

International growth

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Ticket to ride

The web makes borders irrelevant – despite the hard work of Brexiters to make it otherwise – and international ecommerce is thriving. China leads the way for UK retailers, although all markets are potential targets. **Paul Skeldon** takes a look at how to go global

ON 1 MAY 2017, a mile-long freight train pulled into the eastern Chinese city of Yiwu. In its 30 containers were British goods, shipped 7,500 miles along the new Silk (rail) Road to sate the growing Chinese demand for British goods.

While for trade between Europe and China is 2,000 years old – as old as the original Silk Road – the train represents the new face of ecommerce. It's an international face that, Brexit or not, is going to see retailers looking beyond the horizon in order to expand.

Since the internet is global then international sales should be a given. However, for many years, ecommerce has grown domestically in every country, with its own set of players and customs and practices. That is starting to change. This year's 'peak season' – Black Friday and Cyber Monday – have now become an almost-month long sales pitch that kicked off, appropriately enough, by Single's Day in China on 11 November. A study carried out by Royal Mail over the three months running up to Single's Day this year found that more than half (55%) of shoppers in China bought items from British brands in a three-month period, spending an average of £104 per month, with 79% of them shopping on mobile.

China's ecommerce market is a busy place, with the average online shopper spending £123 per month, compared to £89 in the UK. It's set to get even busier. Three in four shoppers claim to have recently increased their rate of online shopping, while confidence has risen 30% within two years. 79% of China's shoppers make purchases via their smartphone (up from 70% in 2015), compared to 28% of UK shoppers.

Beyond China

China may capture all the headlines but this move to buy online internationally is growing worldwide as the web's tentacles reach out across borders and shipping costs become ever cheaper. Emerging markets in the Middle East and Latin America sit alongside China as new territories that are rapidly opening up to UK and European goods and services, according to Philip Driver,

head of ecommerce EMEA at Canon Europe. "We are seeing these markets open up further as consumer tastes become more westernised and disposable income in middle class segments continues to grow," he says. "There are still big gains to be had in traditional EFIGS (English, French, Italian, German, Spanish) markets though and getting our premium ecommerce experience right for European customers is our focus at Canon right now."

UK retailer Laura Ashley is also looking overseas to stave off falling UK profits. The homewares-to-fashion retailer launched online in China in November 2016 and plans to develop its ecommerce business through international growth. The trader already delivers to eight European countries, with delivery recently added to the Czech Republic and Hungary. It will also add new payment solutions to its German, French and Benelux operations.

And it isn't just confined to UK retailers. Duifhuizen, a Dutch retailer of bags and travel goods, has launched duifhuizen.com in response to growing interest from overseas in its existing Netherlands website.

"We've noticed a continuous rise in our customers from abroad," said ecommerce manager Mark van der Stokker. "In future, we're looking to focus more on country-specific content. Take Mother's Day for example. It's celebrated earlier in the UK than it is in The Netherlands. On the international online shop, we've time-adjusted our content in order to offer the English-speaking customer the best service at the most relevant moment."

How to be international

So how are all these businesses looking to tap into other markets? The key is to "Sell internationally, not just ship internationally," says Nir Debbi, co-founder and CMO at Global-e. "Fundamentally, it is localisation that will uplift international conversions. Markets differ on currencies, languages, payment methods and tax regime, so the online experience provided should reflect this."

One way round this is to use marketplaces. Leading marketplaces such as Amazon and eBay – not to mention China's Alibaba and AliExpress – already have a presence

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Ten issues to consider

1 LANGUAGE: There is a pull towards UK goods, especially in China but you still need to sell them to shoppers and that has to be done in the local language you are selling to. A picture will show what you have, but imagine if you had to try to read all the reviews and specifications in another language. Translation is the very first step.

2 CURRENCY: Like language, you have to show prices in the local currency so that shoppers know how much it is going to cost them (relative to what they already know). According to Global-e's data, when given an option, 98% of customers worldwide prefer to pay with their own currency over the merchant's default currency. It's also important to consider local pricing and rounding conventions when converting prices into another currency.

