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CHECK IT OUT

FOREWORD

THE IMPACT OF AI ON PARCEL CLAIMING

At the recent World Economic Forum in Davos, the Managing Director of the IMF suggested that up to 60% of jobs in developed economies could be impacted by artificial intelligence. According to The Guardian, 27% of employees fear losing their jobs to AI within the next five years.

In this magazine, we take a closer look at a very specific use case: the impact of AI-driven software on parcel claims within the customer service departments of online retailers.

The story behind our software solution, claim.me, began when Seven Senders faced a challenge: scaling parcel-claim handling in-house while working with more than 100 local last-mile carriers across Europe. From the consumer's perspective, most inquiries were repetitive—questions about delivery delays, damaged parcels, failed deliveries, or suspected losses.

Traditionally, customer service agents spent countless hours checking tracking pages and filing claims with multiple carriers, each with its own requirements, languages, and documentation standards. In the case of a missing delivery, consumers were often asked to print, sign, and return a Declaration of Non-Receipt. For damaged parcels, photos had to be taken and exchanged back and forth between the consumer, the online shop, Seven Senders, and the last-mile carrier—mostly via email. It quickly became clear that these manual, fragmented processes were not scalable and would not keep pace with the growth of our delivery platform.

With the introduction of AI, this complexity was reduced to just a few standardized clicks. Consumers now sign pre-filled Declarations of Non-Receipt digitally. Photos of damaged parcels are uploaded via a shared link, automatically analyzed by AI, and forwarded directly to the relevant last-mile carriers—without manual intervention. Recognizing the value of this solution internally, we made it available to our online retail customers facing the same challenges in their customer service departments.

By working even more closely with customer service teams, we took the next step and developed a more powerful solution: AIME, our LLM-based parcel claim agent. AIME chats directly with consumers until it clearly understands whether a parcel is lost, damaged, or partially missing. It knows each carrier's specific claim guidelines, gathers all required information and documents, and submits a complete claim directly to claim.me. From there, the Seven Senders team takes over and manages the process with the carriers until the refund is completed. In effect, AIME removes the entire parcel-claim workload from our customers' service teams.

What we observed was striking: the time freed up by automation was not spent idle. Instead, it was reinvested where it matters most—engaging with customers and delivering a consistently high level of service. Rather than being burdened by parcel-claim bureaucracy, customer service agents can now focus on meaningful interactions.

At the same time, a traditionally unpleasant touchpoint—lost or damaged deliveries—is transformed into a positive customer experience, helping ensure that a single incident does not prevent consumers from purchasing again.

Using parcel claims as an example, AI clearly demonstrates its potential: freeing humans from repetitive, frustrating tasks so they can focus on what truly matters.

Learn how this transformation works in practice in our case study with Europe's largest musical instrument retailer, Thomann.

Ramin Varnhorn
Head of claim.me

INDEX

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COLUMN

NEW YEAR, NEW BORDERS: WHY 2026 BELONGS TO AI-POWERED COMMERCE

A new year always invites bold predictions, but cross-border e-commerce doesn't need much crystal-ball gazing for 2026: it's already being rewired in real time by AI.

Last year, "translation" meant making words intelligible. This year, AI makes them persuasive by localising tone, humour, sizing advice and even product imagery so a shopper in Manchester doesn't feel they're buying from "somewhere else". The smartest brands aren't just automating customer service; they're automating confidence. Expect AI to power dynamic pricing by market, automated compliance checks on listings, and predictive fraud screening that adapts to regional patterns faster than any rules engine ever could.

But AI is only the headline. Several other trends will define cross-border this year.

First, delivery promises to get brutally specific. Shoppers now expect precise duty-and-tax calculations at checkout, clearer returns, and honest lead times — not "estimated" optimism. Second, marketplaces continue to act like borderless infrastructure: they bring audience and logistics, but take margin and control, forcing brands to decide where they want to own the relationship. Third, payments diversify further: local wallets, BNPL and instant bank transfers become table stakes, not "nice to have", especially as conversion rates split sharply by country.

Finally, sustainability stops being a banner and becomes a filter. More customers (and regulators) are asking for proof: lower-impact packaging, consolidated shipping options, and transparent supply chains.

In short, this year won't be about going international. It'll be about feeling local everywhere (at scale) with AI as the engine and trust as the currency.

Enjoy reading!
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NEW DUTIES, NEW FEES, NEW DATA

HOW TO PREPARE FOR EU CUSTOMS REFORM CHANGES

Text: Tracy Doyle, AEB // Photos: AEB

Over the next several years, multifaceted customs reforms will fundamentally change cross-border trade processes for logistics service providers, fulfillment companies, customs brokers, and retailers. They will shift cost structures, operational workflows, compliance requirements, and the way data is shared and managed. We've put together a roadmap of the coming changes, followed by actionable steps on how you can minimize disruption and maintain compliance.

Let's start with what's changing. In the near term, the EU Customs Reform initiative has three core elements aimed at modernizing and harmonizing customs processes across the Union: the end of the de minimis exemption for low-value consignments (LVCs); the introduction of duties and handling fees for temporary treatment of LVCs; and the establishment of the EU Customs Data Hub.

The End of the De Minimis Exemption

Currently, goods sent from outside the EU that are valued under €150 are not subject to customs duties. This rule has been under scrutiny for years as e-commerce boomed, allowing sellers to flood the EU market with low-value goods that avoided duty. The exemption created an uneven playing field for EU businesses and overwhelmed border controls.

The end of the minimis was initially scheduled for 2028, alongside the rollout of the EU Customs Data Hub, which will provide functionality to calculate duties for low-value e-commerce transactions. However, after the number of LVCs more than doubled in 2024, with an estimated 4.6 billion parcels entering the EU from third countries—primarily China—EU Member States pushed for a speedier resolution.

A €3 Customs Duty on Low-value Goods: Coming July 1, 2026

On February 11, 2026, the European Council formally approved a €3 customs duty per item type on LVCs, effectively ending the de minimis exemption. Beginning on July 1, 2026, all e-commerce parcels imported into the EU valued at less than €150 will be subject to this flat fee, with an aim to eliminate unfair competitive advantages of low-value imports. The duty will be assessed for each unique tariff code in a parcel, not per parcel. That means that a package containing three different types of clothing, for example, would be assessed €9. The duty will be tied to the Import One-Stop Shop (IOSS) portal, which transacts an estimated 93% of e-commerce flows coming into the EU.

National and Union Handling Fees: Now Through the End of 2026

A Union handling fee was introduced in the customs reform proposal in early 2025 as a stop-gap to compensate customs authorities for the increased administrative costs of processing high package volumes in advance of standing up the EU Customs Data Hub. Although no final decision has been adopted yet, the EU-wide fee is expected to roll out in late 2026 with a price tag of around €2 per parcel for LVCs.

Impatient for the handling fee to take effect; countries began taking matters into their own hands. Romania introduced a national handling fee of 25 RON (roughly €5) for parcels valued under €150 effective January 1, 2026. Italy applied a €2 national handling fee to LVCs starting January 1 as well, although payments for January and February are deferred until March 15 to allow for administrative adjustment.

The EU Customs Data Hub: Coming in 2028

Both the customs duty and handling fees are temporary measures to bridge the gap until the EU Customs Data Hub launches in 2028. The hub will prioritize e-commerce, with other types of movements to be introduced in the 2030s. It will eventually replace the 27 national customs systems now in use with a centralized, digital environment that supplies real-time data to authorities across the EU. This data will be used to accurately calculate the actual value of all goods entering the Union, and duties will be levied accordingly. Operators will only need to submit shipment and product data once, and it will be used for customs declarations EU-wide.

A new EU Customs Authority, which is being seated right now, will oversee the data hub. It will coordinate customs risk management, enforcement, and data sharing. Its goal is to strengthen security, facilitate legitimate trade, prevent fraud, and enforce consistent, efficient, and digitalized customs rules to protect the EU single market.

How Will These Changes Impact Operators?

For businesses involved in cross-border trade, particularly in e-commerce, the near-term changes are already impacting pricing, compliance workflows, and even the feasibility of existing business models. Across stakeholders, one vital factor is of primary importance: clean, centralized, and structured data.

For Logistics Providers

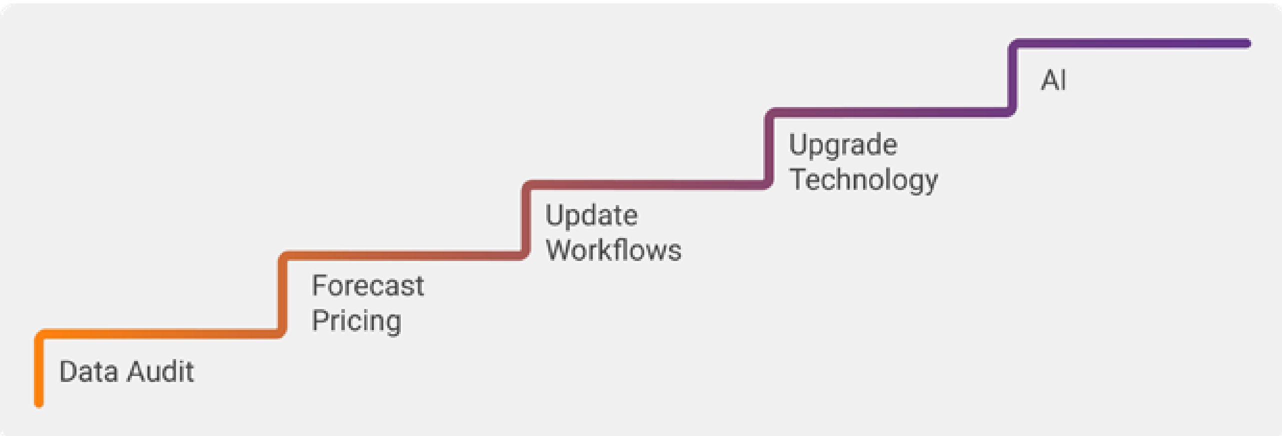
Freight forwarders, carriers, and parcel operators need to pivot from a model built on segmented, national customs processing to one where data accuracy, completeness, and timeliness are paramount. Under the current regime, low-value parcels enter duty free and pass customs with minimal checks. Once the de minimis exemption ends, every parcel will require accurate duty assessment and classification.

This means logistics IT systems will need to be able to handle duty calculations, HS codes, and additional documentation per consignment. For operators handling millions of e-commerce packages annually, this will dramatically increase the amount of data they need to capture and transmit. The pace and quality of data collection will directly affect delivery times and customer experience.

For Fulfillment Partners

Fulfillment centers will need to rethink how they prepare goods for customs processing. In a world where every shipment is scrutinized for duty and fees, fulfillment providers will need to ensure HS code accuracy, country of origin documentation, and product valuation are correct before parcels are handed to carriers.

Businesses using IOSS arrangements today to handle VAT for low-value shipments will need to supplement their data for mandatory duty assessments. This will require integrating customs data capture early in the fulfillment pipeline.



For Customs Brokers

Since the EU Customs Data Hub will create a single interface for customs declarations, brokers must prepare to adopt new systems and processes. This will require investing in digital infrastructure that can talk to the data hub, standardized data formats, and automated validation processes to prevent delays or penalties.

In the interim phase (2026–2028 and beyond), brokers will be dealing with both legacy processing systems in each Member State and preparation for a centralized model. Success will be driven by flexibility, scalability, and clean data. Ensuring every entry has complete customs declarations, managing duty calculations, and integrating handling fees into client cost structures will be major challenges once de minimis ends.

For Retailers

It's clear that non-EU retailers selling directly to consumers in the EU will face significant operational and commercial impacts. The removal of de minimis and introduction of new fees will drive price adjustments that are expected to shift buying behavior in the EU's favor. While this will be a boon for EU retailers offering low-value goods, it will also require them to make strategic changes to shipping, warehousing, and possibly pricing models. Optimization will rely on those changes being data driven.

Conclusion: It's Time to Act

EU Customs Reform changes will affect every aspect of cross-border trade, and they're coming sooner than you think. The changes will be disruptive, but by focusing on clean, accurate data; investing in automation and real-time systems; and aligning with future data flows early, you can be ready for them. ••

5 STEPS: PRIORITIZED PREPARATION FOR CHANGES

1. Conduct a Customs Data Audit

Clean master data is your first line of defense against delays or compliance issues. Companies that maintain duplicate sets of data across systems will struggle to adapt to the coming changes. Start by auditing your existing customs dataset. Confirm HS codes are accurate and up to date; country of origin is correctly assigned for all SKUs; product values, including declared customs value, are consistently recorded; and IOSS registrations are in place and aligned with projected volumes. Work toward a master dataset shared across logistics, fulfillment, and compliance teams.

2. Build Duty Forecasting into Pricing Models

With the abolition of the de minimis threshold and new fees in play, you need to model the impact of the fixed €3 duty per HS code per parcel and the impending handling fee, expected to be around €2 per parcel. Real-time data will be key to forecasting and reforecasting these costs, as well as any administrative overhead required to process them.

Since leveling the playing field for EU retailers is expected to result in changes in trade lanes and a stronger competitive position for EU-based sellers, this will likely be a moving target to begin with. Transparently communicating changes in pricing structures to customers and partners in advance of the shifts will help avoid unpleasant surprises that could compromise your sales and reputation.

3. Update Operational Workflows for Customs Compliance

Integrate customs compliance checkpoints into fulfillment and logistics workflows. This may include verification of HS codes at pick and pack; automated validation of product descriptions against customs classification databases; compliance checks for country of origin and duty rates; and harmonized reporting that aligns with anticipated EU Customs Data Hub data fields. For brokers, this means working closely with clients to ensure incoming data arrives in a format ready for customs submission without repeated manual corrections.

4. Upgrade Technology with an Eye Toward Interoperability and Automation

The EU Customs Data Hub will be entirely data driven. Investing in systems that can capture, validate, and transmit customs data automatically will be key for all parties in the value chain. Features to look for are integration with your WMS, TMS, or ERP system and data standards that align with the forthcoming EU Customs Data Hub protocols. Start migrating toward centralized data standards now. This will provide the foundation for immediate automation and interoperability benefits, plus facilitate a smoother transition when the centralized system goes live.

5. Look into AI-assisted Classification, Risk Scoring, and Sanctioned Party Screening

The data hub will leverage AI to predict compliance issues before goods arrive at the border. Businesses should explore similar AI tools internally to classify goods more accurately, detect anomalies in valuation or documentation, and automatically scan customers, vendors, and transactions against global watchlists. Adopting these tools will put you in a better position to meet customs authority expectations.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LONDON, LISBON, AND LARNACA DELIVERY IN TWO DAYS WITH HEYWORLD

Text: Maria-Rose Mathew // Photos: heyworld

From 2019 to 2024, there was an 88% increase in cross border e-commerce sales in Europe, making it the world's largest market worth US $504 billion (~€463 billion EUR). Globally, the cross-border market is expected to grow to US $4.8 trillion by 2032 (~€4.16 trillion EUR), as shoppers look abroad for price, assortment, and access to specific brands. To capture a share of this cross-border growth, brands need to provide the same fast, reliable delivery experience they offer locally to international customers.

According to the Metapack e-commerce Delivery Benchmark Report published for 2026, shoppers in Europe expect their online orders to arrive within 1-2 days. This delivery expectation is one of the key aspects that keeps the potential buyers from committing to a cross-border purchase, due to longer delivery timelines.

Faster shipping is no longer considered a competitive advantage, but a basic service requirement. However, as per the report, only 30% of retailers can deliver within two days as a standard. For online retailers, delivery performance is the ultimate success/failure factor.

There is, therefore, a clear need for a logistics partner that can meet the challenges of customers' expectations of fast and reliable delivery while being a one stop solution for the European network, all at an affordable cost.

Unlike the USA market, where there are several levels of domestic delivery services, in Europe, there are typically only two delivery options available to the customer, standard delivery and express delivery. Standard delivery services can take between three and six days to some markets, and road linehaul is the norm when it comes to cross border deliveries. Express delivery services usually take one to three days to deliver via priority distribution systems. This usually comes at a significant premium; therefore, express shipping often captures less than 10% of retailers' volumes.

Express delivery also comes with limitations such as early order cut-offs, very high costs, etc., making it difficult for retailers to offer affordable and fast delivery to customers.

This narrow classification of delivery options in Europe creates bottlenecks for delivery-experience-led growth and expansion for e-commerce retailers and fails to leverage the world's largest single market.

As the "first mover" and still the only service provider in Europe to utilize the belly capacity of passenger flights for e-commerce parcel delivery, heyworld bridges the gap between standard and express delivery with a 2-day service across Europe. This model is designed to be faster than standard shipping yet far more affordable than the available express options, making fast and reliable deliveries accessible to e-commerce retailers of all sizes.

By utilizing the cargo space in the lower deck (belly) of the Lufthansa Group of airlines, heyworld built an integrated solution benefiting not just from daily passenger flights, but also from numerous daily flight options, unlocking higher scheduling and routing flexibility across the farthest points of the European continent.

With this hybrid network, heyworld has exclusive access to more than 10,000 monthly departures across 100 destinations in Europe, including distant and remote locations that are otherwise not easily accessible.

How does this benefit the shippers?

- Faster delivery
- Volume flexibility
- Affordable price

Portugal case in point

In Portugal, cross border purchases make up more than 80% of all online sales, yet customer complaints about the shopping experience increased (by) 64 % in 2025 compared with 2024. Delivery failures are cited as the number one reason for dissatisfaction.

If a parcel is being sent from Poland, often a key logistics hub for e-commerce players, it could take four to five days to deliver to a Portuguese customer in the best of cases.

heyworld offers daily connections from Frankfurt to Lisbon, with at least three flights per day, ensuring the same day uplift. e-commerce brands, therefore, get their parcels to Portuguese consumers within 2 days, without the price tag of express shipping.

For example, if a customer orders a product at 19:00, and the shipper's warehouse dispatches it the same evening, the order can be connected to the next morning's flight to Lisbon, the parcel is injected to last mile carrier on the same day, and delivery is then completed the next day.

This level of service is not just limited to the capital Lisbon, but also to other cities and islands by capitalizing on daily flights to places like Madeira. A customer from Madera and a customer from Lisbon ordering at the same time, get their delivery about the same time by implementing a direct connection in Madeira to the local carrier, thus skipping the networking effects of shipping via mainland Portugal.

These are not just possibilities; heyworld has already shipped over 1 million parcels utilizing belly capacity in the past year.

As the cross-border e-commerce market is expected to increase 9-fold to US$4.81 trillion by 2032, brands must seek competitive advantages to maintain and grow market share. Some markets are spoilt by quality delivery choices, and in Europe, there can still be a wide gap between customer expectations and available delivery solutions.

heyworld is positioned to support e-commerce businesses of every size and design custom cross-border solution to open the full potential of the European network. Customers in London, Lisbon and Larnaca can all benefit from the same delivery timeline and receive their parcels in 2 days. ••

ABOUT HEYWORLD

Starting in May 2026, heyworld will merge with customs specialist CB Customs Broker to form a new company and create an e-commerce one-stop shop that streamlines clearance and transport. For more information, follow us on LinkedIn.

heyworld

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Integrated Network

Connecting Europe's largest air network to first and last mile to allow late warehouse cut offs.

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Connect with us.
We design cross-border logistics solutions for businesses of every size.

FROM CLICK TO CONSUMER: HOW MARKETPLACES TEST YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN

Text: Frank Wever // Photos: DSV

Online marketplaces are now a core part of European e-commerce. From global platforms like Amazon and eBay to specialist marketplaces, they offer retailers fast access to new customers, trusted environments and built-in infrastructure. But behind the promise of reach and growth sits a critical question: can your supply chain keep up with what these platforms demand?

Choosing the right marketplace is as much an operational decision as a commercial one. Fulfilment models, delivery speeds, returns and cross-border requirements all place pressure on logistics and warehousing. Without an agile, scalable supply chain, marketplaces can add complexity and cost rather than drive sustainable growth.

So how can you know if your choice of marketplace is going to accelerate growth or add unnecessary complexity to your online operations? Read on and find out.

Know your customer base

Firstly, you need to understand where your customers shop and how they prefer to buy. Large pan-European platforms like Amazon and eBay draw massive and diverse audiences across many categories, making them attractive for broad market reach. But if you have a niche product or operate in a specialised segment, such as fashion, you may want to consider a marketplace that only sells to your customer group.

Identifying where your existing customers spend their time and which marketplaces they trust helps ensure your products are visible to the right audience, rather than simply chasing the largest traffic numbers.

Ask yourself:

- Does this marketplace reach my target customer demographics?
- Is it strong in my priority countries or regions?
- Are shoppers browsing with price-led intent or brand-led intent?
- Are competitors present and how crowded is the space?

What are you actually paying for?

