these regulations are interpreted to be inconsistent with our restructuring, our business will be severely impaired.

Under the agreement reached in November 1999 between the PRC and the United States concerning the United States' support of China's entry into the World Trade Organization, or WTO, foreign investment in PRC Internet services will be liberalized to allow for 30% foreign ownership in key telecommunication services, including PRC Internet ventures, for the first year after China's entry into the WTO, 49% in the second year and 50% thereafter. China officially entered the WTO on December 11, 2001. However, the implementation of China's WTO accession agreements is still subject to various conditions.

The Ministry of Information Industry, or MII, has also stated that the activities of Internet content providers are subject to regulation by various PRC government authorities, depending on the specific activities conducted by the Internet content provider. Various government authorities have stated publicly that they are in the process of preparing new laws and regulations that will govern these activities. The areas of regulation currently include online advertising, online news reporting, online publishing, online securities trading and the provision of industry-specific (e.g., drug-related) information over the Internet. Other aspects of our online operations may be subject to regulation in the future.

The interpretation and application of existing PRC laws and regulations, the stated positions of the MII and the possible new laws or regulations have created substantial uncertainties regarding the legality of existing and future foreign investments in, and the businesses and activities of, PRC Internet companies, including us.

Table of Contents

Accordingly, it is possible that the relevant PRC authorities could, at any time, assert that any portion or all of our, Beijing ITC s, Beijing Sohu s, Hengda s, High Century s Sohu-Guolian s or Sohu Internet s existing or future ownership structure and businesses violate existing or future PRC laws, regulations or policies. It is also possible that the new laws or regulations governing the PRC Internet sector that have been adopted or may be adopted in the future will prohibit or restrict foreign investment in, or other aspects of, any of our, Beijing ITC s, Beijing Sohu s, Hengda s, High Century s, Sohu-Guolian s and Sohu Internet s current or proposed businesses and operations. In addition, these new laws and regulations may be retroactively applied to us, Beijing ITC, High Century, Hengda, Beijing Sohu, Sohu-Guolian or Sohu Internet.

If we, Beijing ITC, High Century, Beijing Sohu, Hengda, Sohu-Guolian or Sohu Internet were found to be in violation of any existing or future PRC laws or regulations, the relevant PRC authorities would have broad discretion in dealing with such violation, including, without limitation, the following:

levying fines;

confiscating our, Beijing ITC s, High Century s, Hengda s, Beijing Sohu s, Sohu-Guolian s or Sohu Internet s income;

revoking our, Beijing ITC s, High Century s, Hengda s, Beijing Sohu s, Sohu-Guolian s or Sohu Internet s business license;

shutting down our, Beijing ITC s, Beijing Sohu s or Sohu Internet s servers and/or blocking our Web sites;

requiring us, Beijing ITC, High Century, Hengda, Beijing Sohu, Sohu-Guolian or Sohu Internet to restructure its ownership structure or operations; and

requiring us, Beijing ITC, High Century, Hengda, Beijing Sohu, Sohu-Guolian or Sohu Internet to discontinue any portion or all of its Internet business.

We may be unable to collect long-term loans to related parties or exercise management influence associated with Beijing Sohu, High Century, Sohu-Guolian, Hengda or Sohu Internet.

At June 30, 2003 Sohu had provided long-term loans of \$5.2 million to Dr. Charles Zhang, Sohu s president and chief executive officer and a major Sohu shareholder, and certain of our employees. The long-term loans are used to finance investments in Beijing Sohu and High Century, which are owned 80% by Dr. Charles Zhang and 20% by certain of our employees, Hengda, which is owned 80% by High Century and 20% by an employee, and Sohu Internet, which is owned 80% by High Century and 20% by an employee. Beijing Sohu, High Century, Hengda and Sohu Internet are used to facilitate our participation in telecommunications, Internet content, financial services and certain other businesses in China where foreign ownership is either prohibited or restricted. We expect that we will continue to be involved in and provide additional financial support under similar arrangements in the future, subject to the restrictions set forth in the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 with respect to loans to directors and executive officers.

The agreements contain provisions that, subject to PRC law, (i) the loans can only be repaid to us by transferring the shares of High Century, Hengda, Sohu Internet or Beijing Sohu to us, (ii) the shares of High Century, Hengda, Sohu Internet or Beijing Sohu cannot be transferred without our approval, and (iii) we have the right to appoint all directors and senior management personnel of High Century, Hengda, Sohu Internet and Beijing Sohu. Dr. Charles Zhang and the other employee borrowers have pledged all of their shares in High Century, Hengda, Sohu Internet and Beijing Sohu as collateral for the loans and the loans bear no interest and are due on demand after November 2003, in the case of

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

High Century, the earlier of a demand or 2010, in the case of Beijing Sohu, after January 2003, in the case of Hengda, and after June 2004, in the case of Sohu Internet, or, in any case, at such time as Dr. Charles Zhang or the other employee borrowers, as the case may be, is not an employee of Sohu. Sohu does not intend to request repayment of the loans as long as PRC regulations prohibit it from directly investing in businesses being undertaken by High Century, Hengda, Sohu Internet, Sohu-Guolian and Beijing Sohu.

Table of Contents

Our ability to ultimately collect these loans will depend on the profitability of Beijing Sohu, Hengda, Sohu-Guolian, Sohu Internet and High Century, which is uncertain. As of June 30, 2003, we had recorded \$461,000 of valuation allowance for losses incurred by Beijing Sohu, High Century, Hengda, and Sohu-Guolian. Furthermore, because of uncertainty associated with PRC law, ultimate enforcement of the loan agreements is uncertain. Accordingly, we may never be able to collect these loans or exercise influence over High Century, Hengda, Sohu-Guolian and Beijing Sohu.

We have attempted to comply with restrictions on foreign investment in the PRC Internet sector imposed by the PRC government by transferring our content-related assets and operations to, and entering into agreements with, Beijing Sohu and Sohu Internet, PRC companies owned by our President and Chief Executive Officer. If the PRC government finds that these agreements do not comply with the relevant foreign investment restrictions, our business in the PRC will be adversely affected.

Because the PRC government restricts foreign investment in Internet-related businesses, we have restructured our Internet operations by having Beijing Sohu and Sohu Internet acquire appropriate government approvals to conduct our content-related operations. In addition, we have transferred our content-related assets and operations to Beijing Sohu and Sohu Internet. The legal uncertainties associated with PRC government regulations and our restructuring may be summarized as follows:

whether the PRC government may view our restructuring as being in compliance with its laws and regulations;

whether the PRC government may impose additional regulatory requirements with which we, Beijing Sohu or Sohu Internet may not be in compliance; and

whether the PRC government will permit Beijing Sohu or Sohu Internet to acquire future licenses necessary in order to conduct operations in the PRC.

We cannot be sure that our restructured operations and activities will be viewed by PRC regulatory authorities as in compliance with applicable PRC laws and regulations. Our business will be adversely affected if our business license is revoked as a result of non-compliance. In addition, we cannot be sure that we, Beijing Sohu and Sohu Internet will be able to obtain all of the licenses we, Beijing Sohu or Sohu Internet may need in the future. Future changes in PRC government policies affecting the provision of information services, including the provision of online services and Internet access, may impose additional regulatory requirements on us, Beijing Sohu or Sohu Internet or our service providers or otherwise harm our business.

We depend upon contractual arrangements with Beijing Sohu, Hengda, Sohu-Guolian, High Century and Sohu Internet for the success of our business and these arrangements may not be as effective in providing operational control as direct ownership of these businesses and may be difficult to enforce.

Because we conduct our Internet operations only in the PRC, and because we are restricted or prohibited by the PRC government from owning Internet content, financial services or telecommunication operations in the PRC, we are dependent on Beijing Sohu, Hengda, Sohu-Guolian, High Century and Sohu Internet in which we have no direct ownership interest, to provide those services through contractual agreements between the parties. These arrangements may not be as effective in providing control over our Internet content, financial services or telecommunications operations as direct ownership of these businesses. For example, Beijing Sohu and Sohu Internet could fail to take actions required for our business, such as entering into content development contracts with potential content suppliers or failing to maintain the necessary permit for the content servers. If Beijing Sohu, Hengda, Sohu-Guolian, High Century and Sohu Internet fail to perform its obligations under these agreements, we may have to rely on legal remedies under PRC law, which we cannot assure you would be effective or sufficient.

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

Dr. Charles Zhang, our president and chief executive officer and a major shareholder of our company, is also the majority shareholder of Beijing Sohu, Hengda, Sohu-Guolian, High Century and Sohu Internet. As a

Table of Contents

result, our contractual relationships with those companies could be viewed as entrenching his management position or transferring certain value to him, especially if any conflict arises with him.

Even if we are in compliance with PRC governmental regulations relating to licensing and foreign investment prohibitions, the PRC government may prevent us from distributing, and we may be subject to liability for, content that it believes is inappropriate.