3 SHIPPING: In any market, multiple shipping options are always a good idea. Internationally, this can be even more important, since well priced options – that is, not too expensive options – are always a winner with customers. It is also important to be clear about final shipping dates for Christmas or other 'hot date' delivery periods, factoring in a buffer zone to ensure complete customer satisfaction.

4 RETURNS: Much like shipping, having a simple and clear returns policy that makes it easy to send back goods is a must. Returns are often overlooked as a selling point but internationally, they can make all the difference. If you can arrange localised returns, or even collection, free of charge, then customers are put at ease and are far more likely to click that buy button.

5 TAX, DUTY AND CUSTOMS: Retailers should be completely up front about any additional costs such as customs charges or handling fees. Providing a guaranteed local tax and duties calculation at checkout creates greater customer trust and better brand perception.

6 BRAND EXPERIENCE: How do you maintain your brand experience and values across borders? A lot of companies take a copy and paste approach to localisation and market rollout. While this can be fine for speed, simple things can have a jarring impact to conversion. Using the US date format, for example, seems like a trivial point but hits sales as it adds friction. Don't make customers change to fit your brand – you need to change your brand to fit them.

7 PERSONALISATION: The personalisation of the shopping experience is a must across all markets these days, even the developing ones. One of the biggest challenges for cross-border retail will be how to collect and manage all that data, especially post-GDPR in May 2018.

8 MARKETPLACES: As we have seen, one way to get a headstart overseas is to tap into existing presences such as marketplaces. They already have the reach and many can help you translate your product information and pricing, as well as being a one-stop-shop for shipping and returns handling.

9 BE READY OPERATIONALLY: To meet all these challenges you need your whole business to be ready operationally. This means, of course, doing all the above, but you also need to make sure your whole company is geared up to deal with being an international company. Is your warehouse ready? Can your website handle the increase in traffic? Are your carriers in place and do any of your staff have language skills in any of your target markets?

10 TAKE TIME TO UNDERSTAND: Expanding overseas is clearly a good way to grow your business but you have to really understand the markets you are looking to operate in. Ideally, start with ones that you already have reasonable sales in and grow that. But even then, you need to research heavily and even perhaps go and stay in those markets to really get to grips with the subtle customs and practices that characterise it.

in many countries, so using them to either sell or to create a shop front can be a work-around to expansion problems such as language, currency, shipping and returns. To put their importance into perspective, leading up to Singles' Day, Chinese marketplace app AliExpress claimed the top spot for shopping apps by daily iOS and Google Play combined downloads in the UK, France and Germany!

In summary

There is nothing easy about expanding overseas but the rewards are potentially enormous. Look at where you might already have a good market fit and understand the idiosyncrasies of these markets before you do anything. There is much to be gained but also much to be lost.

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ChannelAdvisor's expert guide to selling internationally

WE ALL WANT to sell more. Maybe you want to sell more by increasing your presence in your domestic market, maybe by expanding into more geographies, or maybe via more channels. But while selling more is our clear collective goal, knowing where to start is less clear.

That's where we come in. ChannelAdvisor has been specialising in helping brands and manufacturers increase their ecommerce footprint for over 16 years now. Brands such as Clarks, Littlewoods Clearance, Samsung and hundreds more have relied on our expertise to boost their online sales, so we clearly know a thing or two about selling more.

But when it comes to expanding internationally, where should you begin?

Understand your customer

The first step when going international is to understand who you're selling to and how they want to purchase your product. Just because your current customer buys in a certain way doesn't mean your prospects will buy that way internationally. Research popular online marketplaces where you're looking to sell and make sure you're visible on them.

Research the competition

Research the marketplace ecosystem you're looking to break into and see who your competitors are. How are they selling? How are they listing their products? Chances are your competitors have done a decent amount of research and optimisation on their listings, so see what you can emulate and, ideally, do better than them.

