

salesforce

Map Your Global Commerce Strategy

How to Sell Anything, Anywhere in the World



Introduction

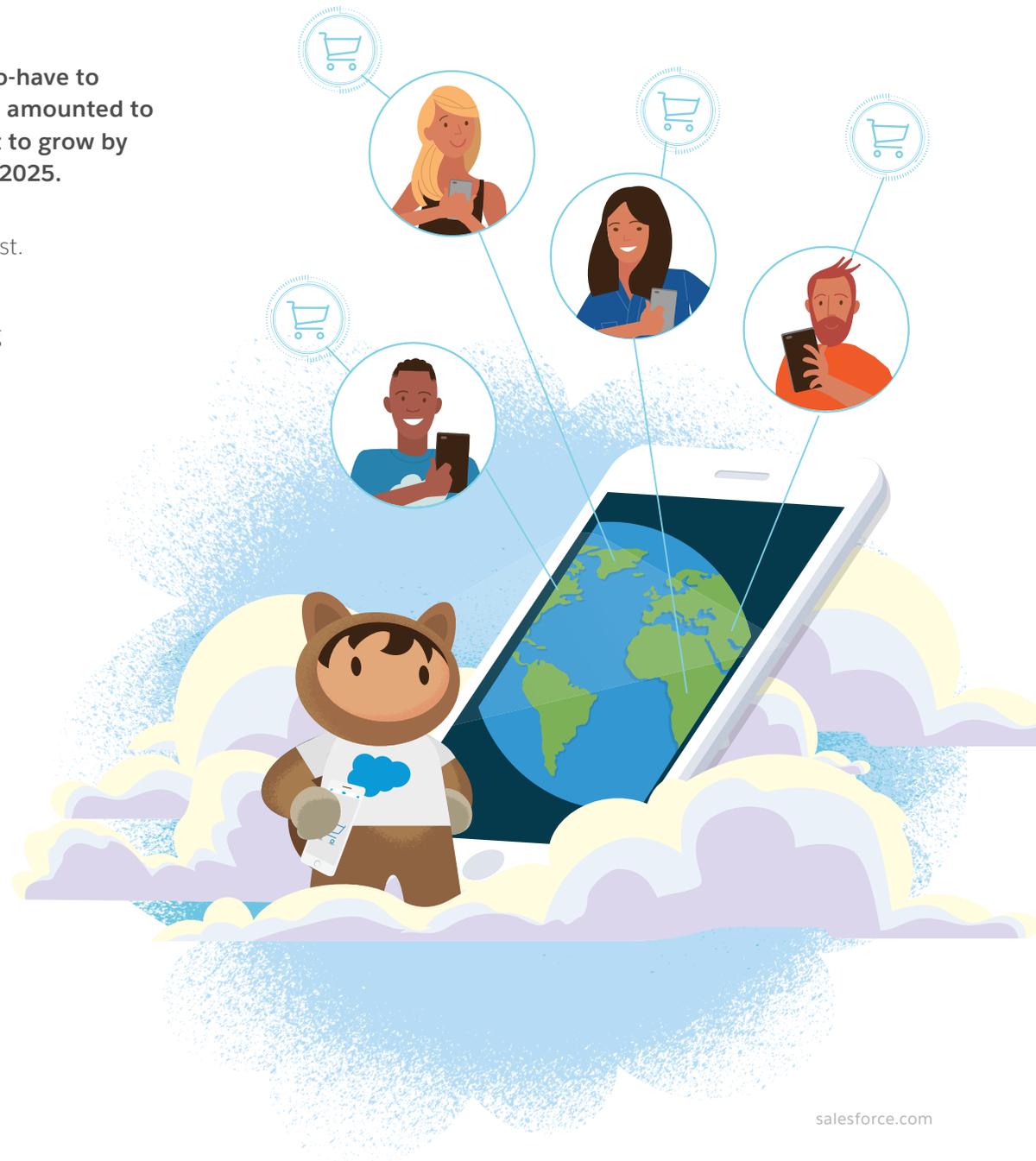
Over the last few years, digital commerce went from a nice-to-have to critical for business success. In 2021 alone, ecommerce sales amounted to approximately \$4.9 trillion worldwide.* This figure is forecast to grow by 50 percent over the next four years, reaching \$7.4 trillion by 2025.

In the new normal, global buying behaviors will become digital-first.

- What is the purpose of international expansion? Are you driving overall brand awareness or growing revenue?
- Which countries have the greatest market potential?
- What are the barriers to entry?
- What are the local considerations?
- Are there local providers to partner with?
- Will the investment and risk outweigh the potential reward – and vice versa?
- What channels do local consumers engage with most?

In this guide, you'll learn the key steps to map your global strategy based on Salesforce's experience helping hundreds of brands expand globally.

