

Building a Baduk City

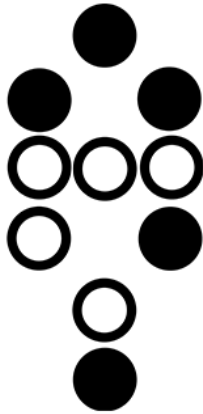
Key Elements, Effective Strategies and Why it's Worth Pursuing.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Methodology and Adaptation in America
3. Essential Elements
4. Baduk City Benefits
5. Baduk City Strategies
6. Baduk City Advisory Board
7. Engaging the Broader Community
8. Baduk Spaces and Places
9. Membership Development
10. The Art of the Baduk Club: Pairing Go with Art.
11. Baduk Tourism
12. Philosophy
13. Recommendations



OVERVIEW

What follows is a report written principally for Baduk community experts, political leaders and government officials **in America**. While it is envisioned as a source of inspiration and information for almost anyone interested in building a stronger, more vibrant Baduk community, this document will be of most practical use to: (i) professionals in the Baduk industry including Go equipment manufacturers & retailers, venue owners, Go club promoters, Go tournament organizers, Artists and Baduk associations; (ii) politicians at the local level, but also at the regional and national levels; (iii) government officials involved in economic and/or cultural development at the local level, but also at the regional and national levels; and (iv) tourism and business leaders looking for ways to enhance local economies. How each city defines success will vary. Some cities have set very ambitious goals for the delivery of economic, cultural and other benefits. For others, it comes down to creating a sustainable environment for artistic expression.

1. INTRODUCTION

Following the 2016 AlphaGo vs. Lee Sedol match, the earth turned its head to the world of Go for the first time. The board games market is expected to grow at a CAGR of over 10% during the period 2020-2024.

[According to Berkshire Hathaway](#): “Board games are considered as one of the best ways to leave aside electronic gadgets and devices, which are otherwise keeping modern-day families busy, and get them together over an interesting game. Despite rapid technological advancements, several families consider connecting and bonding over a board game. Hence, more people prefer to shun digital activities and opt for a better and meaningful experience. Therefore, the need to engage with family and near and dear ones is expected to drive the demand for board games.

The rising popularity of board game conventions is boosting the board games market. Board game conventions are the new area for vendors catering to the global board games market. There are several board game conventions organized across the world with a wide range of participation (from both active players and game publishers).

Another factor driving the global board games market is the rise in the number of board game cafes across the world. With a rise in the board game cafe culture, people are witnessing many game shops and cafes offering snacks and drinks in various gaming events. With the advent of such cafes, people tend to find their board game solace quite comprehensively. The market has been witnessing a spurt in demand for several tabletop board games. While pre-school kids are more interested in chance-based tabletop games, strategy-based tabletop games are seeing higher demand among grade-schoolers, teenagers, and adults. The need to increase problem-solving attitude and critical thinking ability among gamers is the major driver for the development of strategic tabletop board games. The collectible card games are growing at a steady rate in the market despite their decreasing popularity.

The educational board games segment is expected to witness an incremental growth of over \$4 billion by 2024. Further, vendors are increasingly focusing on developing board games that have the learning quotient. The high popularity of strategy and war games is a major factor for the high share in the global market. The relevance of indulging is extremely high in strategy & war games, and in countries such as South Korea, Germany, Japan, and China, they are highly appreciated.”

Market Growth Enablers

- Urge to Connect over Analog Experience
- Surge in Number of Board Game Cafes
- Crowdfunding Boosters Paving Growth Paths
- Incorporation of Learning Quotient

Market Growth Restraints

- Fear of Tariffs & Trade Slumps
- Advent of Alternative Options
- Profusion in Supply Causing Inequity

Market Opportunities & Trends

- Leveraging Global Retail Trends
- Adapting a Digital-first Approach
- Strategic Product Introductions
- Capitalizing on Board Game Conventions



Nate Dorough

February 1 at 7:45 PM · 



What does one do for fun when not working or spending hours just staring at social media? I've forgotten what I like, again.



5

17 Comments



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2. METHODOLOGY AND ADAPTATION IN AMERICA

Digital Presence

As the use of board games continues to grow, Go has a unique proposition in the marketplace.

Not only has Go been playtested by tens of millions of consumers over the last 2400+ years, It also offers an immersive and inclusive community in-person and online. After the initial introduction, players that become interested in further studying the game of Go are welcomed by a buffet of options for gathering information and strategy to further their knowledge of the game.

