

Cross-Border E-Commerce Practice Guide for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

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Preface

In recent years, cross-border e-commerce (CBEC) has sustained robust growth. The global market is projected to exceed USD 5 trillion, while the gross merchandise volume of China's outbound e-commerce has grown by approximately 12% year on year. Regionally, emerging markets such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa have seen particularly rapid growth, serving as the primary engines of global CBEC expansion. With relatively low barriers to entry, controllable startup costs, and broad market potential, CBEC is becoming an increasingly vital pathway for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to expand into international markets.

Yet SMEs face multiple practical challenges in engaging with CBEC. First, product homogenization is becoming increasingly pronounced, and price competition is intensifying; relying solely on low-price broad SKU listing strategies offers no sustainable way forward. Second, varying regulatory requirements across countries continue to tighten, driving up compliance costs related to tax registration, product certification, and data privacy, while platform traffic is increasingly concentrated on brand sellers. Third, most SMEs are constrained by team size, capital reserves, and cross-border experience, leaving them with limited systematic guidance on market selection, model matching, and operational implementation, and with minimal room for trial and error.

To help SMEs reduce trial-and-error costs and take steady first steps in going global, the World Internet Conference Specialized Committee on E-Commerce has compiled this Guide. Grounded in the actual resource endowments of SMEs and following the business logic of "selecting markets, defining models, managing operations, and leveraging tools," the Guide systematically introduces key market profiles and selection methods, business model matching, product selection and supply chain management, payment and financing, marketing and advertising, and other hands-on essentials spanning the full CBEC workflow. It also provides introductory guidance on artificial intelligence (AI) tools and a list of commonly used tools, aiming to help SMEs make more accurate business judgments with limited resources, gradually build sustainable cross-border operational capabilities, and enable SMEs worldwide to better integrate into the CBEC ecosystem.

Editorial Notes:

In compiling this Guide, extensive market data, platform information, and commonly available tools and services have been referenced to provide practical guidance for SMEs. It should be noted that any reference to platforms, tools, or service providers herein is illustrative only and does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement. The contents of this Guide do not constitute professional advice on legal, tax, or financial matters.

Executive Summary

CBEC is a systematic endeavor with closely interlocking components. For SMEs going global, four critical questions must be addressed in sequence: which market to enter, what model to adopt, how to organize operations, and what tools to use for efficiency gains. Accordingly, this Guide is structured into four parts—Target Market Entry Guidelines, Business and Organizational Model Selection Guidelines, End-to-End Operations Guidelines, and Practical AI Application Guidelines—supplemented by a practical resource toolkit in the annexes, aiming to cover the complete journey from decision-making to implementation for SMEs.

Selecting the right market is the first step toward successful global expansion. The world's eight major CBEC markets each exhibit distinct characteristics: North America and Europe boast large volumes but impose high compliance thresholds; Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East lead in growth rate yet face significant infrastructure gaps; Japan and South Korea impose stringent quality requirements; and Africa remains at an early stage of development where potential and risk coexist. Rather than spreading themselves too thin, SMEs should apply a three-step framework—"macro assessment, competitive screening, and low-cost validation"—to size up market opportunities and control trial-and-error risks with minimal upfront investment.

No single business model is universally optimal; the best choice is the one most suited to a company's own conditions. Models such as independent Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) websites, Business-to-Consumer (B2C) platforms, Business-to-Business (B2B) platforms, fully managed and partially managed models, and social media and content commerce differ significantly in their demands on capital, team capabilities, supply chains, and operational capability. Enterprises can conduct tiered self-assessment based on seller type, operational capability, and product characteristics: sellers with supply chain advantages may start with low-barrier supply-oriented models, while trading-oriented sellers may enter through retail-oriented models built around product selection and channel flexibility. Once a model is chosen, resources should be allocated in step with the startup, expansion, and maturity phases, with organizational structure and entity setup evolving in tandem.

Operational execution capability determines the success or failure of cross-border operations. In product selection, enterprises should adhere to five principles—platform compatibility, market orientation, supply chain reliability, profit feasibility, and compliance-first positioning—while strictly observing four red lines: intellectual property rights (IPR), product safety, market access certification, and environmental responsibility. In supply chain and logistics fulfillment, enterprises should establish a dual-track supplier system, classify and manage inventory by value and turnover frequency, and match logistics solutions to actual needs. In payments and financing,

SMEs should choose collection tools aligned with their business profile, minimize collection cycles and foreign exchange losses, and take a proactive approach to exchange rate risk management. In marketing and advertising, structured pricing should be implemented by distinguishing traffic-driving products, high-margin products, and image-building products, combining in-platform advertising with off-platform content-driven traffic generation. Compliance must run through every link of the full chain; any violation could expose the upfront investment to significant losses.

The core value of AI lies in pushing the boundaries of what a team can achieve. SMEs should apply AI following the principles of "demand-driven, incremental, and build-through-use" adoption, advancing steadily through four stages—efficiency-driven substitution, decision support, business integration, and AI-native operations. During the startup phase, they should prioritize AI for repetitive tasks such as content creation, translation, and customer service response. During the growth phase, they should leverage AI for market analysis, product selection decisions, and marketing optimization. In the multi-market operations phase, they should integrate AI deeply into business workflows covering order management, inventory control, and logistics. The transition to AI agents taking on end-to-end operational responsibilities should be explored only when foundational conditions are firmly in place. Tool investment should be kept within means, planned in tiers aligned with annual budgets, and subject to validation through free versions before any commitment to paid plans.

This guide is accompanied by a series of practical tools for daily reference by enterprises. Each chapter incorporates tools such as a Pre-Launch Action Checklist for New Market Entry, a Common Pitfall Checklist for New Market Entry, a Business Model Selection Decision Matrix, and a Compliance Checklist. Annexes A through D provide a guide to mainstream platform onboarding, policy update subscription channels, toolkit links, and a terminology glossary. Enterprises can draw on these resources at key stages such as market entry, model decision-making, and operational review.

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Part I

Target Market Entry Guidelines

The first step for any SME engaging in CBEC is to define its target market. With over 200 countries and regions varying widely in market size, consumer behavior, regulatory requirements, and infrastructure, SMEs should avoid spreading themselves too thin. Instead, they should develop a thorough understanding of each market's unique features and opportunities, align these insights with their own product strengths and resource capabilities, and make informed, systematic selections. Precise market profiling enables SMEs to map the competitive landscape, while low-cost testing helps control trial-and-error risks, allowing them to enter international markets on a sound footing.

(I) Profiles of Key Markets

The world's eight major CBEC markets differ markedly in scale, consumer behavior, and compliance requirements. A clear grasp of each market's distinct competitive landscape and operational priorities is fundamental for SMEs to identify opportunities and safeguard against risks during the market entry phase.

1. North American Market¹

Key Platforms: AliExpress, Amazon, eBay, SHEIN, Temu, TikTok Shop, Walmart².

Market Size: The North American market serves a population of approximately 500 million. E-commerce sales in the United States alone are projected to reach approximately USD 1.53 trillion in 2026, accounting for approximately 15.8% of total retail sales. Growth has averaged 10%–12% annually over the past three years, making this one of the largest and most mature e-commerce markets worldwide.

1. North American Market: The market comprising the United States and Canada; Mexico belongs to the Latin American market.