The PRC has enacted regulations governing Internet access and the distribution of news and other information. In the past, the PRC government has stopped the distribution of information over the Internet that it believes to violate PRC law, including content that is obscene, incites violence, endangers national security, is contrary to the national interest or is defamatory. In addition, we may not publish certain news items, such as news relating to national security, without permission from the PRC government. Furthermore, the Ministry of Public Security has the authority to cause any local Internet service provider to block any Web site maintained outside the PRC at its sole discretion. Even if we comply with PRC governmental regulations relating to licensing and foreign investment prohibitions, if the PRC government were to take any action to limit or prohibit the distribution of information through our network or to limit or regulate any current or future content or services available to users on our network, our business would be harmed.

We are also subject to potential liability for content on our Web sites that is deemed inappropriate and for any unlawful actions of our subscribers and other users of our systems under regulations promulgated by the MII.

Furthermore, we are required to delete content that clearly violates the laws of the PRC and report content that we suspect may violate PRC law. It is difficult to determine the type of content that may result in liability for us, and if we are wrong, we may be prevented from operating our Web sites.

We rely on e-subscription services for a significant portion of our revenues.

We derive a significant portion of our revenues from e-subscription services (including short messaging services) on our Web sites. For the three and six months ended June 30, 2003, e-subscription revenues represented approximately 59% and 60%, respectively, of our total revenues, as compared to 31% and 26% for the corresponding three and six month periods in 2002. We expect our reliance on e-subscription revenues to increase. Our business plan is dependent upon further increases in revenues from e-subscription services and the expansion of our subscriber base.

E-subscription revenue is derived principally from providing value added short messaging services such as alumni club, dating and friends matching, e-mail, ringtone and logo downloads and various other related products to mobile phone users. E-subscription fees are charged on a monthly or per message basis. Pursuant to contractual arrangements between Beijing Sohu and a number of mobile network operators in China which are subsidiaries of China Mobile Communication Corporation, or CMCC, and China Unicom Co., Ltd, or Unicom, Sohu relies on the operators for both billing of, and collection from, mobile phone users of e-subscription fees. The service fees range from approximately 10% to 50% of our e-subscription revenues, and are based on contracted rates that are subject to review and renewal on an annual basis. Generally, (i) within 15 to 90 days after the end of each month, Beijing Sohu receives a statement from CMCC and Unicom confirming the amount of e-subscription charges billed to that operator's mobile phone users and (ii) within 30 to 120 days after delivering a monthly statement to Beijing Sohu, each operator remits the e-subscription fees, net of its service fees, for the month to Beijing Sohu which then transfers the funds to Beijing ITC, in order to allow the revenues to be included within our consolidated accounts.

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

With respect to our e-subscription services, we depend on the cooperation of CMCC and Unicom. We rely on CMCC and Unicom in the following ways:

we provide short messaging services through CMCC's and Unicom's network and gateway;

Table of Contents

we utilize and rely on CMCC and Unicom's billing systems to charge our subscribers through the subscriber's mobile phone bill;

we rely on their collection proxy services to collect payments from subscribers; and

we rely on their infrastructure to further develop our subscription services.

We face significant risks in the area of e-subscription services, such as the following, which could adversely affect our e-subscription services and revenues:

E-subscription services are provided through our Web site and recorded in our internal systems. However, in order to recognize revenue and get paid for services provided, we rely on billing confirmations from CMCC and Unicom as to the actual amount of services they have billed to their mobile customers. We do not collect e-subscription fees from an operator in certain circumstances due to technical issues with the operator's network. We refer to these failures as an operator's failure rate, which can vary from operator to operator. An operator's failure rate can vary from month to month, ranging from 5% to 80% and may change at any time without notice. If an operator encounters technical problems, increases in the failure rate for that operator could occur. CMCC Beijing is currently in the process of establishing a new billing platform and may require us to switch to this platform in the future. The new platform may result in higher failure rates. Changes in failure rates may result in significant reductions or fluctuations in our e-subscription revenues.

The service fees we pay for using an operator's infrastructure are set based on the negotiation of annual contracts. Our contract with Unicom expires in March 2004. Our contracts with CMCC expire at various times from November 2003 to May 2004. Our negotiating power is limited and if an operator increases its service fees, or does not comply with the terms of our contract, our revenue, gross margin and profitability could be materially reduced.

We rely on the operators to pay us the e-subscriptions fees which they have billed to their mobile customers. If an operator refuses to pay us or limits the amount of e-subscriptions fees which can be billed in a month, our revenues could be adversely affected.

An operator could launch competing services at any time.

The refusal of an operator to allow us to supply certain services or its refusal to allow us to charge our desired prices for our services could disrupt our e-subscription services.

If CMCC or Unicom is unwilling to cooperate with us, we would not be able to find substitute partners.

Currently over eighty percent of our e-subscriptions revenue is from consumers who subscribe for individual services for which we charge a monthly fee ranging from approximately \$0.60 to \$4.00. Over the past nine months, the largest contributor to our e-subscriptions growth and total e-subscriptions revenue has been our online dating and friends matching service which we refer to as Jiqingongshe or GGMM. Growth and sustainability of our e-subscription revenues is dependent upon user acceptance of our existing and new services, especially services such as GGMM which are paid by way of monthly subscriptions. Because these services are new and untested, we do not have a clear understanding of consumer behavior, making it difficult to predict future growth or usage.

Pursuant to the regulations of CMCC and Unicom, Sohu has the right to charge consumers who have registered to be billed on a monthly basis even if they do not use our services in any month or on a regular basis. If CMCC and Unicom were to disallow us from billing consumers who do not actively use our services, our e-subscriptions revenue, generally, and our GGMM revenue, specifically, would be materially impacted.

Our consumers may not understand our services or the fees they are being charged, may not be satisfied with our services and/or may not use our services on a regular basis, each of which could result in decreases or fluctuations in our revenue.

Table of Contents

Also, consumers may cancel their services at any time without notice, which could result in significant reductions and fluctuations in our revenue.

CMCC or Unicom may change their operating regulations at any time, which could result in our being fined or having our services discontinued without notice. Changes in these operating regulations could also have a material impact on our revenue. For example, in April 2003, CMCC announced or clarified regulations which prohibit utilizing its billing gateway for services which are not directly related to the mobile phone and prohibit billing for services which have not been used by a subscriber for more than three months. In July 2003, CMCC disallowed us from using third party Web sites which do not have Internet content provider licenses, or website union, to promote our e-subscriptions products. In each of the three months ended December 31, 2002, March 31, 2003 and June 30, 2003, a substantial portion of our e-subscriptions growth, especially as regards our GGMM product, was derived from using website union. As a result of our inability to use website union to promote our products, we expect minimal or no growth in e-subscriptions revenue for the three months ended September 30, 2003 as compared to the three months ended June 30, 2003 and, in addition, future growth in e-subscriptions revenue could be materially less than historical growth.

We face intense competition from a number of companies who may launch competing or better products than us at any time. In addition, there are limited barriers to entry in this area.

We also face the risk that changes in government policy could restrict or curtail the services which we provide.

We depend on online advertising for a significant portion of our revenues.

We derive a significant portion of our revenues from the sale of advertising on our Web sites. For the three and six months ended June 30, 2003, advertising revenues represented approximately 35% and 33%, respectively, of our total revenues, as compared to 55% for both of the corresponding three and six month periods in 2002.

The online advertising market in China is new and relatively small. Our ability to generate and maintain significant online advertising revenues in China will depend, among other things, on:

the development of a large base of users possessing demographic characteristics attractive to advertisers;

downward pressure on online advertising prices;

acceptance by advertisers that online advertising is effective;

the development of independent and reliable means of verifying traffic; and

the effectiveness of our advertising delivery, tracking and reporting systems.

The development of Web software that blocks Internet advertisements before they appear on a user's screen may hinder the growth of online advertising. The expansion of ad blocking on the Internet may decrease our revenues because when an ad is blocked, it is not downloaded from

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

our ad server. As a result, such advertisements will not be tracked as a delivered advertisement. In addition, advertisers may choose not to advertise on the Internet or on our portal because of the use by third parties of Internet advertisement blocking software.

Accordingly, we may not be successful in generating significant future online advertising revenues.

Our e-commerce services may face certain business and regulatory risks.

For the three and six months ended June 30, 2003, e-commerce revenues represented approximately 5% and 6%, respectively, of our total revenues, as compared to 13% and 17% for the corresponding three and six month periods in 2002.

Table of Contents

Substantially all e-commerce revenues are earned from the sale of consumer products. Our business plan is dependent upon further increases in revenues from e-commerce.

We face the following risks with respect to our e-commerce business line:

the online shopping market is small and unproven in China and, therefore, we may not be able to sustain revenue growth or maintain existing revenue levels;

we may not be able to maintain our existing gross margins because of competitors such as Joyo, Bertelsmann Online and Dang Dang;

credit cards are not widely used in China and, therefore, we rely on cash on delivery for collecting payments whereby we have a collection risk from the companies providing delivery service; and

future government regulations could restrict us from further expanding or continuing this business.

In 2002, through High Century, we invested \$3.1 million in Sohu-Guolian, a joint venture which provides services to the online trading and financial services industries.