Think about payment

Cart abandonment is one of the most frustrating problems of the online selling process but it's also one of the most prevalent when it comes to selling products internationally. If a potential buyer can't pay the way they want to pay and they're buying from a brand or site they don't know all that well, they might just not have enough trust to complete the purchase. That's why trusted payment options such as PayPal offer added ease and expertise to the selling process and will help get customers over the line.

Shipping and returns

Calculate your costs for shipping and returns and make them apparent to the consumer where they'd expect to see them. No one wants to get stung with expensive shipping costs they're not expecting – not sellers and certainly not the customers!

There are hundreds of shipping and packaging solutions out there, so see what's available in the market you're looking to get into and see if that beats what your current supplier is offering when shipping internationally.

If you're looking to expand internationally, talk to the experts. ChannelAdvisor has a global team of ecommerce experts just waiting to help. Head over to www.channeladvisor.co.uk to book a demonstration or for a time that we can talk to you. If you just can't wait, just give us a call on 0203 014 2700 and we'll be more happy to help.

Happy selling.

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ChannelAdvisor (NYSE: ECOM) is a leading provider of cloud-based ecommerce solutions that enable retailers and branded manufacturers to integrate, manage and optimise their merchandise sales across hundreds of online channels including Amazon, Google, eBay, Walmart and Facebook. Through automation, analytics and optimisation, its customers can leverage a single inventory feed to more efficiently list and advertise products online. Billions of dollars of merchandise are driven through ChannelAdvisor's platform annually, with thousands of customers using its solutions to help grow their businesses.

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Criteo (NASDAQ: CRTO), the leader in commerce marketing, is building the highest-performing and open commerce marketing ecosystem to drive profits and sales for retailers and brands. More than 2,700 Criteo team members partner with 17,000 customers and thousands of publishers across the globe to deliver performance at scale by connecting shoppers to the things they need and love. Designed for commerce, Criteo's Commerce Marketing Ecosystem sees over \$550bn in annual commerce sales data. For more information, please visit www.criteo.com.

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New Look
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Greenlight Commerce is an award-winning, digital commerce agency that specialises in implementing SAP Hybris Commerce and Salesforce Commerce Cloud platforms. Our team of experts apply creativity and a deep understanding of your business to deliver platforms for digital growth. Using tried and tested processes, we build omnichannel experiences and service offerings that give you the edge in the marketplace. Part of the Greenlight group, we are a full-service partner, giving our customers the expertise and technology to deliver digital growth across all areas, in the one place.

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Klarna.
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Klarna was founded in 2005 in Stockholm with the aim of making it easier for people to shop online. In the last 12 years, technology has evolved, transforming the world around us, yet our mission remains as relevant as ever – to make paying as simple, safe and smooth as possible. Klarna is now one of Europe's largest banks and is providing payment solutions for 60m consumers across 70,000 merchants in 18 countries. Klarna offers direct payments, pay after delivery options and instalment plans with a smooth one-click purchase experience that lets consumers pay when and how they prefer to. Klarna is backed by investors such as Sequoia Capital, Bestseller, Permira, Visa and Atomico.

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PFS is a global commerce service provider of solutions including digital strategy consulting, digital agency and marketing services, technology development services, business process outsourcing services and a complete omnichannel technology ecosystem. The company seeks to optimise every customer experience and enhance the traditional and online business channels of clients across numerous industries. PFS is solution agnostic, with strong and longstanding partnerships with the major enterprise commerce platform providers, which results in the best technologies being utilised for each implementation. PFS has offices across three continents in North America, Europe and Asia.

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Poq, the app commerce company, is a Software-as-a-Service that empowers retailers to create highly effective and customised native apps. These allow retailers to build stringer brands, sell more products, deepen customer loyalty and deliver relevant content, communications and rewards.

Our platform is the result of years of focus on retail apps and is proven to increase conversion rates and revenue. New code is rolled out every week and new releases delivered every quarter. Clients include the UK's largest brands and department store retailers.