***The Go world is 20 years behind in digital adaptation. Most websites do not support mobile and Go equipment manufacturing companies have outdated payment and shipping options. This leaves a huge gap in the North American and European markets that could be filled by national and local manufacturing companies willing to adapt non-traditional methods of producing and distributing Baduk equipment using digital retail outlets.*

Unlike collectible board games, Go has seen a radical digital adaptation and implementation with Go servers hosting games with players from across the world. Even just 20 years ago, finding Go related literature, pro game records, or even a game of Go hosted online was very difficult. Before the internet it was next to impossible to be exposed to the game in America or Europe.

Now, Baduk players are free to connect with the broader global community 24/7 online. The introduction of mobile gaming makes it possible for two players on opposite sides of the world to connect for a quick game on-demand. This allows any player access to the highest level of Go with the swipe of a finger.

Cultural Adaptation

Today America is a cultural crucible, being among the leaders in contributing to the global cultural economy. "Internet culture" is now forming an international society of individuals who feel more in tune and aware of global economic development than ever before. People born after 1995 have grown up with the largest database of human knowledge ever compiled, allowing american consumers to cherry pick cultural items and expose these items to the open marketplace. Because North America does not have the same depth of culture that other nations have, Americans are free to choose what worldview appeals to them and immediately adopt it with little scrutiny from the surrounding community.

Digital Adaptation

The game of Go only evolves with its best active players. The 20th Century brought a resurgence of truly great Go players alongside industrialization and globalization that spilled into computer AI having enough data and game records to successfully rival the worlds best players. This also brought about new and interesting ways to approach Baduk with AlphaGo's infamous "slack moves", reminding us that you only need one more point than your opponent to win.

With the adaptation of computer Go into mobile devices, it's easier than ever to play Go with experienced players from all around the world on-demand. This is the equivalent of attending club meetings and tournaments every day. With that comes international exposure to relevant playing styles and up-to-date game records and theory. This exposure breeds cross-pollination of eastern and western views of the game and allows every player an equal chance to gain the essential wisdom of Go to strengthen their game as quickly as their effort and studying allows.

3. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

There is no strict definition of a Baduk city. Nevertheless, The essential elements of a Baduk city are:

- Baduk Players
- Go Organizers and Club Presidents
- Access to Spaces and Places
- A Receptive and Engaged Audience
- Baduk Product Manufacturers (Equipment and Merchandise)
- Board Game Retailers

It is also important to have multi-level government support for Go, a broader city infrastructure conducive to the sector, and Baduk education programs. Because of Go's high barrier of entry due to the steep learning curve, it's very important to note that the Baduk City needs a culture focused on studying Go for the sake of positive mental and emotional benefits. If the community gets too competitive, it allianates potential new players and stagnates membership growth.

4. BADUK CITY BENEFITS

Economic Impact

Go can be a significant driver of economic activity, employment, exports and tax revenue. These impacts derive mainly from direct spending on live events purchased by local residents and tourists. Such events can also maximize returns with sponsorships and strategic business partnerships. There is also related spending on food, drink, accommodations, hospitality and

transportation. Beyond these, Baduk generates indirect spending through graphic design, live music and fine art promotion.

Baduk Tourism

For cities looking to generate economic benefits from Go, tourist spending is a big part. It represents “new money” for a city and generates additional spending on hotels, restaurant meals, bars and other local attractions.

Cultural Development and Artistic Growth

A successful Baduk city creates the environment to support players in their professional development. Access to supporting professionals and the training to improve their game and knowledge of the world of Go enables more players to take the leap from hobby to career.

More tournament opportunities; in high quality venues of the appropriate size for the stage of development and in front of an engaged audience helps hone players skills.

Attracting and Retaining Talent

“It is commonly understood that the life that the arts brings to a city causes people to move there and attracts industry. There is an enormous movement by local and state governments in Australia to enhance the vibrancy of their cities in order to hang onto youth, and attract entrepreneurs and businesses.”

- Damian Cunningham, Director of Audience and Sector Development in Australia.

A successful Baduk city fuels other creative industries. Not only does the game itself bring creative development, but skills learned in promoting Go (digital advertising, video production, graphic design and community development) can be applied to other sectors.

Strengthening Mental Health

Adopting a strong Baduk community within a city brings unprecedented mental and emotional health benefits to the players who participate. Go has been shown to radically improve focus, strengthen fluid IQ and demonstrates the capability to decrease symptoms caused by anxiety and depression. Active Baduk community members also report staggering increases in emotional development and broader mental awareness with consistent study of the game.

[**It's important to note that 1 in 8 ER visits are attributed to mental health or substance abuse emergencies in America.](#)

5. EFFECTIVE BADUK CITY STRATEGIES

The following linear strategies are an effective way to build a Baduk city: Developing a supportive policy framework; establishing a city-run Baduk office or hiring a Baduk officer, developing a Baduk Advisory Board, engaging the broader Baduk community, ensuring access to spaces and places, focusing on audience development and creating a Baduk tourism plan.