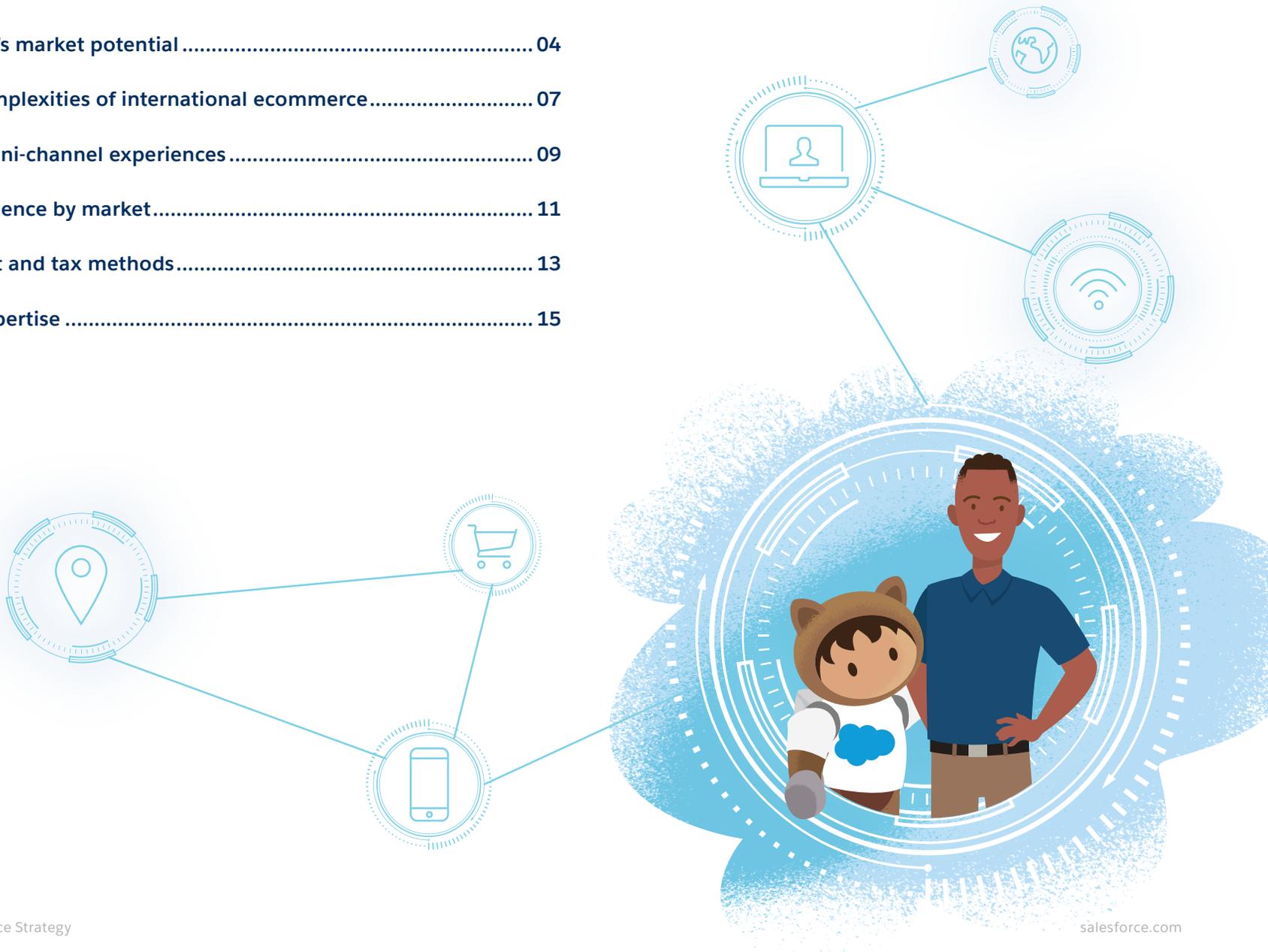
If you're ready to discover your global potential, let's get started.