2. Unless otherwise specified, all platforms and enterprises mentioned in this report are listed in alphabetical order.

Key Characteristics: Consumers demonstrate strong purchasing power and high average order values (AOV). Logistics and payment infrastructure is well developed. Platform governance is rigorous, with stringent IPR enforcement. Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) requirements are shifting from voluntary commitments to mandatory obligations. Advertising-driven customer acquisition costs (CAC) continue to rise, while consumer spending shows an increasingly polarized trend.

Operational Guidance

This market is suited to enterprises with branding expertise, deep supply chain capabilities, and robust compliance resources. In product selection, thorough IPR screening should be conducted upfront to avoid design-patent and trademark infringement. On the operations side, Advertising Cost of Sale (ACOS) should be managed on a phased basis. On the compliance side, close attention must be paid to the ESG audit criteria for platforms and variations in state-level sales tax policies. Sellers relying on low-price broad SKU listing strategies will find their margins increasingly squeezed; a shift toward product differentiation and brand building is strongly advised.

2. European Market

Key Platforms: AliExpress, Allegro, Amazon, Cdiscount, eBay, ManoMano, Otto, Ozon, SHEIN, Temu, and Zalando.

Market Size: The European market encompasses roughly 530 million people. E-commerce sales are projected to reach approximately USD 699.7 billion in 2026. User penetration stands at about 63.6%, and the market has grown at a compound annual rate of 5%–8% over the past three years.

Key Characteristics: The market is a fragmented mosaic of countries and languages. While individual countries offer limited scale, regional integration unlocks substantial volume. Value-added tax (VAT) compliance thresholds are high, with divergent tax rates and filing rules across jurisdictions. Data privacy rules are stringently enforced under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and violations can trigger substantial fines. Environmental regulations such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) are being rolled out intensively, with clear mandates for packaging and product recycling. Consumers place a high premium on sustainability and product quality.

Operational Guidance

Prior to market entry, enterprises should prioritize VAT registration and secure all required tax identification numbers, ensuring full clarity on tax obligations in both destination markets and inventory-hosting jurisdictions. Packaging and products must meet EPR standards, with environmentally friendly materials adopted and all required registrations filed. All user data collection practices must strictly adhere to the GDPR, and

off-platform advertising campaigns should be reviewed for cookie consent compliance. The United Kingdom and Germany are recommended as initial entry points; any expansion into Southern and Central/Eastern Europe should proceed only after compliance and logistics operations have been thoroughly validated in practice.

3.Chinese Market

Key Platforms: Tmall, Douyin E-commerce, Kuaishou E-commerce, JD.com, Pinduoduo, and Taobao.

Market Size: China's online retail market serves roughly 1.4 billion people and generates approximately USD 2.5 trillion in sales, representing over 25% of total retail sales of consumer goods and growing at an average annual rate of around 8.7%.

Key Characteristics: China leads the world in online retail, underpinned by mature e-commerce infrastructure, high mobile payment penetration, and social platforms deeply integrated into consumer decision-making. CBEC platforms offer foreign brands a lightweight entry pathway into China's market characterized by intense competition, low consumer brand loyalty, and concentrated promotional events.

Operational Guidance

Mainstream Chinese e-commerce platforms all operate cross-border zones, such as Tmall Global and JD Worldwide, making them suitable channels for foreign enterprises entering China. Core trademarks must be registered in China before launch to preempt squatting risks. Product packaging and copy should be deeply adapted to local culture, avoiding a direct-translation approach to market entry. Inventory and promotional campaigns for major shopping festivals such as 618 and Double 11 should be prioritized, with preparations beginning two to three months in advance. For small and medium brands, China's mature CBEC platforms should be considered the primary entry channel. At the same time, enterprises should actively establish a presence on social platforms such as WeChat and Douyin to achieve brand exposure and sales conversion.

4.Japanese and South Korean Market

Key Platforms: 11st, AliExpress, Amazon, Coupang, Naver, Rakuten, Temu, and Yahoo! Shopping.

Market Size: The combined population of Japan and South Korea is roughly 180 million. In 2026, e-commerce sales are projected to reach approximately USD 203.3 billion in Japan and USD 180 billion in South Korea. E-commerce penetration rates stand at

approximately 81.6% in Japan and 30% in South Korea.

Key Characteristics: Platform concentration is high in both markets, with domestic platforms wielding significant influence. Japanese consumers demand high standards for product quality, packaging details, and after-sales service. South Korean consumers are sensitive to logistics speed, where next-day delivery is the baseline expectation. Both countries enforce strict import product certification requirements, including Japan's Act on Product Safety of Electrical Appliances and Materials (the PSE certification) and the Food Sanitation Act, as well as South Korea's KC Certification.

Operational Guidance

Enterprises must obtain all mandatory local certifications before listing a broad range of SKUs; otherwise, goods risk being held at customs or removed from platforms. They should earmark budgets for returns, exchanges, and after-sales support and specify return conditions and timeframes clearly on product detail pages. In Japan, enterprises should leverage Amazon Japan's logistics infrastructure for rapid fulfillment at launch, and then cultivate brand depth through Rakuten. In South Korea, they should use Coupang to drive sales volume and Naver for brand visibility and AI-powered search optimization.

5. Southeast Asian Market³

Key Platforms: Blibli, Lazada, Shopee, Tiki, TikTok Shop, Tokopedia.

Market Size: The Southeast Asian market has a population of approximately 680 million. E-commerce transaction volume has grown at 18%–25% annually over the past three years, with platform penetration continuing to rise.

Key Characteristics: Young consumers are the primary engine of e-commerce growth across Southeast Asia and display strong purchasing intent. Live-streaming and short-video commerce on platforms such as TikTok Shop are expanding rapidly and have achieved deep market penetration. Cash on Delivery (COD) remains widely used, though delivery success rates fluctuate significantly. While infrastructure is improving rapidly, the region's archipelagic geography complicates last-mile logistics. Localization requirements extend well beyond language to encompass product curation aligned with local preferences and religious customs. Consumer preferences vary markedly by market: brand and quality dominate in Singapore; aesthetics and social appeal resonate in Thailand; natural ingredients and value for money drive purchasing in Vietnam; while Indonesia, despite its vast scale, presents substantial logistics challenges.

Operational Guidance

During the initial phase, enterprises should use TikTok's shoppable short-vi-

3. Southeast Asian Market: The market centered on six core countries: Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore.

eo links to test products at low cost. Where COD accounts for a high share of orders, they should rigorously monitor delivery success rates and may blacklist customers with a history of refusal or switch high-risk regions to prepayment. In product selection, they should consider religious requirements regarding clothing styles and materials to avoid cultural taboos. Enterprises should also synchronize their marketing calendars with local festivals, prioritizing Ramadan, Songkran, and Eid al-Fitr. Finally, they should leverage local warehousing services on Shopee and Lazada to compress cross-border logistics lead times and shorten delivery windows.

6. Middle Eastern Market

Key Platforms: Amazon, Noon, SHEIN.

Market Size: The Middle Eastern e-commerce market is projected to reach approximately USD 57 billion in 2026. E-commerce sales account for roughly 3.6%–8.3% of total retail sales, with a compound annual growth rate of approximately 11.6%.

