

## More on E-Commerce Ethics: How Far Can We Go?

João Negreiros<sup>1</sup>, Ana Cristina Neves<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>University of Saint Joseph, Rua de Londres 16 Macao, China

\*Corresponding Author

João Negreiros

Email: [joao.garrot@usj.edu.mo](mailto:joao.garrot@usj.edu.mo)

**Abstract:** As the continuation of “E-Commerce Ethics: How Far Can We Go?” presented in Portugal (October 2014), this paper highlights further e-Commerce real cases where ethical issues are still raised in a controversial manner. A blog/forum was created in Moodle Learning Management System for thirty business students of University of Saint Joseph (USJ), Macao, China, to record their answers to several specific questions. Once again, the only conclusion that can be stressed is no consensus was found on the majority of these matters although all these e-Businesses live under the protection of the law.

**Keywords:** Business ethics, E-Commerce, Teaching, Moodle Forum

### Preamble

Under the E-commerce perspective, organizations are taking advantage of Internet technologies to improve organizational performance. Increasing profitability, gaining market share, improving customer service and delivering products faster are some of the organizational performance gains possible with electronic commerce [1]. This means that this process involves organization's electronic interactions with its stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, government regulators, financial institutions, managers, employees and general public.

Globally, ethics signifies being right or wrong. In particular, business ethics examines ethical principles and morals that arise in a business setting [2]. By default, governments use laws and regulations to point business behavior. Yet, it is ethics that regulates areas and details of behavior that lie beyond governmental control. Curiously, the interest of this topic increased dramatically in the last couple of years. Nowadays, for instance, major corporations promote their commitment to non-economic values under headings such as ethics codes and social responsibility charters.

As a teacher of E-Business at University of Saint Joseph, Macao, several activities are accomplished by students including an E-Business Ethic's Forum. Its aim regards the selling of unusual products and services available on the Web and whose goal is to make money. Some analysis of the qualitative responses of each question will be depicted in this writing where some Internet links are given with a straight inquiry. As expected, it is not the purpose to advocate (or not) each industry but allow readers to reflect about each ethical

values in the name of money, 錢 税金, argent, 돈, دوقن, 钱, dinero, geld, כסף, wang, pecuniam, dinheiro, pera, ধন, tiền...

### In the Name of Money, How Far Can We Go? cheaper-than-tuition.com



“Check [cheaper-than-tuition.com/](http://cheaper-than-tuition.com/). How much is an university diploma/transcript? Could you order one?” An emblematic answer from this forum could be “it costs 99.9 USD for a fake diploma including shipping worldwide”. Curious comments could be found in their blog: (A) “Very interesting website. A lot cheaper than USJ”, (B) “I would not order one because the experience of being in classes is far more important than the diploma itself”, (C) “Less than 100 euros...Yeah I might drop out” and (D) “If only I knew

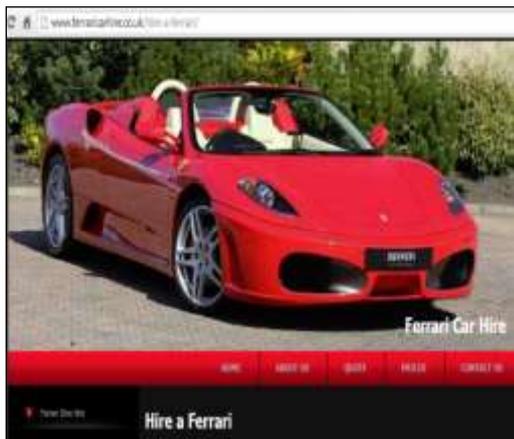
it before reaching the 4th year...”. In the name of money, how far can we go?

**ashleymadison.com**



“Check ashleymadison.com. According to www.prweb.com/releases/2012/3/prweb9247843.htm, this e-commerce had a revenue of 480,000,000 MOPs with 13,000,000 members. Nowadays, the site reveals that this number rose to 36,000,000 affiliates. Meanwhile, check its Facebook account at facebook.com/ AshleyMadison. Could you setup a e-business analogous to this one? It seems quite profitable. How different is this e-business from www.match.com?”. Three types of comments should be highlighted: (1) “The difference between both relies on the customer’s target: the former helps you to find a sex buddy while the latter tries to help you on the finding of a long term relationship”; (2) “I could not open this kind of e-business since ashleymadiso.com focus on betraying, not dating.”; (3) “If I could setup this kind of e-business, I would quit USJ”. In the name of money, how far can we go?