**"Ecommerce sales worldwide from 2014 to 2025," Statista 2022*

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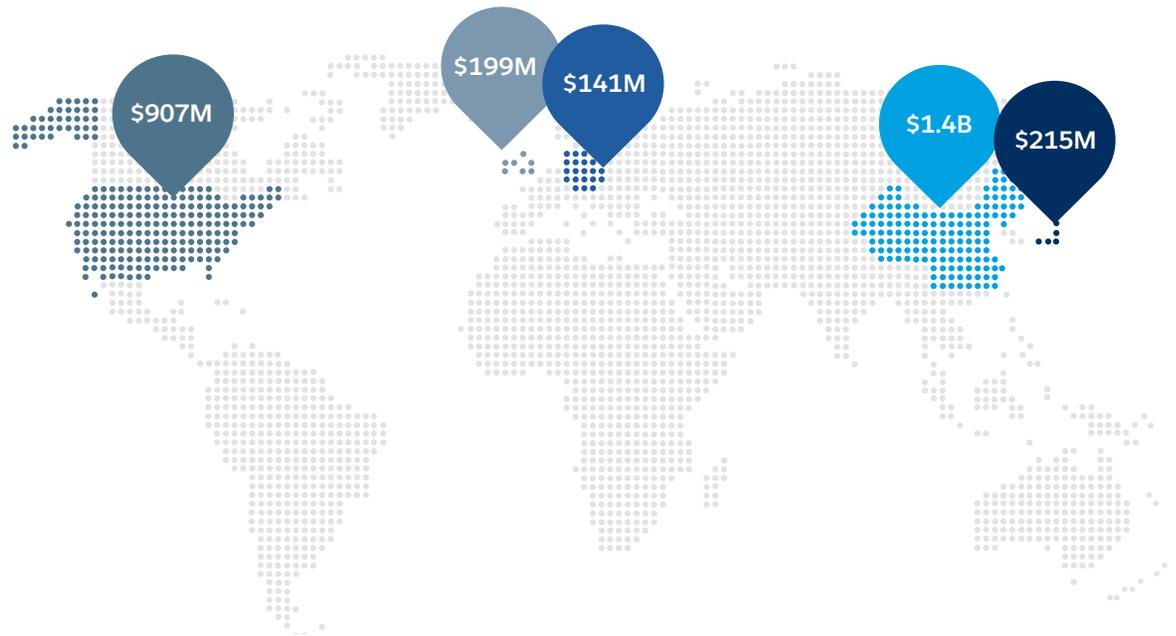
1 Identify your brand's market potential.

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, cross-border ecommerce was expected to hit \$6.54 billion in 2023.* Recent events will accelerate the trend, but every country differs dramatically along verticals and in their demand for foreign products. To understand the intricacies of each market, it's key to know who the buyers are and how to build custom experiences for them. There are a number of crucial factors to assess, such as:

- How many people live in your target country?
- What are the demographics?
- What are the population's technology preferences?
- What is their level of awareness of your brand?
- Are you able to manufacture, ship, or import products to your target country?

Let's look at how to evaluate each.

Ecommerce Opportunities Are Everywhere



Source: "Global Comparison-Revenue," Statista, December 2021.

* "Retail e-commerce sales worldwide from 2014 to 2023," Statista, 2020.

1 Identify your brand's market potential.

Dig into the demographics.

The [CIA's World Factbook](#) is a valuable source of information to compare countries at a granular level. For example, if you're selling baby apparel and gear, you can use this data to identify a given country's median age and birth rate for a more accurate estimate of the market potential.

Assess the level of digital adoption.

Digital maturity, particularly in new and emerging markets, is a major consideration. Are consumers just beginning to adopt technology? If so, it may be worthwhile to make the strategic investment to be one of the first digital players before others claim the position.

Ecommerce Will Continue to Grow

	B2C Commerce Volume (2024, projected, in millions)	Ecommerce Penetration Rate		Compound Annual Growth Rate (2020-2024)	Average Revenue per User (2020)
		2020	2024, projected		
China	\$1,309,535	62%	70%	6.9%	\$1,121
U.S.	\$599,186	81%	84%	9.3%	\$1,569
Japan	\$120,586	73%	77%	5.0%	\$1,075
U.K.	\$101,679	89%	92%	4.6%	\$1,399

Source: "Retail ecommerce sales worldwide from 2014 to 2023," Statista, 2020.



1 Identify your brand's market potential.

Understand your global brand awareness.

Search for customers abroad who know your brand. Capture as many data points about them as possible, including web tracking data, which will uncover the countries where people browse your site. Google Trends can also help break down regional interest based on foreign consumers who use its search engine – simply search for your brand or product names.

If you have a presence in international markets with a nontransactional site, analyze traffic volumes and trends from your site as well as referrals and signals from social media. This will help you discover the countries ripe for growth. If brand awareness is low or unknown, it will take a greater investment in time, cost, and effort to build it up.

Identify global and regional competition.

Will your biggest competitors be local brands or established global players? Is there a need for your products that no competitor is currently meeting? Create an action plan to show how you will break into a new market with a competitive strategy and how your brand will fill a void.

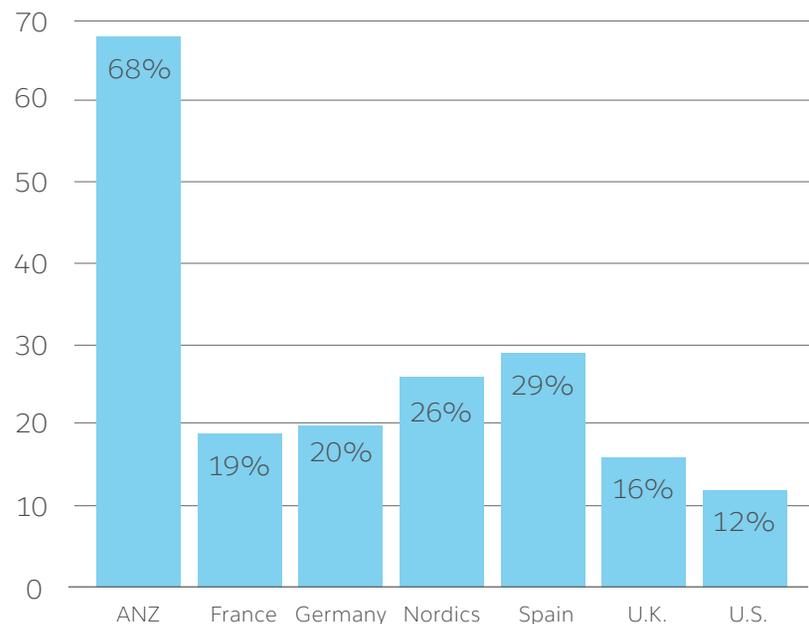
Tap into local resources.

