

Challenges and Opportunities for Chinese Scholars In the Field of Electronic Commerce

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One of the most significant progresses in the electronic age is the development of E-commerce. In a short period of time e-Bay and Amazon.com have become the household words. One may recall the olden days when almost every household had a major retail company's catalog such as Sears, J.C. Penny or Montgomery Ward. These catalogs were thick and heavy, worse than most telephone books. People had a hard time to shelf such a giant volume at home. Many used them to check price before shopping, but very often the listed price may not be current and therefore not honored. Sometimes those items in the catalog may not even be available. Such shortfalls are now overcome by the E-commerce. The gradual disappearance of those catalogs signifies the new trend of trading in the North America.

The uprising of China's economy in the recent years has provided a virgin ground for the expansion of the electronic commerce. In the early 2000, the Ministry of Information Industry established a nationwide non-profit organization, China Electronic Commerce Association (CECA). The primary objective of CECA is to promote the development of E-commerce throughout China by offering services to the government agencies and the related industries. Through various activities such as the international symposiums, China will be benefited from closer international cooperation. Since its inception, the Association has been responsible for establishing many legislative policies for the expansion of E-commerce. The origin of E-commerce can be traced to the North America region, where a sub-chapter of China Electronic Commerce Association was established in California in February, 2005. The goal of this chapter is to provide opportunities for research, technology, exchange, networking, education and partnership to the members in both China and North America. Essentially it serves as a bridge between the two regions.

At present the E-commerce industry in China is still at an early stage. Some controlling factors include the availability of computers and net surfing to the residents, especially in the rural districts. Another factor in consideration is the general education level when a large population receives only nine years of schooling. To many people, surfing on the net is only available through some special centers but not at home. The expenses may not be easily within their reach. Electronic payment by credit cards is another hurdle when the use of credit card is limited. However, judging from the development and the use of cellular phones in China, the changes in China are very fast and impressive. Within a very short

period of time China has become the number one country of cellular phone users. The vast coverage of cellular phones is also very impressive. From high mountains to the desert and to the sea, most areas are within the reach. It will be a great help when most people may perform web-surfing through their cellular phones. Catching up to the modern technology in China is often underestimated. Even if E-commerce is only limited to the cities such as Beijing or Shanghai, the size of population is more than many countries in the Western world. The market and the potential of E-commerce in China have already attracted the attention of many foreign companies, including those from Korea and Japan.

What are the opportunities for the Chinese Scholars in North America? Chinese Scholars in North America have the distinct advantages of bilingual capability and are familiar with the operation of market in both countries. They represent an elite class of professionals with higher education and training both at home and abroad. Many are familiar with E-commerce and their operative methods. Chinese scholars, who are capable of introducing E-commerce education at the university level and developing software for on-line education, are in great demand. One suggestion is to hold an annual competition in the knowledge of E-commerce, similar to the academic Olympiad, between students in China and North America. This will definitely help to promote friendship and cooperation between the two countries. Chinese scholars may also provide the needed supports in technological innovations, security, and logistics in the various fields of E-Commerce.

In China, professionals have been described as “go down to the sea” (Xia Hai), when they leave their professional jobs and participate in the commercial field. E-commerce may be one of the few avenues, by which Chinese scholars do not have to leave their professional jobs and still enjoy the adventure of the business world. Opportunities in E-commerce, especially in China, are unlimited. Chinese scholars will be the key players in leading E-commerce in China along with the world trend.