Cost is one of the most decisive factors when selecting an online marketplace, but it is also one of the most complex. Some marketplaces offer lower entry costs but demand ongoing investment in paid visibility, while others bundle services at a higher fee in exchange for scale and convenience.

In addition to commission rates, marketplace fees can also include onboarding costs, monthly subscriptions, fulfilment and storage fees, payment processing and advertising spend – not to mention penalties tied to service levels. Understanding the total cost of ownership and how it evolves as your sales increase, can help you choose marketplaces that support your growth rather than eroding margins over time.

Ask yourself:

- What is the total cost of selling on the marketplace?
- Is paid advertising or promotion required for visibility?
- How do costs scale as volume grows?
- Are there any hidden or variable costs?

Success with warehousing and returns

Where you store inventory directly affects delivery speed, costs and fulfilment complexity—particularly when selling cross-border. Some marketplaces require, or strongly incentivise, sellers to use their own fulfilment networks, while others allow more flexibility through existing warehouses or third-party logistics partners.

If you already have a warehousing set-up in place, you need to assess whether it meets the marketplace and local market requirements. This includes stock placement by country, the ability to scale during peak periods and compliance with local regulations. For example, selling on Amazon Prime typically requires inventory to be held locally to meet fast delivery expectations.

Returns are another critical factor. Each marketplace sets its own rules around return windows, costs and customer experience. While generous return policies can improve conversion, they can also erode margins—especially when managing cross-border reverse logistics.

Ask yourself:

- Does the marketplace require or incentivise its own fulfilment network?
- Can my current warehouse set up support expected volume and scale during peak periods?
- Are cross-border VAT, inventory and reverse logistics manageable for my operations?
- What is the return window and who pays?

Understanding the value of data

Marketplaces control how your products are seen through algorithms that are often opaque and change without warning. While you can expect to gain access to basic performance metrics, visibility into customer data is usually limited, restricting opportunities for personalisation and long-term customer relationships.

10 MARKETPLACES TO WATCH

Amazon
The dominant marketplace in Europe, operating localized platforms in most major markets.

eBay
One of Europe's most established marketplaces, particularly strong in the UK and Germany.

Allegro
The clear market leader in Poland and one of Europe's fastest-growing marketplaces.

Zalando
Europe's leading fashion and lifestyle marketplace, active across more than 20 countries.

Cdiscount
A major player in France, particularly strong in electronics and home categories.

Temu
A global e-commerce marketplace that sells directly from manufacturers at low prices

TikTok
Now active in several European countries allowing users to browse, discover and buy products in the app

Bol.com
The leading marketplace in the Netherlands and Belgium, known for high consumer trust

OTTO
A major German marketplace with a curated, invitation-based model that attracts established brands

ManoMano
A fast-growing specialist marketplace focused on DIY, home improvement and gardening

You also need to consider how your sales data may be used by the platform itself – both at the current time in the future. Weighing fast access to demand against reduced control is critical to ensuring marketplaces support sustainable growth rather than create long-term dependency.

Ask yourself:

- Who owns and controls the customer-generated data?
- What level of visibility do we have?
- How does the platform use our sales and performance data?

- Are algorithms transparent so they can support our long-term planning

From warehouse to consumer

European consumers increasingly expect fast, reliable, and trackable shipping and marketplaces vary in how much control retailers retain over carrier selection and last-mile delivery. For example, Amazon allows sellers to use their own delivery providers while Zalando insists that sellers use their delivery networks.

Regardless of your delivery set-up, you should think about whether your service levels meet local customer expectations. Poor logistics performance on a marketplace can damage your seller ratings and visibility, even if the issue is beyond your direct control. Conversely, if your sales accelerate and you want to expand further, you need a logistics provider ready to expand and scale in line with your growth.

Ask yourself:

- Can I use my preferred logistics provider?
- Are delivery speed expectations realistic for my operations?
- Can I achieve effective cross-border deliveries?
- How will delivery performance affect my seller ranking or visibility?

Maintaining a strong brand profile

Marketplaces differ widely in how much they allow retailers to express their brand identity. Platforms like Zalando are designed to support curated brand experiences with high-quality imagery, story-driven catalogues, and fashion-oriented content standards, while mass marketplaces prioritise volume and breadth, making it harder to maintain a distinct brand voice.

When considering a new marketplace, think about how its positioning aligns with your brand values, such as

transparency, innovation or ethical sourcing. A mismatch can dilute brand perception and undermine your long-term brand equity, even if short-term sales are attractive.

Ask yourself:
- Can I present my brand effectively?
- Does the marketplace positioning align with my brand values?
- Are there restricions on pricing or promotion?
- Will my brand be in direct competition with private labels or marketplace owned brands?

Who owns the customer?
Customer support is another area where marketplaces vary in their approach. On platforms like eBay, sellers often manage customer interactions directly, while others, such as Amazon, act as the first line of support. This can simplify operations but reduces direct contact with customers.

Before committing to a marketplace, it's essential to understand the dynamics of the customer relationship, how disputes are resolved and what service standards apply. Poor support—whether handled by the marketplace or the seller—can quickly lead to negative reviews and reduced visibility, making clear and efficient support processes critical to protecting both sales and brand reputation.

Ask yourself:
- Who owns the customer relationship?
- How are disputes and charges managed?
- Are service level agreements clearly defined?
- Is there a risk that poor marketplace support reflects poorly on my brand?

Why supply chain agility makes the difference
Online marketplaces offer European retailers powerful opportunities to grow cross-border, reach new customers and scale quickly but only when the operational foundations are in place. As this article has shown, marketplace success requires careful consideration of what's required from your business and your supply chain. Delivery speed, returns handling, warehousing locations and fluctuating demand all place constant pressure on operations, making agility and scalability critical advantages.

An agile supply chain, supported by a global logistics network, allows you to select the right marketplace model and expand into new markets with confidence. With the right freight forwarding expertise, warehousing strategy and end-to-end supply chain management in place, you can meet marketplace demands, scale with confidence and turn growth ambition into long-term success. ••

TALK TO DSV ABOUT E-COMMERCE
As the world's leading global transport and logistics provider, DSV understands the challenges faced by online retailers looking to expand in new marketplaces. We offer everything needed for successful e-commerce – from state-of-the-art systems, including integrations to all major shopping carts and marketplaces, to a dedicated network of e-commerce locations so you can scale your operations with ease. Wherever you are based, and whatever you sell, our team of experts can make sure that your customers' orders are seamlessly fulfilled – regardless of marketplace.

DSV E-commerce Logistics

State-of-the-art e-commerce fulfilment

- Global coverage
- Scalable
- Easy integration and setup
- API's, shopping carts & marketplaces
- Multiple carriers, favorable tariffs
- Packaging
- Efficient returns initiation and handling
- Real-time dashboard

DSV

Global Transport and Logistics

BEYOND COMPLIANCE: HOW UBSEND TURNED ESG INTO AN INTEGRAL PART OF LOGISTICS IN THE EU

Text: Frank Calviño // Photos: UBsend

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria are reshaping the European logistics industry. What once functioned as a voluntary sustainability initiative has become a core operational requirement, influencing everything from carrier selection and network design to financial reporting and customer relationships.

For UBsend, a European multi-carrier logistics platform, ESG is not merely a compliance obligation. Instead, the company has incorporated sustainability into its operational model, strategic planning, and customer advisory role.

In this interview, Kasper Nielsen, Procurement Manager and ESG responsible at UBsend, explains how ESG is transforming the parcel industry, how UBsend has adapted its business model, and why the company believes sustainability will ultimately become a source of competitive advantage rather than a regulatory burden.

What ESG Is and Why It Matters in Logistics

But, before we continue, let's begin at the beginning: ESG stands for Environmental, Social, and Governance. It is a framework used by regulators, investors, and companies to evaluate how businesses manage sustainability risks and impacts.

The environmental dimension focuses on climate-related issues, including greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, and resource efficiency. In logistics, this often translates into decarbonizing transportation networks, reducing packaging waste, and optimizing delivery operations.

The social dimension focuses on people. It includes labor conditions, worker safety, diversity, and broader social responsibility across the supply chain. For logistics companies, this increasingly includes ensuring fair working conditions not only within their own workforce but also among subcontracted drivers and logistics partners.

Governance refers to how companies manage oversight and accountability. It includes compliance systems, corporate transparency, ethical business practices, and the internal structures that ensure ESG commitments are implemented and reported correctly.

Across Europe, ESG is now closely tied to regulatory reporting frameworks and access to financing. Investors and banks increasingly assess companies based on sustainability metrics, meaning logistics providers must demonstrate transparency and measurable progress in areas such as emissions, workforce conditions, and governance structures.

ESG as a New License to Operate in the European Parcel Industry

According to Nielsen, the shift toward ESG compliance has fundamentally changed how logistics companies operate.

"Before, emission reporting was something companies could highlight as a positive feature. Now it has become a necessity. ESG has moved from a nice-to-have to a license to operate," says Kasper Nielsen, Procurement Manager and ESG responsible at UBsend.

Much of this shift has been driven by European legislation, which has expanded sustainability reporting requirements for large companies. However, the effects extend far beyond the companies that are legally required to report.

Large retailers and e-commerce companies increasingly demand detailed sustainability data from their logistics partners. As a result, parcel operators and logistics platforms must be able to measure, report, and explain their environmental and social impacts even if they are not directly subject to the same regulatory obligations.

UBsend experiences this dynamic particularly strongly because many of its customers are major European fashion retailers and online merchants with strict sustainability targets.

"Even if you are not formally obliged to report, if you want to work with the big enterprise companies in Europe, you need to follow the same standards," says Nielsen.

Another major complexity for the industry is the lack of standardized emissions reporting. Although frameworks such as the Greenhouse Gas Protocol provide guidance, companies still use different methodologies to calculate logistics emissions. For integrators working with multiple carriers, harmonizing this data can be a significant operational challenge.

Highlight: Why Transport Emissions Matter in the EU

Transport is one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Europe, making logistics a key focus area for sustainability efforts.

Indicator	Value	Year	Source
Share of EU greenhouse gas emissions from transport	~29%	2022	European Environment Agency
Share of transport emissions from road transport	73%	2023	European Environment Agency

Because road transport dominates the sector, parcel delivery networks — particularly last-mile delivery — play a central role in decarbonizing European logistics.

How UBsend Has Adapted to the ESG Agenda

To respond to the evolving ESG landscape, UBsend has integrated sustainability directly into its operational structure. Nielsen's role reflects this integration: he oversees both procurement and sustainability activities within the company.

The procurement team manages relationships with carriers across Europe, while the sustainability team focuses on reporting, compliance, and developing environmental and social initiatives.

One of the company's most significant investments has been in developing a centralized CO_2 reporting platform. This system consolidates emissions data from multiple carriers and translates it into a standardized format for customers' sustainability reporting.

"We have invested in a CO_2 footprint portal where we can report emissions on a company level but also drill down to the individual customer level across carriers in a harmonized way," says Nielsen.

Another key initiative has been optimizing the physical logistics network. By consolidating volumes across customers and routing shipments through optimized hub structures, UBsend can reduce both costs and emissions while maintaining service levels.

"By consolidating volumes and optimizing hub solutions, we can reduce both costs and CO_2 emissions while maintaining or even improving service performance," Nielsen explains.

Highlight: Electrification Trends in European Transport

Electrification is expected to play a key role in reducing logistics emissions in the coming decade.

Indicator	Value	Year	Source
Share of renewable energy in EU transport	8.7%	2022	European Environment Agency
Share of electric vans in new EU registrations	7.7%	2023	European Environment Agency

Electric vans and alternative fuels are increasingly being adopted for urban delivery operations, particularly in cities with stricter emissions regulations.

Integrating ESG Into the UBsend Business Strategy
Rather than treating ESG as a reporting exercise, UBsend has integrated sustainability considerations into its long-term strategy.

"We have taken a clear strategic view on ESG. Our goal is to be as strong as possible within this area, and we believe that in the future it can become a competitive advantage," says Nielsen.

One of the most significant internal projects supporting this strategy was the company's double materiality assessment. This assessment required a comprehensive evaluation of the sustainability topics most relevant to the company, both in terms of their impact on society and the risks they pose to the business.

The process required months of analysis and collaboration across departments, including interviews with internal stakeholders and reviews of governance structures.

"What started as a compliance exercise actually sparked valuable discussions internally about what really matters for our company and where we can make the biggest impact," Nielsen recalls.

The assessment highlighted several priorities, including workforce well-being, governance standards, and the treatment of workers throughout the logistics value chain.

Working With Customers and Carriers on ESG
As a multi-carrier logistics platform, UBsend sits between e-commerce companies and the parcel networks that deliver their products. This position allows the company to influence sustainability practices across both sides of the logistics ecosystem.

The company currently manages relationships with roughly 150 carriers across Europe. Sustainability has become one of the parameters used when evaluating these partnerships, alongside cost and operational performance.

"We manage around 150 carriers in Europe, and ESG is becoming an increasingly important parameter when we evaluate partners," says Nielsen.

UBsend maintains structured supplier relationship management programs with regular performance reviews and strategic discussions. Sustainability roadmaps are now a standard part of these meetings.

"We run structured supplier relationship management with quarterly business reviews and strategic meetings where sustainability is always part of the agenda," Nielsen explains.

On the customer side, UBsend increasingly acts as an advisor on logistics sustainability. The company analyzes delivery networks, consumer preferences, and emissions data to identify ways customers can improve both efficiency and environmental performance.

One example involved analyzing delivery patterns for a fashion retailer. The study showed that shifting more deliveries to out-of-home pickup points could reduce emissions, improve delivery success rates, and lower logistics costs.

Highlight: Emissions Impact of Parcel Locker Deliveries
Research into last-mile logistics shows that alternative delivery methods can reduce emissions under the right conditions.

Delivery method	Estimated CO2 Impact VS Home Delivery	Source
Parcel locker delivery	Up to 21% lower emissions	Academic research on last-mile logistics

The impact depends on factors such as locker density, consumer travel behavior, and route optimization.

The Future of ESG in the Parcel Industry
Looking ahead, Nielsen believes that the next major step for the logistics industry will be greater standardization of sustainability reporting.

"A major step forward would be harmonized standards for how emissions are calculated across Europe," says Nielsen.

He also expects the social dimension of ESG to become more important across logistics supply chains, particularly as companies pay closer attention to labor conditions among subcontracted drivers and warehouse workers.

“In the coming years, I believe we will see much more focus on social responsibility across the value chain — ensuring that workers are treated properly and that companies have the right governance structures in place,” Nielsen explains.

For UBsend, the long-term goal is to continue developing its advisory role. By combining logistics data, network expertise, and sustainability insights, the company aims to help customers make better operational decisions.

Highlight: Growth of E-commerce in Europe
The continued expansion of e-commerce is a major factor shaping the sustainability discussion in logistics.

Indicator	Value	Year	Source
EU internet users buying online	62%	2015	Eurostat
EU internet users buying online	78%	2025	Eurostat

As online shopping grows, the number of parcel shipments continues to increase — making the environmental footprint of logistics networks an increasingly important part of ESG strategies across European supply chains. ••


Hurricane®
Data powering global trade

WHY LOW VALUE IMPORT REFORM IS FORCING SMES TO RETHINK COMPLIANCE INFRASTRUCTURE

Text: Joe Diamond // Photos: Hurricane Commerce

Low value import reform is rapidly becoming one of the most consequential shifts facing e-commerce-focused SMEs worldwide. Governments across multiple markets are narrowing duty relief thresholds, introducing administrative cost recovery mechanisms and increasing border data visibility. For policymakers, the direction of travel is clear. For smaller traders, the implications are structural.

Unlike large multinationals with integrated ERP systems, dedicated compliance teams and sophisticated tax engines, SMEs often rely on marketplaces, parcel carriers and fragmented compliance tools. As low value regimes tighten, that structural asymmetry becomes more pronounced.

What once appeared manageable through manual processes and disconnected tools is increasingly becoming a systemic constraint. The question facing many SMEs is no longer simply how to ship internationally. It is whether their compliance infrastructure is capable of keeping pace with regulatory change.

The Hidden Cost of Reform

Emerging low value reforms typically combine three core elements: reduced duty relief thresholds, enhanced electronic data requirements and new or increased per shipment administrative fees. Each element may appear manageable in isolation. Together, however, they create a significant shift in compliance burden.

For SMEs operating on thin margins, even modest additional costs can materially alter viability. Every tariff decision, data field and remittance obligation sits on a narrow cost base. Unlike large enterprises, SMEs have limited negotiating leverage with carriers or marketplaces. Additional costs are rarely absorbed; they are passed through. The result is predictable. Some SMEs will scale back international activity. Others will restrict product ranges. Some may exit certain markets entirely.

In price sensitive segments, even relatively small per consignment fees layered on top of duty and VAT can distort landed cost and suppress demand. Where margins are already narrow, the addition of administrative costs can push transactions from viable to unprofitable. The economic impact therefore extends beyond compliance. It affects competitiveness, consumer choice and the long-term structure of cross border e-commerce itself.

Why Fragmented Compliance No Longer Works

Modern low value frameworks demand consistency across classification, duty calculation, checkout pricing and customs submission.

Many SMEs still operate with disconnected systems. One tool for HS classification, spreadsheets for landed cost calculations, a separate tax engine and manual remittance processes. That approach was tolerable under simplified low value regimes where regulatory oversight was limited and duty relief thresholds were generous.

Under tightening frameworks, however, the cracks begin to show. Misclassification becomes more costly. Duty discrepancies lead to delays. Inconsistent data between checkout systems and customs declarations creates operational friction. Manual intervention increases processing time and administrative cost. Increasingly, regulators are expecting higher quality electronic data earlier in the shipping process. That expectation cannot be met through fragmented workflows. The direction of travel is towards integrated compliance processes where the same validated product data drives classification, duty calculation, checkout pricing and customs submission.

This becomes particularly critical in structured Delivered Duty Paid (DDP) models, where duties and taxes are collected at the point of sale and must align precisely with customs declarations. In those environments, inconsistencies between commercial pricing and customs documentation can trigger delays, disputes or financial exposure. In short, the operational tolerance for compliance errors is narrowing.

The AI Temptation

As compliance pressure increases, many organisations are exploring whether artificial intelligence can fill the gap. The logic appears compelling. If large language models can write code, generate reports and automate customer service, why not use them to automate customs classification as well? In recent years, some logistics companies and e-commerce operators have begun experimenting with building internal classification engines powered by large language models such as GPT.

On the surface, the idea appears attractive. AI promises speed, automation and cost reduction. The assumption is that classification is primarily a language problem: identify the product description, map it to the correct HS code and calculate the associated duty. The reality, however, is considerably more complex.

The Compliance Reality

Large language models are extraordinarily capable at generating fluent text. They are designed to predict words based on patterns learned from vast amounts of public data. Customs compliance, however, is not primarily a language task. It is a data integrity problem.

Tariff schedules change regularly across more than 200 customs jurisdictions. Duty rates vary depending on origin, trade agreements and product attributes. Restricted goods rules differ by country. Sanctions lists are updated continuously. Classification decisions must be explainable and supported by legal references that withstand regulatory scrutiny.

A generic large language model does not maintain continuously updated tariff databases. It does not track regulatory updates across global customs authorities. It does not produce auditable legal citations for classification decisions. In controlled demonstrations, LLM driven classification may achieve acceptable results. In live environments, error rates compound quickly. Misclassification affects duty, tax liability, restricted goods status and ultimately legal exposure. Even small inaccuracies can lead to operational disruption when scaled across thousands of shipments. The challenge therefore is not simply algorithmic accuracy. It is the surrounding compliance infrastructure.

The Data Moat

As Hurricane Commerce CTO Ian Venner has argued in recent industry commentary, the problem many organisations underestimate is not the model itself. It is the data ecosystem required to make the model reliable.

Maintaining accurate global classification capability requires structured tariff data, continuously updated duty rates, rules of origin logic, sanctions screening data and historical classification knowledge built over millions of real world transactions. It also requires regulatory interpretation. Customs authorities publish updates regularly, but translating those changes into operational decision logic requires domain expertise and institutional knowledge. In this sense, compliance infrastructure is less about artificial intelligence and more about sustained data governance.

Building that capability internally is not impossible, but it is far more resource intensive than many organisations initially assume. Data ingestion pipelines, validation processes, regulatory monitoring, system resilience and audit trails quickly introduce layers of complexity. For many SMEs, attempting to replicate this infrastructure internally becomes prohibitively expensive.

The Role of Integrated Trade Ecosystems

Against this backdrop, the more sustainable response is not fragmented tools or improvised AI overlays, but participation in integrated trade ecosystems. Platforms such as Hurricane Commerce have spent more than a decade building compliance infrastructure that connects classification, duty calculation, sanctions screening and customs data exchange within a unified logic engine.