Key Characteristics: The Middle East is characterized by high AOVs, underpinned by strong per capita GDP and purchasing power across the GCC countries. The period surrounding Ramadan represents the core annual consumption peak. E-commerce penetration remains low, pointing to substantial growth potential. COD still accounts for a high share of

transactions, though the market is gradually shifting toward digital payments. Last-mile delivery is a critical pain point; vague addresses directly impact both delivery completion and success rates, eroding profitability.

Operational Guidance

Enterprises should begin preparing Ramadan marketing campaigns at least one month in advance, ensuring inventory and advertising materials are in place and concentrating budgets to capture the pre-festival window. They should mitigate COD risks by offering prepayment options for high-AOV products and restricting COD coverage to specific regions where appropriate. On the logistics front, they should prioritize platform fulfillment or pre-positioned warehouses over self-managed delivery to minimize losses and return disputes. Finally, they should ensure that packaging and advertising materials respect local religious and cultural sensitivities, avoiding inappropriate imagery or text.

7. Latin American Market

Key Platforms: Amazon, Mercado Libre, SHEIN, Shopee, Temu, TikTok Shop.

Market Size: Latin America has a population of roughly 660 million. In 2026, the e-commerce market is projected to reach approximately USD 215.3 billion. E-commerce sales account for roughly 14% of total retail sales, growing at

approximately 1.5 times the global average.

Key Characteristics: Latin America ranks among the world's fastest-growing e-commerce regions, with Brazil and Mexico serving as the primary growth engines. The payment landscape is fragmented, with localized payment tools and buy-now-pay-later (BNPL) options widely adopted. Complex customs clearance and extended logistics lead times pose substantial operational challenges. Significant exchange rate fluctuations directly erode profit margins. Short videos and live-streaming are emerging as critical purchase gateways through product discovery.

Operational Guidance

Enterprises should prioritize Mercado Libre as their launch platform, capitalizing on its integrated local logistics and payment infrastructure to accelerate market entry. They must integrate mainstream local payment methods; exclusive reliance on international card payments will alienate the majority of customers. Prices should be quoted in local currency, and pricing models must account for exchange rate volatility and cross-border foreign exchange losses. On the logistics front, they should leverage platform-operated overseas warehouses or third-party facilities to compress delivery lead times and preempt disputes stemming from customs clearance delays.

8.African Market

Key Platforms: Jumia, Kilimall, Konga, Takealot.

Market Size: Africa has a population of roughly 1.5 billion. E-commerce transaction volume is growing at a compound annual rate of approximately 17%.

Key Characteristics: E-commerce penetration across Africa remains low but is accelerating rapidly, while consumers exhibit price sensitivity. The market is structurally fragmented across four distinct sub-regions: North Africa offers comparatively robust infrastructure and elevated e-commerce adoption; West Africa is characterized by high population density alongside significant logistics and payment constraints; East Africa leads the continent in mobile payment penetration and is highly digitalized; and South Africa, as the most industrialized economy, hosts mature automotive and premium consumer goods markets. Mobile money adoption ranks among the world's highest, serving as a critical payment channel for the unbanked. Logistics infrastructure remains weak, and addressing systems are underdeveloped. Certain markets carry elevated operational risks due to political instability and stringent foreign exchange controls.

Operational Guidance

Enterprises should prioritize entry into leading markets such as Nigeria and South Africa, leveraging local e-commerce platforms to establish their opera-

tions. They should integrate mainstream mobile money channels into their payment systems to enhance the customer experience. On the logistics front, they should rely on platform-operated local fulfillment services, as building proprietary logistics networks entails prohibitive upfront costs. They must pay close attention to the foreign exchange policies in target countries, settling in stable currencies or processing remittances promptly to guard against profit erosion from steep local currency depreciation. In marketing, they should respect tribal cultures and religious customs.

(II) Three-Step Market Selection Framework

The international market is complex and dynamic. Rather than relying on trial and error, SMEs should adopt a three-step framework—macro assessment, competitive screening, and low-cost validation—that combines data analysis with practical testing to systematically identify target markets suited to their capabilities and resources.

1. Macro Assessment

Macro assessment is the first step in market selection. SMEs should rapidly identify a pool of candidate markets with fundamental potential from across the globe, eliminating options that are clearly unsuitable. The core of this

step lies in grasping macro-level trends, focusing on four key dimensions.

Key Dimension 1: Market size and growth potential. Enterprises should evaluate the target market's online retail scale, e-commerce penetration rate, and growth trajectory. They should prioritize markets with a moderate market base and accelerating growth, while avoiding red-ocean markets where e-commerce growth is decelerating and competition for existing share has intensified.

Key Dimension 2: Policy stability and trade barriers. Enterprises should systematically review CBEC-related policies in the target market, paying particular attention to the latest tariff schedules and import tax incentives. They should also monitor non-tariff barriers such as technical trade measures and import/export restrictions and assess policy stability and geopolitical risk using authoritative indices and reports. On this basis, priority should go to markets with transparent, stable policies and supportive measures for small cross-border sellers, while those with high tariff barriers and unpredictable policy shifts should be avoided.

Key Dimension 3: Infrastructure readiness. Enterprises should concurrently assess the maturity of logistics and distribution networks, mobile payment systems, digital infrastructure, and warehousing support in the target market. Markets with more mature infrastructure generally present lower fulfillment barriers and more manageable upfront investment. Where logistics and payment ecosystems remain underdeveloped, enter-

prises should tailor fulfillment and collection arrangements accordingly, rather than adopting operational models from mature markets wholesale.

Table 1 Macro Assessment Overview of Eight Key Markets

Key Market	Market Size & Growth Potential	Policy Stability & Trade Barriers	Infrastructure Readiness	Compliance Cost Assessment
North America	Large scale, approximately 10%–12% growth	Frequent trade policy shifts, rising tariff barriers	Well-developed logistics networks, payment systems, and warehousing facilities	Well-established rules but high IPR enforcement and compliance costs
Europe	Substantial scale, approximately 5%–8% growth	Stable policy framework, increasing environmental trade barriers	Mature in Western Europe, relatively weak in Eastern Europe	High VAT/GDPR/EPR compliance thresholds
China	World-leading online retail market, approximately 8.7% growth	Stable policies supportive of CBEC development	Globally leading e-commerce infrastructure	Well-developed platform rules, moderate compliance costs
Japan and South Korea	Moderate scale, steady growth	Stable policies, clear entry rules	High logistics speed, mature payment systems	Strict mandatory certification requirements
Southeast Asia	Approximately 18%–25% growth, strong potential	Relatively open, divergent national policies	Archipelagic geography, complex last-mile delivery	Relatively low costs but fragmented rules
Middle East	Low penetration, approximately 11.6% growth	Geopolitical conflict creates policy risks; GCC states remain relatively stable.	Relatively underdeveloped infrastructure for last-mile delivery	High certification and local agent requirements
Latin America	Approximately 1.5 times global average growth	High tariff barriers, complex customs clearance	Slow delivery, fragmented payment systems	Complex tax systems, high compliance costs
Africa	Emerging stage, approximately 17% growth	High political and policy risks in select countries	Weak infrastructure, underdeveloped addressing systems	Strict foreign exchange controls, high risks

2.Competitive Screening

Competitive screening is the second step in market selection. Within the candidate markets identified through macro assessment, SMEs should conduct in-depth analysis of the platform competitive landscape, category saturation, and their own differentiated advantages to screen out markets character-

ized by excessively intense competition and limited viable space.