If you already own overseas stores but don't have an ecommerce presence, leverage regional store and retail managers for valuable insights about market conditions, cultural conundrums, the competition, and target audiences. Local knowledge and the ability to negotiate local contracts are huge benefits.

Determine if you should manufacture, import, or ship products.

Work with local country contacts and partners to understand requirements for manufacturing, importing, or shipping goods within your target country. By tapping into your available resources, you can get a sense of the economic environment, trade tariffs, and other restrictions to help you map your approach.

Digital Commerce Growth (year-over-year)



Source: [Salesforce 2020 Shopping Index](#).

2 Understand the complexities of international ecommerce.

As soon as you uncover a business opportunity, consider the complexities of expanding into your target market. It's relatively easy for most European brands to sell to other EU countries given the union, but a U.S.-based brand expanding to Canada (with a forecasted \$33 billion in ecommerce sales in 2024) has to consider customs, duty, and taxes.

Consult legal and financial experts.

If you want to step into China's vast ecommerce market, you can't ensure operations if you don't know internet and consumer regulations. Consult legal and financial departments to understand the impact of requirements like these. Depending on your operational model, you may need local legal entities to represent your interests.

Understand local regulations.

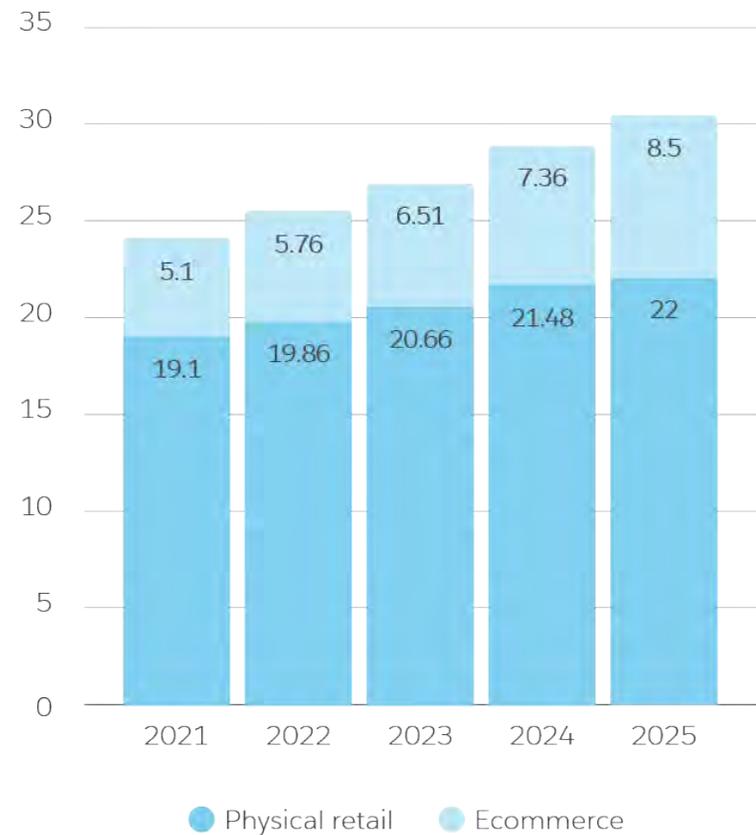
It's important to understand local or regional regulations, such as the GDPR and the [California Consumer Privacy Act](#). Ensure that your commerce provider guarantees compliance and security with the right tools and is transparent about any issues.

Monitor currency rates.

Certain countries have volatile currencies. If you are pricing in local currency but want to capitalize in your home market, monitor exchange rates carefully and evaluate risks and potential insurance options.

Ecommerce Will Grow Faster Than In-Store Sales Worldwide

(in trillion U.S. dollars)



Source: "In-store and e-commerce retail sales worldwide from 2019 to 2025," Statista, 2021.

2 Understand the complexities of international ecommerce.

Track political and economic developments.

Changes in government and policy can impact commerce activities. Follow ongoing developments closely – with trusted sources – to identify any potential risks. These changes can occur due to sudden environmental, health, or societal shifts, so keep up to date on news from a regional source.

Assess local infrastructure.

Local infrastructure adds further complexity. For example, China is centrally governed, so it has a much better carrier infrastructure compared to India, but it has yet to develop unified street names and ZIP codes. In South Korea, fraud is practically nonexistent, but it is a bigger issue in Mexico and Russia.