The success of this investment depends, among other things, on the following factors:

conditions and trading volumes in the China securities market which currently can be considered weak;

the acceptability and development of online stock trading in China which is unknown at this time;

expansion, which is dependent on the development of China's banking system (which currently does not allow for nation wide remote account opening);

cooperation from Guolian Securities Co., Ltd., our joint venture partner, who we rely on to provide technical expertise, licensing and other resources to allow Sohu-Guolian to provide services; and

future legislation to allow Sohu-Guolian to obtain its own online securities trading license (currently regulations do not exist which would allow Sohu-Guolian to obtain its own online trading license).

There is no assurance that Sohu-Guolian will be successful, and, in addition, we believe that it is unlikely that Sohu-Guolian will be profitable in 2003 or 2004.

Our operating results are likely to fluctuate significantly and may differ from market expectations.

Our annual and quarterly operating results have varied significantly in the past, and may vary significantly in the future, due to a number of factors, many of which are beyond our control. As a result, we believe that year-to-year and quarter-to-quarter comparisons of our operating results are not a good indication of our future performance. It is likely that in some future quarter, our operating results may be below the expectations of public market analysts and investors. In this event, the trading price of our common stock may fall.

We will not be able to attract visitors, advertisers, paying subscribers, short messaging and e-commerce customers if we do not maintain and develop the Sohu brand.

Maintaining and further developing our brand is critical to our ability to expand our user base and our revenues. We believe that the importance of brand recognition will increase as the number of Internet users in China grows. In order to attract and retain Internet users, advertisers, subscribers, and short messaging and e-commerce customers, we may need to substantially increase our expenditures for creating and maintaining brand loyalty. If our revenues do not increase proportionately, our results of operations and liquidity will suffer.

Our success in promoting and enhancing our brand, as well as our ability to remain competitive, will also depend on our success in offering high quality content, features and functionality. If we fail to promote our brand successfully or if visitors to our portal or advertisers do not perceive our content and services to be of high

Table of Contents

quality, we may not be able to continue growing our business and attracting visitors, advertisers, and short messaging and e-commerce customers.

We may need additional capital and we may not be able to obtain it.

Our capital requirements are difficult to plan in our rapidly changing industry. We currently expect that we will need capital to fund additions to our portal and computer infrastructure, including any acquisitions of complementary assets, technologies or businesses we may pursue, as well as the expansion of our sales and marketing activities.

Our ability to obtain additional financing in the future is subject to a variety of uncertainties, including:

investors' perceptions of and appetite for Internet-related securities;

conditions in the U.S. and other capital markets in which we may seek to raise financing;

our future results of operations, financial condition and cash flows;

the amount of capital that other PRC entities may seek to raise in foreign capital markets;

PRC governmental regulation of foreign investment in Internet companies;

economic, political and other conditions in the PRC;

PRC governmental policies relating to foreign currency borrowings; and

any new laws and regulations that may require various PRC government approvals for securities offerings by companies engaged in the Internet sector in the PRC.

Our inability to raise additional funds on favorable terms, or at all, could force us to scale back our planned expenditures, which could adversely affect our growth prospects.

If we fail to establish and maintain relationships with content and technology providers and mobile network operators, we may not be able to attract and retain users.

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

We rely on a number of third party relationships to attract traffic and provide content in order to make our portal more attractive to users and advertisers. Some content providers have increased the fees they charge us for their content. This trend could increase our operating expenses and could adversely affect our ability to obtain content at an economically acceptable cost. Most of our arrangements with content providers are short-term and may be terminated at the convenience of the other party. In addition, much of the third party content provided to our portal is also available from other sources or may be provided to other Internet companies. If other Internet companies present the same or similar content in a superior manner, it would adversely affect our visitor traffic.

Substantially all of our e-subscription revenue is generated through short messaging services where we depend on mobile network operators for message delivery and payment collection. If we were unable to continue this arrangement, our short messaging services would be severely disrupted.

Our business also depends significantly on relationships with leading technology and infrastructure providers and the licenses that the technology providers have granted to us. Our competitors may seek to establish the same relationships as we have, which may adversely affect us. We may not be able to maintain these relationships or replace them on commercially attractive terms.

We depend on key personnel and our business may be severely disrupted if we lose the services of our key executives and employees.

Our future success is heavily dependent upon the continued service of our key executives, particularly Dr. Charles Zhang, who is the founder, president, chief executive officer and a major shareholder of our company

Table of Contents

and the founder and president of Beijing Sohu, High Century, and Hengda. We rely on his expertise in our business operations and on his personal relationships with some of our principal shareholders, the relevant regulatory authorities, our customers and suppliers, Beijing Sohu, High Century, and Hengda. If one or more of our key executives and employees are unable or unwilling to continue in their present positions, we may not be able to easily replace them and our business may be severely disrupted. In addition, if any of these key executives or employees joins a competitor or forms a competing company, we may lose customers and suppliers and incur additional expenses to recruit and train personnel. Each of our executive officers has entered into an employment agreement and a confidentiality, non-competition and non-solicitation agreement with us. However, the degree of protection afforded to an employer pursuant to confidentiality and non-competition undertakings governed by PRC law may be more limited when compared to the degree of protection afforded under the laws of other jurisdictions. We do not maintain key-man life insurance for any of our key executives.

We also rely on a number of key technology staff for the operation of Sohu. Given the competitive nature of the industry, the risk of key technology staff leaving Sohu is high and could have a disruptive impact on our operations.

Rapid growth and a rapidly changing operating environment strain our limited resources.

We have limited operational, administrative and financial resources, which may be inadequate to sustain the growth we want to achieve. As our audience and their Internet use increase, as the demands of our audience and the needs of our customers change and as the volume of online advertising, short messaging and e-commerce activities increases, we will need to increase our investment in our network infrastructure, facilities and other areas of operations. If we are unable to manage our growth and expansion effectively, the quality of our services could deteriorate and our business may suffer. Our future success will depend on, among other things, our ability to:

adapt our services and maintain and improve the quality of our services;

protect our Web site from hackers and unauthorized access;

continue training, motivating and retaining our existing employees and attract and integrate new employees; and

develop and improve our operational, financial, accounting and other internal systems and controls.

Our advertising pricing model, which is based on charging a fixed fee to display advertisements for a specified time period, may not be profitable.

There are currently no industry standard pricing models used to sell advertising on the Internet. This makes it difficult to project our future advertising rates and revenues. The models we adopt may prove not to be profitable. A significant portion of our advertising revenues in 2003 and 2002 were derived from charging a fixed fee to display an advertisement over a given time period.

We may not be able to track the delivery of advertisements through our portal, which may make us less attractive to potential advertisers.

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

It is important to advertisers that we accurately measure the demographics of our user base and the delivery of advertisements through our portal. Companies may choose not to advertise on our portal or may pay less for advertising if they do not perceive our portal to be reliable. We depend on third parties to provide us with some of these measurement services. If they are unable to provide these services in the future, we would need to perform these services ourselves or obtain these services from other providers. This could cause us to incur additional costs or cause interruptions or slowdowns in our business during the time we are replacing these services. We are currently implementing additional systems designed to collect information on our users. We may not be able to implement these systems successfully.

Table of Contents

Our strategy of acquiring complementary assets, technologies and businesses may fail and may result in equity or earnings dilution.

As a component of our growth strategy, we have acquired and intend to actively identify and acquire assets, technologies and businesses that are complementary to our existing portal business. Our acquisitions could result in the use of substantial amounts of cash, potentially dilutive issuances of equity securities, significant amortization expenses related to goodwill and other intangible assets and exposure to undisclosed or potential liabilities of acquired companies. Moreover, the resources expended in identifying and consummating acquisitions may be significant. Furthermore, any acquisitions we decide to pursue may be subject to the approval of the relevant PRC governmental authorities, as well as any applicable PRC rules and regulations.

We may rely on dividends and other distributions on equity paid by our wholly-owned operating subsidiaries to fund any cash requirements we may have.

We are a holding company with no operating assets other than investments in Beijing ITC, our wholly-owned subsidiary in the PRC and our affiliates Beijing Sohu, High Century, Hengda, Sohu-Guolian and Sohu Internet, which own and conduct our Internet business. We may rely on dividends and other distributions on equity paid by Beijing ITC for our cash requirements in excess of any cash raised from investors and retained by us. If Beijing ITC incurs debt on its own behalf in the future, the instruments governing the debt may restrict Beijing ITC's ability to pay dividends or make other distributions to us. In addition, PRC legal restrictions permit payment of dividends by Beijing ITC only out of its net income, if any, determined in accordance with PRC accounting standards and regulations. Under PRC law, Beijing ITC is also required to set aside a portion of its net income each year to fund certain reserve funds. These reserves are not distributable as cash dividends.

Beijing ITC has incurred significant net losses since its inception. Therefore, we have not received any dividends or other distributions from Beijing ITC in the past and do not expect any dividends in the foreseeable future.

*We may not have exclusive rights over the mark **Sohu.com** in certain areas.*

We have applied for registration of the **Sohu.com** mark in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and plan to apply for registration in Malaysia and Singapore. Completion of these applications is subject to prior rights in the relevant jurisdictions. Any rejection of those applications may adversely affect our legal rights over the mark **Sohu.com** in those countries and regions.