SMEs should evaluate both traffic concentration and viability for small and medium sellers. To gauge traffic concentration, they should conduct in-depth research on core e-commerce platforms in the target market, with particular attention to the market share

of top sellers (e.g., Top 10). To assess the viability for small and medium sellers, they should determine whether platform traffic is monopolized by top sellers, whether onboarding processes are transparent, and whether new sellers benefit from traffic support or fee incentives. Markets meeting these criteria should be prioritized; those characterized by heavy traffic concentration among top sellers or platform-owned brands (e.g., excessive Amazon's first-party presence), high entry barriers, policy bias toward established brand sellers, and limited organic traffic access for small sellers should be avoided. Meanwhile, they should review each platform's seller onboarding thresholds and current incentive policies to identify whether the platform is offering a favorable window for new seller entry.

SMEs should evaluate category saturation and competitive intensity. Drawing on insights into best-selling categories in the target market, they should focus on identifying niche segments "that are in demand yet unsaturated." They should use analytical tools to assess top-seller concentration within the category and analyze core keyword search data to gauge the supply-demand ratio (product listings relative to search volume). Priority should go to niche, essential-demand categories with low market concentration, limited top-seller dominance (e.g., the top 10 brands accounting for less than 40% of sales), high new-product survival rates, and genuine growth trends. Conversely, red-ocean categories—where supply substantially exceeds demand, gross margins are razor-thin, and

price wars trigger volatile price fluctuations, or where a handful of entrenched bestsellers with high review barriers (e.g., leading competitors with thousands of reviews) dominate sales—should be avoided, as they present formidable obstacles to new product entry.

SMEs should conduct thorough competitor analysis to identify product differentiation advantages. Focusing on the target category, they should deconstruct the sources of competitive advantage, such as cost strengths, product innovation, brand building, traffic operations, or platform support, and classify each as either "achievable" or "unattainable." These sources should then be benchmarked against their differentiated capabilities, including supply chain strength, product micro-innovations, and service experience, to confirm whether such advantages can be clearly communicated on product detail pages. Entry should be prioritized when enterprises possess two or more perceivable differentiation advantages that create clear separation from competitors; markets where they lack any differentiation foothold and can only compete on price should be avoided.

3.Low-Cost Validation

Low-cost validation is the third step in market selection. Enterprises should test products on social media, cross-validate the results with data analytics tools, and run small-batch pilot sales to gauge market demand with minimal upfront investment. These efforts inform whether to enter at scale.

Method 1: Low-cost product testing via social

media. Enterprises should tap into free or low-cost traffic on mainstream social platforms in the target market to publish product content, using engagement data to gauge consumer interest. In practice, they should select platforms with high penetration in the target market, publish product images, text, short videos, or live-stream clips for the target category, and ensure that content highlights core selling points, use-case scenarios, and differentiated features through an authentic, organic sharing style rather than hard-sell formats. Post-publication, they should monitor organic engagement data over a 48- to 72-hour window, tracking views, likes, comments (noting any purchase-intent questions), saves, and direct message inquiries.

If the deep-engagement rate for a single piece of content—the ratio of saves, shares, and comments to total views—exceeds 1%, and three or more explicit purchase inquiries appear in the comments or direct messages, the test is deemed successful. Conversely, if deep-engagement rates consistently fall below 0.5% across multiple test rounds and no substantive purchase-intent feedback materializes, enterprises should promptly adjust the product or switch markets.

Method 2: Cross-validation via third-party data tools. Enterprises should use CBEC data analytics tools to cross-validate market opportunities across dimensions such as demand scale, search trends, and competitor sales performance, with costs primarily comprising tool subscription fees. In practice, they should use professional CBEC data analytics tools to query 12-month search volume trends, aver-

age monthly sales, and average price ranges for the target category; compare search popularity changes for this category across multiple target markets to confirm whether demand is on an upward, stable, or downward trajectory; and analyze actual sales performance, listing duration, and review growth rates of competitors to assess survival space for new entrants.

If search volume shows an upward or stable trend, leading competitors demonstrate strong monthly sales, and mid-tier and long-tail sellers still generate orders, the test is deemed successful. Conversely, if search volume is declining, or sales are heavily concentrated among a handful of established listings while new listings generally show poor sell-through, the test should be deemed unsuccessful.

Method 3: Small-batch pilot sales. Once validation via social media and data tools is complete, sellers should ship goods to the target market in volumes based on the minimum order quantity (MOQ) for real-world sales testing, using actual order data to make the final determination. This represents the validation step with the highest trial-and-error cost yet the closest approximation to real market conditions. In practice, an initial test volume of 100 to 200 orders should be used, with fulfillment via platform-managed shipping or small-batch overseas warehouse dispatch, to control upfront inventory risk. During testing, the focus should be on order conversion rate (the ratio of visitors to orders), delivery success rate (for COD markets), return rate, positive review rate among first-batch users, and specific review content. Profit is not

the objective at this stage; the priority is obtaining authentic user feedback for product iteration and operational optimization.

If conversion rates reach category averages, return rates are controllable, positive review rates exceed 80%, and no recurring negative feedback themes emerge, the test is deemed successful, and the enterprise can proceed to scaled volume expansion. Conversely, if conversion rates fall significantly below expectations, negative reviews cluster around a specific product defect, or return rates exceed tolerable thresholds, volume expansion should be paused immediately. Enterprises should then address the identified issues through product adjustments or decisively switch markets or categories to avoid substantial losses.

4. Practical Tools

Systematic use of action checklists, guides to avoiding common pitfalls, and information sources helps improve the efficiency of new-market launches and reduce trial-and-error costs. Enterprises can refer to the following three categories of tools.

(1) 30-Day Pre-Launch Action Checklist for New Market Entry

Once the target market is identified, enterprises should structure their preparations for the 30 days leading up to launch across four phases, advancing on a week-by-week, task-by-task basis.

Table 2 30-Day Pre-Launch Action Checklist for New Market Entry

Phase	Key Actions	Deliverables	Reference Tools and Channels
Week 1: Information gathering	Research target market demographics, GDP, online retail scale, and e-commerce penetration	One-page market profile	ecommerceDB, Statista, official websites of national statistical offices
	Query tariff rates, free trade agreement status, and certification requirements	Tariff and compliance screening checklist	WTO Tariff Database, official customs websites of respective countries, Ministry of Commerce FTA Service Network
	Map out mainstream platform entry conditions and fees in the target market	Platform onboarding comparison table	Amazon Seller Central, Shopee Seller Center, platform merchant recruitment pages
Week 2: Competitive intelligence	Search target category keywords and record search result volume and top 20 BSR links	Competitive intensity assessment form	Jungle Scout, platform front-end search, SellerSprite
	Deconstruct top 10 competitor listings (titles, images, pricing, review counts)	Competitor teardown	Keepa (price history), platform product pages
	Identify social platform user preferences and collect localized creative references	Creative inspiration board	Instagram, TikTok, buyer showcases on local e-commerce platforms
Week 3: Testing preparation	Shoot or produce 3 to 5 test content pieces (short videos, images, and text)	Test content asset package	Canva, CapCut, smartphone filming
	Prepare small-batch test products (100–200 units) and a logistics plan	Inventory and logistics plan	1688 Global Exclusive, platform logistics service providers, freight forwarder quotes
	Register target platform accounts, complete qualification review, and bind payout accounts	Platform store activation	Payoneer, PingPong, WorldFirst, platform onboarding portals
Week 4: Launch validation	Publish social media test content and monitor engagement data collected over 48 to 72 hours	Test content data tracking sheet	Google Sheets, creator dashboards of respective platforms
	Cross-validate search volume and sell-through data via third-party tools	Data validation findings	Google Trends, Jungle Scout, SellerSprite
	List small-batch test products and activate data monitoring	First-batch sales data	Platform seller backend, self-built data dashboards

(2) Common Pitfall Checklist for New Market Entry

Entering a new market involves numerous pitfalls and high costs. The following checklist outlines common misconceptions, their typical consequences, and mitigation strategies to help enterprises identify risks early and reduce trial-and-error costs.