Crucially, access models are evolving to lower the barrier for SMEs. Through solutions such as the Hurricane Global Assure portal, smaller operators can connect to enterprise trade intelligence through a browser based interface without heavy system integration. This shifts compliance from a bespoke internal project to an accessible shared infrastructure. In practical terms, it means SMEs can validate classification decisions, check duty exposure and identify restricted goods before shipments move, without needing to build complex internal systems. ••


Vinted

DELIVERING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY:

HOW GLS AND VINTED ARE POWERING EUROPE'S SECOND-HAND BOOM

Text: Frank Calviño // Photos: GLS, Vinted

As Europe's second-hand marketplace continues to surge, logistics has become a decisive factor in its success. The partnership between parcel delivery company GLS and online platform Vinted illustrates how smart logistics infrastructure can enable cross-border commerce, helping millions of users buy and sell pre-owned goods with ease.

A Marketplace Built on Reuse

In the past decade, buying second-hand has shifted from a niche activity to a mainstream habit. At the center of this transformation is Vinted, the leading second-hand fashion marketplace in Europe.

Founded in 2008 in Vilnius, Vinted began as a simple digital space where people could sell or swap second-hand clothing. Since then, it has expanded dramatically in both scope and geography. The platform operates in 29 markets by the end of 2026, serving millions of members who buy and sell everything from fashion and electronics to books, home appliances, and hobby equipment.

This growth reflects a broader shift in consumer behavior. Rising environmental awareness, economic considerations, and the convenience of digital marketplaces have made second-hand shopping part of everyday life for many Europeans. But behind the simplicity of clicking "buy" lies a complex operational challenge: moving millions of parcels between private sellers and buyers across borders.

The Origins of the GLS–Vinted Collaboration

As Vinted expanded rapidly across Europe, it needed delivery partners capable of supporting both domestic and cross-border shipments at scale. Logistics is not merely an operational detail for a peer-to-peer marketplace; it is central to the platform's entire business model.

The collaboration with GLS emerged as a natural fit. The parcel delivery company already had a strong presence in several markets where Vinted operated or planned to launch, providing the infrastructure to support rapid expansion.

Equally important was the technological compatibility between the two companies. Vinted integrated GLS services through a single API connection, enabling streamlined shipping management across multiple countries. This standardized integration simplified operations while maintaining consistent delivery performance across markets.

Cost was another critical factor. Unlike traditional e-commerce transactions, where retailers often absorb shipping costs, Vinted's buyers typically pay for delivery. Affordable shipping, therefore, plays a decisive role in whether items sell quickly.

"Low shipping costs are critical," according to information from the partnership briefing. Affordable delivery keeps listings competitive and helps sellers complete transactions faster. GLS currently supports Vinted operations in several European markets, including Germany, Hungary, and Denmark, handling both domestic shipments and cross-border deliveries.

Logistics as the Backbone of Marketplace Growth

For digital marketplaces, logistics is often invisible when everything works well. Yet it remains one of the most important elements of the customer experience.

Vinted's rapid growth across more than two dozen countries depends heavily on reliable parcel delivery. Each successful transaction involves two individuals who often live hundreds or even thousands of kilometers apart. If deliveries are delayed or unpredictable, trust in the marketplace quickly erodes.

Reliable shipping, therefore, serves a dual purpose: it ensures that buyers receive their purchases on time and allows sellers to receive payments quickly once deliveries are confirmed.

The partnership with GLS addresses several of these needs simultaneously.

First is reliability. Parcels must arrive as promised to maintain confidence in the platform. Second is transparency. Shipment tracking and clear delivery information reduce uncertainty for users on both sides of the transaction. Finally, there is scalability. As Vinted continues to expand into new regions, its logistics partners must handle increased parcel volumes without introducing operational complexity.

Technology That Connects Millions of Parcels

Technology plays a crucial role in managing this complex network of shipments. As a digital-first company, Vinted relies on centralized systems and automated workflows to coordinate deliveries across multiple carriers and markets. Standardized APIs enable seamless integration with logistics partners such as GLS, allowing the platform to manage parcel flows efficiently.

Through these integrations, shipment data can move instantly between systems, providing real-time tracking updates and operational visibility. This reduces manual processes while helping customer support teams resolve issues quickly. Standardized technology also ensures consistency across markets. Whether a parcel travels within Germany or crosses borders from Denmark to Hungary, the underlying shipping processes remain predictable and manageable.

Looking ahead, innovations in logistics technology are likely to focus on scalability and predictability. Tools that streamline claims management, automate shipment monitoring, and improve operational transparency will become increasingly important as marketplace volumes grow.

Convenience for Buyers and Sellers

For Vinted's millions of members, the partnership translates into a smoother and more affordable shipping experience. One of the key elements is access to extensive out-of-home delivery networks. Parcel shops and locker points allow users to drop off or collect packages at convenient locations, rather than waiting for home delivery.

This approach offers several advantages. It reduces delivery costs, increases user flexibility, and helps logistics providers consolidate shipments more efficiently.
Convenience is particularly important for peer-to-peer transactions, where sellers are typically private individuals shipping items from their homes. Easy access to drop-off points makes the selling process simpler and more accessible.

Reliability also reinforces community trust. Buyers expect parcels to arrive on the promised day, while sellers rely on predictable delivery timelines to receive payments quickly. When logistics performs consistently, it strengthens the credibility of the entire marketplace.

Supporting Europe's Circular Economy

Beyond operational efficiency, the GLS–Vinted partnership also contributes to a broader economic and environmental trend: the growth of the circular economy.

By enabling the resale of millions of items that might otherwise be discarded, platforms like Vinted extend product lifecycles and reduce waste. Logistics providers make this possible by connecting buyers and sellers across regions and borders. In this sense, parcel networks are becoming an essential infrastructure for sustainable commerce.

The partnership also illustrates how collaboration between digital platforms and logistics companies can unlock new trade opportunities. Traditional retail supply chains were built around centralized warehouses and professional sellers. Peer-to-peer marketplaces, by contrast, involve millions of decentralized participants. Supporting this new model requires logistics systems that are flexible, scalable, and technologically integrated.

Looking Ahead

As Vinted continues to expand across Europe, logistics partnerships will remain central to its strategy. Entering new markets brings additional challenges, from regulatory differences to customs procedures for cross-border shipments. Carriers capable of providing cost-efficient and reliable deliveries will play a critical role in enabling that expansion.

The GLS–Vinted collaboration demonstrates how logistics can move beyond simple parcel delivery to become a strategic enabler of digital marketplaces. By combining infrastructure, technology integration, and operational reliability, the partnership enables millions of people to participate in secondhand commerce. For consumers, the result is simple: buying and selling pre-owned items across Europe can feel as easy as trading with a neighbor. Behind that simplicity, however, lies a sophisticated logistics network—and a partnership designed to keep Europe's circular economy moving. ••

WHY ONLINE RETAILERS SHOULD LOOK EAST FIRST — NOT WEST WHEN EXPANDING INTERNATIONALLY

Text: Tomasz Dominik, Sales Director Packeta Germany, Baltics and Scandinavia // Photos: Packeta Group

When German online retailers consider international expansion, their attention often turns almost automatically to Western Europe. France, Spain or the Benelux countries are perceived as natural target markets, largely due to geographic proximity, familiar brand environments and historically established trade relationships. This perspective is understandable because it is based on known markets and a perception of lower risk. However, this very mindset causes many companies to overlook substantial growth potential that lies much closer to home, namely Central and Eastern Europe.

TOMASZ DOMINIK,
SALES DIRECTOR
PACKETA GERMANY, BALTICS AND SCANDINAVIA

Over the past years, the region has undergone a fundamental transformation. Countries such as Poland, Czechia and Slovakia now combine highly digitalised consumers, modern logistics infrastructures and rapidly growing e-commerce sectors. For retailers, this creates a rare combination of rising demand, comparatively moderate competition and efficient cost structures. From the perspective of a logistics provider like Packeta, it is evident time and again that expansion into these markets can scale faster than many companies initially expect.

Central and Eastern Europe Is No Longer an Emerging Market

One of the most common misconceptions is that Central and Eastern Europe should still be considered a developing region. In reality, the data tells a different story. Poland, Czechia and Slovakia together represent roughly 65% of the German market size when measured by population and purchasing power parity. At the same time, marketing and customer acquisition costs in many sectors remain significantly lower than in Western Europe.

Equally important is the region's digital maturity. Internet penetration and online shopping behaviour in many CEE countries are comparable to Germany and Austria. In Czechia and Slovakia, the proportion of active internet users who shop online is similar to Austria and in some cases even higher.

This combination of digital maturity and ongoing growth potential makes the region particularly attractive from a business perspective. While many Western European markets are already saturated, e-commerce in parts of Eastern Europe is still expanding dynamically.

Recent analyses further confirm this trend. Forecasts suggest that e-commerce in Eastern Europe is expected to grow significantly faster than in many Western markets over the coming years. At the same time, competition levels are often lower, allowing new entrants to gain visibility and market share more quickly. This combination of growth and reduced saturation creates an environment that is especially attractive for expanding online retailers.

Competitive Landscape: Less Saturation, More Opportunity

Beyond demand dynamics, competitive intensity plays a critical role in market selection. Western Europe is often dominated by large platforms and established brand ecosystems, meaning new entrants must invest heavily in marketing simply to gain visibility.

In many CEE markets, the situation is different. While strong local players and marketplaces exist, the overall structure is less concentrated than in Western Europe. This creates better opportunities for international retailers to build market share and brand awareness without immediately facing the same level of competitive pressure seen in markets such as France or the UK.

For example, Poland is home to Allegro, one of Europe's largest marketplaces, with millions of active buyers and extremely high market penetration. At the same time, however, the Polish ecosystem still leaves room for independent online shops to grow alongside marketplace presence. Many international retailers successfully combine their own webshops with marketplace strategies, using platforms like Allegro to accelerate market entry and brand visibility.

A similar dynamic can be observed in Czechia, where local champions such as Alza or Mall.cz dominate certain categories, while price comparison platforms like Heureka play a central role in the customer journey. Rather than creating insurmountable barriers, these platforms often function as entry points for international sellers, enabling rapid visibility and customer acquisition without requiring large upfront marketing investments.

Compared to highly consolidated Western European markets dominated by global players, this combination of strong local ecosystems and remaining growth potential creates a more accessible competitive environment for retailers entering Central and Eastern Europe.

There is also an important cultural factor that is frequently underestimated: German products enjoy a strong reputation across much of Central and Eastern Europe. Quality, reliability and technical excellence are strongly associated with Germany. In categories such as beauty, home goods, DIY, electronics and automotive products, retailers often benefit from this positive perception. In practice, German online shops frequently build trust faster in CEE markets than in many Western European ones - provided localisation and logistics are executed properly.

Logistics as a Strategic Competitive Advantage

A decisive difference between Western and Eastern Europe today lies not only in demand or competition, but in logistics structures. While Germany remains heavily focused on home delivery, many Eastern European markets have developed alternative delivery ecosystems centred around out-of-home solutions such as parcel shops and lockers.

This infrastructure fundamentally changes shipping economics. Deliveries can be consolidated, failed delivery attempts are reduced, routes become more efficient and transport capacity utilisation improves. As a result, both costs and CO_2 emissions per parcel decrease.

Parcel locker networks illustrate this transformation particularly clearly. Countries like Poland and Czechia invested early in such systems and now rank among the regions with the highest locker density in Europe. In many cities, pickup points are located just a few minutes' walk away. For consumers, this means flexibility; for retailers, higher delivery success rates and predictable costs.

For retailers, this creates a strategic advantage that is often overlooked: in certain scenarios, shipping to Central and Eastern Europe can be more cost-efficient than domestic home delivery within Germany. Many companies find this counterintuitive, as international logistics is commonly perceived as more expensive.

Structural Advantage: Scalable Delivery Models

From a logistics perspective, out-of-home delivery creates a system that becomes more efficient as volumes increase. For growth-oriented retailers, this is critical because increasing parcel volumes do not automatically lead to proportionally higher costs.

Whereas home delivery is heavily dependent on labour and time, locker networks allow for far greater scalability. At the same time, sustainability metrics improve because delivery vehicles require fewer stops and routes can be optimised more effectively.

In an environment of rising transport costs and increasing regulatory pressure related to sustainability, this factor is becoming strategically more important.

Geographic Proximity: An Underestimated Benefit

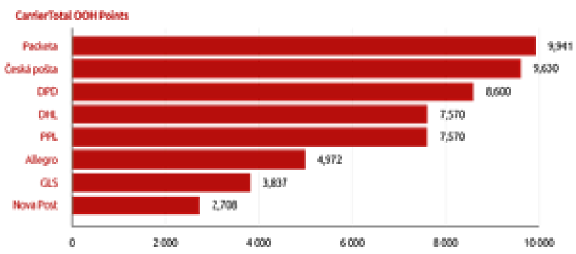
Another aspect that often receives insufficient attention in strategic discussions is geography. Many Central and Eastern European markets are closer to German logistics hubs than parts of Western Europe. Transport routes to Prague or Brno from southern or eastern Germany are often faster than deliveries to remote regions of France or Spain.

This proximity reduces transit times, simplifies returns processes and enables flexible delivery models. For retailers, this translates into lower complexity combined with high service quality.

Deep Dive: Why Czechia Is an Especially Attractive Market

With e-commerce accounting for roughly 10–15 % of total retail sales, Czechia has reached a level comparable to several Western European markets such as France or Austria and even surpasses countries like Italy or Spain. This illustrates that the Czech market is far more mature than many retailers assume when considering expansion opportunities in Central and Eastern Europe.

Top 8 Out-of-Home Parcel Networks in the Czech Republic



At the same time, the market is highly digital. More than half of consumers were already using mobile devices for online purchases by 2021, while desktop remains relevant. This multi-device usage reflects the digital maturity of the market.

Consumer behaviour itself is also evolving. While price used to be the dominant driver, customer experience is becoming increasingly important. Shoppers value selection, convenience and reliable delivery - developments that were previously observed in Western Europe. The delivery structure in Czechia is particularly noteworthy. Deliveries to pickup points and partner stores are among the most popular shipping methods, reaching approximately 42% share, while private courier delivery accounts for around 28%.

This preference once again highlights the importance of out-of-home delivery. For retailers, it creates a system that offers both economic and environmental benefits. At the same time, strong consumer acceptance increases the success probability for international sellers, since no fundamental behavioural change is required.

From Logistics Efficiency to Strategic Growth Potential

For many retailers, logistics is initially perceived as an operational consideration rather than a strategic lever. However, when evaluating expansion into Central and Eastern Europe, logistics efficiency becomes directly linked to market entry risk and long-term profitability.

The ability to leverage established out-of-home delivery networks, combined with geographic proximity to Germany, significantly reduces complexity compared to more distant international markets. Retailers are not starting from scratch; instead, they are entering ecosystems where infrastructure, consumer behaviour and delivery preferences are already aligned with scalable cross-border operations.

This changes the expansion equation fundamentally. Rather than facing high upfront investment with uncertain returns, which is a common challenge in saturated Western European markets, companies can enter CEE markets with comparatively lower barriers and faster feedback loops. Early traction can often be achieved with moderate investment, allowing retailers to validate demand before committing to deeper localisation or infrastructure expansion. For decision-makers, this translates into a more favourable risk-to-reward ratio. Expansion becomes less about long-term speculation and more about structured growth testing within reachable markets.

Strategic Perspective: Why Looking East Makes Sense

Market expansion decisions should always consider multiple dimensions: demand potential, competition, cost structure, logistics and scalability. When these factors are evaluated holistically, Central and Eastern Europe emerges as a strategically logical expansion path for many retailers.

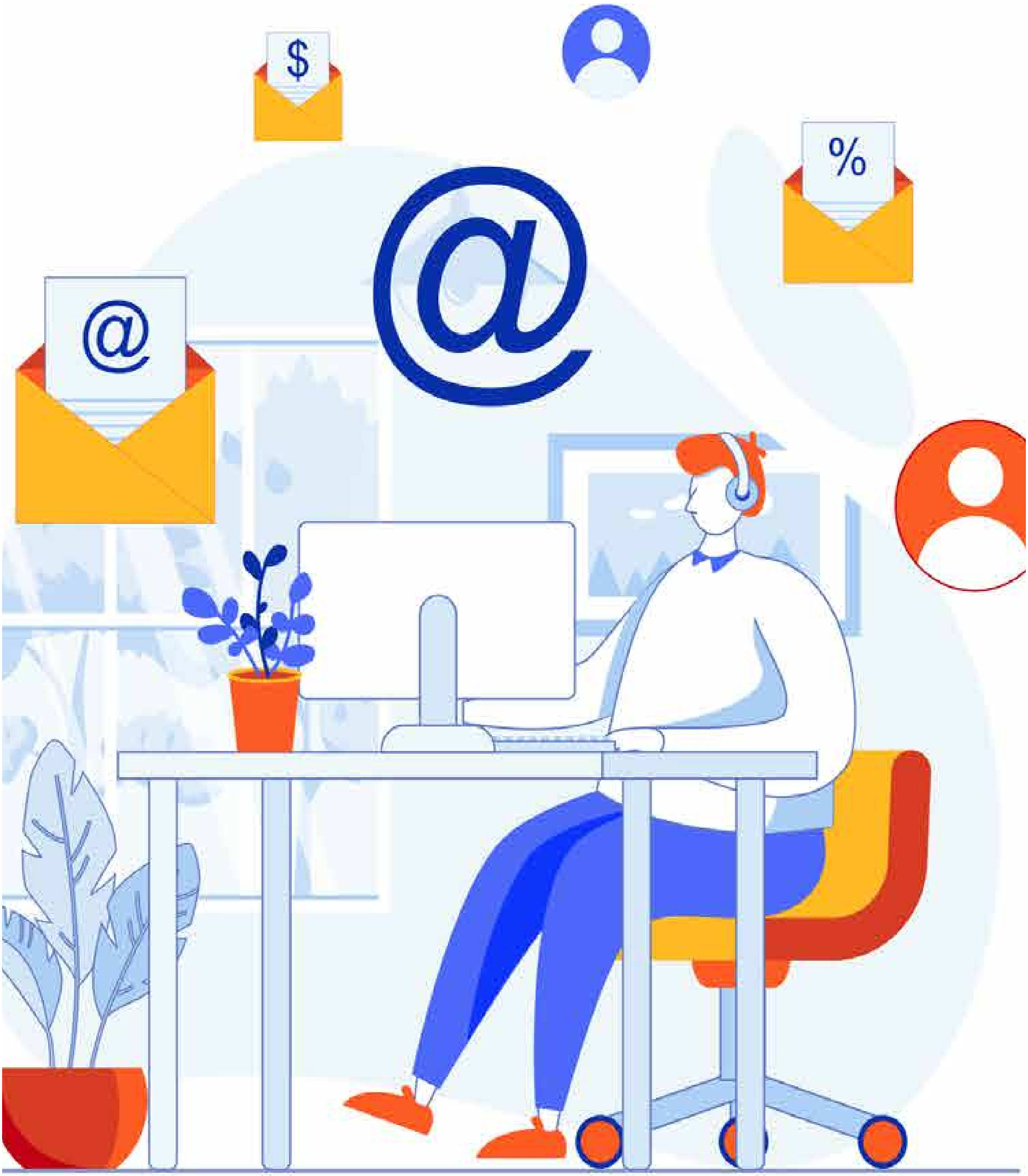
While Western Europe is often characterised by high marketing costs, intense competition and complex market structures, CEE offers a combination of growth, efficiency and proximity. Markets such as Czechia, in particular, provide relatively low-risk entry points into international expansion, especially for companies looking to test cross-border potential before committing to more distant markets. For many retailers, the region can therefore function as a stepping stone for broader internationalisation strategies.

Conclusion: Rethinking Expansion Strategy

The traditional expansion logic of German online retailers originates from a time when economic differences within Europe were more pronounced than today. That reality has changed. Central and Eastern Europe has evolved into a dynamic, digitally advanced commercial region with strong growth momentum and modern consumer expectations.

For retailers seeking growth, looking east may therefore not only be sensible - but strategically advantageous. Modern logistics infrastructures, high online affinity and positive perceptions of German products create conditions that are increasingly rare in Western European markets.