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MADE.com
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Quiz

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Maplin Electronics
Monsoon
Net-A-Porter
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Partners:

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Håkan Thyre

Director, Strategic Partnerships,
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What does ChannelAdvisor do and what is your USP?

ChannelAdvisor has been helping retailers and branded manufacturers sell online for nearly two decades.

We specialise in assisting our clients and partners in key specific aspects of the ecommerce ecosystem: helping them list products on marketplaces like Amazon and eBay; optimising digital marketing to help ensure the right product appears to the right user on Google Shopping, Facebook, etc; and solutions for brands like Where to Buy which provide ways to connect shoppers to a trusted network of sellers.

Three things make ChannelAdvisor unique: our expertise, our relationships with industry leaders and our scale. Firstly – we've been helping sellers since 2001, so we've amassed both the experience and know-how to help enable sellers to be successful online.

Second – we've established strategic partnerships with industry leaders like eBay that help us to enable our customers to grow and expand on new marketplaces as well as digital marketing channels.

Finally – scale. Last year we supported nearly 2,900 customers globally and processed \$8.1bn in gross merchandise value.

How would you describe ChannelAdvisor's strategic vision?

Our company mission is to connect and optimise the world's commerce. That's what we're all about. We want to provide retailers and branded manufacturers with the software and services they need to successfully sell products via online sales channels.

Who are your customers?

We've worked with thousands of retailers and branded manufacturers of all sizes. In the UK, we work with

CHANNELADVISOR IN BRIEF

Date launched: 2001

Reach: global

Turnover: \$113.2m

Customers: 2,902

Number of employees: 697

Website: www.channeladvisor.co.uk

For more information: call 020 3014 2700 or email ukteam@channeladvisor.com

Clarks, Littlewoods Clearance and Parkers of Bolton, just to name a few. We find that sellers who are looking to find new ways to expand and new tactics to compete online are the best fit to be a ChannelAdvisor client.

What we do best is help retailers and branded manufacturers to sell more

// Mobile shopping will increasingly take place on a small number of apps, so if you're not on key channels such as Amazon or eBay, you're missing out //

Håkan Thyre

across geographies and provide the tools to enter into new markets. We have the relationships, the partnerships and, most importantly, the in-house expertise to help enable sellers to succeed.

What do you see as challenges for the coming year and what are you doing to meet them?

Logistics will increasingly become a point of differentiation. Consumer expectations are continuously getting more demanding. To stay competitive, retailers will need to find fulfilment partners that can help them meet those demands. We are expanding

our network of fulfilment partners to ensure that our customers have easy access to the right partners.

One of the big trends we're seeing at the moment is the increased demand for mobile commerce. More and more customers want to hit that 'buy' button wherever they may be, so brands that want to win have to accommodate that.

On 28 November 2016 (also known as Cyber Monday in the US) we saw nearly 73% of traffic and 46% of orders on the ChannelAdvisor platform come through mobile devices. The shift away from desktop will only continue and retailers need go from 'mobile-also' to 'mobile-first'. Mobile shopping will increasingly take place on a small number of apps, so if you're not on key channels such as Amazon and eBay, you are missing out on a significant opportunity.

What new functionality does the latest version of your software give to retailers?

We've found that one of the biggest challenges for marketplace sellers is competing on price. Staying competitive requires continual price monitoring but it can be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to reprice on multiple marketplaces without breaching price policy constraints.

In our latest product release, we announced the ChannelAdvisor Price Manager, which helps solve

this problem, allowing sellers to execute on a cross-channel repricing strategy. With this feature, repricers act independently to come up with the best decision for each individual marketplace and then have the lowest price applied everywhere.

What are the challenges ChannelAdvisor is seeing when selling across geographies?

More and more marketplaces are springing up and one of the biggest challenges is staying on top of them all, understanding the ones that you should be on and understanding how (or even if) customers use them.