Table 3 Common Pitfall Checklist for New Market Entry

Common Pitfall	Manifestation	Mitigation Strategy
Focusing solely on scale while ignoring growth rate	Entering a large but stagnant market and becoming trapped in zero-sum competition for existing share	Verify growth rates over the past three years and prioritize markets with upward growth trajectories
Neglecting hidden compliance costs	Assuming low tariffs mean all requirements are met, leading to blocks from product certification or EPR	Conduct a full compliance chain review during product selection: certification, taxation, environmental compliance, and IPR
Misjudging top-seller dominance on platforms	Entering a market only to discover all traffic is monopolized by top sellers, leaving new sellers with no organic reach	Search core category keywords in advance to assess concentration in search results and BSR rankings
COD trap	Blindly entering a COD-heavy market where high refusal rates erode profits	Research payment structure data in advance; set prepayment options or purchase return insurance in high-risk COD markets
Selecting products based on experience without testing	Assuming there is market demand for a product and placing large inventory orders directly	Complete the three-step framework of testing via "social media, tool validation, and small-batch pilot sales" before scaling
Ignoring cultural taboos	Packaging colors, model imagery, or advertising copy violating local religious or cultural sensitivities	Engage local reviewers to audit creative assets; reference the visual expression styles of leading local brands
Using one collection account across all markets	Binding only one collection tool, leading to cash flow disruption if the account is frozen	Maintain at least two mainstream collection tools to diversify freeze risk
Neglecting after-sales service and returns	Consumers in Japan, South Korea, Europe, and North America have high return expectations; slow after-sales response drags down ratings through negative reviews	Develop return policies in advance and prepare multilingual customer service script templates

Part II

Business Model Selection Guidelines

Selecting a business model that aligns with an enterprise's own resources and capabilities is essential for SMEs' success in CBEC. Different models impose vastly different demands on capital, team capabilities, supply chains, and operational capability. SMEs must avoid copying large-company strategies wholesale; instead, they should choose a model suited to their current development stage and core strengths, while aligning organizational structure and entity setup with business growth.

(I) Analysis of Models Suited to SMEs

Mainstream CBEC business models fall into four categories by sales channel: independent Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) websites, Business-to-Consumer (B2C) platforms, Business-to-Business (B2B) platforms, and social media and content commerce. In addition, depending on differences in operational autonomy, fully managed and partially managed models are also available. These models differ in core logic, operational priorities, strengths and weaknesses, applicable scenarios, and suitable product categories.

1. By Sales Channel

Independent DTC Website: This model centers on the brand's official independent website as its core transaction platform, leveraging social platforms to drive traffic and reach consumers directly. It allows enterprises to build proprietary brand equity and accumulate first-party user data, making it well-suited to sellers pursuing product differentiation and brand ownership. In practice, sellers can launch brand websites using Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) tools such as Shopify; drive traffic through search engine optimization (SEO), social media advertising, and content marketing; and develop well-established membership programs and after-sales service support.

B2C Platform: This model operates through

global or regional retail platforms, leveraging their built-in traffic and infrastructure for rapid, asset-light scaling. It is well suited to early-stage sellers seeking quick product validation. SMEs adopting this model should focus on mastering platform rules and algorithms, optimizing product detail pages, engaging in platform marketing campaigns, and leveraging platform logistics systems such as Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) for order fulfillment.

B2B Platform: This model connects sellers with global enterprise buyers through B2B platforms such as Amazon Business and Alibaba.com, accommodating small-batch quick-response orders, customized orders, and bulk wholesale orders. It is well suited to sellers with production capacity advantages or those seeking to ship in volume. Sellers on B2B platforms should focus on completing corporate profiles and qualification certifications, optimizing product keywords to match B2B procurement habits, and using platform tools for the request for quotation (RFQ) and inquiry follow-up.

Social Media and Content Commerce: This model attracts followers on global social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok through short videos, live-streaming, and image-text content, seeding product interest, driving traffic, and enabling direct conversion. It suits sellers whose products offer strong visual appeal and who excel at content operations. Sellers should build content creation teams or collaborate with overseas key opinion leaders (KOLs) and key opinion consumers (KOCs) to produce

high-quality content aligned with local culture on an ongoing basis and run precision-targeted social media ad campaigns.

2.By Operational Autonomy

Generally, merchants make their own decisions across the entire CBEC value chain. However, as some manufacturers lack experience in running CBEC operations directly, certain platforms have introduced fully managed and partially managed models to lower the barrier for such merchants to enter the CBEC market.

Fully Managed Model: Under the fully managed model, merchants focus on preparing inventory, quality control, and stocking goods into warehouses, while the platform handles everything else end-to-end—traffic generation and management, pricing, customer service, fulfillment, and after-sales support. This model is particularly well suited to factory-based sellers and supply chain-driven enterprises. Fully managed sellers must keep tight control over product costs and quality, comply with the platform's price review and restocking requirements, and ensure their supply chains deliver maximum value for money with a stable supply of goods.

Partially Managed Model: Under the partially managed model, merchants retain control over pricing, marketing, and other key operations while drawing on the platform's logistics and fulfillment infrastructure. This gives them greater operational flexibility, making the model a good fit for early-stage sellers that lack professional operations teams.

Table 4 Comparison of CBEC Business Models

Business Model	Core Strengths	Core Weaknesses	Best Suited For	Ideal Product Categories
Independent DTC Website	Full control over brand and customer data, high margins, high customer loyalty	High traffic generation costs, large upfront investment, in-house responsibility for technology and site maintenance	Sellers committed to long-term brand building, with differentiated products or unique brand storytelling	High-repeat-purchase categories (beauty products, maternity & baby), differentiated custom products, high-premium branded goods
B2C Platform	Massive built-in traffic and consumer trust, mature payment and logistics systems, low upfront investment	High commissions and advertising fees, fierce competition amid product homogenization, no ownership of customer data	Startup sellers, sellers lacking brand experience, or those seeking rapid product validation or high-volume sales	Highly standardized everyday essentials, 3C digital products, household goods
B2B Platform	High and stable order values, high customer stickiness, relatively less competition than B2C	Long transaction cycles, complex decision-making processes, demanding supply chain and compliance requirements	Factories with robust production capacity, integrated manufacturing-and-trading enterprises, businesses seeking bulk or customized shipments	Industrial machinery, building materials and home furnishings, apparel and textiles, auto parts and hardware
Fully Managed and Partially Managed Models	Significantly lower operational barriers and labor costs, with no need to navigate complex cross-border processes	Loss of pricing power and customer data, severely compressed margins, dependence on the platform	Factory-based sellers, startup teams with no operational experience, enterprises with exceptional cost advantages	Price-competitive daily necessities, apparel, footwear, and headwear, small commodities and other standardized products
Social Media and Content Commerce	Strong potential for explosive traffic growth, relatively low CAC, easy to build emotional connections and brand identification	Short content life cycle, unstable traffic, high demands on creative and localized content capabilities	Sellers skilled in content creation and traffic generation and management, products with strong visual appeal or novel, distinctive attributes	Fashion apparel, beauty and personal care, creative toys, novelty home goods

