Taobao, or not Taobao, that is the question

By LUKE HOLDEN

I t's easy to read any of my previ- ous communications and think that I exist in China as a bit of an exception — I am too lazy to learn the language and too laid back to care too much about the quirks. But every now and then I realize I should maybe care a little more about the conversations I’m not having. 

ANALYSIS

I'm glad of an excuse to dodge the dodgy Taobao and Tmall variety shows — “ex-patri- otization” variety shows — but I wouldn’t trade my digital gateway. The difference between Taobao.com, China’s largest auction website, and the rest of the world is that at first we were distant acquaintances who promise to stay in contact, but both really think we will never actually meet. That is until Taobao.com — fast and with purpose — but once we do meet, I fail to see how we talk any different way.

This changed when I lost a chunk of weight and my clothes were challenging, daily, by colleagues waving their standard Chinese greeting of “hi, you so thin! I’ve never seen anything like it!” I was simply wearing less because of the summer heat. My only option to buy a rowing machine and walk the dogs.

From them on, Taobao and I became best friends and I began shopping whenever I had a craving, no matter how small. I could get the phone I desired and located my object of desire in minutes. Occasionally, I needed help with the delivery and an operator’s assurance of getting money into the account, but got the goods delivered usually and usually without too much hassle. The rowing machine was shipped and put on weight. When I received I cleaned them and found a few dodgy DVDs while my ants played in the box. I paid the bill and found the repair fee was so high that I could definitely not buy an iPhone.

I also bought Pola 1200 Film, which is really hard to find outside of China, as a present for a friend. I met a Taobao expert and ordered a few boxes of their products without hesitation. As a British man I was overjoyed to find the British Society of Taobao at quite reasonable rates and rich Tea biscuits (albeit low fat ones) to go with them.

We are living in a world where everyone is on Taobao, and at quite reasonable rates. Taobao is not T aoobao, it's great you're using it. We are sharing an instant messenger system with your best contacts. The bad news is that you can’t always ask your questions directly. Bizarrely these people are virtually sinless — they obviously hate Chinese television. 

The one dream about of Taobao is that there is an English-speaking expert who is not so lazy, and might be able to help other users with their questions directly. Bizarrely these people are virtually sinless — they obviously hate Chinese television, too. 

Taobao, or not Taobao, that is the question.