From Packeta's perspective, real-world experience consistently shows that companies entering these markets early secure competitive advantages that are difficult to replicate later. Retailers that recognise this shift today position themselves ahead of competitors who continue to focus exclusively on traditional Western expansion paths. ••



CONVERSATIONAL E-COMMERCE: UNIFYING OCT8NE AND WHATSAPP TO SKYROCKET YOUR SALES CUSTOMER SERVICE

Text: Ilaria Carboni // Photos: Oct8ne, Unsplash Vector Elements

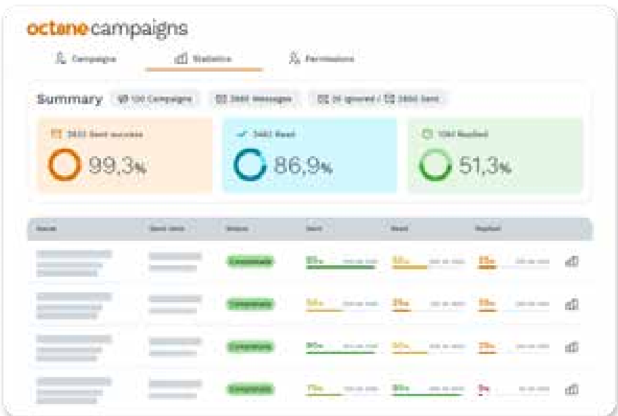
In today's e-commerce landscape, customers don't want to wait. They don't want to fill out a form and receive an email 24 hours later. They want answers now. This is where Conversational e-commerce stops being an option and becomes the growth engine for leading brands.

But how do you manage thousands of inquiries across your website, Instagram, and WhatsApp without losing control? The key lies in the strategic combination of Oct8ne's AI Agent and the untapped potential of WhatsApp Marketing.

The Oct8ne AI Agent: Your Best 24/7 Salesperson

The Oct8ne AI Agent isn't just a basic "FAQ" chatbot. It is a commerce-focused solution that understands context and drives decision-making by offering ultra-personalized, visual responses through full product catalog integration.

- *Omnichannel Support (Web & Social Media):* Whether a customer reaches out via your online store's chat, Instagram Direct, WhatsApp, or Facebook Messenger, the AI centralizes the entire conversation.
- *Visual Sales*: This is the true game-changer. Unlike other AIs, Oct8ne allows you to showcase products in real-time within the chat window. The AI doesn't just answer questions; it "shows" the catalog through coviewing.



- *Filtering and Qualification*: The AI resolves over 80% of routine inquiries (e.g., "Where is my order?" or "Is this in stock?"). If it detects a complex sales opportunity, it seamlessly scales the conversation to a human agent.

Driving Direct Demand with WhatsApp Marketing

While on-site chat captures those already visiting you, WhatsApp is the tool to go out and find the customer. Implementing WhatsApp Marketing campaigns allows for:

- *Precise Segmentation:* Send personalized notifications about new launches, abandoned carts, weekly offers, discounts etc..
- *High Open Rates:* WhatsApp boasts an open rate of over 90%, compared to the 20% average for traditional email marketing.
- *Zero Friction:* The customer receives a message and, with a single tap, initiates a conversation that can lead directly to a purchase.

The Ideal Flow: From Campaign to Permanent Conversion

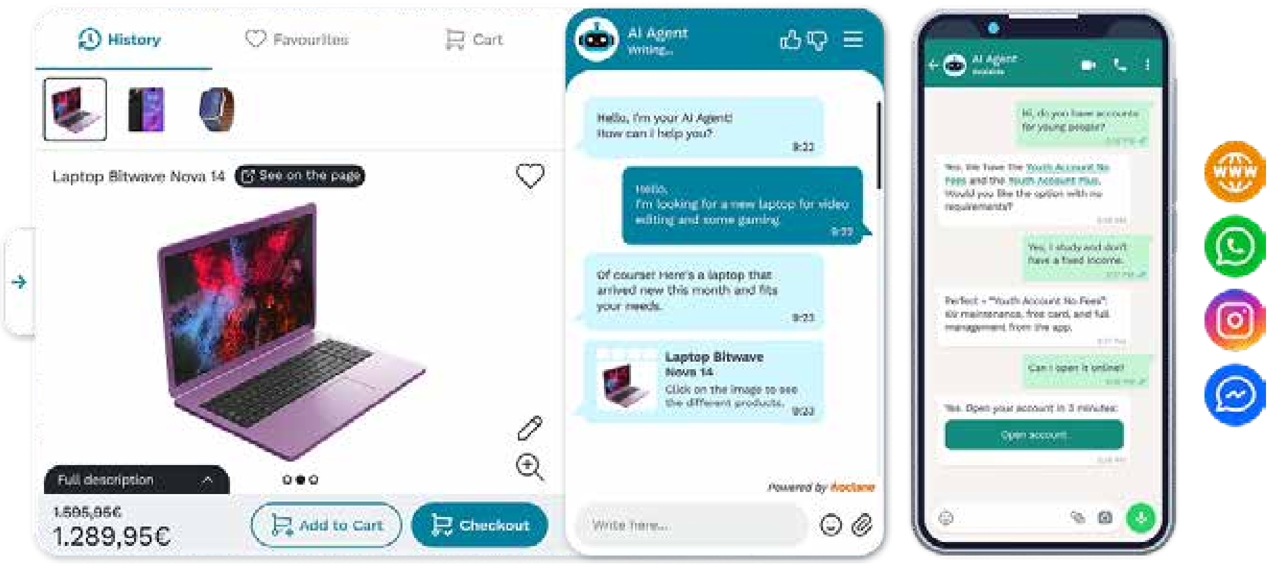
How do you connect all the pieces? Here is the "Master Flow":

1. *Attraction (WhatsApp):* Launch a WhatsApp campaign with an exclusive offer. The message includes a quick-reply button.
2. *Initial Interaction (AI Agent):* When the customer responds, Oct8ne's AI Agent takes over, resolving doubts about sizing, materials, or availability in seconds.
3. *Omnichannel Continuity:* If that same customer visits your website later, the AI Agent recognizes them. The conversation doesn't start from scratch; it picks up right where it left off on WhatsApp or Instagram.
4. *Visual Closing:* Through Oct8ne's visual support, the customer sees the product, is convinced, and completes the checkout within the conversational flow.

Conclusion: Build Relationships, Not Just Transactions

The success of conversational e-commerce isn't just about making a single sale; it's about creating an open line of communication with your customers. By integrating the Oct8ne AI Agent with your social channels and WhatsApp, you transform your customer service into an efficient, human-centric sales machine.

Ready to scale your e-commerce? Conversational technology is no longer the future—it is the standard. Start automating today without losing the personal touch. ••



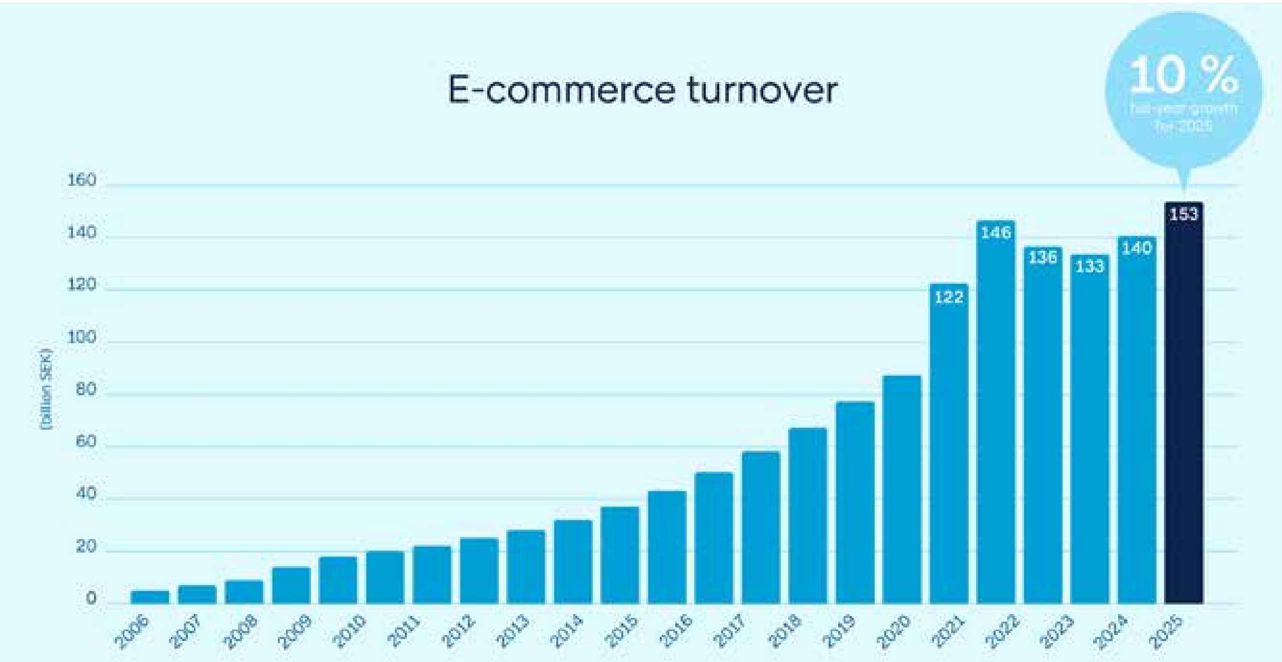
RECORD YEAR FOR SWEDISH E-COMMERCE

Text: Malin Herzig // Photos: PostNord

Swedish e-commerce recorded a landmark year in 2025. Total online sales increased by 10 percent compared with the previous year, reaching SEK 153 billion, the highest level ever recorded in Sweden. This surpasses the previous peak from 2021, when e-commerce turnover amounted to SEK 140 billion. Growth was broad-based and consistent throughout the year. Seven out of eight e-commerce sectors reported positive development in every quarter of 2025, signalling a clear shift after several years of economic slowdown. The strongest growth was seen in Furniture & Home Interior and Pharmacy, both of which achieved annual growth rates of 18 percent.

Economic Recovery Drives Online Retail Growth

Following several challenging years marked by low economic activity, 2025 became a year of recovery. Household purchasing power improved, economic conditions stabilized, and consumer spending increased, benefiting retail overall and contributing to record-high online sales. E-commerce also continued to gain market



share from physical retail, growing at a faster pace than total retail trade during the year.

The total share of e-commerce within Swedish retail increased to 15 percent in 2025. Most sub-sectors saw rising online penetration, except for grocery retail, where the e-commerce share remained stable at 4 percent. Online pharmacy stood out as the sector that strengthened its position the most, increasing its e-commerce share by 3 percentage points.

After a year of recovery and strong growth, Swedish e-commerce enters 2026 with a solid position and favorable conditions for continued development. At the same time, the overall e-commerce share has remained relatively stable at 14–16 percent over recent years.

primarily offer accessibility and convenience, while physical stores continue to play a key role in delivering experiences and building customer relationships.

E-commerce Continues to Gain Share in Retail

E-commerce experienced long-awaited growth throughout 2025. The year started positively and maintained momentum across all quarters. By year-end, all sectors except one reported positive full-year growth.

After several years of dominance at the top of the growth rankings, pharmacy e-commerce was joined by furniture and home interior as the fastest-growing sectors. At the other end of the spectrum, Books & Media showed the weakest performance, declining by 3 percent. All other e-commerce sectors grew by at least 5 percent,

E-commerce Evolves with Social Commerce and AI

E-commerce growth in 2025 was not only about higher sales volumes but also about structural change. One notable trend is the continued rise of social commerce, where social media platforms play an increasingly important role in the consumer journey.

At the same time, the use and importance of artificial intelligence within e-commerce continued to expand. In 2025, consumers in the United States were, for the first time, able to shop directly via AI agents. While this functionality is not yet available in Sweden, Swedish consumers are already using AI tools to explore product ranges, compare alternatives, and find products tailored to their needs. As AI adoption accelerates, the competitive landscape for online retailers is evolving, making it increasingly important to adapt to these new technologies.

Overall, the developments of 2025 confirm that e-commerce is now a natural and integrated part of both retail and everyday consumer life. Physical retail and e-commerce serve partly different needs: digital channels

an encouraging sign compared with the previous year, when only three sectors reached similar growth levels. This points to a broad recovery and reinforces the role of e-commerce within Swedish retail.

Online sales also outpaced total retail growth during the year, further increasing e-commerce's overall share of the market.

Cross-border E-commerce Remains Strong, and Large Marketplaces with Broad Assortments Dominate

Nearly half of Swedish consumers, 45 percent, have purchased goods from foreign online stores during the past year, a level unchanged from 2024. China remains the most common country of origin for cross-border purchases, accounting for 27 percent of international shopping (up from 25 percent in 2024), followed by Germany at 23 percent and Denmark at 12 percent, both unchanged year on year. Purchases from the United Kingdom declined to 8 percent (from 11 percent), while the United States accounted for 7 percent (down from 8 percent). Cross-border e-commerce is most common among consumers aged 30-49, where 55 percent have shopped internationally, followed by those aged 50-64, at 46 percent.

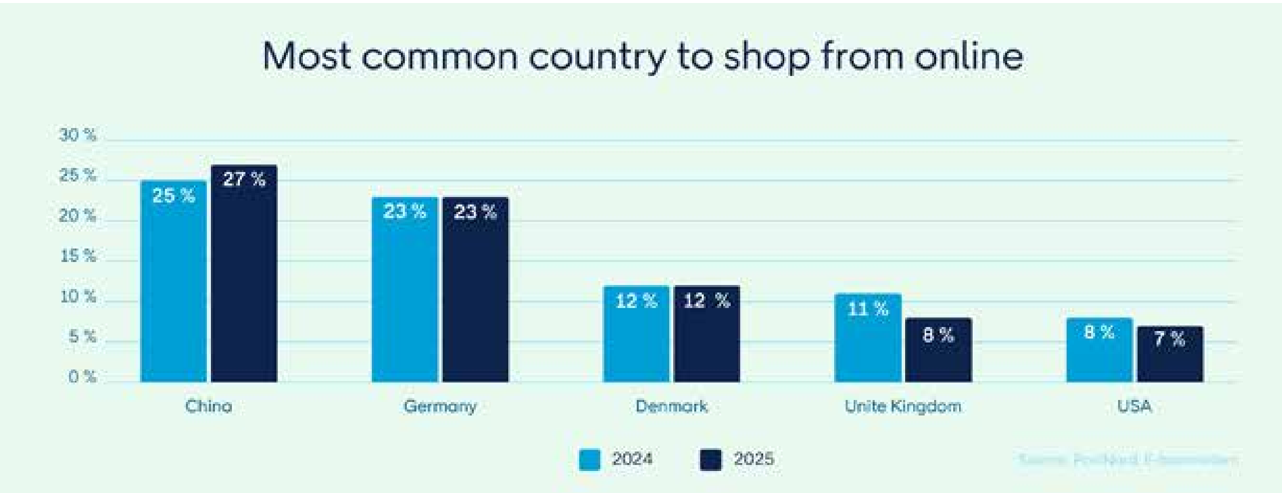
When it comes to preferred international marketplaces in different age groups, there are clear generational differences. While Amazon remained the most popular platform across all age groups in 2024, Temu overtook Amazon among older consumers in 2025. This shift is also reflected in rankings of consumers' favorite e-commerce sites, where Temu climbed from eighth to seventh place, while Amazon retained its second-place position. Both platforms offer broad assortments, often with wide variations in price and quality.

Almost one in four consumers purchased from China and Temu in the past month alone. In just over two years, Swedish consumers are estimated to have spent at least SEK 6 billion on the platform. The strong uptake highlights how attractive low prices are, particularly among older consumers.

However, upcoming regulatory changes may influence future purchasing behavior. From summer 2026, parcels imported from outside the EU with a value below EUR 150 will also be subject to customs clearance. This could affect consumer demand from low-cost Chinese platforms such as Temu. Purchases from platforms like Zalando and Amazon, which largely ship goods from within the EU, are expected to be less affected.

How different generations will adapt their cross-border shopping habits in response to these changes remains to be seen, particularly as new customs regulations come into force.

As the market moves forward, Swedish e-commerce enters a new phase defined less by recovery and more by transformation. Strong growth, rising consumer confidence, and continued digital adoption have reinforced e-commerce as a permanent pillar of retail. At the same time, shifting consumer behaviors, the rapid rise of global marketplaces, expanding use of AI, and forthcoming regulatory changes will place new demands on retailers. Success will increasingly depend on the ability to balance price, trust, sustainability, and customer experience across both domestic and cross-border channels during 2026. The resilience shown during 2025 suggests that Swedish e-commerce is well-positioned to adapt, even as the rules of competition continue to evolve. ••



ABOUT THE REPORT:
Source: The PostNord E-barometer Annual Report 2025.
The Swedish annual report is based on information collected from retail companies in January 2026. A total of 101 companies in Sweden that sell goods over the internet participated in the survey. The consumer results are based on 12 monthly surveys with just over 1,200 respondents at each survey time (a total of approximately 15,000 respondents).

"TRANSLATING MY PRODUCT INFORMATION HAS LITTLE IMPACT"

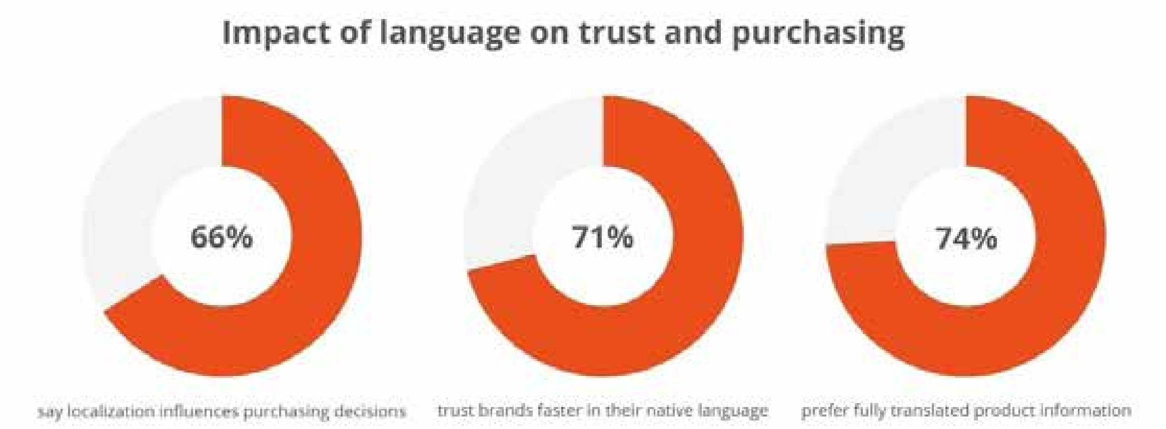
REALLY? OR ARE YOU MISSING OUT ON SALES?

Text: Ymke Lathouwers // Photos: Clonable, Pexels.com

You enthusiastically launch your English-language webshop abroad. But the orders fail to materialise. E-commerce companies often underestimate the importance of language. On platforms such as Amazon, international selling can seem deceptively simple. One listing with global reach. As a seller, you might quickly assume that an English product description on German Amazon will suffice. English feels like a safe choice. Universal, clear and inexpensive. But what if that choice is actually costing you customers?

The assumption: "English works fine"

The idea that translations yield little return is understandable. Marketing budgets are more readily spent on campaigns than on translation work. Many consumers also understand English reasonably well. The temptation is therefore strong to offer content in English and assume this will be sufficient.



What goes wrong in practice?

Yet something is amiss. In practice, customers tend to drop out, even when they understand the English text. Take Amazon as an example. A German consumer reads an English product description. They feel unsure about what is being communicated and then choose an alternative with a German description. Confidence in the product drops. Details are missed or trust in the webshop is simply lacking. Instead of buying, they click away. Sales are lost not because of the offer itself, but because of the way it is presented.

This behaviour is no exception. Research by CSA Research (2023) shows that 71% of international consumers are more likely to trust brands that offer content in their own language. In addition, 66% indicate that localisation has a direct influence on their purchasing decision. More specifically, 74% prefer to buy from webshops with fully translated product information. A significant share even state that they will not buy at all if content is unavailable in their own language.

Even when consumers understand English, localised product information makes them feel more confident. Decisions are made more quickly as a result.

Why language has such a strong impact

This uncertainty is not just a matter of perception. It is a well-documented pattern in international online purchasing behaviour. Research into cross-border e-commerce shows that success is not only about language comprehension. Information quality and trust play an equally important role. Well-translated and naturally readable product information reduces uncertainty and increases willingness to purchase. This effect is particularly strong in markets where language is closely associated with reliability (Zeng & Richardson, 2016; Broeder & Schouten, 2017). Less uncertainty quite simply leads to more purchases.

From translation to localisation

But there is more. Localisation goes beyond translation alone. It involves tailoring the entire customer experience to local expectations. According to the Ecommerce Localisation Index by Nimdzi Insights (2022), webshops with fully localised content achieve conversion rates that are on average 1.5 to 2 times higher than those of generic English-language sites.

This difference is not limited to wording. It also concerns terminology, keywords, payment methods, reviews and cultural preferences. A visitor should not only understand what you are selling. They should feel addressed and confident throughout the entire journey.