3 Harmonize your omni-channel experiences.

Cultural differences and technology preferences may cause customer expectations to vary from country to country. Because of this, brands should deliver a consistent shopping experience across touchpoints and geographies.

Today, as mobile devices overtake desktop and integrated apps become the norm, brands can deliver omni-channel experiences unique to each market. How?

Consolidate on a single platform.

From a [single commerce platform](#), brands synchronize sites and product data across categories with a common code base. Administrators can run promotions across all local sites or turn on a specific campaign for Diwali in India, for example, without disrupting the site experiences in Germany, Italy, and the U.S.

Make smarter business decisions.

Reports and dashboards enable business users to view metrics and manage multiple sites using custom data ranges, behavioral data, sales results, profitability of promotions, common device type, and more. With these insights, marketers, merchandisers, and ecommerce teams can tailor the brand experience or geo-specific needs for smarter business decisions.

Deliver personalized customer experiences.

[Artificial intelligence](#) (AI) embedded into a single commerce platform gives brands the power to make geo-specific correlations based on browsing and shopping behavior in the following ways:

- **Search dictionaries:** Consider region-specific language cues. In the U.K., for example, “trainers” will show in search results instead of “sneakers.”
- **Predictive sort:** As customers choose products, sorting rules surface products relevant to each customer’s profile.
- **Product recommendations:** AI can surface products based on regional differences like climate. For example, if a customer is based in Miami, AI may recommend a pair of shorts to go with a new blouse. If the customer is in Oslo, they may see a recommendation for a sweater or coat instead.



3 Harmonize your omni-channel experiences.

Bring commerce to preferred channels.

While social media such as Instagram and Facebook are most popular in the U.S., how and where customers spend most of their time varies by country. WhatsApp, for example, is prevalent in Europe and Latin America. In APAC, it's WeChat. Understand where your target customers are. Consider a commerce solution that allows flexibility by market to build a custom experience for each local market.

Streamline the post-purchase experience.

Once an order has been placed, provide a great customer experience, no matter where they are in the world, with fast shipping, transparent order status, and successful order delivery. **Integrated order management** that is compliant with regional tax codes gives customers complete visibility into their orders. It also helps agents provide faster service, returns, and order handling with a single customer view.

Align your store network.

Brands often struggle to understand and serve customers consistently across physical and digital channels. Connect online and in-store by integrating customer-first experiences such as “click and collect,” otherwise known as “buy online, pick up in-store” (BOPIS). Store associates are armed with customer information and recommended products so they can offer a personalized experience. Every interaction syncs with the main customer record so you always have a single source of truth.

In addition, treat individual stores as miniature warehouses and activate in-store and fulfillment center inventory across digital channels. If you offer online-to-offline services in your home market, such as “browse by store” or “click and collect,” consider offering these services in other countries as well.

SHISEIDO

Beauty powerhouse **Shiseido**, the parent company of beloved brands like Bare Minerals and Drunk Elephant, replatformed on Salesforce Commerce Cloud to control all ecommerce experiences across multiple brands and sites. As a result, the company easily launches and manages sites globally and adjusts to varying market needs – and it experienced **5x revenue growth** in the last five years.



4 Localize your experience by market.

Expanding globally is more than turning the lights on in a new country. It's building a custom experience unique to each market with respect to language nuances, address formats, preferences, geography, and peak shopping days.

Account for language nuances.

Poor translation is the number one hindrance to conversion on foreign websites. Even U.S. brands expanding to the U.K. have to consider small differences. For example, a “sweater” in the U.S. is a “jumper” in the U.K.

Be mindful of address formats.

Every country differs in terms of address format. Reflect these differences in the checkout process. It's right-to-left in some Arabic countries, while different European countries look like this:

Address Formats Vary

Kingsfordweg 151
1043 GR Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Erika-Mann-Str. 57
80636 München
Germany

36, Avenue Hoche
75008 Paris
France

240 Blackfriars Road
London, SE1 8NW
United Kingdom

Support country-specific UX best practices.

Usability plays a big role in experiences that resonate with local customers. Determine how much to invest in country-specific UX best practices. It may be wise to create completely separate product photography featuring local models or close-up shots of stitching and labels to confirm authenticity.

Test the differences to compare the homepage of each country's top search engine, such as Google in the U.S. and Naver in South Korea. The different cultural and design approaches are easily recognizable.

Research social commerce trends.

In the ever-changing space of social media, it's crucial to identify which platforms are the most prevalent as you enter different regions. While Instagram is the leading platform in the U.S., Doyin and WeChat are prominent in China. Trends within each platform also vary by locality. Live shopping is huge in China for millennials and Gen Z consumers, but is just catching on in the U.S.



4 Localize your experience by market.

Localize campaigns.

Some countries start end-of-season sales earlier than others. Climate in different hemispheres triggers the need for different clothing. If a brand expands to the Southern Hemisphere, it must swap its sales of seasonal clothing.

