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EDITOR'S NOTE

Translated by Michael Black

ABSTRACTS

The multinational coffee shop chain Starbucks has proved to be a pioneer in the United States, with the deployment of Wi-Fi access. Declaring itself to be an ethical company, it provides a non-smoking environment and non-alcoholic beverages and charges a fee for secure internet access, in the fashionable areas of big cities. Having first placed the company's economic model in the global context of new forms of mobility and of the development of the commercial opportunities they provide, the authors present the initial findings of research, carried out in April 2006, on the users of the Starbucks cafés in Beijing. The social practices observed reveal the need for access to distant services and a strong desire for local social interaction. These new areas of mobility, which are semi-public/semi-private spaces, have elements of both the SOHO (Small Office Home Office) and the meeting place.

INDEX

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