Dealing with translated content more intelligently

At the same time, many e-commerce companies struggle with the manageability of translated content. And rightly so. Manually translating thousands of products is costly. It is also error-prone and difficult to maintain. As a result, organisations look for ways to automate the process while retaining control.
At Clonable, we see these challenges every day. That is why we developed a solution that combines automated translations with local control. We convert entire webshops into another language and ensure that product descriptions, navigation and metadata are immediately available online. From there, local adjustments are straightforward. Prices can be adapted. Specific content can be rewritten. Pages can be excluded where needed. This approach maintains speed and oversight while keeping content up to date.

"LAUNCHING LOCAL LANGUAGE VERSIONS LED TO A NOTICEABLE INCREASE IN INTERNATIONAL VISIBILITY AND ENGAGEMENT."

Scan to read the full NFC World case

Trust and turnover: the example of NFC World

A concrete example is NFC World. This Dutch webshop specialises in NFC technology. The company expanded its site with German and French language versions to better serve international customers. Within a short period of time, the new sites were live. Structure, SEO and product information were fully retained. Customers were offered a familiar experience in their own language. The results were visible almost immediately. Impressions and clicks in Google increased. Engagement from new markets grew steadily.

What does this mean for you?

The message is clear. Language influences trust. Trust influences purchasing behaviour. Purchasing behaviour determines revenue. Companies aiming for international growth cannot afford to treat language as an afterthought. Take a critical look at your product pages through the eyes of a foreign visitor. Are the specifications clear? Do your USPs translate effectively? Do payment methods and reviews feel familiar and trustworthy? Every detail matters.

Language sells

The assumption that "translating my product information has little impact" does not hold. Data, practice and psychology all point in the same direction. Language sells. Those who speak the customer's language earn their trust. If you want to make an impact across borders, speak the language of your customer. ••

SOURCES:

Zeng, W. & Richardson, A. (2016). The Role of Translated Information Quality In a Global E-retailing Context. Journal of Electronic Commerce Research.

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ENTERING THE UK E-COMMERCE MARKET:

HOW TO SELL SUCCESSFULLY IN THE UK

Text: Katharina Knoop // Photos: exporto

For many retailers from the DACH region, the UK is one of the most attractive expansion markets in Europe. High online affinity, strong purchasing power, and a well-developed marketplace culture make the UK an exciting market—but also a demanding one. In this article, we show what the UK e-commerce market looks like in 2026, how British consumers shop online and which factors truly determine a successful market entry.

Overview: The UK e-commerce market

Online retail is firmly embedded in everyday life in the United Kingdom. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the share of internet sales in total UK retail was 27.4% in 2025. During peak periods such as the Christmas season, this figure rises significantly – to around 32.3% in November 2025.

In addition, Statista data shows that almost all British consumers – close to 85% – shop online. This makes the UK one of the most mature e-commerce markets in Europe. For 2026, revenue is forecast at USD 136.6 billion with further growth expected to USD 159.31 billion by 2030.

For you as a retailer, this means: the market is large, established and highly competitive. Anyone selling in the UK will meet experienced online shoppers with clear expectations.

UK customer buying behaviour: What British shoppers want

If you want to sell in the UK, you should understand how British consumers shop and make decisions.

Habits and devices: Mobile is the standard

E-commerce is part of daily life in the United Kingdom and UK customers have established shopping routines and expectations. 87% of British consumers shop online at least once a month – often on mobile: 69% use their smartphone for online shopping.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR RETAILERS: CREATE A CONSISTENTLY POSITIVE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE. FOCUS ON A MOBILE-FIRST STRATEGY INCLUDING FAST LOADING TIMES, SIMPLE NAVIGATION AND AN OPTIMISED CHECKOUT FOR ALL SCREEN SIZES.

Purchase preferences and motivations

The most in-demand products include clothing, shoes, cosmetics and personal care. Groceries and beverages as well as electronics and household goods are also frequently purchased. Price alone rarely determines where these items are bought. Convenience, transparency and selection carry more weight.

Before making larger purchases, the majority of British consumers (59%) generally research online first. 57% also find reviews from other customers particularly helpful before making a purchase themselves – a sign that social validation matters.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR RETAILERS: PRODUCT PAGES SHOULD BE CLEARLY STRUCTURED, INFORMATIVE AND INCLUDE REVIEWS. IF YOU RELY SOLELY ON PRICE, YOU WILL QUICKLY LOSE TO PROVIDERS WITH A BETTER SERVICE EXPERIENCE.

Checkout, delivery and returns

Long delivery times, missing payment options or unexpected additional costs are among the most common reasons for cart abandonment worldwide. UK customers are no exception. Free and fast delivery options are at the top of UK customers' wish list as is the ability to process returns without additional fees. 70% of carts are abandoned when expectations at checkout are not met.

The most popular payment methods in the United Kingdom are debit and credit cards, digital wallets (Apple Pay/Google Pay) and PayPal, with BNPL ("buy now, pay later") options becoming increasingly common, such as paying in instalments or paying later.

When it comes to delivery, British consumers tend to be more conservative: the majority prefer classic home delivery by postal van.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR RETAILERS: ENSURE TRANSPARENCY AROUND DELIVERY COSTS AND DELIVERY TIMES. INTEGRATE LOCAL AND PREFERRED PAYMENT METHODS AND CONSISTENTLY DELIVER A SMOOTH, MOBILE-OPTIMISED PAYMENT PROCESS.

Cross-border or local?

British consumers are traditionally open to buying from international retailers, especially from China, the US and Germany. That said, many shoppers still prefer retailers that:

- offer fast delivery times
- enable transparent returns
- do not cause hidden customs duties or additional charges

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR RETAILERS: SINCE BREXIT, CUSTOMS, VAT AND DELIVERY TIMES HAVE BECOME CENTRAL COMPETITIVE FACTORS. INTERNATIONAL SHOPS SUCCEED WHEN THEY CREATE A SHOPPING EXPERIENCE THAT IS AS CONVENIENT FOR UK CUSTOMERS AS SHOPPING WITH LOCAL PROVIDERS.

Popular channels and marketplaces in the UK

Anyone who wants to sell in the UK should also be aware that the purchasing process often does not begin in their own online shop, but on platforms.

Online marketplaces dominate

According to Statista, Amazon UK is by far the most popular UK marketplace: 78% of consumers said in 2025 that they shop there. It is followed by eBay (34%) and Argos (32%). For many product categories, marketplaces are the most important entry point in the customer journey.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR RETAILERS: DECIDE EARLY WHETHER YOUR ASSORTMENT SHOULD BE MARKETPLACE-LED OR MORE D2C-ORIENTED. IN MANY CASES, A HYBRID APPROACH PROVES EFFECTIVE – REACH VIA MARKETPLACES AND BRAND BUILDING VIA YOUR OWN SHOP.

Social commerce is growing

Social commerce is also becoming increasingly relevant in the United Kingdom – particularly among younger target groups, as statistics on UK online purchasing behaviour show:

- 32% of British consumers have already bought products directly via social media.
- Facebook and Instagram are among the most important platforms for social commerce. At the same time, TikTok is becoming increasingly relevant, especially for direct purchases.
- In the 18 to 34 age group and in product categories such as fashion, beauty and lifestyle, social commerce is above average in relevance.
- In addition, consumers discover new products more and more often via platforms such as Instagram or TikTok before then purchasing on marketplaces or in online shops.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR RETAILERS: IF YOU WANT TO GROW IN THE UK, YOU SHOULD FIRMLY INTEGRATE SOCIAL ADS, CREATOR COLLABORATIONS AND SHOPPABLE CONTENT INTO YOUR MARKET ENTRY STRATEGY.

Success factors for entering the UK e-commerce market

To sell successfully in the UK market, you need more than listed products. From the market and consumer insights, three key levers emerge: strategic preparation, operational decisions and targeted visibility.

Strategic preparation

Before you start, define your market position precisely. This helps you avoid entering the market with an uncompetitive offer. This includes:

- *Market research and target group analysis*: Analyse which regions and age segments are relevant for your product. Younger target groups buy more frequently via social commerce while others rely more on classic marketplaces. Also consider price sensitivity and calculate realistically in GBP.
- *Competitor analysis:* Check who is already selling successfully in your category – especially on Amazon UK and other leading platforms. Prices, delivery times, reviews and returns conditions set the benchmark for customer expectations.

Operational decisions

In cross-border e-commerce from the DACH region to the UK, process quality determines market success. Particularly important are:

- *Logistics and fulfilment:* Fast, predictable delivery is the standard. Your logistics must realistically meet delivery times and remain stable as volumes grow.
- *VAT and customs compliance:* Since Brexit, VAT registration, customs declarations and clean documentation are mandatory. Automated and integrated processes prevent delays and additional costs.
- *Returns strategy:* British customers expect simple, transparent returns. Clear processes and easy-to-understand communication directly impact reviews and repeat purchases.

Visibility and reach

Even the best setup delivers little if you are not visible. Without reach, there is no revenue. That is why retailers should:

- *Optimise marketplace listings:* Optimise titles, product descriptions, keywords and images specifically for the UK market. Reviews and delivery performance influence ranking and conversion.
- *Use social commerce:* Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram are gaining importance, especially among younger target groups. Plan social ads and shoppable content strategically.
- *Invest in local SEO and paid ads:* Optimise your shop for UK search queries and test targeted campaigns via Google UK and social media.

Master your UK market entry with exporto
To ensure that your entry into the British market does not fail due to operational details, we at exporto combine all relevant cross-border services into one integrated solution:

- Shipping to the UK in 2–3 working days
- Fast, local returns processing within a few working days
- Automated customs and VAT processes
- Integration of leading last-mile carriers in the United Kingdom
- Technical integration of all services from a single source

This enables a shopping experience that meets UK customer expectations around delivery speed, returns convenience and service while building an operational foundation that keeps pace with your growth.

Conclusion
The UK e-commerce market is large, digitally driven and demanding. Retailers who consistently align strategy, processes and visibility are the ones who succeed. Market understanding, stable operations and presence on the relevant channels – from marketplaces to mobile to social commerce – make the difference. For German retailers, a structured approach is recommended with clear market analysis, locally adapted logistics and integrated VAT processes.

At exporto, we support you with our solution to implement your entry into the UK e-commerce market in a structured and scalable way. ••

INTERESTED?
Get to know us and our solution without further obligation.

THE HIDDEN CONVERSION KILLERS IN CROSS-BORDER DTC

Text: Rafael Sant'Anna, Founder & CEO, e-CROSS // Photos: e-CROSS

Why payments, duties, delivery promise and localized CX must work as one system

Many DTC brands believe they are already selling cross-border simply because their website accepts international orders. Their store is visible globally, customers can technically buy from abroad, and parcels can be shipped internationally.

But being available internationally is not the same as being optimized for international conversion. That distinction matters more than ever. As cross-border e-commerce matures, brands are no longer competing only on product, price, or marketing efficiency. They are competing on trust, predictability, and operational coherence across the full buying journey. And in cross-border DTC, those qualities are much harder to deliver than they appear.

International customers do not experience payments, duties, delivery, and post-purchase support as separate workflows. They experience one buying decision. If any part of that journey feels uncertain, expensive, confusing, or unfamiliar, conversion drops.

That is why many brands misdiagnose their international performance. They look at traffic volume, CAC, or channel mix and assume the issue is top-of-funnel. In reality, the biggest revenue leak is often hidden deeper in the operating model: a fragmented cross-border experience that creates friction before, during, and after checkout. The next phase of international DTC growth will not be won by the brands that simply open more countries. It will be won by the brands that remove more friction.

The illusion of international readiness

For many e-commerce teams, international expansion begins with a straightforward question: "Can we ship there?" If the answer is yes, the market is considered open. But operationally, that is only the beginning.

A brand may have international traffic and even some international sales, while still underperforming badly in cross-border conversion. The reason is simple: most stores were built primarily for domestic conversion, then extended internationally through patches, plugins, and vendor layers. The front-end may look global, but the customer journey still feels foreign.

This is especially visible in four moments that define purchase confidence:

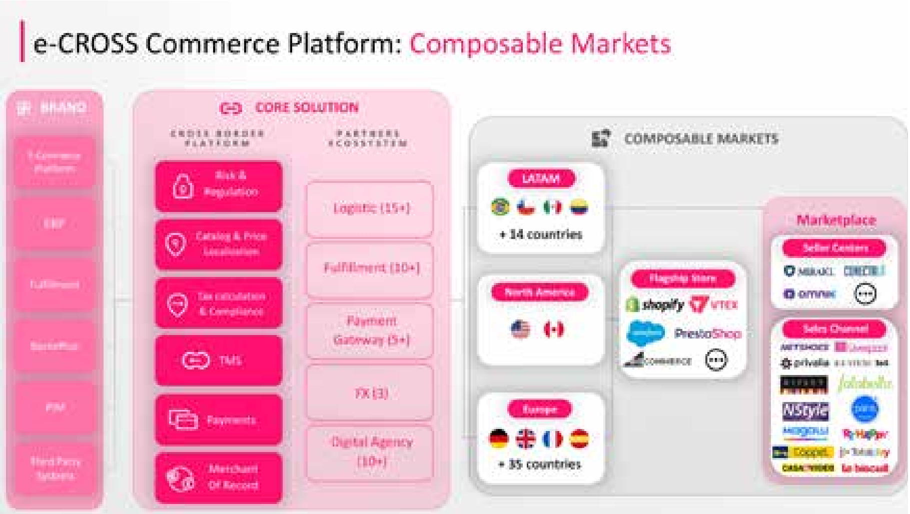
- whether the preferred payment experience is available,
- whether the total cost is clear before purchase,
- whether the delivery promise feels reliable,
- and whether the post-purchase journey feels local and trustworthy.

When one or more of those moments fail, customers hesitate. They may still browse, add to cart, or even initiate checkout. But they do not complete the purchase at the rate the brand expected. And if they do buy, operational friction often shows up later as higher support demand, disputes, failed deliveries, or low repeat purchase rates. In other words, many brands are not facing an international demand problem. They are facing an international confidence problem.

The first hidden killer: payment mismatch

The first friction point is often the most underestimated one: payment. Too many brands treat international payments as a basic processing function. If the credit card goes through, the system is working. But from the consumer's perspective, payment is not just about technical acceptance. It is about familiarity, trust, and ease.

Customers are more likely to convert when checkout reflects local expectations. That can include local currencies, relevant payment methods, installment logic where culturally expected, recognizable payment flows, and a fraud strategy that protects the brand without blocking legitimate demand.
A brand may be driving traffic successfully in a market, yet still lose conversion because the checkout does not feel native enough to complete the purchase with confidence. This is one of the most common cross-border blind spots. The brand sees



site visits and cart creation, but underestimates how quickly confidence drops when the customer reaches payment and feels forced into an unfamiliar process. At that moment, the brand is no longer competing only with direct competitors. It is competing with the customer's benchmark for local e-commerce.

A checkout that feels foreign creates a psychological tax. Even when the product is attractive, the customer starts asking silent questions: Will this charge go through correctly? Is this merchant really set up for my market? What happens if I need support? Why is this payment experience different from what I usually trust? Those doubts reduce conversion fast.

In cross-border DTC, a brand may have international traffic, but if checkout does not feel local, conversion stays foreign.

The second hidden killer: unclear landed cost

If payment drives trust, landed cost drives certainty. One of the fastest ways to lose an international sale is to leave customers unsure about what they will actually pay. Product price alone does not define the purchase decision in cross-border e-commerce. Duties, taxes, shipping fees, and possible import-related surprises all shape conversion.

Uncertainty is often more damaging than price itself. Customers may accept higher final costs if the value proposition is clear and the total is transparent. What they are far less willing to accept is ambiguity. If the final amount feels unpredictable, many will abandon cart rather than risk an unpleasant surprise later. This is particularly important for brands selling into markets where consumers are already sensitive to import fees, customs friction, or hidden charges. Even highly motivated customers will hesitate if they are not confident they understand the full cost of ownership before clicking "buy."
For brands, the consequences go beyond conversion loss. Poor landed cost transparency also creates downstream problems: more support tickets, more customer frustration, more refusals at delivery, and more pressure on margin when teams try to solve issues manually.

Transparent duties and taxes are not only a compliance or checkout matter. They are a conversion asset and a customer experience asset. The strongest cross-border brands understand that pricing clarity is part of the product experience. They do not force customers to mentally simulate risk. They reduce uncertainty upfront.

The third hidden killer: weak delivery promise

Many merchants still believe that "we ship internationally" is, by itself, a compelling value proposition. It is not.

International delivery is no longer judged only by whether the parcel arrives. It is judged by whether the promise feels credible at the time of purchase. Customers want to know when the order is likely to arrive, how reliable that estimate is, and what kind of experience they should expect along the way. A vague or generic shipping promise weakens confidence, even if the actual logistics operation is decent behind the scenes.

This is where many brands lose momentum. Their ads create desire, their product pages generate intent, their checkout may even survive initial friction, but the delivery promise is too weak to close the decision. "International shipping available" is not enough. "Estimated delivery in 7–21 business days" often sounds less like a promise and more like a warning. In cross-border DTC, speed matters, but reliability matters more.

A slightly longer delivery window can still convert well if it is presented with clarity and consistency. Customers are often willing to wait when expectations are properly set. What damages conversion is the sense that the merchant is not fully in control of the journey.

Delivery promise is also deeply linked to brand positioning. Premium brands, in particular, cannot afford an international experience that feels improvised. If the product is aspirational but the shipping communication feels generic, the customer perceives a disconnect. That disconnect reduces trust not only in logistics, but in the brand itself. A reliable delivery promise is not an operational footnote. It is part of the commercial offer.

The fourth hidden killer: non-localized post-purchase experience

For many teams, cross-border strategy is still too checkout-centric. But the international customer journey does not end when the payment is approved. In many cases, that is where trust is truly tested. Tracking communication, customs updates, delivery exceptions, return flows, and customer support all shape whether the customer feels reassured or abandoned after purchase. If the post-purchase experience is confusing, slow, or culturally misaligned, the brand pays for it later in lower retention, weaker word-of-mouth, and higher service costs.

This is especially important because international buyers usually take a higher perceived risk on the first order. They are buying from farther away, often across languages, currencies, and import rules. That means post-purchase communication carries more emotional weight than in domestic e-commerce.

When brands fail here, the damage is bigger than one support interaction. The customer concludes that the merchant was good at acquiring the order, but not fully prepared to fulfill the relationship. In cross-border DTC, post-purchase is not just a support function. It is part of the product. Brands that win internationally understand that localized customer experience is not limited to translated pages or local currencies. It includes how the order is explained, tracked, updated, and supported all the way to delivery and beyond.

Why fragmented operations create fragmented conversion

The common thread behind these four conversion killers is fragmentation. Payments may be handled by one provider, duties by another logic layer, logistics by multiple intermediaries, and customer communication by separate tools or teams. Each component may function reasonably well on its own. But from the customer's perspective, the result can still feel broken. That is because customers do not buy through org charts or vendor contracts. They buy through one continuous experience.

When cross-border operations are fragmented, teams also struggle internally. Visibility declines. Optimization becomes slower. Ownership becomes unclear. Metrics get separated by function rather than tied to the actual commercial journey. The brand sees payment issues, delivery complaints, tax questions, and support volume as isolated problems, when in reality they are connected symptoms of one system not working together.

Cross-border performance is no longer just about market access. It is about orchestration. The strongest operators increasingly treat cross-border as one revenue system: checkout localization, landed cost clarity, delivery reliability, and localized post-purchase all aligned around conversion and customer trust.

What high-performing brands do differently

The brands that scale international DTC more effectively usually do four things well.

- First, they design checkout for local confidence, not just global availability.
- Second, they make total cost understandable before purchase.
- Third, they turn delivery promise into a trust-building commercial asset.
- Fourth, they treat post-purchase communication as part of conversion quality, not just a service function.

Most importantly, they do not manage these elements in silos. They align them operationally.

That does not necessarily mean using fewer tools for the sake of simplicity. It means building a cross-border model where the customer experience is coherent, the data is visible, and the team can optimize the whole journey instead of firefighting disconnected parts of it. International growth becomes more sustainable when brands stop treating cross-border as a shipping extension and start treating it as a conversion system.

A simple executive checklist

If you are evaluating your cross-border performance, start with five questions:

- Does checkout reflect local payment expectations in your key markets?
- Can customers understand total landed cost before they purchase?
- Is your delivery promise clear enough to support confidence?
- Does post-purchase communication feel local and reassuring?
- Can your team see payments, duties, logistics, and CX as one operating flow?

If the answer to any of these is no, the issue is probably not demand alone. It is friction.