Understanding your target market is absolutely vital to success when it comes to selling across geographies. What works in the UK might also work well in the US, but will that same Amazon product listing resonate in India? How about China? You have to have data and insight into these markets before opting to sell in them. Launching blind would be foolhardy.

That's where we feel we add the most value – we stay on top of the entire ecommerce industry so that brands don't have to. We're plugged into the industry and, based on our experience, can offer guidance on what works and what doesn't.

If you're interested in finding out what we can do for you, request a demo absolutely free at channeladvisor.co.uk and one of our ecommerce experts will be more than happy to help.

This Company Spotlight was produced by InternetRetailing and paid for by ChannelAdvisor. Funding articles in this way allows us to explore topics and present relevant services and information that we believe our readers will find interesting and informative.

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

Company overview

Clarks is a leading UK-based international footwear brand and retailer. Founded in 1825 by brothers Cyrus and James, Clarks is still based in its birthplace of Somerset and is active in over 35 countries. The world's number one brand in 'everyday footwear,' Clarks designs, innovates, manufactures and sells more than 50 million pairs of shoes every year through around 1,000 of its stores worldwide as well as its online channels.

The situation

As an established brand that's been around for many years, Clarks has always kept ahead of the latest retail trends. With the growth of ecommerce in the retail industry, Clarks identified the opportunity to reach more customers through marketplaces and embarked on expanding its sales to Amazon in the UK.

"With 12 successful transactional websites globally, we were looking for new avenues to expand our customer base," said Gayle Hetherington, Marketplace Manager at Clarks. "We immediately saw the opportunity that marketplaces could offer us. With established audiences and a global reach, marketplaces enabled Clarks to seamlessly expand into new global channels, while complementing our current online strategy."

When starting out, Clarks began by listing its products manually on Amazon UK, which was a time-consuming and ineffective process for the team. Every time a new product line was released, it would take Clarks weeks to have the range listed on Amazon. While results on the marketplace were promising, Clarks realised that in order to scale-up in a quick and agile way, it would need to speed up this process and automate its marketplaces activities.

"We were pleased with the initial success we experienced on marketplaces and were very keen to expand to others," said Hetherington. "We knew that we wouldn't be able to scale at the pace we wanted to without an ecommerce platform, so began to search for a solution that would be able to support us."

The solution

After evaluating the options, Clarks turned to ChannelAdvisor Marketplaces to manage its marketplaces business. By working with ChannelAdvisor's Managed Services team, Clarks' campaigns are fully implemented and managed by ChannelAdvisor's expert team, which allows Clarks to extend its reach without adding any internal resources.

ChannelAdvisor's team is focused on creating and executing campaigns for Clarks in line with its business goals. The ChannelAdvisor team focuses on account optimisation, ensuring that all Clarks' campaigns are listed and mapped correctly on an ongoing basis, giving full visibility on every marketplace. As a part of the focus on growth, Clarks' dedicated campaign managers review the performance of categories, identify sales opportunities, provide competitor analysis and run promotional listings such as eBay Daily Deals to increase sales.

"The team at ChannelAdvisor is an extension of our own. They are experts in each marketplace and understand the nuances and requirements of each, so we know our campaigns are set up to succeed. They share our business goals and always go above and beyond to help us achieve them," said Hetherington.

The results

Since working with ChannelAdvisor, Clarks has been able to dramatically expand its product line on Amazon. New products are live on Amazon within a few hours of release, a vast difference from the time it used to take when listing manually.

Based on this success on Amazon, the retailer decided to expand to new marketplaces in the UK and across Europe. Today, Clarks sells its broad product range on Amazon and eBay in the UK, as well as eBay and Zalando in Germany and eBay in the Netherlands, Spain and France.

"It simply wouldn't have been possible for us to build our own integration into any of these new marketplaces ourselves," said Hetherington. "ChannelAdvisor has opened the door for us to expand our business to new channels and has dramatically increased our visibility and sales on marketplaces. We see the team as a partner to our business and value the difference their work has brought to our ecommerce success. We look forward to what our future holds with ChannelAdvisor."