Account for peak holidays.

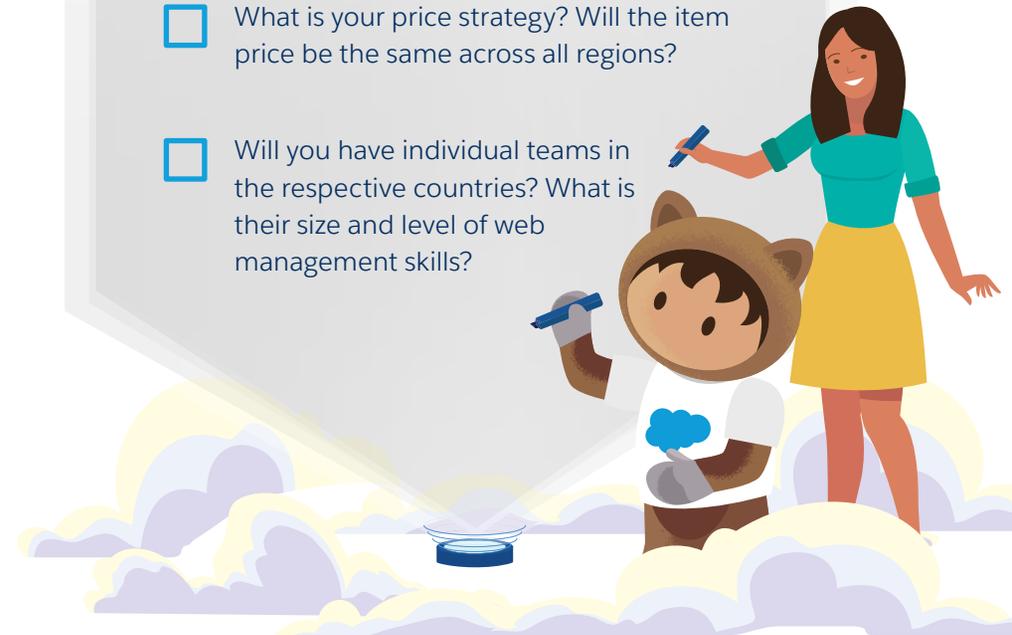
Local campaign calendars should account for key holidays and high-traffic shopping days, which may come at different times than your home country. For example, **Cyber Week** is most prevalent in the U.S., but **Singles Day** and Chinese New Year are China's biggest shopping days. Brands with a presence across geographies need the flexibility to accommodate peak shopping days at various points throughout the year.

Know your limits.

There is danger in over-localization to the point where aspired brand image is turned upside down. For example, to express its California vibes, Hollister maintains photography with U.S. models for Asian markets and generally doesn't adapt marketing to local patterns or preferences. Consider localizing services and language portions key to checkout and conversion, but keep your experience close to core brand values.

Your Localization Checklist

- What is your approach for campaigns and promotions? Is it one-size-fits-all or country-specific?
- What is your product catalog and inventory mix? Is there one central warehouse selling the same products across all targeted countries or are there exclusive products per country?
- What is your price strategy? Will the item price be the same across all regions?
- Will you have individual teams in the respective countries? What is their size and level of web management skills?



5 Determine payment and tax methods.

Payment and tax are two of the most complex factors due to the diversity of payment types, preferences, and tax rules by country. Staying up to date on changing legislation and consumer preferences can be difficult for even the savviest brands. For example, consumers in the Netherlands value consumer protections while those in the U.S. and Japan want speed and convenience. How do you address these differences?

Offer the right payment types for your audience.

Analyze your target market to understand and offer the best payment mix. Many consumers in fast-growing Latin American markets, for example, use a payment system called DineroMail. After making a purchase, customers are directed to a DineroMail site to print out a payment slip, which they take to an OXXO or 7-Eleven to make the payment.

Choose a platform that supports leading tax and payment providers.

A **unified commerce platform** should support payments, tax, and currency plug-ins from leading providers, which makes it easy to launch relevant payment types in target markets. This allows customers to pay in their local currency using their preferred payment method. (Beware of providers who offer few choices or only have a native offering, which typically results in high transaction fees.)



Lululemon launched on Commerce Cloud in Asia and EMEA markets, opening the door for expansion into new markets quicker than ever. The athleisure brand now innovates and optimizes operations with a multisite/multigeo management system.



5 Determine payment and tax methods.

Capture foreign payments and consider local banking.

Brands may incur high currency exchange fees if they pay local partners and employees in local currency but settle revenue at home. Pay close attention – especially during the investment phase.