Research informs Baduk city strategy development. In general, Baduk city initiatives should undertake research in the following areas: Economic impact studies; Baduk tourism impact studies, business inventories, needs assessments and resource guides.

6. BADUK CITY ADVISORY BOARD

The key functions of a Baduk Advisory Board is to navigate city hall and lead commissions derived from a cities Baduk strategy. The board should internally advocate and educate about the game of Go. It should also offer consistent education/networking programs and events.

Municipal financial support and Arts Council financial support is important to maintain upfront investment in Go tournaments and Art festivals that offer Baduk education and exposure. This also promotes collaboration and awareness with a cities broader artistic sector.

The Baduk Advisory Board should be an all-encompassing, stand alone agency strictly focused on providing opportunities for community education and membership funneling to upcoming club meetings and tournament play.

7. ENGAGING THE BROADER COMMUNITY

A Baduk city can only be successful with the engagement of people impacted the most. Since Go is considered a fine art, Artists, Entrepreneurs, Designers, Musicians, Engineers and other creative positions tend to be the group with the greatest interest in learning Baduk.

A sub audience is Gamers and Competitors. This audience is more interested in building skill and improving rank. Although this group is much smaller, they will be more focused on competition and tournament play. They might attend club meetings irregularly, but that should not be taken as a sign they are not committed to studying the game. These players could be your greatest advocates for club attendance, since they're out in the world promoting Baduk more than the average club attendee.

8. BADUK SPACES AND PLACES

Having consistent baduk events is key for membership growth and with that requires consistent participation from venues, coffeeshops, bars, parks, religious institutions and schools. This relationship between Go organizers and venue owners should be dynamic and flexible. Quantity and variety of spaces are important for new lead generation and maintaining constant membership growth.

The following are essential spaces for a successful Baduk city:

Established meetup locations

One weekly meetup location for every 100,000 local residents. This location should offer available space for 20 players.

Example: Detroit has 673,000+ residents so it requires 7 different weekly meetup locations to establish a foundation of 0.01%.

Flexible pop-up locations

Hosting Bi-weekly community exposure events raises awareness and brings new leads into your teaching funnel - dynamic pop-up locations in already established community events also demonstrates the level of activity within the local Go community to non-Baduk community members.

Schools

Establishing JV/V clubs in schools could be the greatest catalyst for membership retention. Not only does it expose students to Go theory, it also positions students to pursue an “ownership” role in their local Go community. As players graduate they can become more involved in the adult Baduk community. Students that fall in love with the game and commit themselves to a lifelong journey of studying Go are more willing to take on responsibilities to help facilitate local club membership growth.

Cultural Locations

Integrating Go into the greater artistic and creative communities is critical for awareness and exposing the game of Go to the right audience. Pairing Go exposure events and “micro-tournaments” with already established music and art festivals can radically increase new leads funneled into weekly club meetups.

A huge segmented audience is churches and other religious organizations. They already have established communities with solutions to advertise to their members. They also can provide space for their members to gather and study Baduk.

Established tournament locations

Serious club members need a space to express their strength as a player. Tournaments establish membership rank; expose individual clubs to the greater local Baduk community and encourage Baduk tourism. Having consistent “pro-am” tournaments gives players a goal to work towards.

Furthermore, separating “club play” and “tournament play” keeps weekly Go club meetups lighthearted. Only 25% of club members will want to segment into serious tournament play. With that in mind, it’s important to keep club culture light and encouraging.

9. MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

First Contact

For a Baduk city to succeed, It needs to expose the game to new players. Understanding who is most likely to pick up the game, and where they like to visit is very important for budgeting marketing money and time to best generate club membership. First contact with a potential new player does not guarantee a conversion. You need multiple touching points with a single lead in order to increase the chance of conversion.

Consistently flooding the market with new content and events starts to generate the attention necessary to convert at a 3%-5% rate. Some tactics that can be used include:

- Content marketing and digital advertising
- Teaching and exposure events
- Energising members to invite with printed media
- Partner with art & music festivals for positive brand association

Membership Retention

Having experienced players willing to teach new players and having larger community engagement events that members can volunteer and participate in are two sides to the membership retention coin. The environment at club meetings needs to be study group focused. This keeps new players engaged during the incubation period as well as holds the interest of experienced players that feel valued for the information they are able to share.

Most players cap out at around 5kyu so the goal of every club president should be to retain new members until they reach “club standard” playing ability. With computer Go, it’s easier than ever for club presidents to keep up with current and relevant information.