Unauthorized use of our intellectual property by third parties, and the expenses incurred in protecting our intellectual property rights, may adversely affect our business.

We regard our copyrights, service marks, trademarks, trade secrets and other intellectual property as critical to our success. Unauthorized use of our intellectual property by third parties may adversely affect our business and reputation. We rely on trademark and copyright law, trade secret protection and confidentiality agreements with our employees, customers, business partners and others to protect our intellectual property rights. Despite our precautions, it may be possible for third parties to obtain and use our intellectual property without authorization. Furthermore, the validity, enforceability and scope of protection of intellectual property in Internet-related industries is uncertain and still evolving. In particular, the laws of the PRC and certain other countries are uncertain or do not protect intellectual property rights to the same extent as do the laws of the United States. Moreover, litigation may be necessary in the future to enforce our intellectual property rights, to protect our trade secrets or to determine the validity and scope of the proprietary rights of others. Future litigation could result in substantial costs and diversion of resources.

We may be subject to intellectual property infringement claims, which may force us to incur substantial legal expenses and, if determined adversely against us, materially disrupt our business.

We cannot be certain that our products and services do not or will not infringe valid patents, copyrights or other intellectual property rights held by third parties. We have in the past been, are currently, and may in the

Table of Contents

future be, subject to claims and legal proceedings relating to the intellectual property of others in the ordinary course of our business. In particular, if we are found to have violated the intellectual property rights of others, we may be enjoined from using such intellectual property, may be ordered to pay a fine and we may incur licensing fees or be forced to develop alternatives. We may incur substantial expenses in defending against these third party infringement claims, regardless of their merit. Successful infringement claims against us may result in substantial monetary liability or may materially disrupt the conduct of our business by restricting or prohibiting our use of the intellectual property in question.

We may be subject to, and may expend significant resources in defending against, claims based on the content and services we provide over our portal.

As our services may be used to download and distribute information to others, there is a risk that claims may be made against us for defamation, negligence, copyright or trademark infringement or other claims based on the nature and content of such information. Furthermore, we could be subject to claims for the online activities of our visitors and incur significant costs in their defense. In the past, claims based on the nature and content of information that was posted online by visitors have been made in the United States against companies that provide online services. We do not carry any liability insurance against such risks.

We could be exposed to liability for the selection of listings that may be accessible through our portal or through content and materials that our visitors may post in classifieds, message boards, chat rooms or other interactive services. If any information provided through our services contains errors, third parties may make claims against us for losses incurred in reliance on the information. We also offer Web-based e-mail and subscription services, which expose us to potential liabilities or claims resulting from:

unsolicited e-mail;

lost or misdirected messages;

illegal or fraudulent use of e-mail; or

interruptions or delays in e-mail service.

Investigating and defending any such claims may be expensive, even if they do not result in liability.

Risks Related to Our Markets

We will rely on online advertising sales for a significant portion of our future revenues, but the online advertising market is new and rapidly evolving, particularly in China, and the Internet has not been proven as a widely accepted medium for advertising.

We expect to derive a significant portion of our revenue for the foreseeable future from online advertising. If the Internet is not accepted as a medium for advertising, our ability to generate revenues will be adversely affected.

The online advertising market is new and rapidly evolving, particularly in China. As a result, many of our current and potential advertising clients have limited experience using the Internet for advertising purposes and historically have not devoted a significant portion of their advertising budget to Internet-based advertising. Moreover, advertising clients that have invested substantial resources in other methods of conducting business may be reluctant to adopt a new strategy that may limit or compete with their existing efforts. In addition, companies may choose not to advertise on our portal if they do not perceive our online advertising platform to be effective or our audience demographics to be desirable. The failure to successfully address these risks or execute our business strategy would significantly reduce our profitability.

The acceptance of the Internet as a medium for advertising depends on the development of a measurement standard. No standards have been widely accepted for the measurement of the effectiveness of online advertising.

Table of Contents

Industry-wide standards may not develop sufficiently to support the Internet as an effective advertising medium. If these standards do not develop, advertisers may choose not to advertise on the Internet in general or through our portals or search engines.

Many of our current and potential e-subscription customers have only limited experience using the Internet for subscription purposes, and may not be willing to fully embrace the products and services we offer, which would adversely affect our future revenues and business expansion.

The e-subscription market is also new and rapidly evolving in China. Many of our current and potential e-subscription customers have limited experience using the Internet for subscription services. Our e-subscription revenue growth depends upon user acceptance of our existing and new services, especially services that are paid by way of monthly subscriptions. Because these services are new and untested, we do not have a clear understanding of consumer behavior, making it difficult to predict future growth or usage. Customers may not be willing to fully embrace the products and services we offer, which would adversely affect our future revenues and business expansion.

We face intense competition which could reduce our market share and adversely affect our financial performance.

The PRC Internet market is characterized by an increasing number of entrants because, among other reasons, the barriers to entry are relatively low. The market for Internet services and products, particularly Internet search and retrieval services, short messaging and e-commerce services and online advertising, is intensely competitive. In addition, the Internet industry is relatively new and constantly evolving and, as a result, our competitors may better position themselves to compete in this market as it matures.

There are many companies that provide or may provide Web sites and online destinations targeted at Internet users in China. Some of our major competitors in China are major United States Internet companies, such as Yahoo! Inc and Nasdaq listed companies Sina Corporation and Netease. In addition, we may face competition from existing or new domestic PRC Internet companies that are either affiliated with large corporations such as Legend Computer, America Online and Softbank Corporation, or controlled or sponsored by PRC government entities. These competitors may have certain advantages over us, including:

substantially greater financial and technical resources;

more extensive and well developed marketing and sales networks;

better access to original content;

greater global brand recognition among consumers; and

larger customer bases.

With these advantages, our competitors may be better able to:

develop, market and sell their products and services;

adapt more quickly to new and changing technologies; and

more easily obtain new customers.

We may not be able to compete successfully against our current or future competitors.

The telecommunications infrastructure in China, which is not as well developed as in the United States, may limit our growth.

The telecommunications infrastructure in China is not well developed. Our growth will depend on the PRC government and state-owned enterprises establishing and maintaining a reliable Internet and telecommunications

Table of Contents

infrastructure to reach a broader base of Internet users in China. The Internet infrastructure, standards, protocols and complementary products, services and facilities necessary to support the demands associated with continued growth may not be developed on a timely basis or at all by the PRC government and state-owned enterprises.

We depend on ChinaNet, China Netcom, China Telecom and the Beijing Telecom Administration for telecommunications services, and any interruption in these services may result in severe disruptions to our business.

Although private Internet service providers exist in China, almost all access to the Internet is maintained through ChinaNet, currently owned by China Netcom and China Telecom, under the administrative control and regulatory supervision of the MII. In addition, local networks connect to the Internet through a government-owned international gateway. This international gateway is the only channel through which a domestic Chinese user can connect to the international Internet network. We rely on this infrastructure and China Netcom and China Telecom to provide data communications capacity primarily through local telecommunications lines. Although the government has announced aggressive plans to develop the national information infrastructure, this infrastructure may not be developed and the Internet infrastructure in China may not be able to support the continued growth of Internet usage. In addition, we will have no access to alternative networks and services, on a timely basis if at all, in the event of any infrastructure disruption or failure.

We may not be able to lease additional bandwidth from the Beijing Telecom Administration on acceptable terms, on a timely basis or at all. In addition, we will have no means of getting access to alternative networks and services on a timely basis, if at all, in the event of any disruption or failure of the network.

The high cost of Internet access may limit the growth of the Internet in China and impede our growth.

Access to the Internet in China remains relatively expensive, and may make it less likely for users to access and transact business over the Internet. Unfavorable rate developments could further decrease our visitor traffic and our ability to derive revenues from transactions over the Internet.

The acceptance of the Internet as a commerce platform in China depends on the resolution of problems relating to fulfillment and electronic payment.

Our future growth of revenues depends in part on the anticipated expansion of e-commerce activities in China. As China currently does not have a reliable nationwide product distribution network, the fulfillment of goods purchased over the Internet will continue to be a factor constraining the growth of e-commerce. An additional barrier to the development of e-commerce in China is the lack of reliable payment systems. In particular, the use of credit cards or other viable means of electronic payment in sales transactions is not as well developed in China as in some other countries, such as the United States. Various government entities and businesses are working to resolve these fulfillment and payment problems, but these problems are expected to continue to hinder the acceptance and growth of the Internet as a commerce platform in China, which could in turn hinder our growth.

Risks Related to the Internet and Our Technology Infrastructure

To the extent we are unable to scale our systems to meet the increasing PRC Internet population, we will be unable to expand our user base and increase our attractiveness to advertisers and merchants.

As Web page volume and traffic increase in China, we may not be able to scale our systems proportionately. To the extent we do not successfully address our capacity constraints, our operations may be severely disrupted, and we may not be able to expand our user base and increase our attractiveness to advertisers and merchants.

Table of Contents

Unexpected network interruptions caused by system failures may result in reduced visitor traffic, reduced revenue and harm to our reputation.