(II) Business Model Selection

No business model is inherently superior to another; the key lies in finding the one that matches an enterprise's own conditions. Enterprises can work through three dimensions in sequence—seller type, operational capability, and product characteristics. First, they should determine their seller type based on their resource endowments, in particular whether they enjoy supply chain and cost advantages. Second, they should assess their current e-commerce operational capability and see where they fit among three levels: no e-commerce operations team, basic operational capability, or strong operational capability. Finally, taking into account whether their products lend themselves to content-driven presentation and whether they are oriented toward brand-driven development, they can select the recommended business model accordingly.

It should be noted that factory-based sellers and integrated manufacturing-and-trading sellers, drawing on their supply chain advantages, can get started with a low entry barrier through supply-oriented models, such as the fully managed and partially managed models, and then shift to a brand retail path once their operational capabilities mature. Trading companies, brand owners, and individual entrepreneurs, by contrast, lack cost advantages at the source. Rather than engaging in low-price competition through supply-oriented models, they should build on their strengths in product selection and channel flexibility and find their entry point among retail-oriented models. Seller type and operational capability are not set in stone; enterprises should continuously adjust and optimize their business model mix as their teams grow and their development stage evolves.

Table 5-1 Decision Matrix for Business Model Selection

Seller Type	Operational Capability	Recommended Business Model	Decision Logic
Factory-based sellers	No operational capability	Fully managed model	Enter overseas markets as a supplier, leveraging cost and production capacity advantages while sidestepping operational weaknesses
	Basic operational capability	Partially managed model, or self-operation on B2B/B2C platforms	The partially managed model retains autonomy over pricing and product selection; B2B platforms allow factories to draw on their credentials to secure wholesale orders
	Strong operational capability	Dual track: B2B/B2C platforms plus independent website	Platforms generate volume, building up sales and reputation, while the independent website builds brand equity and user data

Table 5-2 Decision Matrix for Business Model Selection

Seller Type	Operational Capability	Recommended Business Model	Decision Logic
Integrated manufacturing-and-trading enterprises, trading companies, or brand owners	Basic operational capability	Self-operation on B2B/B2C platforms	Leverage product selection flexibility for rapid product testing and iteration, monetizing platform traffic directly
	Strong operational capability, with a focus on brand development	Dual track: B2C platform plus independent website	Platforms sustain volume and cash flow, while the independent website secures ownership of the brand and user data
	Strong operational capability plus robust content creation capabilities	B2C platform or independent website and social media traffic generation	Drive brand growth through content, with high repeat purchase rates and ample growth headroom

(III) Phased Strategies Across the Enterprise Lifecycle

Selecting a business model is only the starting point; it is the ability to allocate resources, set goals, and manage risks at each stage of development that determines whether an enterprise can achieve steady, sustained growth. A CBEC business generally progresses through three phases—startup, expansion, and maturity—each with fundamentally different core tasks: the startup phase focuses on validating feasibility, the expansion phase on scaling up, and the maturity phase on deepening competitive barriers. Enterprises should define the implementation strategy and risk control priorities for each phase, ensuring that their organizational structure and entity setup evolve in step with the business and guard against both strategic overreach and overly cautious stagnation.

The organizational structure should evolve alongside the development phase. During the startup phase, a team of three to five people is optimal, with a flat management structure and versatile roles in which each member covers multiple functions. The core team lead should centralize oversight of financial approvals, account permissions, and compliance responsibilities, successfully completing an entire business cycle at a minimal staffing cost. Upon entering the expansion phase, the enterprise should shift to a specialized division of labor, with positions organized around operations, supply chain, and support functions, and should establish a dedicated risk control and compliance role responsible for matters such as tax filings, fund repatriation, and account security, ensuring a smooth transition from a "lean" setup to a "professional" one.

Table 6-1 Overview of Phased Strategies for CBEC Enterprises

Development Phase	Phase Characteristics	Development Goals	Implementation Strategy	Resource Allocation	Risk Control
Startup	No cross-border experience, small team (fewer than five people), limited capital, unvalidated products	Rapidly validate product feasibility and complete a successful test process from product selection to closing the first sale	1. Adopt an asset-light model, such as a B2C platform or the fully managed model 2. Focus on one or two core products 3. Capitalize on platform traffic dividends to scale up quickly	1. Prioritize spending on platform onboarding fees and basic operational tools 2. Concentrate human resources on product selection and operations 3. For logistics, use platform fulfillment or direct mail for small, light parcels	1. Avoid blind stockpiling that leads to excess inventory 2. Keep advertising spend under strict control, relying primarily on organic traffic 3. Monitor platform rules to avoid store suspension for violations 4. Pay attention to IPR protection and register trademarks early
Expansion	Stable orders achieved, team taking shape (5–20 people), an initial product line in place, profit becoming a priority	Expand market share, enhance brand awareness, and optimize the profit structure	1. Expand to multiple platforms or channels 2. Establish a basic brand visual identity and content system 3. Optimize the supply chain to improve gross margins	1. Increase the marketing budget and experiment with social media traffic generation 2. Hire professional operations, customer service, and design staff 3. Consider stocking goods in overseas warehouses to improve fulfillment speed	1. Prevent cash flow disruptions and control the pace of expansion 2. Keep multi-platform operations orderly by establishing standardized processes 3. Prevent delayed after-sales responses and declining customer satisfaction

Table 6-2 Overview of Phased Strategies for CBEC Enterprises

Development Phase	Phase Characteristics	Development Goals	Implementation Strategy	Resource Allocation	Risk Control
Maturity	Brand gaining some recognition, stable team in place (more than 20 people), multi-market presence, pursuing sustainable growth	Build brand barriers, achieve omni-channel growth, and enhance user lifetime value (LTV)	1. Pilot an omni-channel strategy 2. Deepen localized operations 3. Establish a membership system and an owned audience pool	1. Invest in brand building 2. Establish localized teams and warehousing networks 3. Introduce digital management systems	1. Guard against brand aging by continuously innovating products and marketing 2. Avoid over-reliance on any single market or channel 3. Strengthen compliance management to meet tax and data privacy requirements across different countries



Part III

End-to-End Operations Guidelines

Once the target market and business model are determined, the ability to execute operations on the ground becomes the decisive factor in the success of a cross-border business. From localized product selection to supply chain fulfillment, and from payment and settlement to marketing and promotion, every link in the chain is closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing. SMEs should systematically build end-to-end operational capabilities on the basis of their own resource endowments, so that they can improve efficiency through refined operations and hold the bottom line through compliant business practices.