Final thought

Cross-border DTC has entered a more demanding phase. International customers have more choice, higher expectations, and less patience for uncertainty. Brands that want to grow globally cannot rely on product appeal alone. They must reduce invisible friction across the full buying journey. The winners will not simply be the brands that translate more pages, activate more markets, or ship to more countries. They will be the brands that make international shopping feel clear, trustworthy, and operationally seamless.

In cross-border e-commerce, conversion is rarely won by one feature alone. It is won when payments, duties, delivery promise, and customer experience work together as one system. ••

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Rafael Sant'Anna is Founder & CEO of e-CROSS, a technology-driven DTC cross-border solution that helps brands grow internationally through integrated payments, international logistics, duties & taxes, and localized customer experience.

POST-PURCHASE BENCHMARK BENELUX: HOW 100 MAJOR ONLINE SHOPS PERFORM DURING PEAK SEASON

Text: Ruud den Rooijen // Photos: Salesupply

Peak season in e-commerce is the ultimate stress test. Order volumes spike, carrier networks run hot, and customers still expect a smooth experience: clear delivery promises, proactive updates, easy returns, and fast refunds. No drama. No surprises.

That's exactly why Returnless, Salesupply and Sendcloud tested the post-purchase journeys of 100 of the largest webshops in the Netherlands and Belgium during Black Friday '25—and returned items in the December rush. We didn't just check whether parcels arrived. We audited the whole post-purchase journey: from promise to delivery, from return to refund, and from "where is my parcel?" to the reality of customer service availability.

Are you thinking to expand your online store to the Benelux? Or are you wondering why you are struggling in these comeptitive markets? Keep on reading.

The results show strong fundamentals on delivery performance, but also a few gaps that quietly drain loyalty and create unnecessary support volume.

Shipping & delivery

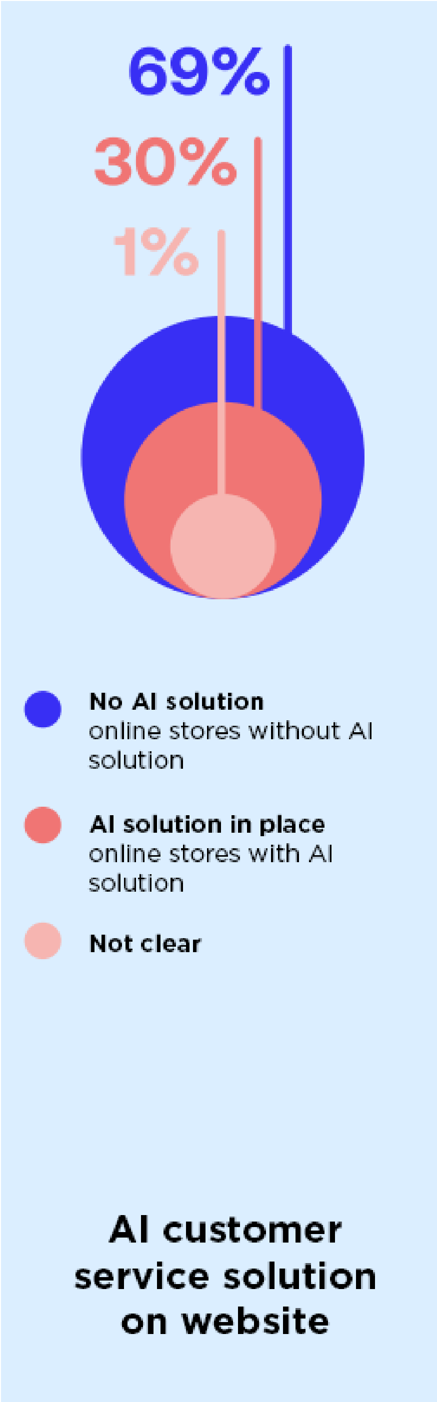
Delivery reliability held up well during peak. In the benchmark, 91% of orders arrived within the promised delivery window, and the average delivery time was 1.7 days. That's the reality of the Benelux market: shoppers are used to fast, predictable delivery, even when networks are stretched.

What separates a "good" shipping experience from a great one is communication. The best performers set expectations early, confirm dispatch clearly, and give updates that answer the real customer question: when will it arrive, and what can I do if I'm not home? That reduces anxiety and prevents the classic refresh-track-refresh loop.

The bigger weakness isn't speed. It's choice. Only 15% of webshops allow customers to choose the carrier at checkout. Consumers often have strong preferences based on parcel shop coverage, local reliability, and past experiences. Remove choice and you increase the odds of missed deliveries, "not my carrier" frustration, and WISMO ("Where is my order?") messages that could have been avoided.

Returns & refunds

Returns have changed. Free returns are no longer the default promise: 70% of webshops charge for returns. That can work



fine when policies are easy to find, explained plainly, and consistent across channels. If not, return costs may feel like a punishment afterwards.

The operational maturity is mixed. Only 55% of retailers offer a returns portal, meaning almost half still rely on manual steps, email instructions, or fragmented flows. A portal reduces back-and-forth, standardises data collection, and gives you structured return reasons you can use to improve product pages, sizing guidance, or packaging.

Refunds are the trust moment. In 36% of cases, the refund process lacked clear updates: no "return received", no status, no proactive confirmation that money is on the way. Silence triggers tickets and suspicion, and it turns a routine return into a negative memory. The strongest journeys follow a simple rhythm: confirm receipt, tell the customer what happens next, and close the loop once the refund is initiated.

Customer service

Customer service is the safety net when delivery or returns wobble—and a conversion tool when shoppers hesitate – but only when available. Most webshops cover standard hours well: 92% are reachable during weekday office hours. But availability drops exactly when many people shop. Only 28% offer customer service on weekday evenings, leaving a gap during prime browsing and buying time.

When support isn't reachable, customers improvise: they email (and wait), they DM you publicly, or they abandon the cart and buy somewhere else. That's why "opening hours" is not just an ops - or cost topic, it's a revenue topic.

The online shops offer an average of 3.25 customer service channels, with email and phone still dominant. WhatsApp is surprisingly underused with only 44% of stores offering it. A missed opportunity, since the channel offers vast automation opportunities to help with the limited availability of customer service.

The same can be said of the adoption of AI for customer service: 69% had no AI service solution (chatbot) online. Many retailers still spend human time on FAQs (wismo, returns & refunds) during the exact weeks when human time is most scarce. AI chat can perfectly take care of these repetitive questions, also during the evenings and weekends when your human customer service team is enjoying their well-deserved time-off. ••

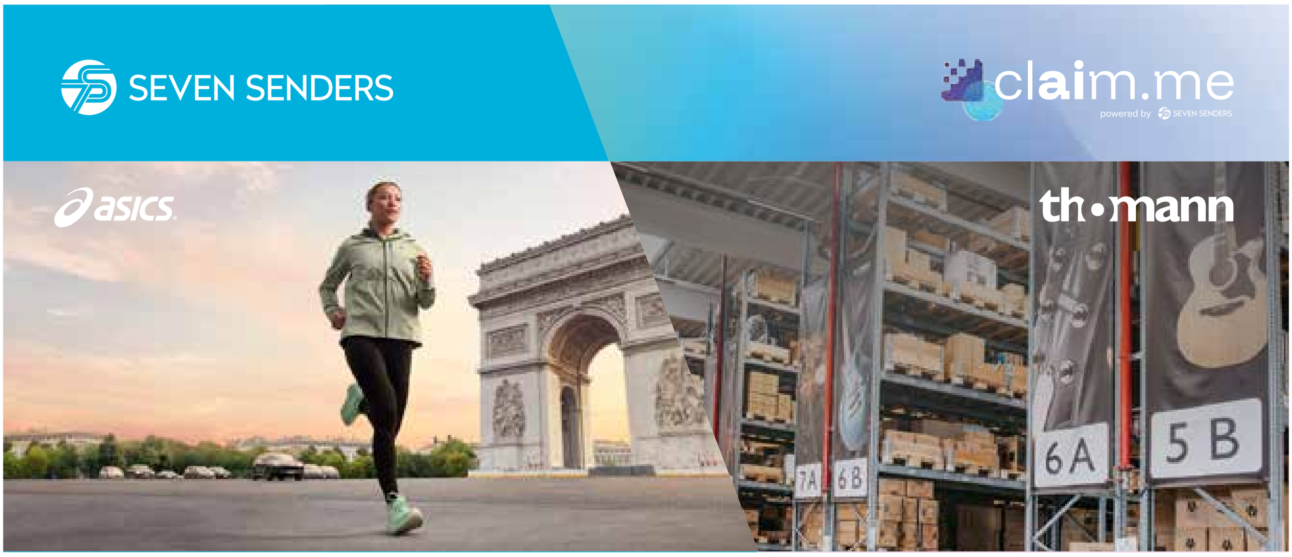
PRACTICAL QUICK WINS

1. SHOW DELIVERY TIME CLEARLY ON PRODUCT PAGES AND IN CHECKOUT
2. SHOW SHIPPING COSTS EARLY (AND BE CLEAR ABOUT FREE-SHIPPING THRESHOLDS)
3. OFFER MORE DELIVERY CHOICE (PARCEL SHOP/PICK-UP; CARRIER CHOICE WHERE POSSIBLE)
4. MAKE RETURN REGISTRATION SELF-SERVICE (RETURNS PORTAL OR AT LEAST ONE CLEAR FLOW)
5. COMMUNICATE RETURN COSTS BEFORE PURCHASE (PRODUCT PAGE/ CHECKOUT)
6. SEND PROACTIVE REFUND UPDATES (RETURN RECEIVED + REFUND INITIATED)
7. OFFER EXCHANGE/STORE CREDIT AS AN OPTION (DON'T PUSH IT, PRESENT IT SMARTLY)
8. ALIGN OPENING HOURS WITH SHOPPING MOMENTS (EVEN IF IT'S "LIGHT" EVENING COVER)
9. USE WHATSAPP AND AI TO REDUCE PRESSURE AND SUPPORT CUSTOMERS OUTSIDE OPENING HOURS

HOW ASICS TURNS INTERNATIONAL PARCEL DELIVERY INTO A LOCAL EXPERIENCE AND HOW THOMANN SCALES EFFICIENTLY WITH CLAIMS SOFTWARE

Text: Willemijn Bruinsma, Sr Field Marketing Manager // Photos: Seven Senders

As e-commerce continues to grow, parcel logistics becomes about much more than shipping alone. Brands need systems that scale across countries and carriers while meeting rising customer expectations. This is exactly what ASICS and Thomann have achieved with Seven Senders and claim.me (powered by Seven Senders). While ASICS focused on improving delivery and returns through a fully customized last-mile carrier network, Thomann strengthened operational efficiency by centralizing and automating carrier claims management. Together, their stories highlight a shared insight: better logistics outcomes are driven by visibility, standardization, and the right processes at every step of the parcel journey.



ASICS: Seven Senders enables ASICS to achieve linehaul costs savings in addition to higher customer satisfaction with their local last mile carrier network

ASICS has become synonymous with high-quality footwear and apparel. The name ASICS stands for "Anima Sana In Corpore Sano" a Sound Mind in a Sound Body. Founded in 1949 in Kobe, Japan, the brand has grown into a global favorite among runners and athletes.

ASICS has always believed in the positive power of movement. This philosophy naturally extended to logistics, making the collaboration with Seven Senders a strong fit: optimizing the movement of parcels to the end consumer. To set up their cross-border shipping and build a sound future for the company, ASICS has relied on the unique value proposition of customized last mile service capabilities through the logistics network Seven Senders has to offer.

Previously, ASICS relied on standard universal carriers for international shipping. However, as the company sought more innovative ways to better address consumers and enhance the customer experience, this setup proved insufficient and no longer future-ready.

Seven Senders stood out as an innovative approach to parcel shipping across Europe, offering customized last-mile service capabilities through a European carrier network supported by a fully configurable platform.

Beyond tailored last-mile delivery services, Seven Senders supports ASICS with additional solutions, including a powerful BI and analytics tool, carbon offsetting of transport-related emissions through 7SGreen, and a backup return label engine. A dedicated team from Customer Operations, Partner Integration, and Key Account Management works closely with ASICS to continuously improve collaboration.

Through the customizable Seven Senders portal, ASICS customer service teams can proactively track shipments ahead of delivery, log and monitor claims, and manage returns across all last-mile providers in one central overview. Daily performance tracking results in streamlined outbound parcel management and enhanced control over cross-border operations.

ASICS and Seven Senders have partnered since October 2022 for home deliveries in key European markets. Out-of-home deliveries and returns have been live since June 2023. In July 2023, ASICS launched its Swiss webshop using Seven Senders' customs solution, opening a new market with the right documentation available at the right time, supported by local partners and full traceability.

Positive outcomes include:

- Cost savings of up to 14% per linehaul
- Increased flexibility through a local carrier network
- Improved customer satisfaction and sustainability with the PUDO Locator
- A transparent and reliable customs clearance solution

ASICS benefits from a broad network of highly regarded national last-mile carriers and can adapt delivery options to destination-specific preferences. For example, customers in France and Scandinavia favor out-of-home delivery. With the Seven Senders PUDO Locator, ASICS can offer pickup and drop-off options at checkout, such as parcel lockers and post offices, reducing delivery costs while operating more sustainably without compromising convenience.

Overall, the partnership supports ASICS' long-term strategy of agility, customer-centric last-mile innovation, and sustainability, while streamlining processes and reducing costs across markets.

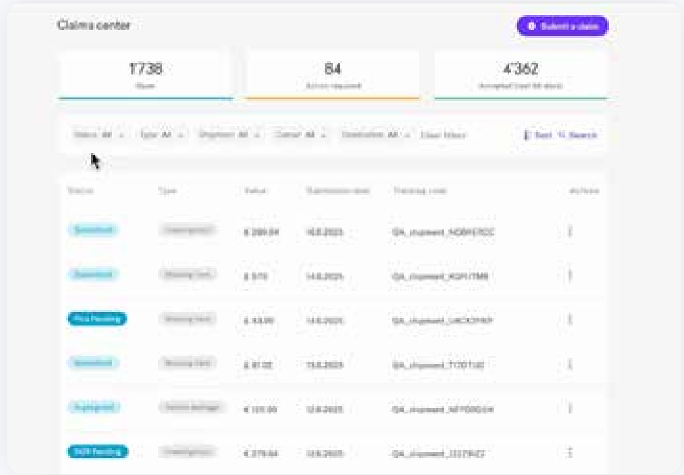
Thomann: Efficiency through process automation: Music retailer Thomann relies on claim.me for carrier claims management

Carrier claims: a cost driver with untapped potential

With increasing shipment volumes and varying carrier requirements, claims management at Thomann has become increasingly complex and time-consuming.

Founded in 1954 in Treppendorf, Germany, Thomann is a family-owned business and a globally leading online retailer for musical instruments and equipment. In 2024, the company generated approximately €1.5 billion in revenue and shipped around 6.8 million parcels.

At this scale, claims handling is no longer a side task. It becomes a critical operational and financial lever.



All claims at a glance

Data from Seven Senders shows that 3 out of every 1,000 parcels result in dispute cases, with around 50% qualifying for a carrier refund. For every million parcels shipped, this equates to approximately 1,500 claims. With a net order value of €100 per parcel, the potential refund value can reach €150,000 per year.

As shipment volumes grew, scalability plays an important role, especially in claims management. Some carriers required claims to be submitted via email using customized templates, while others relied on proprietary portals with individual user access. Training effort increased, and tracking claim statuses became increasingly difficult.

Thomann's path to a centralized claims system with claim.me

Thomann set out to eliminate this fragmented landscape and establish a scalable, centralized claims process.

claim.me is a software and service solution designed for efficient carrier claims management in e-commerce. Originating as an internal tool within the Seven Senders delivery platform, it was built to streamline Seven Senders' own customer service claims processes and is now offered as a scalable solution for retailers.

Through its long-standing cooperation with Seven Senders in parcel shipping, Thomann learned about claim.me and implemented it within its customer service operations. The conclusion was clear: building an internal ticketing system and integrating each carrier individually is time-consuming and cost-intensive, while claim.me offers a significantly faster and simpler alternative.

With claim.me, Thomann can respond to carrier inquiries directly through the portal, track claim statuses at any time, file appeals when rejections occur, and manage all claims within a single system. Approved claims continue to be paid directly by the carrier.

The first claims were submitted in November 2024 for DHL shipments within Germany. claim.me is now fully integrated. Thomann acts as a pilot customer and reports that challenges are resolved quickly and effectively. With DHL and UPS fully integrated, claims for shipments across more than 100 countries have already been successfully processed.

Thomann estimates handling between 15,000 and 20,000 claims per year. claim.me provides the transparency needed to analyze data, determine claim rates, and continuously improve processes. Thomann emphasizes that the goal is not only to process claims efficiently, but to learn from the data and keep improving, a need that claim.me actively supports through rapid feature development.

Conclusion:

From last-mile delivery to claims management, ASICS and Thomann show how removing complexity enables logistics teams to scale efficiently and stay customer-focused. ••

ABOUT:
SEVENSENDERS.COM: SELL INTERNATIONAL. SHIP LOCAL. ONE PLATFORM TO DELIVER TO EVERY DESTINATION IN EUROPE.
CLAIM.ME: WE CHASE YOUR REFUNDS, YOU FOCUS ON YOUR CUSTOMERS.

THE CHANGING CUSTOMER JOURNEY IN CROSS-BORDER PRODUCT DISCOVERY

Text: Stephen Meade // Photos: ChannelEngine

Cross-border shoppers only make a purchase when clarity, value, and confidence align. However, online shopping behaviors have changed, and we no longer have a product discovery landscape dominated by a marketplace-first superhighway.

Instead of taking a linear path to find products, consumers are following a fragmented, multi-branched route across a complex ecosystem of marketplaces, channels, digital touchpoints, and countries. This makes it more challenging for brands to promote discovery, influence consideration, and support conversion across borders.

To put the magnitude of this change into perspective, over one-fifth of consumers are no longer going straight to their favorite marketplace to find new items. In fact, in 2025, only 37% started their purchasing journey on marketplaces.

So, the next logical question is: where are consumers finding the products they want?

Discovery is everywhere

Marketplaces remain the ultimate destination for most purchases, especially cross-border, where trust and quality matter. However, consumers now discover and compare options across many more channels and digital experiences before they select one to buy.

Loyalty to single channels is becoming a thing of the past. An analysis of recent trends in ChannelEngine's Marketplace Shopping Behavior Report 2026 shows that consumers are spending more time across different channels. In particular, social commerce, emerging AI-driven channels, and new search methods are taking a larger share of consumer attention. In fact, faced with an ocean of confusing and competing offers, 58% of shoppers already use AI assistants to navigate options across numerous channels.

Availability is #1

When it comes to cross-border shopping, the greatest driver for purchases is availability, and not brand affinity or channel loyalty. By using AI-assisted shopping, consumers can more easily find the product and offer they want, across all countries and channels, including ones they have never used or heard of before.

This is a huge shift, but it doesn't apply equally across all categories. Channel selection often corresponds to the boundary between purposeful product searches and inspiration-led browsing.

For example, social commerce is most popular for unplanned purchases of Fashion, Apparel, and Beauty/Health products. However, it is much less popular for high-value items and Electronics, where more research is needed to clinch a sale.

Channel selection can also vary a lot across shopper demographics, even within the same product category. Younger consumers within the 'Millennial' and 'GenZ' segments are most likely to use new marketplaces or social commerce. Older consumers, on the other hand, are less likely to change their favorite online shopping channel.

But let's remember that point-of-sale and product discovery often happen on different channels. While many consumers may never use social channels to buy items, they may still discover products on these channels. This has implications for your strategy to attain maximum visibility, as we'll explore more in a moment.

Comparison is a rational response to cross-border complexity
International purchases have become a normal activity for many consumers, but cross-border shopping still carries more uncertainty.

Several 'red flags' can undermine consumer confidence. In particular, cross-border shoppers worry the most about product quality, authenticity, and ease of returns. Additional costs like VAT or customs charges can also make them more hesitant. Certain categories are especially sensitive to these concerns, especially Luxury and Technology products.

Confidence over price, shipping speed, returns, and seller credibility carries much more weight across borders. It is much easier for consumers to be put off by unclear information or questions that undermine buyer confidence. However, with the ability to compare offers on these and other factors, consumers can manage this risk and reduce indecision.

There are two things that sellers must achieve: clarity and consistency. Potential customers must have a clear view of the details for each offer, and these must be consistent across all channels. Remembering that consumers will compare offers across multiple channels, inconsistent details for things like price, shipping, or returns can easily raise questions about your trustworthiness as a seller. As they are still evaluating multiple offers at this time, the consumer simply will choose another seller instead.

Visibility influences consideration, not just conversion
Sponsored search and ads are traditionally seen as a driver for conversion. However, in this new discovery landscape, the role of these tools has shifted to influence product consideration as well.