Our portal operations are dependent upon Web browsers, Internet service providers, content providers and other Web site operators in China, which have experienced significant system failures and system outages in the past. Our users have in the past experienced difficulties due to system failures unrelated to our systems and services. Any system failure or inadequacy that causes interruptions in the availability of our services, or increases the response time of our services, as a result of increased traffic or otherwise, could reduce our user satisfaction, future traffic and our attractiveness to users and advertisers.

Our operations are vulnerable to natural disasters and other events, as we only have limited backup systems and do not maintain any backup servers outside of China.

We have limited backup systems and have experienced system failures and electrical outages from time to time in the past, which have disrupted our operations. All of our servers and routers are currently hosted in a single location within the premises of Beijing Telecom Administration. We do not maintain any back up servers outside Beijing. We do not have a disaster recovery plan in the event of damage from fire, floods, typhoons, earthquakes, power loss, telecommunications failures, break-ins and similar events. If any of the foregoing occurs, we may experience a complete system shutdown. We do not carry any business interruption insurance. To improve the performance and to prevent disruption of our services, we may have to make substantial investments to deploy additional servers or one or more copies of our Web sites to mirror our online resources. Although we carry property insurance with low coverage limits, our coverage may not be adequate to compensate us for all losses, particularly with respect to loss of business and reputation, that may occur.

Concerns about security of e-commerce transactions and confidentiality of information on the Internet may increase our costs, reduce the use of our portal and impede our growth.

A significant barrier to e-commerce and confidential communications over the Internet has been the need for security. Internet usage could decline if any well-publicized compromise of security occurred. We may incur significant costs to protect against the threat of security breaches or to alleviate problems caused by these breaches. If unauthorized persons are able to penetrate our network security, they could misappropriate proprietary information or cause interruptions in our services. As a result, we may be required to expend capital and resources to protect against or to alleviate these problems.

Our network operations may be vulnerable to hacking, viruses and other disruptions, which may make our products and services less attractive and reliable.

Internet usage could decline if any well-publicized compromise of security occurs. Hacking involves efforts to gain unauthorized access to information or systems or to cause intentional malfunctions or loss or corruption of data, software, hardware or other computer equipment. Hackers, if successful, could misappropriate proprietary information or cause disruptions in our service. We may be required to expend capital and other resources to protect our Web site against hackers. We cannot assure you that any measures we may take will be effective. In addition, the inadvertent transmission of computer viruses could expose us to a material risk of loss or litigation and possible liability, as well as materially damage our reputation and decrease our user traffic.

Political, Economic and Regulatory Risks

Regulation and censorship of information distribution in China may adversely affect our business.

China has enacted regulations governing Internet access and the distribution of news and other information. Furthermore, the Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party has been given the responsibility to censor news published in China to ensure, supervise and control a particular political ideology. In addition, the MII has published implementing regulations that subject online information providers to potential liability for

Table of Contents

content included on their portals and the actions of subscribers and others using their systems, including liability for violation of PRC laws prohibiting the distribution of content deemed to be socially destabilizing. Because many PRC laws, regulations and legal requirements with regard to the Internet are relatively new and untested, their interpretation and enforcement may involve significant uncertainty. In addition, the PRC legal system is a civil law system in which decided legal cases have limited binding force as legal precedents. As a result, in many cases it is difficult to determine the type of content that may result in liability for a Web site operator.

Periodically, the Ministry of Public Security has stopped the distribution over the Internet of information which it believes to be socially destabilizing. The Ministry of Public Security has the authority to cause any local Internet service provider to block any Web site maintained outside China at its sole discretion. If the PRC government were to take action to limit or eliminate the distribution of information through our portal or to limit or regulate current or future applications available to users of our portal, our business would be affected.

The State Secrecy Bureau, which is directly responsible for the protection of state secrets of all PRC government and Chinese Communist Party organizations, is authorized to block any Web site it deems to be leaking state secrets or failing to meet the relevant regulations relating to the protection of state secrets in the distribution of online information. Under the applicable regulations, we may be held liable for any content transmitted on our portal. Furthermore, where the transmitted content clearly violates the laws of the PRC, we will be required to delete it. Moreover, where the transmitted content is considered suspicious, we are required to report such content. We must also undergo computer security inspections, and if we fail to implement the relevant safeguards against security breaches, we may be shut down. In addition, under recently adopted regulations, Internet companies which provide bulletin board systems, chat rooms or similar services, such as our company, must apply for the approval of the State Secrecy Bureau. As the implementing rules of these new regulations have not been issued, however, we do not know how or when we will be expected to comply, or how our business will be affected by the application of these regulations.

Political and economic policies of the PRC government could affect our business.

All of our business, assets and operations are located in China and all of our revenues are derived from our operations in China. Accordingly, our business could be adversely affected by changes in political, economic or social conditions in China, adjustments in PRC government policies or changes in laws and regulations.

The economy of China differs from the economies of most countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in a number of respects, including:

structure;

level of government involvement;

level of development;

level of capital reinvestment;

growth rate;

control of foreign exchange; and

methods of allocating resources.

Since 1949, China has been primarily a planned economy subject to a system of macroeconomic management. Although the Chinese government still owns a significant portion of the productive assets in China, economic reform policies since the late 1970s have emphasized decentralization, autonomous enterprises and the utilization of market mechanisms. We cannot predict what effects the economic reform and macroeconomic measures adopted by the Chinese government may have on our business or results of operations.

Table of Contents

The PRC legal system embodies uncertainties which could limit the legal protections available to us and you.

The PRC legal system is a civil law system based on written statutes. Unlike common law systems, it is a system in which decided legal cases have little precedential value. In 1979, the PRC government began to promulgate a comprehensive system of laws and regulations governing economic matters in general. Our PRC operating subsidiary, Beijing ITC, is a wholly-foreign owned enterprise, or a WFOE, which is an enterprise incorporated in mainland China and wholly-owned by our indirect subsidiary, Sohu Hong Kong. Beijing ITC is subject to laws and regulations applicable to foreign investment in mainland China. However, these laws, regulations and legal requirements are relatively recent, and their interpretation and enforcement involve uncertainties. These uncertainties could limit the legal protections available to us and other foreign investors, including you. In addition, we cannot predict the effect of future developments in the PRC legal system, particularly with regard to the Internet, including the promulgation of new laws, changes to existing laws or the interpretation or enforcement thereof, or the preemption of local regulations by national laws.

Restrictions on currency exchange may limit our ability to utilize our revenues effectively.

Substantially all of our revenues and operating expenses are denominated in Renminbi. The Renminbi is currently freely convertible under the current account , which includes dividends, trade and service related foreign exchange transactions, but not under the capital account , which includes foreign direct investment.

Currently, Beijing ITC may purchase foreign exchange for settlement of current account transactions , including payment of dividends, without the approval of the State Administration for Foreign Exchange, or SAFE. Beijing ITC may also retain foreign exchange in its current account (subject to a ceiling approved by the SAFE) to satisfy foreign exchange liabilities or to pay dividends. However, the relevant PRC governmental authorities may limit or eliminate our ability to purchase and retain foreign currencies in the future.

Since a significant amount of our future revenues will be in the form of Renminbi, the existing and any future restrictions on currency exchange may limit our ability to utilize revenue generated in Renminbi to fund our business activities outside China, if any, or expenditures denominated in foreign currencies.

Foreign exchange transactions under the capital account are still subject to limitations and require approvals from the SAFE. This could affect Beijing ITC 's ability to obtain foreign exchange through debt or equity financing, including by means of loans or capital contributions from us.

We may suffer currency exchange losses if the Renminbi depreciates relative to the U.S. Dollar.

Our reporting currency is the U.S. Dollar. However, substantially all of revenues are denominated in Renminbi. Our revenues as expressed in our U.S. Dollar financial statements will decline in value if the Renminbi depreciates relative to the U.S. Dollar. Very limited hedging transactions are available in China to reduce our exposure to exchange rate fluctuations. To date, we have not entered into any hedging transactions in an effort to reduce our exposure to foreign currency exchange risk. While we may decide to enter into hedging transactions in the future, the availability and effectiveness of these hedges may be limited and we may not be able to successfully hedge our exposure, if at all. In addition, our currency exchange losses may be magnified by PRC exchange control regulations that restrict our ability to convert Renminbi into U.S. Dollars.

It may be difficult to enforce any civil judgments against us or our board of directors or officers, because most of our assets are located outside of the United States.

Although we are incorporated in the State of Delaware, a significant portion of our assets are located in the PRC. As a result, it may be difficult for investors to enforce outside the United States in any actions brought against us in the United States, including actions predicated upon the civil liability provisions of the federal securities laws of the United States or of the securities laws of any state of the United States. In addition, certain of our directors and officers (principally in the PRC) and all or a substantial portion of their assets may be located

Table of Contents

outside the United States. As a result, it may not be possible for investors to effect service of process within the United States upon those directors and officers, or to enforce against them or us judgments obtained in United States courts, including judgments predicated upon the civil liability provisions of the federal securities laws of the United States or of the securities laws of any state of the United States. We have been advised by our PRC counsel that, in their opinion, there is doubt as to the enforceability in the PRC, in original actions or in actions for enforcement of judgments of United States courts, of civil liabilities predicated solely upon the federal securities laws of the United States or the securities laws of any state of the United States.