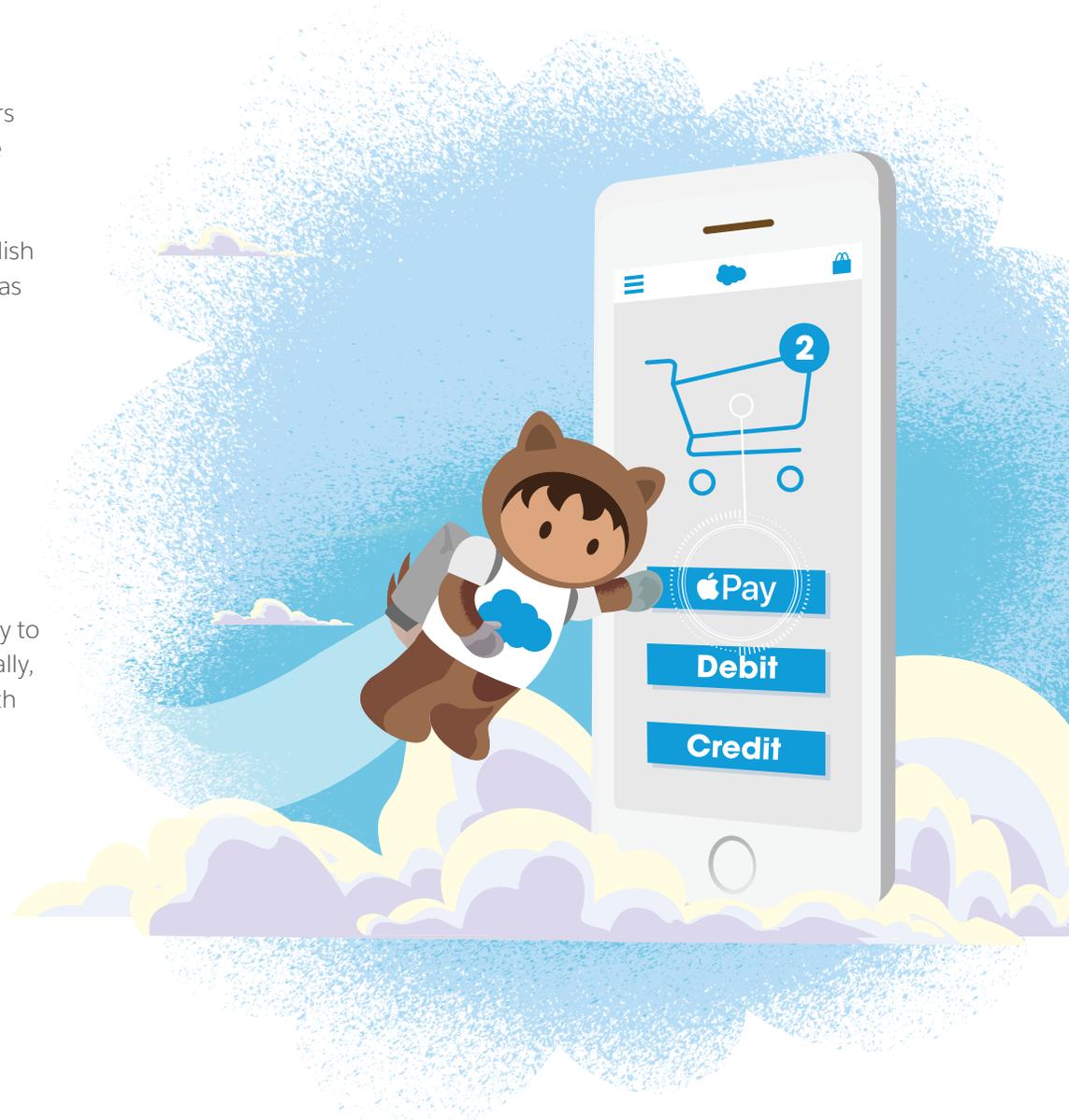
Given payment complexity, it may make sense for your brand to establish a local bank account abroad. Complete the entire application process as early as possible. Neglecting to do so could delay site launch.

Localize and simplify the checkout process.

By highlighting critical shopping actions and reducing the number of clicks, brands ease the workload for customers and make it faster to reach checkout.

Improving the checkout experience universally improves conversion – and having a localized experience can make all the difference. One way to do this is to autopopulate checkout fields wherever possible. Additionally, with express payment options like [Apple Pay](#), customers check out with one touch for a fast and frictionless checkout experience.

The Salesforce [AppExchange](#) and [Partner Marketplace](#) have a full range of precertified fulfillment partners and fast integrations.



6 Tap into partner expertise.

It's most effective to target a small number of strategic, high-potential growth countries and fill in remaining markets with verified, third-party fulfillment partners like [Pitney Bowes](#). Precertified partners with cross-border presence can offer payments, fulfillment, duties, customs, and tax compliance that plug into your own checkout experience. They're a low-risk option to test many markets simultaneously.

Assess your partners' global footprint.

Before contracting with new partners, consider third-party logistics providers with reliable subsidiaries. For example, a payment gateway in Europe may also support payments in Latin America. Run a full assessment of existing vendors and inquire about their capabilities or partnerships outside of your home market. In certain cases, existing partners can recommend and introduce you to other regional partners.

Find the right system integrators.