Consumers compare offers across multiple marketplaces and other channels, but they will only consider a product if they happen to encounter it at the right time, particularly when comparing options across borders.

While AI-assisted comparison helps narrow choices, sponsored products that match search intent strongly influence visibility. Beyond clicks, sponsored ads can improve rankings in organic and AI-driven search results. High-ranking offers are perceived as more trustworthy, a crucial factor in cross-border conversion.

As well as directly driving clicks and views, sponsored product ads can improve your ranking in organic and AI search results. High-ranking offers are also seen as more trustworthy, which is essential for driving conversion in cross-border shopping.

Once again, content quality, consistency, and clarity show their value here. Visibility and brand trust help to reinforce your products' recognizability amid numerous competing offers. Without visibility, your products stand zero chance of making it onto the consumer's shortlist of multiple offers across numerous channels.

The drop-off between discovery and checkout
Cross-border shoppers know they have multiple options. But, in the end, they must settle for just one.

This makes the journey from discovery to checkout highly sensitive. One unanswered question or friction point can cause cart abandonment, even at the final stage.

The 3 most common points of friction are delivery terms, returns, and payment options. These issues often arise once the consumer has already selected a handful of products that meet their primary criteria (for example, size, color, brand). The products are sitting in their basket, and they're ready to go through checkout.

Only then do they have a pause to think: "Is it legit? What's the shipping cost/time? Do I get free returns?"

A moment ago, they were sure they were getting a good deal. But now, unexpected surprises and unanswered questions about key concerns erase all the trust you have already built with them, in a second.

Trust is essential for cross-border conversion
We regularly see that the most successful cross-border brands leverage recognizable trust signals at key phases. These can significantly reduce uncertainty and drive checkout completion in the last mile of the shopping journey.

For example, unexpected shipping costs are one of the most common friction points, but offering free shipping is an easy way to avoid this entirely without over-complicating or over-localizing your listings.

In fact, 91% of consumers see free shipping as a significant driver for making a purchase, even if they end up spending the same amount overall. It simplifies their decision-making process and offers clarity. Similarly, customer ratings, verified buyer reviews, and a variety of payment options will all improve checkout completion rates.

Although consumers encounter and compare offers on more channels than ever before, there are still ways to cut through the noise. As well as the tactics outlined above, limited-time deals are a highly effective way to put pressure on consumers. 73% of shoppers are highly motivated by this tactic, making it a valuable way to enter their 'consideration list'.

Driving cross-border sales across diverse digital touchpoints

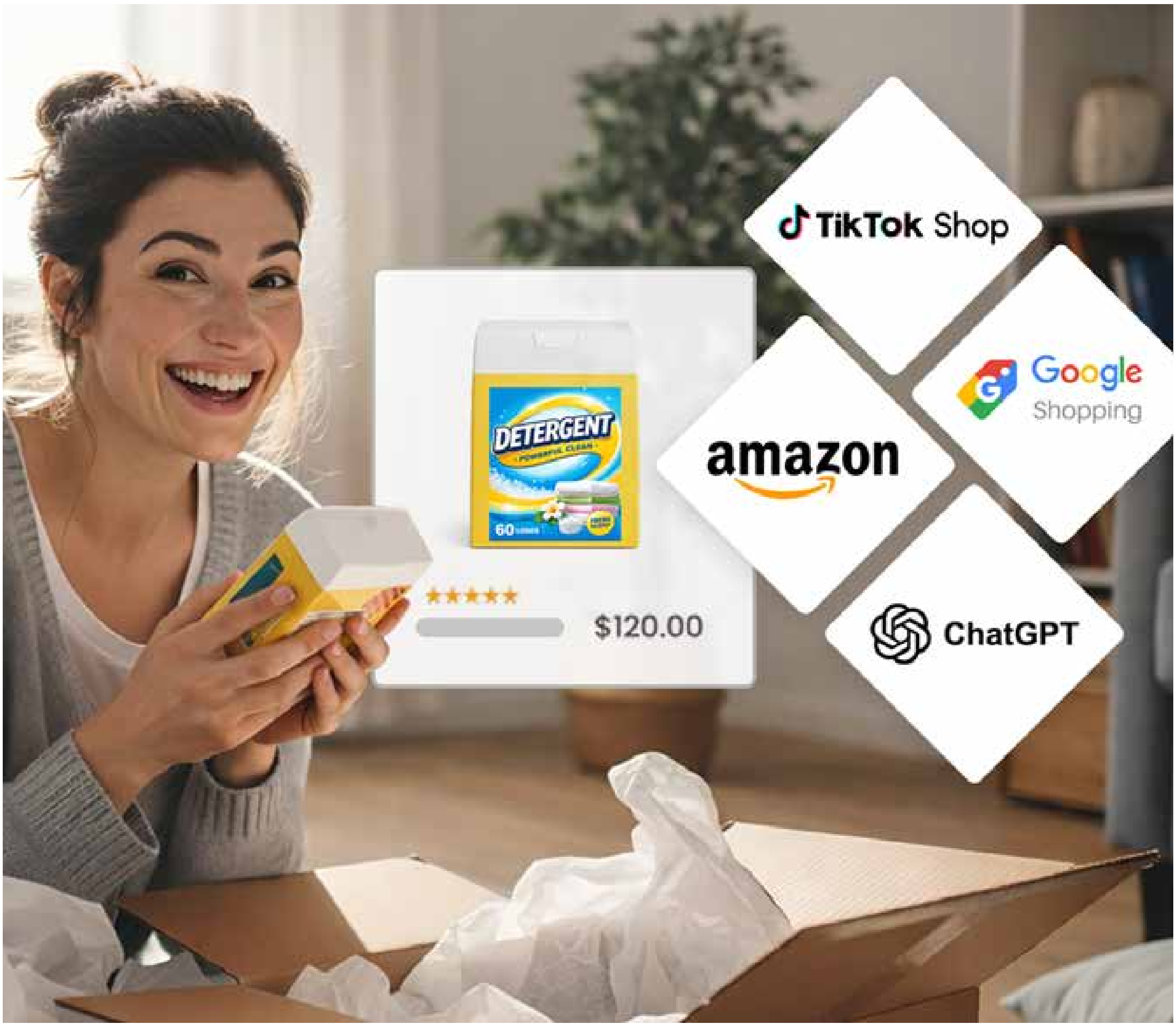
Trust is built layer by layer, and every touchpoint contributes to buyer confidence. Provided your offer meets all their criteria, consumer trust will ensure your products sail through the checkout without hesitation.

Even in a fragmented e-commerce landscape, conversion across borders is driven primarily by low prices, product availability, and fast shipping. However, priorities can vary a lot across demographics. Younger shoppers are more motivated by the quality of product listings and the overall experience, rather than price. For this reason, product content and consistent experiences across all touchpoints are crucial, especially for this growing segment.

Most of all, sellers must provide all cross-border shoppers with clarity. Listings should present all essential information and trust signals upfront, removing doubt and enabling a smooth path to checkout.

When you can provide all the right information and trust signals in a scannable, easy-to-read format, your listings become instantly more relevant, even in an overwhelming array of offers. This is the best way to remain visible and drive conversion in this changing cross-border e-commerce landscape.

And, to deliver this level of clarity at scale, brands need to manage product content, pricing, and fulfillment information from a single, centralized source of truth. Marketplace integration solutions like ChannelEngine help make this possible by ensuring data stays consistent and up to date across marketplaces, channels, and countries, reducing friction and reinforcing trust throughout the cross-border buying journey. ••




Spring
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ALL HANDS ON DECK
TOWARDS A MORE RESPONSIBLE GLOBAL LOGISTICS SECTOR

Text: Sian Docksey // Photos: Spring GDS Europe

International collaboration across the value chain is the key to reducing emissions across the logistics sector. Spring GDS's strategy reflects the company shift from individual initiatives to a structured roadmap.

Environmentally and socially responsible scaling is no longer an add-on: it's an expectation.
Customer demands, regulatory developments and a climate-conscious cultural landscape all point towards a major shift in the logistics sector: businesses without a measurable, transparent sustainability strategy across their operations are falling behind.

The challenge of reducing emissions across carbon-intensive international shipping networks is highly complex. Cross-border e-commerce logistics experts at Spring GDS are tackling this with the same approach they bring to every other challenge: leveraging their international network to offer delivery solutions that take the complications away from their customers.

Sustainable operations are not limited to environmental targets. As Spring GDS expands, welcoming 100 new employees in 2025, the organisation has paid additional attention to how diversity, inclusion and wellbeing goals are integral to everyday activities. Inside and outside the organisation, Spring GDS is increasing the resources to help people grow with the company.

International logistics providers face growing expectations to integrate sustainability into the way they expand and operate. This article explores how Spring GDS is contributing to a sector-wide shift toward more responsible practices that aim to benefit both people and the planet.

The Spring GDS strategy

Spring GDS is an international delivery company specialising in cross-border e-commerce. Operating as part of the PostNL Group, Spring GDS connects merchants to consumers worldwide through a coordinated network of digital platforms and logistics partners.

Spring GDS operates primarily as an asset-light logistics orchestrator, designing and managing cross-border flows in collaboration with partner carriers and postal operators, alongside a growing fulfilment footprint. Their strength lies in the combination of global ambition with local expertise, harnessing specific knowledge of destination markets to help e-commerce businesses grow across borders.

As an asset-light, agile organisation working across the value chain, Spring GDS's most impactful sustainability action comes from influencing and decarbonising the transport ecosystem within which they operate. Strategic collaborations with businesses and partners across Spring GDS's international network are driving measurable, emissions reduction action that creates lasting value for stakeholders, customers and the planet.

A maturation of approach
Spring GDS has significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 11.9 kilotonnes of CO_2e across their network through their HVO100 biofuel 'Out the Tank' solution. In

addition, they introduced orange pallet boxes as a zero waste alternative to carton or wood packaging and supported businesses in tracking their emissions through customer specific CO_2 reports.

In 2025, Spring GDS launched its Book & Claim solution to increase the availability of Sustainable Aviation Fuel to cut emissions from air transport. 2025 also saw the launch of Spring GDS's new Emission Tool that provides customer-specific CO_2 reports, a key milestone in strengthening the accuracy and transparency of climate reporting.

2025 marked a significant shift in Spring GDS's operations from individual sustainability initiatives to structured decarbonisation roadmap. The company has a key role in accelerating this industry-wide transition by steering fuel choices within their outsourced network, while remaining transparent about the limits of their direct operational control.

Key areas where Spring GDS is actively influencing and decarbonising the transport ecosystem include:

- Steering procurement toward lower-emission solutions.
- Increasing the share of renewable fuels where feasible.
- Supporting the scaling of SAF in air transport.
- Optimising network design to reduce transport emissions.

Decarbonisation is a complex, integrated shift that will occur in phases, shaped by technology maturity, infrastructure readiness, regulation and market demand. Spring GDS is taking the lead on building the relationships and cross-border collaborations that will support the whole sector shifting towards net zero emissions.

The pathway to Net Zero

As part of the PostNL Group, Spring GDS contributes to the Group's Net Zero 2040 target, a target validated by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi).

To deliver on this ambition, PostNL focuses on five key decarbonisation levers: electrification, renewable fuels, network efficiency, sustainable infrastructure and energy, and circular economy.

The Spring GDS Scope 3 transition pathway towards reducing emissions and contributing towards PostNL's target of Net Zero 2040 reflects broader developments across the international logistics sector. Industry roadmaps, regulatory developments and peer strategies consistently point to three structural shifts:

1. Renewable fuels will act as bridging solutions during this decade.
2. Electrification will progressively reshape road transport.
3. Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) will scale as regulation and demand mature.

Decarbonising the value chain

Middle-mile air transport

Shipping by air produces high emissions and, in the short-term, Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) is the primary decarbonisation tool available to the aviation sector. SAF is a renewable fuel that reduces CO_2 emissions by up to 80% compared to fossil jet fuel. Industry roadmaps, including those of IATA, recognise SAF as essential to achieving Net Zero aviation, supported by increasing regulatory blending mandates in Europe.

SAF production capacity is expanding as industry investment accelerates. However, scaling its use and impact requires stronger market demand. Spring GDS sees it as their role to help generate this demand by enabling credible and accessible SAF adoption across our international air network. In collaboration with their customers, Spring GDS supports SAF uptake within our outsourced air network through our Book & Claim solution.

Through the Book & Claim solution, Spring GDS enables customers to lower the carbon footprint of their air shipments by choosing how much SAF to attribute to those shipments. This allows them to strengthen their sustainability commitments while directly investing in cleaner aviation across the logistics chain.

Customers receive verified, standards-aligned documentation of the resulting emissions reductions, enabling them to lower their air freight emissions and demonstrate measurable climate impact.

Middle-mile road transport

Sustainability in middle-mile road transport combines the increasing use of biofuels to replace fossil fuels in the short-term, and transition to full electrification in the long-term.

In the short-term, Spring GDS is reducing transport emissions by maximising the physical use of certified HVO100 biofuel across our European road network wherever operationally possible. The HVO100 we procure meets EU RED II sustainability criteria and is certified under recognised schemes (including ISCC). For our 'Out the Tank' insetting solution, they purchase HVO100 with specific feedstock requirements and exclude POME-based pathways. While POME can be eligible under EU rules, they choose to go further for 'Out the Tank' to avoid perceived linkage to the palm oil value chain and to align with stakeholder expectations.

In 2025, Spring GDS's cross-border operations applied 4.1 million litres of HVO100 through insetting: equivalent to 11.9 kt CO_2e reduced. This is comparable to switching off nearly 1 million traditional light bulbs annually.

While HVO100 acts as a practical -short-term solution, electrification is the route towards decarbonisation in road transport for the longer term. Currently, shifting towards electrification remains constrained by charging infrastructure availability and charging cost volatility. Truck electrification is expected to become increasingly cost-competitive over time as battery prices decline, vehicle range improves and policy incentives and carbon pricing accelerate price parity with diesel trucks. Battery electric heavy-duty trucks are already commercially available, and adoption is accelerating across Europe.

Last-mile delivery

Emissions data from last-mile delivery and progress towards Net Zero 2040 varies highly across regions.

Within the Benelux countries, last-mile delivery is largely executed through the PostNL-owned network. Electrifica tion in the last mile at PostNL has progressed significantly, with emission-free delivery accounting for 33% of total mail and parcel deliveries in 2025. This transition greatly influences Scope 1 carbon reductions at Group level.

Outside the Benelux, last-mile delivery is carried out through a network of local carrier partners across Europe and international destinations. The level of electrification and emissions data availability differ greatly between markets and partners. As a result, reporting consistency and comparability remain a challenge.

The role of Spring GDS in these regions is twofold: firstly, progressively improving the quality of our last-mile emissions profile over time. Then, integrate sustainability criteria into partner selection and contract management, favouring carriers with credible electrification roadmaps and renewable fuel adoption strategies.

Accurate, transparent emissions reporting

In April 2025, Spring GDS launched their Emission Tool, a key milestone in strengthening the accuracy and transparency of climate reporting. The tool not only improves accuracy and comparability of emissions data but strengthens Spring GDS's ability to serve customers with clear, actionable insights into their emissions from cross-border shipments.

The Emission Tool operates by linking detailed shipment data from Spring GDS's internal systems to a calculation engine desgined by EcoTransIT. The tool enables Spring GDS to generate customer specific CO_2e reports for any selected period, and show where further refinement is possible with continued improvement of data quality.

The people behind the parcels

Sustainability is a human project

Responsible scaling isn't limited to emissions reduction. At Spring GDS, people are central to how the organisation operates and delivers value. Diversity, inclusion and employee wellbeing are essential to building reliable, long-term relationships and partnerships across borders.

As part of the PostNL Group, Spring GDS aligns with the group's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Policy, which emphases balanced gender representation, multicultural talent development and creating a workplace where everyone feels safe, respected and accepted.

The 2025 Impact Report highlights a number of areas where Spring GDS excels as an organisation that invests in and nurtures talent as the organisation scales.

In figures

2025 saw:

- 100 new employees joining Spring GDS
- An employee retention rate of 86.16%
- 46% of Spring GDS employees are women
- 27% of top management positions are held by women
- An absenteeism rate of only 3.70%

These figures reflect organisational continuity and a workplace where colleagues choose to grow with the company and scale responsibly together.

Investing in local projects creating social value

Supporting targeted local initiatives creates stronger relationships across borders. Spring GDS is expanding its resources into local communities by building partnerships with not-for-profit organisations making a positive social impact.

One example from 2025 is the Spring GDS commitment to help tackle food insecurity in Como, Italy. The Spring GDS team based in Como are collaborating with Banco di Solidarietà, a local organisation that provides food and essential goods to individuals and families experiencing food insecurity.

In 2025, the team organised four collection initiatives, including a Christmas campaign that combined food donations with gifts for families and a financial contribution to support the organisation's work. Several employees also volunteered on-site, helping to collect food directly in supermarkets.

Through this partnership, Spring GDS Italy contributes to meeting a concrete local need and strengthens its positive impact within the Como community.

Collaborating towards a more connected, more sustainable future

The Spring GDS approach to environmental and social responsibility reflects the company belief that transparency, collaboration and accountability are essential to meaningful progress.

The complexity of international logistics is also rich with possibilities. By strengthening international networks and building partnerships with integrated sustainability action, Spring GDS is supporting the whole sector to grow responsibly for the years ahead. ••

E-COMMERCE TRENDS 2026:

10 KEY SHIFTS THAT WILL DEFINE THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL COMMERCE

Text: Judit Simón // Photos: LogiCommerce

E-commerce never stands still. In recent years, accelerated digitalization, the rise of new technologies, and changing consumer behavior have reshaped the way we buy and sell online.

If 2025 has been marked by the consolidation of omnichannel strategies, automation, and international expansion, 2026 represents a turning point. Competitive pressure is increasing, operational costs are rising, regulations are tightening, and consumers expect increasingly seamless and personalized experiences. In this context, technology is no longer just a support function — it becomes the core strategic engine for digital growth.

Below are the ten trends that will shape digital commerce in 2026.

1. Artificial intelligence as the “brain” of e-commerce

In 2026, artificial intelligence shifts from tactical support to becoming the central system that connects data, interprets behavior, and executes decisions in real time.

It is no longer about suggesting “similar products,” but about anticipating needs before users explicitly express them. In B2C, this translates into hyper-personalized experiences and campaigns that react to purchase intent signals. In B2B, it means automating recurring orders, forecasting demand, and dynamically segmenting pricing.

Moving from reactive to proactive marketing will define who grows and who falls behind.

2. Conversational commerce and intelligent assistants

The click-based experience is evolving into an ongoing conversation between brands and customers. Sales through AI-powered chatbots, WhatsApp Business, and virtual assistants will become a major growth driver.

Consumers increasingly expect natural interactions, fast answers, and the ability to complete purchases without friction. The challenge will be integrating conversational channels with catalog management, payments, CRM, logistics, and analytics to ensure consistency and security across the entire journey.

The future of e-commerce will be more dialog-driven, predictive, and contextual.

3. B2B takes center stage

The real growth engine for the next decade will be digital B2B commerce. Traditional processes based on calls, emails, and PDF catalogs are giving way to agile and personalized digital platforms.

B2B buyers now expect experiences similar to B2C: intelligent search tools, dynamic catalogs, personalized pricing by volume or agreement, and automated recurring orders. For companies, e-commerce brings greater control, fewer errors, and the ability to enter international markets without multiplying management costs.

Platforms like LogiCommerce, designed with a native B2B approach, enable advanced customer-specific pricing, VAT management, AI-powered search, corporate account hierarchies, and recurring or bulk ordering — all centralized within a single system.

4. Smart and centralized internationalization

International expansion will no longer require multiple independent stores and duplicated structures. In 2026, internationalization becomes centralized, scalable, and managed from a single Back-end.

Brands will be able to operate across multiple countries, currencies, languages, and regulatory frameworks from one platform, adapting locally without losing global consistency. In B2C, this means localized payments and culturally adapted campaigns. In B2B, it simplifies managing commercial conditions and stocks globally without duplicating technology.

Internationalization moves from being complex to becoming strategic.

5. Real-time hyper-personalization

Personalization evolves into a predictive, context-driven model powered by AI. Behavioral data, purchase history, interaction channels, location, and device signals are combined to create dynamic experiences.

In B2C, homepages automatically reconfigure according to user profiles. In B2B, companies can offer customer-specific pricing, role-based catalog filtering, and personalized dashboards with relevant KPIs.

Brands shift from mass communication to ongoing one-to-one digital relationships.

6. Conversational SEO and discoverability in the AI era

SEO is transforming into optimization for AI-driven answer engines. It is no longer enough to rank in traditional search engines — brands must become reliable sources for generative systems that deliver complete, contextual responses.