(I) Product Selection and Localization

Success in cross-border business begins with well-targeted product selection. Product selection determines not only how well a product is received in the market but also the enterprise's profit structure, competitive barriers, and long-term development. SMEs should adhere to sound selection principles, apply a combination of scientific selection methods, strictly observe compliance red lines, and diversify sourcing channels, so as to form a practical decision-making framework and an actionable pathway for product selection.

1. Product Selection Principles and Methods

Product selection is the starting point of business decision-making. Sellers should abandon the supply-driven mindset of "selling whatever they have" and instead adopt a demand-driven mindset of "selling whatever users need," while adhering to five basic principles: First, platform fit. Different platforms follow different product selection logics, so sellers should determine their product selection direction in light of the target platform's rules and user profiles. Second, market orientation. Choose categories that are in a growth stage rather than in decline, and prioritize "logistics-friendly" products that are small in size, light in weight, shelf-stable, and durable in transit.

Third, supply chain reliability. Prioritize products that are close to the supply source, with short restocking cycles and consistent quality control, and thoroughly assess suppliers' agility and responsiveness. Fourth, profit viability. A product should still deliver a reasonable profit margin after all costs are deducted; sellers should build a complete pricing model that covers costs, profits, platform commissions, and logistics. Fifth, upfront compliance. Compliance risks, including IPR, product safety, certification and market access, and environmental requirements, should be screened out at the product selection stage.

Quick Primer: What Is Product Selection?

Product selection is simply the process of deciding what to sell. It is not about selling whatever you have; it is about finding out what the market needs first and then going out to source the products. A winning product choice rests on four elements: real market demand, limited competition, manageable profit margins, and regulatory compliance and product safety.

Building on these principles, SMEs can apply a combination of the following eight selection methods, tailored to their own resources and the characteristics of their target markets, to make product selection more sound and systematic and improve the chances of success.

Two-Stage On-Platform Ranking: Start with

products on the platform whose sales have already been proven to identify the "categories that sell well" and the "product clusters that sell well"; then screen these clusters for niche products with better margins, less competition, and stronger differentiation. The first step is to track the platform's bestseller lists, top search lists, best-rated lists, and repeat purchase lists across different categories, together with changes in category rankings. The second step is to compare products across dimensions such as function, material, portability, packaging, and accessories, so as to identify the differentiated strengths that their own products can offer.

Benchmark Store Cross-Validation: Select stores in the target market that have been generating stable orders over time, and compare their product mix, price bands, main-image styles, selling-point messaging, customer reviews, and launch frequency to identify the demand directions on which multiple stores converge. If several stores keep supplying products around the same niche demand, that demand evidently rests on a stable market foundation.

Bestseller Follow-Up: Continuously monitor sales volume, search popularity, social media discussion, and user reviews to identify products on a sustained upward trajectory. What is truly worth following is not the occasional product that spikes on a single day, but those that perform steadily over consecutive weeks and attract repeated positive feedback in their reviews. Channels such as trade shows, brand launches, and social media content can help identify promising products before they are

rolled out at scale.

Niche Category Drilling-Down: Start from a first-level category and progressively break it down into third- and fourth-level niche needs, looking for gaps that remain underserved. Pet supplies, for example, can be further divided into feeding, cleaning, travel, training, grooming, and other niche scenarios. The finer the category granularity, the more likely an enterprise is to find differentiated selling points and higher profit margins.

Global Sourcing via Cross-Border Platforms: Building on the completeness, responsiveness, and cost advantages of the global supply chain, identify product portfolios suited to cross-border sales. On sourcing platforms such as 1688 Global Exclusive, enterprises can look for suppliers that offer stable supply, flexible minimum order quantities, customization support, and cross-border experience, starting with products backed by mature supply chains and then fine-tuning them to the needs of the target market.

Price-Tier White-Space Strategy: First, divide the target category into price tiers, and then assess the sales density, review volume, and intensity of competition within each band. If a given price band shows high sales volume, low brand concentration, and user reviews that still express dissatisfaction with function or quality, it usually signals an opening for new entrants in that band.

Social Trend Spotting: Track trending keywords, popular hashtags, viral videos, and comment feedback on social platforms to identify which products are being continuous-

ly discussed and which features are striking a strong chord. Users' likes, saves, comments, and shares on content platforms usually indicate that a product has strong scenario appeal or emotional value.

Reverse Mining of Negative Reviews: Analyze in depth the low-star reviews (one to three stars) and the Q&A sections of competitor listings (product detail pages), distilling real usage pain points and unmet needs from user complaints. The core idea is that "user pain points are where the profit lies": cluster the pain points, make targeted product improvements accordingly, address these pain points directly in marketing copy, and turn competitors' weaknesses into your own core selling points.

2.Compliance Red Lines in Product Selection

Compliance is a prerequisite that must be secured in product selection. Intellectual property, product safety, market access certification, and environmental responsibility are four bottom lines that must never be crossed—any such violation may result in an account freeze, loss of funds, or even legal liability. Enterprises should make compliance a mandatory pre-listing check, screening for risks item by item at the product selection stage and averting them in advance.

IPR protection is the foremost red line in product selection. Enterprises should cross-check the patent and trademark databases of relevant countries, avoid any infringement or unauthorized use involving trade-

marks, design patents, copyrights, or images, and stay away from high-risk IP derivative products, thereby building a strong line of defense for IPR. It is advisable to complete trademark registration for core categories in the target market before sales begin.

Product safety is a bottom line that must be firmly upheld. For categories involving children and electrical appliances in particular, structural design flaws such as sharp edges and detachable small parts must be eliminated, ensuring that products meet the mandatory safety standards of the target market.

Market access certification is the threshold that must be cleared before entering a target market. Enterprises should familiarize themselves with the mandatory certification regimes of their target markets and plan ahead

accordingly, such as CE marking in the European Union, FCC and CPSC requirements in the United States, and the UN38.3 transport safety test for lithium batteries. Products must carry complete test reports and declarations of conformity, and the required authorized representative registration must be completed before they can be lawfully listed.

Environmental and ESG responsibilities are increasingly becoming hard requirements. Enterprises should align with global environmental trends, strictly comply with EPR and other applicable regulations, eliminate prohibited materials, and adopt green packaging. Doing so not only keeps them on the right side of compliance but also builds a responsible brand image.

⚠ The Consequences of Compliance Violations Are Far More Severe Than Expected

- (1) **IPR infringement:** The platform will immediately delist the products and freeze the funds involved; in severe cases, the account may be permanently banned, and the seller may also face lawsuits from brand owners, with damages reaching tens of thousands of dollars.
- (2) **Failure to file VAT:** Tax authorities in EU member states can trace a seller's tax records back three to five years, recovering back taxes together with late payment surcharges and penalties that can add up to more than 200% of the tax due; platforms will also cooperate in freezing the seller's account.
- (3) **Failure to register for EPR:** Starting in mid-2026, sellers who have not completed EPR registration will be unable to sell in the countries concerned, and their existing inventory may be forcibly delisted.
- (4) **Product safety violations:** The platform will enforce a recall, and the seller must bear the costs of consumer refunds and compensation; severe cases may trigger criminal investigations.

(5) Data privacy violations: Fines under the GDPR can reach up to 20 million euros or 4% of global revenue, and even small and medium-sized sellers may face penalties of tens of thousands of euros.