Segmenting Competitive Play

Not all players are looking to enter tournament Go. Actually. Most players are not looking to compete at all. As many Baduk players will report, the positive mental health benefits from constantly playing the game far outweigh the motivation reaped from winning a serious competitive game. With this in mind, it’s important to keep club play lighthearted and full of “kibitzing”.

For the small segment of club members that thrive in a high level competitive environment, they need a goal to work towards. Providing bi-monthly in house tournaments and an annual cultural tourist tournament can retain rank focused club members and reward their efforts with a big win. The prize for coming in top three should be monetarily valuable as well as expands the players future Baduk opportunities. This also brings the greater Baduk community together and exposes club members to a larger network of players and retailers.

Segmenting Study Groups

No member can improve at a satisfying rate without adopting study habits outside of club attendance. It is the current club members duty to show new players good study habits as well as expose them to effective online resources. Not every player will be interested in deeper daily studying, but some will. Segmenting these players into online Go servers and connecting them with the broader international Baduk community can drastically increase club retention rate.

Group Outreach

It’s important for club members to stay active in the community. Having public “pop-up” meetups with small group study can generate consistent attention and intrigue from the community. This inserts Baduk into the daily lives of local community members. Word travels fast when the group looks like they’re having fun and interested passers-by can be funneled into weekly club attendance.

These small meetups outside club attendance can be powerful for keeping community attention on the game of Go and constantly reminding the local community that the Baduk community is active in the area.

Greater Community Integration

The most crucial part to membership development is integrating the Baduk community with the cities artistic and creative communities. It's crucial for club presidents and Go Organizers to insert Go into already established and active art related community wide events.

10. THE ART OF THE BADUK CLUB: PAIRING GO WITH ART

Music Festivals

Every city wide music festival should be paired with an in-house Go tournament. It should also include a teaching station among the other merch tables with active games happening for the duration of the festival. Tournament participants should gain access to the extent of the festival with the purchase of their tournament ticket.

Student & University Outreach

High schools and universities frequently host student networking events that highlight specific aspects of the schools social product offering, especially in Q3 when new students are just arriving and settling in for the school year.

Schools also offer access to spaces and marketing solutions if you work to create an in-house Go club. It's very easy to convince a school board and sponsor to take a risk on promoting a Go club if they understand the education and developmental benefits of a school Go club.

11. BADUK TOURISM

Cultural tourists have been found to stay longer and spend more than other tourists, making them a lucrative target group. Consistently promoting an annual "all members invitational" can lead to an extensive increase in participation with the broader Go community that exists outside the Baduk city.

12. PHILOSOPHY

Baduk is a community building game that requires in-person participation from its members. Although it's necessary to keep a consistent digital presence to remain active in the digital age, in-person exposure events and integrating the active Baduk community into the broader local community is crucial to gain attention and support from people who will never play Baduk.

Non-Baduk community members still need to understand the radical benefits Go club members receive from pursuing the game. These individuals are not interested in the rich history and the fascinating cultural adaptation of the game. If Go club presidents focus their marketing efforts on the complexities and traditions of the game... they will fail.

Rather, the message of Go to a non-Baduk member should focus exclusively on the positive mental and emotional benefits the study of the game provides. This includes:

- Improved focus
- Decreased anxiety
- Decreased symptoms of depression
- Decreased physical symptoms from mental health problems
- Maintaining connection with other community members
- Sense of belonging
- Sense of greater purpose
- Sense of motivation to move forward

It is also recommended to promote the game of Go as an active international community, not exclusively confined to Asia. Although the game originated and is most popular in Asia; it's predicted that the game of Go will rise far above the culture and nation that it came from. With that brings new perspectives and values that each nation will attribute differently. Baduk is a game for every human, from every nation to learn from. Allowing freedom for each nation to adopt the game of Go differently is crucial for international expansion and (eventually) international integration.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

Every Baduk city should focus on building club membership growth with consistent exposure and outreach events. Including but not limited to:

- One weekly club meetup (20 members) for every 100,000 local residents
- Bi-monthly in-house ranked tournament
- Bi-weekly exposure events
- Baduk teaching kiosk at every local community building event
- Baduk tournament and teaching kiosk at every city music/art festival
- Digital presence and list building solutions to stay in contact with active club members

There is no linear path forward to creating a Baduk city. Each city requires different amounts of attention and investment. The largest factor in determining the success of a Baduk city is the leadership team and Baduk Advisory Board members. These individuals will be the catalysts for the growth of Go within their community. Without a strong lead team and their willingness to execute consistent Baduk events; there is no hope for a well-established, city wide Go program.