Content must be more semantic, structured, and aligned with real user intent. Metrics also evolve: visibility in generative results and citation frequency by AI systems become key performance indicators.

7. Advanced automation to optimize resources

As e-commerce grows, so do operational costs. In 2026, advanced automation will reduce manual tasks and free up strategic resources.

From real-time customer support to automated returns and recurring order management, combining AI with integrated systems will increase efficiency and customer satisfaction. Studies suggest automation can reduce operational costs by up to 30%.

8. Headless e-commerce as the definitive model

Monolithic architectures are reaching their limits. The Headless model — separating Back-end business logic from the Front-end experience — is becoming the standard.

By managing operations from a single core while connecting multiple Front-ends (web, app, marketplaces, B2B portals, and in-store touchpoints), brands gain greater flexibility, faster innovation, improved scalability during traffic peaks, and lower long-term maintenance costs.

LogiCommerce embraces a native Headless architecture that separates business logic from the visual layer, enabling brands to connect web, app, marketplace, and physical store experiences without duplicating systems. Acting as a single technological hub, the platform integrates catalog management, stock, promotions, payments, and external integrations within one unified BackOffice.

This model allows companies to innovate faster, scale without limitations, and maintain full data consistency across channels — turning technology from a constraint into a growth driver.

9. Privacy and regulatory compliance as a competitive advantage

Regulations such as GDPR, PSD2, and evolving data laws have made privacy a strategic issue. In 2026, compliance will move beyond legal obligation to become a competitive differentiator.

Transparency, traceability, and real user control over data will become the minimum standard in both B2C and B2B environments.

10. Loyalty beyond points

Traditional points-based loyalty programs are no longer sufficient. Loyalty strategies will evolve into intelligent ecosystems that combine financial rewards, exclusive experiences, data-driven personalization, and omnichannel benefits.

The goal is no longer to offer more discounts, but to build meaningful, long-term value-driven relationships.

2026 will not simply be about adopting new tools. It will be about strategic integration. Brands that successfully connect artificial intelligence, automation, flexible architecture, and customer-centric thinking will be best positioned to compete in an increasingly demanding, regulated, and dynamic digital environment. ••

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LOCAL FULFILLMENT IN SWITZERLAND
WHEN TAKING THE PLUNGE MAKES SENSE

Text: Pascal Frick // Photos: MSDirect

Switzerland combines enormous purchasing power with a high affinity for e-commerce – an attractive market for European online retailers. However, the customs border between the EU and Switzerland poses operational challenges for many. While cross-border shipping makes it easier to get started, local fulfillment can be the more profitable solution above certain thresholds. The decisive factor is not only shipping costs, but the overall total cost of ownership.

The Swiss market: high-priced, high purchasing power, demanding

With a GDP per capita of around €80,000 and an online retail volume of CHF 15.8 billion per year, Switzerland is one of the most lucrative e-commerce markets in Europe. Particularly noteworthy: 18 per cent of this is accounted for by orders from abroad.

The reason for this is the structurally high price level: identical products often cost much more in Switzerland than in Germany. This price arbitrage drives Swiss consumers to foreign shops. Any retailer looking to succeed in this market must meet high expectations: transparent prices in Swiss francs, no hidden customs fees, local payment methods such as TWINT, fast delivery times and smooth returns processes are a must, not a nice-to-have.

Added to this is regulatory complexity: every shipment to Switzerland crosses a strict customs border. The abolition of industrial tariffs in 2024 and the introduction of platform taxation in 2025 have simplified administrative procedures, but customs declarations and import taxes remain mandatory. European retailers looking to expand into the Swiss market have three basic logistics models to choose from, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. These are examined in more detail below.

Cross-border shipping: the classic entry point with limitations

Classic cross-border shipping from an existing EU warehouse with an international shipping service provider is a frequently chosen route.

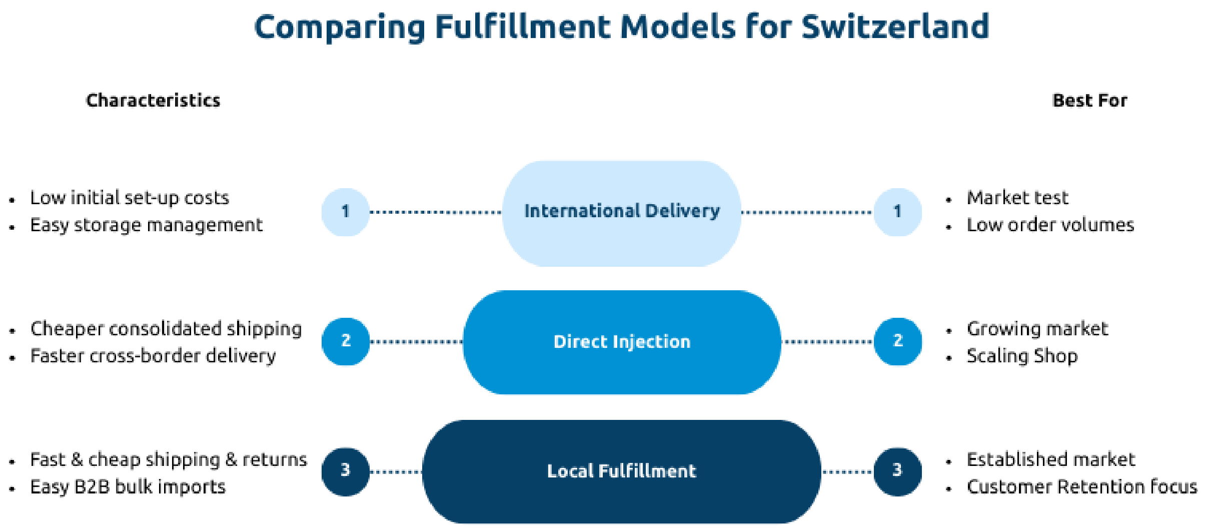
Smaller retailers looking to test the market benefit from the flexibility, minimal setup costs and simplified warehouse management this model offers.

On the other hand, these advantages come at the expense of the customer experience. Longer delivery times of three to seven days at two to three times the shipping price of domestic shipments are standard. In addition, each parcel must be declared individually at customs, which generally only makes sense for small volumes despite the complexity and administrative effort involved.

Particularly critical: returns management becomes a loyalty killer. Swiss customers who return parcels have to fill out customs documents, pay high postage costs and accept long refund times.

Direct injection: the smart interim solution

With direct injection, orders are still picked at the EU central warehouse, but are already labelled there with the



final shipping labels of local Swiss delivery services. The parcels are then transported across the border as consolidated bulk freight and only injected directly into the local carrier's distribution centre after collective customs clearance.

Experience shows that consolidation reduces long-distance shipping costs by up to 30 per cent and improves delivery speed by one to two days compared to traditional cross-border shipping. Swiss customers receive their parcels from a familiar local delivery service, which builds trust and increases the likelihood of delivery on the first attempt.

However, direct injection only pays off if several hundred orders per month are generated in Switzerland, as this model incurs fixed costs for bundled transport, consolidation and IT integration with local carriers.

Regardless of the shipping model chosen, the Incoterm DDP (Delivery Duty Paid) is a critical factor for Swiss customers today. This means the retailer pays all customs duties and taxes upfront. Surveys show that over 80 per cent of Swiss consumers would not purchase from a foreign retailer if pre-customs clearance was not offered.

Local fulfillment: maximum performance, maximum effort

With local fulfillment, a dedicated portion of the inventory is physically relocated to Switzerland and usually managed by a local fulfillment service provider. Orders are picked directly on site and shipped as domestic shipments.

The advantages are particularly evident in the quality of service: delivery times are reduced to one to two working days – exactly the level that Swiss consumers expect. Shipping costs are reduced to low national base rates. Complex customs declarations are no longer necessary, as goods are efficiently imported and cleared through customs in bulk as B2B imports. Returns can be processed quickly and cost-effectively, as customers return goods to a domestic address.

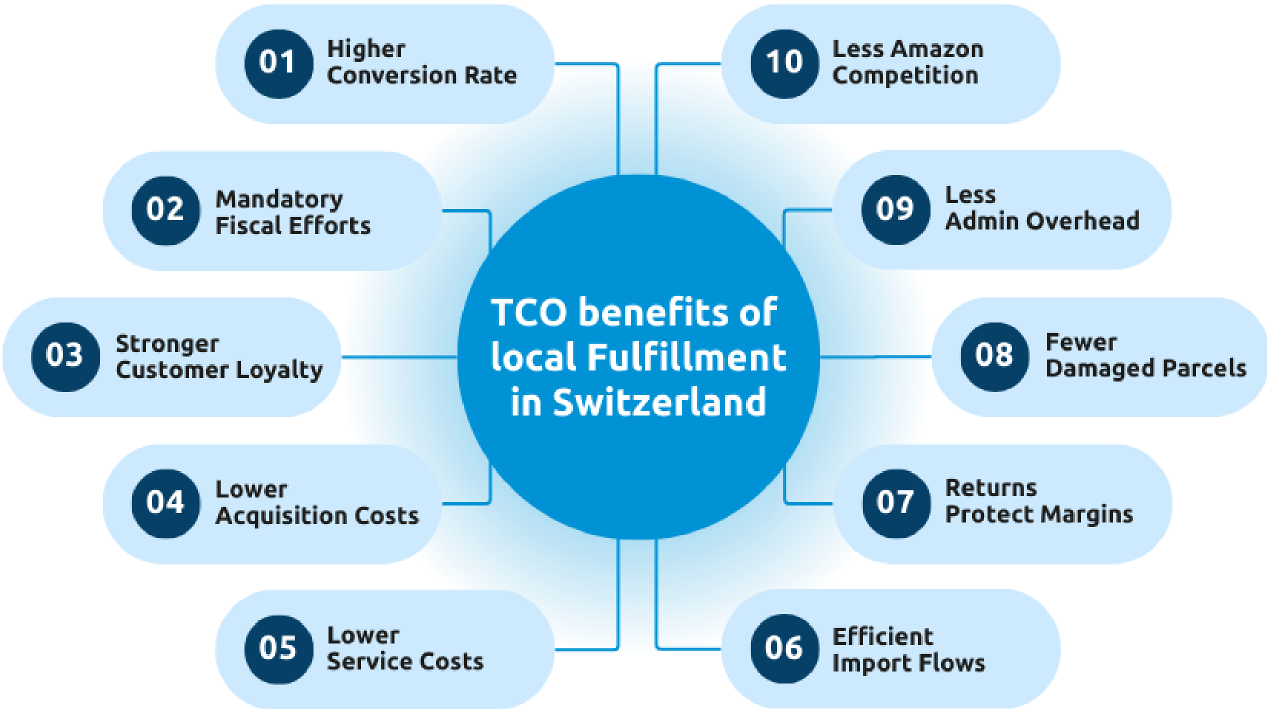
Working with a local service provider such as MS Direct also saves time during the initial setup thanks to existing warehouse infrastructure and reduced overhead, as VAT registration and fiscal representation are also covered. In day-to-day business, retailers also benefit from discounted shipping prices below the basic rate.

The biggest challenge with local fulfillment is inventory allocation. Retailers need accurate demand forecasts to avoid shortages or excess stock in local warehouses.

The strategic tipping point: when local fulfillment pays for itself

Unlike in the EU single market, the decision to opt for local fulfillment in Switzerland is not primarily driven by transport costs, but by a holistic total cost of ownership (TCO) consideration. There are around ten fundamental mechanisms that make the business case for an external warehouse attractive:

1. *Conversion rate increase:* Guaranteed delivery within one to two working days from within the country eliminates the biggest checkout barrier. The absolute certainty that no customs duties will be charged at the doorstep reduces the purchase abandonment rate and increases conversion massively.
2. *Fiscal triggers:* Companies in Switzerland are subject to VAT if their annual turnover exceeds CHF 100,000. From this point onwards, retailers are required to appoint a fiscal representative, regardless of whether they ship from abroad or locally. Once these fixed administrative costs are incurred, the



marginal cost barrier for a local warehouse drops dramatically.

3. *Customer retention:* The reliable customer experience provided by domestic shipping transforms one-time buyers into loyal existing customers. The optimised experience is also reflected in an improved Net Promoter Score (NPS).
4. *Customer acquisition costs:* The higher repurchase rate sustainably reduces customer acquisition costs (CAC), as marketing expenses are spread across higher revenues. This in turn frees up budgets for further growth measures.
5. *Service cost reduction:* Cross-border shipping generates high support volumes due to enquiries about customs delays and unexpected fees. Local fulfillment completely eliminates these reasons for contact and significantly reduces the burden on customer service.
6. *Optimised import logistics:* Instead of clearing hundreds of small B2C parcels individually every day, local fulfillment enables bundled B2B goods imports. Freight costs per item are reduced to a minimum, and customs clearance is highly efficient in large batches.
7. *Returns management as a margin driver:* In industries with high return rates – fashion reaches up to 60 per cent in Switzerland according to Swiss Post – local fulfillment pays for itself the fastest. Returns remain in the country, are checked immediately and can be shipped directly to the next Swiss customer.
8. *Fewer damage claims:* Every additional touchpoint in logistics increases the risk of damage. Direct domestic shipping to the end customer reduces handling processes to a minimum, which significantly lowers damage rates.
9. *Less administrative overhead:* Managing cross-border shipments requires daily attention to customs declarations and potential data errors. Local fulfillment significantly reduces these costs, as goods are transported across the border less frequently and in bulk.
10. *Competitive advantage due to Amazon vacancy:* Unlike in Germany or the United Kingdom, Amazon's Prime network is hardly present in Switzerland due to regulations. Retailers with local fulfillment can independently offer delivery speeds that even Amazon cannot match in this market – an almost untouchable competitive advantage.

These positive factors are further reinforced when working with a local fulfillment service provider. On the one hand, there is no need for expensive investments in warehouses and personnel, and on the other hand, the cost structure changes from fixed to variable costs. Fiscal representation is also handled by most providers. Last but not least, retailers also benefit from long-term security, as they can scale up without large investments.

Growing together in Switzerland

There are many ways to expand into Switzerland's lucrative e-commerce market – whether through cross-border shipping or local fulfillment. When choosing the right approach, it is important to consider the TCO. Especially in industries with high return rates and a focus on customer lifetime value, the advantages of local fulfillment clearly outweigh the disadvantages.

MS Direct supports retailers entering the Swiss market and helps you find the right model for your situation. As a local e-commerce logistics service provider with many years of experience, we offer smart solutions for local fulfillment, cross-border shipping and returns. ••

PETER EGGER, VP GROWTH AT MS DIRECT

Peter Egger has over 18 years of experience in fulfillment and cross-border business and has supported numerous online shops in their international expansion into Switzerland during his career. He provides insight into successful expansion strategies.

A LOOK AT THE PRACTICAL SIDE

Peter, how do you proceed when an online retailer wants to expand into Switzerland?

We always look for the optimal individual solution. The initial situation is crucial: has the retailer already established decentralised logistics structures in other countries, or has it only worked with central fulfillment so far? Then we take a close look at the operational requirements: how important are short delivery times and late cut-off times for the business model? What shipping volumes does the shop currently achieve in Switzerland? How many SKUs the assortment includes, and what are the product dimensions of the items? All these factors are taken into account in our recommendation.

In your experience, for which shops is local fulfillment particularly lucrative?

Retailers with lean product ranges and compact products – i.e. fewer SKUs with smaller dimensions – benefit the most. Low seasonality is also advantageous, as frequent collection changes complicate inventory planning. And with larger order volumes, the costs are naturally amortised more quickly.

However, fulfillment in Switzerland is also interesting for retailers who handle direct imports from China: these goods can be imported into Switzerland duty-free, which creates a massive cost advantage. If a retailer also pursues a marketplace strategy and has to comply with strict SLAs, local fulfillment is often the best way to reliably meet the requirements.

Last but not least, local fulfillment also offers advantages in highly competitive markets. When delivery speed and returns service are key differentiators, local shipping naturally puts you in a better position.

Is there a common denominator among your customers who benefit from local fulfillment?

Yes. We work with a wide range of brands from various industries that have scaled their expansion in Switzerland through our local fulfillment. The spectrum ranges from fashion and beauty to consumer electronics and pet supplies. What they all have in common is that they have recognised the Swiss market as strategically important and have taken their customer experience to a new level through local presence.

What makes MS Direct's fulfillment service so special?

MS Direct has over 50 years of experience in the logistics business. Over the years, we have established reliable processes that allow shops of various sizes to expand and scale into Switzerland without operational complexity. Through AI-driven forecasting systems and the use of robotics, we ensure cost-efficient order processing and operational stability – even at peak times. This enables our customers to easily sell on Swiss marketplaces, if they so wish.

Transparency is particularly important to us: real-time interfaces give our customers a complete overview of stock, orders, shipments and SLA compliance at all times. Each customer is assigned a personal Customer Success Manager who accompanies and supports them as they grow.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO START LOCAL FULFILLMENT IN SWITZERLAND NOW?

Use our online price calculator for a price estimate tailored to your setup.

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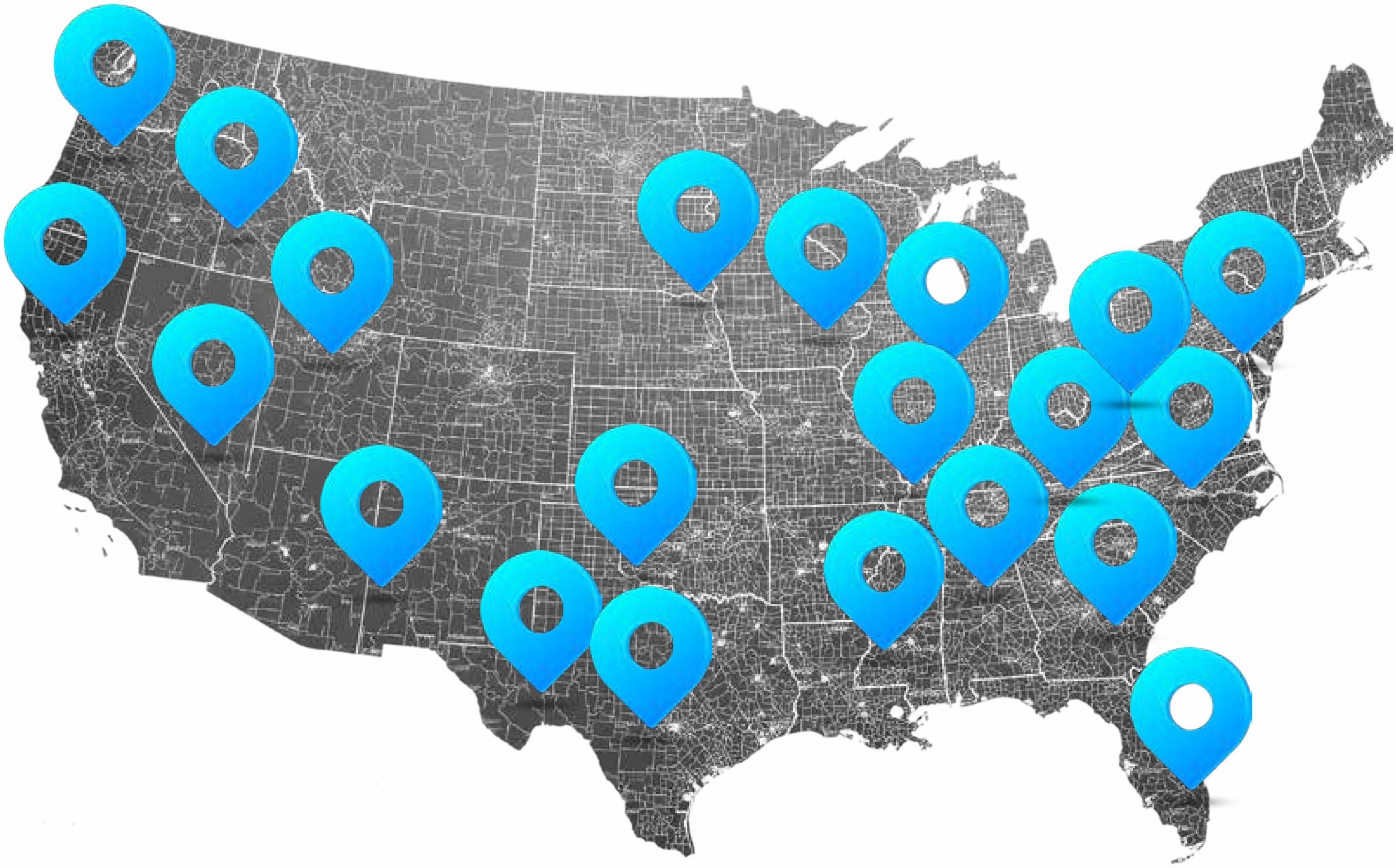

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