**www.ferraricarhire.co.uk&  
www.gentlemen4hire.com**



“Check www.ferraricarhire.co.uk/hire-a-ferrari/. How much does a Ferrari costs to hire for 5 days in MOPs? Now check www.gentlemen4hire.com/index.htm. How much does a male escort costs per hour? Do you perceive any difference on both e-businesses?” Concerning the real facts, the average cost to rent a Ferrari is 800 Euros per day whilst the cost to hire an escort depends on the escort himself (quite often, it varies from 150 a 300 Euros per hour). Regarding individual opinions, we have:

- “I think it would be quite interesting to create an e-commerce offering the two services altogether for 800 Euros.”
- “Both businesses are quite different, that is, the expectations from a Ferrari are well known and predictable while the male escort service requires human management, prone to more unpredictable situations.”
- “Ferrari means renting a car. For a male, it signifies renting dignity. Yet, from the business point of view, no difference (both tries to satisfy people's desire).”
- “I would love to enjoy the speed of a Ferrari but not having a guy besides me.”
- “On the first one, you drive by yourself. On the second one, someone rides you.”

In the name of money, how far can we go?”

**www.matchingdonors.com/life/index.cfm**



“Give a name of a person/country (donor) who is willing to sell his kidney to anyone from [matchingdonors.com](http://matchingdonors.com) or [www.organdonation.nhs.uk](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk). Moreover, tell me your opinion about poor people who sell their organs to pay their ordinary bills. Will you buy a kidney from one of those need people? Let it out...”

The majority of USJ students did not have any idea about the possibility to buy human organs. Still, the majority of them rather prefer to live in sickness than take any advantage of money power over poor people, comparing this situation to human traffic. Curiously, seven out of twenty-four answers clearly stated about their wiliness to give their organs to their families only. In the name of money, how far can we go?

#### controller.com



“On <http://www.controller.com/>, how much does the Russian fighter jet MIG 23 costs in MOPs?” It seems that the average Joe is able to buy a military plane on the Internet for 10,000,000 MOPs. In the name of money, how far can we go?

#### Although all of us live in Macao, none of USJ students thought to open an online Casino. Why is that?

Three reasons were stressed for this behavior: A) Macao holds over 30 casinos. As expected, if anyone enjoys gambling, a real casino becomes more appealing for this scenario. B) Lack of technical knowledge to build this type of Web site. C) Macao restrictions law towards this activity.

#### Can you think of a business that is fully ethical but not under the jurisdiction of the law? Give me an example.

The majority had difficulties to answer this question. Still, some of them highlight euthanasia, private detective and abortion.

#### Tell me a personal story of yours that you have acted legally but not ethically.

➤ “I have seen an old woman who seems to have hurt herself on the street, no one seemed to want to assist her and neither did I for the same reasons they did. In Macao, if you ever come into physical contact with someone who is hurt, for example, and you would like to assist them, you might me accused for something you didn't do. Usually, this is the reason why most people of Macao refuse to help people to avoid getting into a mess. It is legal to refuse to help as no one is legally obliged to assist anyone in need besides the police, medics or government workers. Yet, it is not ethical.”

➤ “Not giving a seat on the public bus to elderly people”.

➤ “When I am in a hurry, I hardly stop on zebras when I am driving the car”.

➤ “I lie to my mom when I am drinking with my friends”.

➤ “When I was in high school, I always used the library computer to check Facebook while other classmates were waiting for the computer to do their projects/assignments.”

➤ “Ignoring the begging man.”

➤ “Using McDonalds wash room without buying any food or smoking inside of it when no one is there.”

➤ “Download movies/music/software/books from the Internet”

#### REFERENCES

1. Watson R, berthou P, Pitt L, Zinkhan G; Electronic Commerce: The Strategic Perspective, Switzerland, 2008; 115.
2. Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics>, 2015.