



# YOUR INTERNATIONAL ECOMMERCE ROLL-OUT: A 19-PART CHECKLIST

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# THE MAJOR UPSIDE OF CROSS-BORDER ECOMMERCE

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Scores of shoppers have flocked online and purchase products outside of their local market during COVID-19. The pandemic isn't the only reason for this change—the movement online also coincides with a long-term growth rate for cross-border sales.

FNFresearch found that cross-border sales have an annual compound growth rate of 27%. Yet, cross-border eCommerce only makes up 22% of global eCommerce transactions, according to Statista. Therefore, there's a major upside to cross-border eCommerce sales.

With international eCommerce still in its infancy, investing in a multi-country site or testing the waters on global marketplaces can put your products in front of a whole new market of customers. Below we outline 19 things to consider during an international eCommerce roll-out, a process we've put into action with global companies like Champion and Helly Hansen.



## STRATEGY & RESEARCH

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### **Have you done your market research? Have you identified less competitive markets?**

Understand the markets where your business has an unfair advantage. For instance, you might see a market like Germany, which is excellent in terms of volume of customers but might be competitive, while you may find other less competitive markets that are *blue oceans*. Due diligence is essential when staking out your future in international eCommerce.

### **Do you have a long-term, flexible roll-out strategy?**

In terms of the strategy for rolling out international eCommerce, you need a long-term vision. This vision shouldn't be too rigid but should outline where your business wants to be in 3-5 years: which markets and why. You also need to have softer milestones that you're trying to hit along the way.

During the roll-out, new issues and ideas will emerge, and there's always a certain degree of risk when you decide to expand into the new markets. Risks can be mitigated by knowing beforehand that your plan will change—flexibility is key.

### **Does your business have a local presence?**

As part of your organisational design, a presence in local markets will help you validate your assumptions and ensure that your new endeavour doesn't blow up in your face. This presence gives you a deeper understanding of your target market, and it's also de-risking your strategy. You'll be able to validate the assumptions that brought you into the market and avoid potential pitfalls.



## TECHNICAL

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### **Will you establish a local technical role for your global expansion?**

Often, you'll have to develop a local role to fulfil technical requirements. For example, external payment and shipping providers need to be integrated for specific markets. Even within the company, you might have another internal business system, such as an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution, where you integrate information. A technical person, who can navigate the various obstacles in the new market, will help you overcome obstacles during the technical roll-out.

### **Should you have a single centralised global system or multiple systems within individual countries or regions?**

Both options have benefits and drawbacks. Maintenance work pushes companies to perform maintenance at the ideal time. But, is there a perfect time? Off-peak hours in the UK occur during peak time in Australia. A centralised system brings the possibility for greater efficiency, while too much diversity among local markets can make work difficult to consolidate. As a result, the decision between a centralised system and multiple systems requires careful consideration.

### **Have you considered using a content delivery network (CDN) to improve global performance?**

Are you using a CDN to assist your global performance? A CDN moves the content to the new country or makes sure there's a copy there. On a technical level, connecting a local machine to the local service can make requests faster. A CDN will eliminate the need for a server in every country and also establish a network that gives you a faster response time.

### **How will you coordinate work across global roll-outs? (Open-ended)**

Have you thought about how to coordinate work across all global rollouts? You can reuse and coordinate resources during the technical part of the roll-out across countries. A change in one country can actually flow into another country's deployment. For this reason, coordinating work across global roll-outs means that you don't have to reinvent the wheel.

Larger companies can sometimes have the problem where regional markets operate like separate companies: They have their own opinions, and they don't like adhering to centralised decision-making. And sometimes technical tools that are available to everyone can simplify things. Local country units might still deal with disagreements on various issues, but—at least technically—everything will look similar.



## MARKETING

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### **Have you translated your website and content?**

The latest research shows that English represents just 25.9% of overall internet traffic, according to Statista. So, this means the English site is inaccessible to the vast majority of global internet users. At the very least, you should ensure that the basics are addressed: local contact details and customer service options based on the time zone of the particular region.



### **Are you managing content in a way that makes your brand more efficient?**

Content management represents a significant issue when overseeing a multi-country eCommerce site. According to the Content Marketing Institute, only 16% of marketers believe they possess the right technology and education to manage their content across their organisation. This issue becomes even more problematic when considering local and global responsibilities for marketing efforts. Effective content management gives you the chance to craft your message to fit with new countries and regions.