System integrators play an important role in building ecommerce sites for emerging markets. Make sure that your partner brings the appropriate expertise or subcontractor experts in to deliver a project that meets your requirements.

Consider independent software vendors.

Another way to reach customers is to integrate with local technologies that customers are already using. Integrations power region-specific experiences, such as the ability to connect with customers on WeChat in Asia-Pacific regions.

Ensure integrations meet local requirements.

Can your CMS handle European umlauts and double-byte languages like Japanese? Are you unsure of which mobile wallet partner is right for your market? Ensure that third-party systems and services meet local requirements; otherwise they will need to be replaced with a local solution.



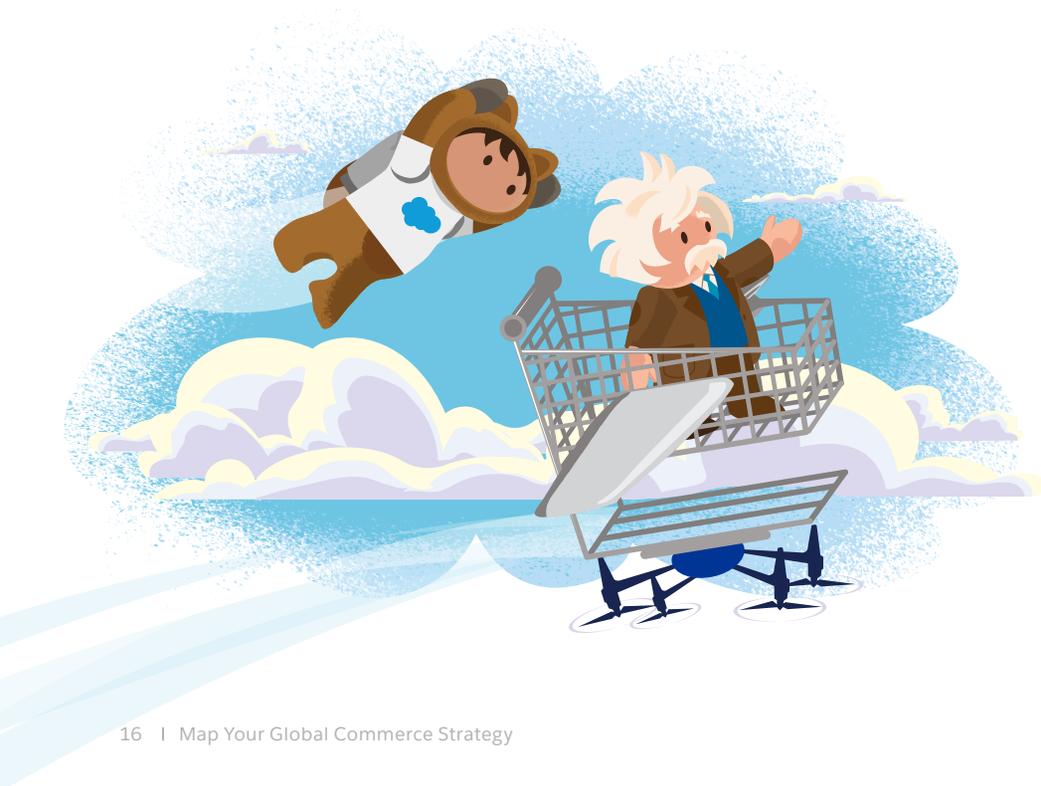
As [ASICS](#) began its journey to become a global retailer, multiple regions were operating up to seven different systems for daily business, a process that was painstakingly manual and inefficient. ASICS recognized it needed to unify systems and modernize the ecommerce experience by integrating data using Salesforce Commerce Cloud and MuleSoft. The sophisticated global view accelerated growth and provided value to every customer.



Take your brand to the global stage.

While every country has its nuances, creating unique localized experiences doesn't have to be a complicated endeavor.

Salesforce Commerce Cloud can help your brand achieve transformational growth by launching and maintaining multiple sites across geographies with flexibility, trust, and intelligence. Manage multiple brands or country sites all from one place with common code, products, content, and catalogs. Out-of-the-box localization capabilities including multicountry, multilanguage, and multicurrency bring speed and customization to geographic expansion with minimized risk, cost, and complexity.



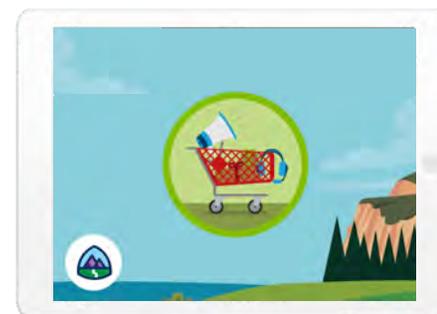
If you're ready to come together with customers around the world, take these next steps:



Take the [Explore Internationalization Best Practices](#) trail on Trailhead, our free digital learning resource.



Discover all the ways to [jumpstart growth](#) for your business.



Learn how to [sell everywhere](#) and across all channels.

[Learn more](#) about Salesforce Commerce Cloud.