Risks Related to the Notes and Our Common Stock

The market price of our common stock has been and will likely continue to be volatile. The price of our common stock, and therefore the price of the notes, may fluctuate significantly, which may make it difficult for holders to resell the notes or the shares of our common stock issuable upon conversion of the notes when desired or at attractive prices.

The market price of our common stock has been volatile and is likely to continue to be so. The initial public offering price of our common stock in July 2000 was \$13.00 per share. The trading price of our common stock subsequently dropped to a low of \$0.52 per share on April 9, 2001. During the last two quarters of 2002, the trading price of our common stock ranged from a low of \$1.20 per share to a high of \$6.94 per share, and during the first half of 2003 and the third quarter through September 26, 2003, the trading price of our common stock ranged from a low of \$6.10 per share to a high of \$43.40 per share. On September 26, 2003, the closing price of our common stock was \$31.60 per share.

In addition, the Nasdaq Stock Market's National Market has from time to time experienced significant price and volume fluctuations that have affected the market prices for the securities of technology companies, and particularly Internet-related companies. Because the notes are convertible into shares of our common stock, volatility or depressed prices for our common stock could have a similar effect on the trading price of the notes. Holders who receive common stock upon conversion also will be subject to the risk of volatility and depressed prices of our common stock. In addition, the existence of the notes may encourage short selling in our common stock by market participants because the conversion of the notes could depress the price of our common stock.

The price for our common stock may fluctuate in response to a number of events and factors, such as quarterly variations in operating results, announcements of technological innovations or new products and media properties by us or our competitors, changes in financial estimates and recommendations by securities analysts, the operating and stock price performance of other companies that investors may deem comparable to us, and news reports relating to trends in our markets or general economic conditions. Additionally, volatility or a lack of positive performance in our stock price may adversely affect our ability to retain key employees, all of whom have been granted stock options or other stock awards.

Sales of a significant number of shares of our common stock in the public market, or the perception of such sales, could reduce our share price and impair our ability to raise funds in new share offerings.

Sales of substantial amounts of shares of our common stock in the public market, or the perception that those sales may occur, could cause the market price of our common stock to decline. Because the notes are convertible into common stock only at a conversion price in excess of the recent trading price, such a decline in our common stock price may cause the value of the notes to decline.

The sale or availability for sale of substantial amounts of our common stock could adversely affect its market price.

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

There were approximately 35,915,845 shares of our common stock outstanding as of August 31, 2003, as well as options to purchase an additional 4,721,564 shares of our common stock. Of the outstanding shares, 25,424,216 were issued prior to the initial public offering of our common stock. These shares are either freely

Table of Contents

tradable without restriction under Rule 144(k) under the Securities Act or are tradable subject to the notice, volume and manner of sale restrictions of Rule 144 under the Securities Act.

Sohu issued 4,600,000 shares of common stock in connection with the initial public offering. All of these shares are freely tradable without restriction unless they are held by our affiliates as that term is defined in Rule 144 under the Securities Act.

On October 18, 2000, we issued an aggregate of 4,401,500 shares of our common stock to the former stockholders of ChinaRen in connection with our acquisition of that company. All of these shares are currently freely tradable without restriction.

We do not expect a public market for the notes to develop after completion of the offering.

Although the notes are currently traded on PORTAL, there can be no assurance as to: (1) the liquidity of any market for the notes, (2) the ability of the holders to sell their notes, or (3) the prices at which holders of the notes would be able to sell their notes. The notes could trade at prices higher or lower than their initial purchase prices depending on many factors. We do not intend to apply for listing of the notes on any securities exchange or for quotation on the Nasdaq National Market.

The notes are effectively subordinated to all liabilities of our subsidiaries and to our secured debt.

We are a holding company with no significant assets other than the stock of our subsidiaries and our holdings of cash, cash equivalents and marketable securities. None of our subsidiaries will guarantee our obligations under, or have any obligation to pay any amounts due on, the notes. As a result, the notes will be effectively subordinated to all liabilities of our subsidiaries. Our rights and the rights of our creditors, including holders of the notes, to participate in the assets of any of our subsidiaries upon their liquidation or recapitalization will generally be subject to the prior claims of those subsidiaries' creditors.

In addition, the notes are not secured by any of our assets or those of our subsidiaries. As a result, the notes will be effectively subordinated to any secured debt we may incur. In any liquidation, dissolution, bankruptcy or other similar proceeding, holders of our secured debt may assert rights against any assets securing such debt in order to receive full payment of their debt before those assets may be used to pay the holders of the notes.

The notes do not restrict our ability to incur additional debt or to take other actions that could negatively impact holders of the notes.

We are not restricted under the terms of the notes from incurring additional indebtedness, including secured debt. In addition, the limited covenants applicable to the notes do not require us to achieve or maintain any minimum financial results relating to our financial position or results of operations. Our ability to recapitalize, incur additional debt and take a number of other actions that are not limited by the terms of the notes could diminish our ability to make payments on the notes when due.

We may not have the ability to repurchase the notes in cash if a holder exercises its repurchase right on the dates specified herein or upon the occurrence of a change of control.

Holders of the notes have the right to require us to repurchase the notes upon the occurrence of a fundamental change, such as a change of control, prior to maturity, as described under the heading **Description of the Notes** **Repurchase at the Option of the Holder Upon Change in Control**. We may not have sufficient funds to make the required repurchase in cash at such time or the ability to arrange necessary financing on acceptable terms. In addition, our ability to repurchase the notes in cash may be limited by law or the terms of other agreements relating to our indebtedness outstanding at the time. We have the ability under the terms of the notes to pay the repurchase price in shares of our common stock, regardless of whether we have cash available, but this may be highly dilutive.

Table of Contents

We are controlled by a small group of our existing stockholders, whose interests may differ from other stockholders.

Our president and chief executive officer, Dr. Charles Zhang, beneficially owns approximately 24% of the outstanding shares of our common stock and is our largest stockholder. Our second largest stockholder, together with our chief executive officer, our other executive officers and members of our Board of Directors, beneficially own approximately 50% of the outstanding shares of our common stock. Accordingly these stockholders acting together will have significant influence in determining the outcome of any corporate transaction or other matter submitted to the stockholders for approval, including mergers, consolidations, the sale of all or substantially all of our assets, election of directors and other significant corporate actions. They will also have significant influence in preventing or causing a change in control. In addition, without the consent of these stockholders, we could be prevented from entering into transactions that could be beneficial to us. The interests of these stockholders may differ from the interests of the other stockholders.

Holders of a majority of the outstanding shares of our common stock are parties to an agreement under which they have agreed to vote together in favor of a nominee of one of our stockholders to our board of directors. As a result of their voting power, they will have the ability to cause that nominee to be elected.

Anti-takeover provisions of the Delaware General Corporation Law, our certificate of incorporation and Sohu's Stockholder Rights Plan could delay or deter a change in control.

Some provisions of our certificate of incorporation and bylaws, as well as various provisions of the Delaware General Corporation Law, may make it more difficult to acquire our company or effect a change in control of our company, even if an acquisition or change in control would be in the interest of our stockholders or if an acquisition or change in control would provide our stockholders with a premium for their shares over then current market prices. For example, our certificate of incorporation provides for the division of the board of directors into two classes with staggered two-year terms and provides that stockholders have no right to take action by written consent and may not call special meetings of stockholders, each of which may make it more difficult for a third party to gain control of our board in connection with, or obtain any necessary stockholder approval for, a proposed acquisition or change in control.

In addition, we have adopted a stockholder rights plan under the terms of which, in general, if a person or group acquires more than 20% of the outstanding shares of common stock, all other Sohu stockholders would have the right to purchase securities from Sohu at a substantial discount to those securities' fair market value, thus causing substantial dilution to the holdings of the person or group which acquires more than 20%. The stockholder rights plan may inhibit a change in control and, therefore, could adversely affect the stockholders' ability to realize a premium over the then-prevailing market price for the common stock in connection with such a transaction.

The power of our Board of Directors to designate and issue shares of preferred stock could have an adverse effect on holders of our common stock.

Our certificate of incorporation authorizes our board of directors to designate and issue one or more series of preferred stock, having rights and preferences as the board may determine, and any such designations and issuances could have an adverse effect on the rights of holders of common stock.

Table of Contents**FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS**

Some statements in this prospectus and in the documents incorporated by reference herein may be forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933 and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, including, without limitation, statements regarding our expectations, beliefs, intentions or future strategies that are signified by the words expect, anticipate, intend, believe, project, or similar language. All forward-looking statements included in this prospectus and any documents incorporated by reference are based on information available to us on the date hereof or as of the dates of the documents incorporated by reference, and we assume no obligation to update any such forward-looking statements. Our business and financial performance are subject to substantial risks and uncertainties. Actual results could differ materially from those projected in the forward-looking statements. In evaluating our business and the advisability of making an investment in the notes or the shares of common stock issuable upon conversion of the notes, prospective investors should carefully consider the information set forth above under the caption Risk Factors . We caution prospective investors in the notes and the shares of common stock issuable upon conversion of the notes not to place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements.

RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES

The following table sets forth our ratio of earnings to fixed charges for each of the periods indicated:

Six Months	Year Ended December 31,				
Ended	_____				
June 30,					
2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
79.72					
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

The ratio of earnings to fixed charges is computed by dividing (i) pre-tax income before minority interests or income or loss from equity investments, plus fixed charges by (ii) fixed charges. Fixed charges consist of interest charges, capitalized expenses related to indebtedness and that portion of rental expense that we believe to be representative of an appropriate interest factor. See Exhibit 12.1 for additional information regarding this calculation.

Earnings during each of the five years ended December 31, 2002 were inadequate to cover fixed charges. The coverage deficiency was approximately \$681,000, \$3,545,000, \$19,450,000, \$43,820,000 and \$1,296,000 for each of the five years ended December 31, 2002, respectively.

USE OF PROCEEDS

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

The proceeds from the sale of the notes and the common stock offered pursuant to this prospectus are solely for the account of the selling stockholders. Accordingly, we will not receive any proceeds from the sale of the Notes or the shares of common stock offered by this prospectus.

Table of Contents

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We will not receive any proceeds from the sale of the securities covered by this prospectus. The notes and shares of common stock issuable upon conversion of the notes are being offered on behalf of the selling security holders. The notes and shares of common stock issuable upon conversion of the notes may be sold or distributed from time to time by the selling security holders, or by pledgees, donees or transferees of, or other successors in interest to, the selling security holders, directly to one or more purchasers (including pledgees) or through brokers, dealers or underwriters who may act solely as agents or who may acquire the notes or shares of common stock as principals, at market prices prevailing at the time of sale, at varying prices determined at the time of sale, at negotiated prices, or at fixed prices, which may be changed. If the notes or shares of common stock are sold through brokers, dealers or underwriters the selling security holder will be responsible for underwriting discounts or commissions or agent's commissions. Unless otherwise permitted by law, if the notes or shares are to be sold by pledgees, donees or transferees of, or other successors in interest to, the selling security holders, then we must distribute a prospectus supplement and/or file an amendment to this registration statement under Rule 424(b)(3) or other applicable provision of the Securities Act amending the list of selling security holders to include the pledgees, donees, transferees or other successors in interest as selling security holders under this prospectus.

The sale of the notes or shares of common stock may be effected in one or more of the following methods (which may involve block transactions):

on any national securities exchange or quotation service on which the notes or shares of common stock may be listed or quoted at the time of sale;

in the over-the-counter market;

in transactions otherwise than on such exchanges or services in the over-the-counter market;

through the writing of options, whether the options are listed on an option exchange or otherwise; or

through the settlement of short sales.

In addition, any notes or shares of common stock that qualify for resale pursuant to Rule 144 or Rule 144A of the Securities Act may be sold under Rule 144 or Rule 144A of the Securities Act rather than pursuant to this prospectus.

These transactions may include crosses or block transactions. Crosses are transactions in which the same broker acts as agent on both sides of the trade.

In addition, the selling security holders or their successors in interest may enter into hedging transactions with broker-dealers who may engage in short sales of the notes or shares of common stock, short and deliver the notes or shares of common stock to close out such short positions, or loan or pledge the notes or shares of common stock to broker-dealers that in turn may sell such securities. The selling security holders or their successors in interest may also enter into option or other transactions with broker-dealers that require the delivery by such broker-dealers of the notes or shares of common stock which may be resold thereafter pursuant to this prospectus if the notes or shares of common stock are delivered by the selling security holders. However, if the notes or shares of common stock are to be delivered by the selling security holder's successors in interest, unless permitted by law, we must distribute a prospectus supplement and/or file an amendment to this registration statement under Rule

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

424(b)(3) or other applicable provision of the Securities Act amending the list of selling security holders to include the successors in interest as selling security holders under this prospectus. Each selling security holder may not satisfy its obligations in connection with short sales or hedging transactions entered into before the effective date of the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part by delivering securities registered under such registration statement.

Brokers, dealers, underwriters or agents participating in the distribution of the notes or shares of common stock as agents may receive compensation in the form of commissions, discounts or concessions from the selling

Table of Contents

security holders and/or purchasers of the notes or shares of common stock for whom such broker-dealers may act as agent, or to whom they may sell as principal, or both (which compensation as to a particular broker-dealer may be less than or in excess of customary commissions).

The selling security holders and any broker-dealers who act in connection with the sale of notes or shares of common stock hereunder may be deemed to be underwriters within the meaning of the Securities Act, and any commissions they receive and proceeds of any sale of notes or shares of common stock may be deemed to be underwriting discounts and commissions under the Securities Act. Neither we nor any selling security holder can presently estimate the amount of such compensation.

The anti-manipulation rules under the Exchange Act may apply to sales of notes or shares of common stock in the market and to the activities of the selling security holders and their affiliates.

The selling security holders may indemnify any broker-dealer that participates in transactions involving the sale of the notes or shares of common stock against certain liabilities, including liabilities arising under the Securities Act, as amended. Any commissions paid or any discounts or concessions allowed to any such broker-dealers, and any profits received on the resale of such notes or shares of common stock, may be deemed to be underwriting discounts and commissions under the Securities Act, if any such broker-dealers purchase notes or shares of common stock as principal.

The notes were issued and sold in July 2003 in transactions exempt from the registration requirements of the Securities Act pursuant to Rule 144A under the Securities Act or in offshore transactions pursuant to Regulation S under the Securities Act. Pursuant to the registration rights agreement, we have agreed to indemnify each selling security holder, its affiliates and its controlling persons, and each selling security holder has agreed to indemnify us, our directors, officers and controlling persons, and the other selling security holders, against specified liabilities arising under the Securities Act.

We will use our reasonable best efforts to keep the shelf registration statement effective for the period set forth below under Description of the Notes Registration Rights. No sales may be made pursuant to this prospectus after such period unless we amend or supplement this prospectus to indicate that we have agreed to extend such period of effectiveness.

We have agreed, among other things, to bear all fees and expenses, other than selling expenses, commissions and discounts, and expenses of counsel to the selling security holders, in connection with the registration and sale of the notes and the shares of common stock covered by this prospectus.

Table of Contents

DESCRIPTION OF THE NOTES

The notes were issued under an indenture between Sohu.com Inc., as issuer, and The Bank of New York, as trustee. The notes and the shares issuable upon conversion of the notes are covered by a registration rights agreement.

The following description of provisions of the notes is not complete and is subject to, and qualified in its entirety by reference to, the notes, the indenture and the registration rights agreement. Please see [Where You Can Find More Information](#) for information on how to obtain a copy of the indenture and the registration rights agreement.

General

The notes are our general unsecured and unsubordinated obligations and are convertible into our class common stock as described under [Conversion Rights](#) below. The notes are limited to \$90,000,000 aggregate principal amount and will mature on July 14, 2023, unless earlier repurchased by us at the option of the holder on July 14th in 2007, 2013 and 2018 or upon the occurrence of a Change of Control (as defined below). We may redeem all or a portion of the notes for cash at any time on or after July 14, 2008, at 100% of the principal amount of the notes if (i) the closing price of our common stock as reported on the Nasdaq National Market for each of the 30 consecutive trading days prior to such time was at least 130% of the conversion price or (ii) at such time at least 90% of the initial aggregate principal amount of the notes have been converted, repurchased or redeemed. See [Redemption at the Option of the Company](#).

We will not pay interest on the notes unless specified defaults under the registration rights agreement occur.

Principal will be payable, and the notes may be presented for conversion, registration of transfer and exchange, without service charge, at our office or agency in New York City, which shall initially be the office or agency of the trustee in New York, New York. See [Form, Denomination and Registration](#) below.

The indenture does not contain any financial covenants or any restrictions on the payment of dividends, the repurchase of our securities or the incurrence of indebtedness. The indenture also does not contain any covenants or other provisions that afford protection to holders of notes in the event of a highly leveraged transaction or a Change of Control of Sohu except to the extent described under [Repurchase at the Option of the Holders Upon Change of Control](#) below.

Conversion Rights

The holders of notes may, at any time prior to the earlier of the redemption or repurchase of the notes and close of business on the final maturity date of the notes, convert any outstanding notes (or portions thereof) into our common stock, initially at a conversion price of \$44.76 per share of common stock, which is equal to a conversion rate of 22.3414 shares of common stock per \$1,000 principal amount of notes. The conversion rate is subject to adjustment upon the occurrence of certain events described below. Holders may convert notes only in denominations of \$1,000 and whole multiples of \$1,000. We are not required to issue fractional shares of common stock upon conversion of notes and instead will pay a

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

cash adjustment based upon the market price of the common stock on the last trading day before the date of the conversion.