### **Is your Search Engine Optimization (SEO) adhering to the needs of specific countries and languages?**

Even if your company is performing well on Google with search terms in English, you will still need to find out how the same product search is undertaken in another language. How can you translate *glocalization* into German, Spanish, French, or British English? For this reason, you need to understand how your core products and services translate into search queries in new markets.

### **Does your Search Engine Marketing (SEM) change according to your market?**

SEM requires a tight grip on the nuances of your target market. Challenges are geographical, psychological, and cultural in nature. In fact, adding local marketers to your team could help you navigate murky waters. Also, remember that goals differ by market, and your KPIs in one market could be to build awareness, while you might focus on building loyalty in established markets. A versatile SEM strategy helps cater to the requirements of each region.

### **Are you active on marketplaces that are winning in your target market?**

Marketplaces contributed to 52% of global online retail sales in 2019, according to DigitalCommerce360. Whether Amazon or another marketplace, your local marketing efforts will benefit from accessing marketplaces that are popular in your target market. Entering marketplaces also links back to initial market research, where you can see how your products fair around the globe without a robust local presence.



## **OPERATIONAL**

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### **Do you have a localised customer service team available on the channels your new customers use?**

For customer service, you need to ensure that your customers' problems are understood. That often means hiring someone who understands the language and also knows where local customers want to communicate. A study by Statista showed that 57% of German respondents preferred phone or voice communication while only 33% of Brazilian respondents preferred phone or voice. This statistic illustrates the need to understand the local context to boost your customer service.

### **Do you have fulfilment that meets your customers' expectations?**

Fulfilment plays a big role in your overall customer experience. For example, same-day shipping is now commonplace. With deliveries getting faster and more accurate, you will need to consider how to get your product to your clients faster than local competitors.

### Have you streamlined your logistics?

To satisfy the demand in your new market, you will need to ensure that your logistics are on point. You will need to consider integrating combinations of distributors, manufacturers, and logistics operators that are capable of working together with your team in an efficient and low-cost manner to get your products where they need to go.



## FINANCIAL

### Do your prices and currencies match the target country?

Similar to a foreign language, prices displayed in different currencies confuse new customers visiting your site. They will have to convert the price on their own, and they will lose trust in your brand. With an eCommerce solution, you can set your base currency to receive payments in the currency of your choice while also giving shoppers from other markets the chance to shop and see prices in their local currency without issues.

### Are you providing localised payment options?

While 44.5% of global digital transactions occur through a digital or mobile wallet, consumer choices begin to diverge when we look at certain countries, according to Statista. Specific options, such as Buy Now Pay Later, are negligible everywhere except for Europe, where they make up 7.4% of eCommerce transactions. Payments methods, for this reason, are crucial when beginning to sell in new markets to give customers the digital experience they want.

### Have you explored the tax policies for your new markets?

Tax regimes add another layer of complexity to selling in new markets, and the landscape is always shifting. After Brexit, taxes for many UK companies resemble other EU outsiders, such as the United States. Thus, it's important to understand taxation to reap the benefits of taking your eCommerce across borders.



## LEGAL

Specific laws can hinder your company when operating in a new country. For instance, the acceptance of cookies in the US and Europe differ greatly. Laws also vary by industry, such as in the area of pharmaceuticals or alcohol.

### Are you up-to-date on the terms & conditions within target markets?

The GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) is one of the main considerations that a company from outside the European Union will need to adjust to. This law requires that you keep data safe while also allowing people to have access to their data and how it is used.\*

# ABOUT VAIMO

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Vaimo is one of the world's most respected experts in digital commerce. As a full-service omnichannel agency, we deliver strategy, design, development and managed services to brands, retailers and manufacturers all over the world.

Our sharp focus, broad experience and deep expertise within B2B, B2C, PIM, Order Management and ERP integrations makes us a key partner for driving success in digital commerce. Our 12+ years track record of technical excellence coupled with our proven results in helping our clients succeed with business development, digital strategy and customer experience design is proudly manifested in our status as an Adobe Platinum Partner.

With local offices in 15+ markets across EMEA, APAC and North America and over 500 employees, we provide an international presence that allows us to cultivate close, long-term relationships with our clients.

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