# China's Alibaba tests social shopping with Pinterest clone

Melanie Lee, Reuters

It is a marriage made in heaven for shopping addicts. Social shopping, the merger of social networking and e-commerce which has hooked millions of users in the United States, has now captured the attention of China's Internet giant.

Alibaba Group's social shopping platform Fa Xian (faxian.etao.com), launched on a testing basis four weeks ago, is already luring 60,000 viewers a day.

"Over the long run, social commerce in China has the potential to be bigger than the United States," said Hans Tung, managing director of venture capital firm Qiming Ventures.

Social shopping websites allow users to post photos of items on virtual pin boards, which others can comment on. Some sites allow users to purchase some of the items by clicking on the photos.

The business model originated in the United States in the mid 2000s when firms such as Kaboodle first set up shops. Others have emerged since then, including Fab.com and most recently Pinterest.

In China, the home of world's largest Internet population with nearly half a billion users, social shopping websites, such as Mogujie, LinkChic and Xinxian, have been launched over the past year.

Alibaba, 40 percent owned by Yahoo Inc, is looking to incorporate these rivals into Fa Xian, which means discovery in Chinese. Unlike other U.S. social shopping websites, all the items on Fa Xian can be purchased through its two e-commerce websites, Taobao Mall and Taobao Marketplace.

"We have about 10 partners right now. At the end of the year, I hope to see if we can achieve 100 partners, because this year China's social shopping industry is very hot," Chen Lijuan, director at eTao, Alibaba's search unit that operates Fa Xian, Fa Xian also plans to expand to include other e-commerce vendors outside the Taobao ecosystem, such as Jingdong Mall.

Cao Xiaolei, a 30-year-old office worker who has been using Mogujie since last July, said she can spend up to an hour looking through the website for items she likes.

"The products on the website have been selected and that can save me time and give me inspiration," she said.

($1 = 6.2997 Chinese yuan)

(Editing by Kazunori Takada and Ron Popeski)

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