A holder may exercise the right of conversion by delivering the note to be converted to the specified office of a conversion agent, with a completed notice of conversion, together with any funds that may be required as described in the preceding paragraph. The conversion date will be the date on which the notes, the notice of conversion and any required funds have been so delivered. A holder delivering a note for conversion will not be required to pay any taxes or duties relating to the issuance or delivery of the common stock for such conversion, but will be required to pay any tax or duty which may be payable relating to any transfer involved in the issuance

Table of Contents

or delivery of the common stock in a name other than the holder of the note. Certificates representing shares of common stock will be issued or delivered only after all applicable taxes and duties, if any, payable by the holder have been paid. If any note is converted prior to the expiration of the holding period applicable for sales thereof under Rule 144(k) under the Securities Act (or any successive provision), the common stock issuable upon conversion will not be issued or delivered in a name other than that of the holder of the note unless the applicable restrictions on transfer have been satisfied.

The initial conversion rate will be adjusted for certain events, including:

the issuance of our common stock as a dividend or distribution on our common stock;

certain subdivisions and combinations of our common stock;

the issuance to all holders of our common stock of certain rights or warrants to purchase our common stock (or securities convertible into our common stock) which rights or warrants are exercisable for not more than 60 days, at less than (or having a conversion price per share less than) the current market price of our common stock on the business day immediately preceding the time of announcement of such issuance;

the dividend or other distribution to all holders of our common stock or shares of our capital stock (other than common stock) of evidences of indebtedness or assets (including securities, but excluding (A) those rights and warrants referred to above, (B) the issuance of our common stock as a dividend or distribution on our common stock referred to above, or (C) dividends or distributions paid exclusively in cash);

dividends or other distributions consisting exclusively of cash to all holders of our common stock; and

the purchase of our common stock pursuant to a tender offer made by us or any of our subsidiaries to the extent that such purchase involves an aggregate consideration that, together with any cash and the fair market value of any other consideration paid in any other tender offer by us or any of our subsidiaries for our common stock expiring within 12 months preceding such tender offer for which no adjustment has been made, exceeds 10 percent of our market capitalization on the expiration of such tender offer.

No adjustment in the conversion rate will be required unless such adjustment would require a change of at least 1% in the conversion rate then in effect at such time. Any adjustment that would otherwise be required to be made shall be carried forward and taken into account in any subsequent adjustment. Except as stated above, the conversion rate will not be adjusted for the issuance of our common stock or any securities convertible into or exchangeable for our common stock or carrying the right to purchase any of the foregoing.

To the extent that we have a rights plan in effect upon conversion of the notes into common stock, note holders will receive, in addition to the common stock, the rights under the rights plan whether or not the rights have separated from the common stock at the time of conversion, subject to limited exceptions and no adjustments to the conversion price will be made, except in limited circumstances.

In the case of:

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

any reclassification or change of our common stock;

a consolidation, merger or combination involving us; or

a sale or conveyance to another corporation of all or substantially all of our property and assets,

in each case as a result of which holders of our common stock are entitled to receive stock, other securities, other property or assets (including cash or any combination thereof) with respect to or in exchange for our common stock, the holders of the notes then outstanding will be entitled thereafter to convert those notes into the kind and amount of shares of stock, other securities or other property or assets (including cash or any combination thereof) which they would have owned or been entitled to receive upon such reclassification, change, consolidation,

Table of Contents

merger, combination, sale or conveyance had such notes been converted into our common stock immediately prior to such reclassification, change, consolidation, merger, combination, sale or conveyance.

If a taxable distribution to holders of our common stock or other transaction occurs which results in any adjustment of the conversion price, the holders of notes may, in certain circumstances, be deemed to have received a distribution subject to U.S. Federal income tax as a dividend. In certain other circumstances, the absence of an adjustment may result in a taxable dividend to the holders of common stock. See Certain United States Federal Income Tax Considerations.

We may from time to time, to the extent permitted by law, reduce the conversion price of the notes by any amount for any period of at least 20 days if our board of directors has made a determination that this decrease would be in our best interests. Any such determination by our board will be conclusive. In that case we will give at least 15 days notice of such decrease. We may make such reductions in the conversion price, in addition to those set forth above, as the board of directors deems advisable to avoid or diminish any income tax to holders of our common stock resulting from any dividend or distributions of stock (or rights to acquire stock) or from any event treated as such for income tax purposes.

Ranking

The notes are senior unsecured general obligations of Sohu and will rank equally in right of payment with all of our other existing and future senior unsecured and unsubordinated indebtedness. The notes will rank senior to any of our subordinated indebtedness.

Because the creditors of our subsidiaries generally would have a right to receive payment superior to our right to receive payment from the assets of our subsidiaries, the holders of our notes will effectively be subordinated to the creditors of our subsidiaries. If we were to liquidate or reorganize, the right of note holders to participate in any distribution of our subsidiaries' assets is necessarily subject to the claims of the subsidiaries' creditors. As of June 30, 2003, our subsidiaries had no outstanding indebtedness, other than intercompany indebtedness and trade debt.

Repurchase at the Option of the Holder Upon Change of Control

If a Change of Control occurs, each holder of notes will have the right to require us to repurchase all of that holder's notes, or any portion of those notes that is equal to \$1,000 or a whole multiple of \$1,000, on the date that is 30 days after the date we give notice at a repurchase price equal to 100% of the principal amount of the notes to be repurchased, together with interest accrued and unpaid to, but excluding, the repurchase date.

Instead of paying the repurchase price in cash, we may pay the repurchase price in our common stock if we so elect in the notice referred to below. The number of shares of common stock that a holder will receive will equal the repurchase price divided by 95% of the average of the closing sale prices of the applicable common stock for the five consecutive trading days immediately preceding and including the third trading day prior to the repurchase date. However, we may not pay in common stock unless we satisfy certain conditions prior to the repurchase date as provided in the indenture.

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

Within 30 days after the occurrence of a Change of Control, we are required to give notice to all holders of notes, as provided in the indenture, of the occurrence of the Change of Control and of their resulting repurchase right. We must also deliver a copy of our notice to the trustee. To exercise the repurchase right, a holder of notes must deliver prior to or on the repurchase date irrevocable written notice to the trustee of the holder's exercise of its repurchase right, together with the note with respect to which the right is being exercised. A "Change of Control" will be deemed to have occurred at such time after the original issuance of the notes when the following has occurred:

Table of Contents

any person or group (as such terms are used in Sections 13(d) and 14(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended), acquires the beneficial ownership (as defined in Rules 13d-3 and 13d-5 under the Exchange Act, except that a person shall be deemed to have beneficial ownership of all securities that such person has the right to acquire, whether such right is exercisable immediately or only after the passage of time), directly or indirectly, through a purchase, merger or other acquisition transaction, of 50% or more of the total voting power of the total outstanding voting stock of:

- (i) Sohu;
- (ii) Beijing Sohu; or
- (iii) any subsidiary of Sohu (each, a significant subsidiary) which meets any of the following three conditions:
 - (a) Sohu s and its other subsidiaries investments in and advances to such subsidiary exceed 50% of the total assets of Sohu and its other subsidiaries consolidated as of the end of the most recently completed fiscal year; or
 - (b) Sohu s and its other subsidiaries proportionate share of the total assets (after intercompany eliminations) of such subsidiary exceeds 50% of the total assets of Sohu and Sohu s other subsidiaries consolidated as of the end of the most recently completed fiscal year; or
 - (c) Sohu s and its other subsidiaries equity in the income from continuing operations before income taxes, extraordinary items and cumulative effects of a change in accounting principle of such subsidiary exceeds 50% of such income of Sohu and Sohu s other subsidiaries consolidated for the most recently completed fiscal year;

other than an acquisition by Sohu, any of our subsidiaries or any of our employee benefit plans;

Sohu, Beijing Sohu or any significant subsidiary, as applicable, consolidates with or merges with or into another person or conveys, transfers, leases or otherwise disposes of all or substantially all of its assets to any person, or any person consolidates with or merges with or into Sohu, Beijing Sohu or any significant subsidiary, as applicable, other than:

Any transaction (A) that does not result in any reclassification, conversion, exchange or cancellation of outstanding shares of the capital stock of Sohu, Beijing Sohu or any significant subsidiary, as applicable, and (B) pursuant to which holders of such capital stock immediately prior to the transaction have the entitlement to exercise, directly or indirectly, 50% or more of the total voting power of all shares of such capital stock entitled to vote generally in the election of directors of the continuing or surviving person immediately after the transaction; and

any merger solely for the purpose of changing the jurisdiction of incorporation and resulting in a reclassification, conversion or exchange of outstanding shares of common stock solely into shares of common stock of the surviving entity;

during any consecutive two-year period, individuals who at the beginning of that two-year period constituted the board of directors of Sohu, Beijing Sohu or any significant subsidiary, as applicable, (together with any new directors whose election to such board of directors, or whose nomination for election by stockholders, was approved by a vote of a majority of the directors then still in office who were either directors at the beginning of such period or whose election or nomination for election was previously so approved) cease for any reason to constitute a majority of such board of directors then in office; or

Edgar Filing: SOHU COM INC - Form S-3

the stockholders of Sohu, Beijing Sohu or any significant subsidiary, as applicable, pass a special resolution approving a plan of liquidation or dissolution and no additional approvals of stockholders are required under applicable law to cause a liquidation or dissolution.

The definition of Change of Control includes a phrase relating to the lease,