3.Product Sourcing Channels

SMEs mainly source products through four types of channels: direct supply from manufacturers, cross-border sourcing, platform-based supply and distribution, and custom development. At the startup stage, it is advisable to begin with platform-based supply and distribution and direct supply from manufacturers and explore custom development once the business matures.

Table 7 Overview of Four Main Product Sourcing Channels

Channel Type	Features	Representative Platforms
Direct supply from manufacturers	Controllable costs and stable supply	Factories in local industrial belts, wholesale markets, local B2B platforms
Cross-border sourcing	Extensive sources, adaptable to local market needs	Alibaba.com (global), DHgate (global small-lot wholesale), Europages (Europe), Global Sources (global), IndiaMART/TradeIndia (India), trade show sourcing
Platform-based supply and distribution	Asset-light and low-risk, with dropshipping support	1688, CJ Dropshipping, Spocket, Syncee
Custom development	Differentiation and premium pricing	ODMs/OEMs, factory customization



4. Practical Tools

Table 8 Summary of Practical Tools for Product Selection

Selection Stage	Recommended Tools and Channels	Key Uses and Value
Macro trend insights	Google Trends Pinterest Trends TikTok Creative Center	Track keyword search trends to determine whether a category is on the rise or in decline; capture viral social media content and local user preferences
Category opportunity screening	Helium 10 Jungle Scout / SellerSprite Keepa	Analyze the competitive landscape of a category, including how dominant the top sellers are, estimate the sales ceiling, and review historical price fluctuations and ranking changes to identify high-growth niche segments
Keyword demand mining	Amazon Search Bar Google Keyword Planner Ahrefs / Semrush	Identify high-frequency search terms and long-tail keywords, analyze search volume and competition, understand consumers' specific use cases, and inform keyword placement in listings
In-depth competitor analysis	Fakespot / ReviewMeta Keepa Manual research (review sections and Q&As of listings)	Track competitors' sales fluctuations and promotion frequency and timing; use tools to filter out fake reviews, pinpoint genuine negative reviews (pain points), and identify opportunities for product improvement
Supply chain and costs	1688 Global Exclusive Yiwugo Alibaba.com	Compare prices, minimum order quantities (MOQs), and customization capabilities for identical products across suppliers; use reverse image search to quickly match suppliers; and calculate gross margins and work out pricing strategies accordingly
Compliance and risk screening	EUIPO/USPTO (websites of trademark offices) WIPO Global Brand Database National customs websites (e.g., CBP)	Check for trademark and patent infringement risks; confirm HS codes, import duty rates, and lists of prohibited or restricted items, ensuring that product selection complies with the laws and regulations of the target country

(II) Supply Chain and Logistics Fulfillment

Supply chain and logistics fulfillment constitute the backbone of cross-border operations, directly affecting the cost structure, delivery experience, and capital security. Cross-border business is a contest not only of product selection and traffic but also of supply chain and fulfillment capabilities: the resilience of the supply chain directly determines whether an enterprise can absorb a

surge of orders, keep costs down in the off-season, and recover quickly when problems arise. To build a supply chain and logistics fulfillment system that works in practice, SMEs should coordinate their supply chain strategy, inventory management, logistics solutions, and use of overseas warehouses, and at the same time give due weight to quality control, customer experience, and compliance requirements.

1. Supply Chain Strategy and Quality Control

The supply chain strategy determines the stability of operations, while quality control determines their sustainability; together, they are the starting point of supply chain management.

(1) Core Strategy: From Reliance on a Single Supplier to a Resilient Configuration

The core of a resilient supply chain lies in building a dual-track system and cultivating cost awareness. Relying on a single supplier at the initial stage may seem convenient, but once that supplier experiences capacity fluctuations or stockouts, the entire business could collapse. To guard against this, sellers should take four steps. First, establish a dual-supplier system in which the primary supplier covers 70%–80% of the supply volume while a backup supplier is kept engaged through small orders, ensuring that a switch can be completed within 72 hours in an emergency. Second, replace the stockpiling mindset with a turn-over-driven one. This means replenishing stocks on the basis of historical sales velocity, seasonal patterns, and current inventory levels, while treating days of inventory as the core health indicator. Third, calculate the landed cost, bearing in mind that the true cost equals the purchase price plus domestic freight, customs declaration fees, first-leg shipping, import duties in the destination country, last-mile delivery, platform commissions, and potential return costs. Looking only at the purchase price can easily lead to being "profitable on paper while actually losing money." Fourth, build small-batch, quick-re-

sponse capabilities by prioritizing suppliers that accept small minimum orders, offer short sampling lead times, and support customization, thereby reducing the risk of unsold inventory.

(2) Quality control: a lightweight QC system

The core of quality control is "low cost, high assurance": the aim is to avoid returns, negative reviews, and platform penalties caused by product quality problems. Given the limited quality control budgets of SMEs, it is advisable to establish a lightweight quality control system covering the entire chain: confirm samples and materials before production; conduct random inspections of key processes during production; and carry out final inspections and pre-shipment checks after production. Inspection can be arranged through online quality control platforms (such as Intertek's online inspection services and QIMA's remote inspections) to strike a balance between cost and efficiency.

In addition, enterprises should establish an emergency response mechanism for quality issues. Once a batch anomaly is detected, immediate action is essential: first, assess the in-transit and in-warehouse inventory to determine the scope affected; then contact the platform to initiate consultations and work toward a proper solution; and at the same time, submit a formal written claim for liability and compensation to the supplier. Delayed handling will only pile up additional warehousing and return costs.

2. Inventory and Logistics Fulfillment Management

Inventory and logistics account for the bulk of supply chain costs and directly determine fulfillment speed. Managing the inventory structure and choosing the right logistics solutions are key for SMEs to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

(1) Inventory Classification: Matching Strategies to Value and Frequency

Products differ enormously in their capital occupation and turnover characteristics, and a one-size-fits-all inventory strategy will inevitably leave some categories overstocked and others out of stock. The core approach is to classify products along the two dimensions of value and frequency and match each product class with a differentiated inventory and replenishment strategy.

For Class A products (high value, high frequency), demand should be forecast precisely, safety stock set appropriately high, and replenishment reviewed weekly. For Class B products (medium value, medium frequency), apply routine management, replenish on a biweekly or monthly cycle, and conduct quarterly stocktaking. For Class C products (low value, low frequency), keep inventory to a minimum and purchase strictly on demand to avoid tying up capital. Meanwhile, a dynamic inventory replenishment mechanism should be established. Under this mechanism, replenishment quantities are determined on the basis of average daily sales and procurement lead times, and safety factors are set for

seasonal fluctuations, so as to prevent both stockouts and overstocking.

Dynamic Inventory Replenishment Model

Key formula: Recommended replenishment quantity = (average daily sales × procurement lead time in days) – current inventory + safety stock

Where safety stock = average daily sales × procurement lead time in days × safety factor (typically 0.3–0.5; 0.5–0.8 for categories with large seasonal fluctuations)

(2) Logistics Solution Selection: Low Cost and High Fit

With limited capital and fluctuating order volumes, SMEs should choose logistics solutions that strike the optimal balance between cost and speed—neither blindly pursuing speed at the expense of cost nor cutting prices to the point where delays spin out of control.

Generally speaking, international express services suit urgent replenishment and high-value goods; air freight is appropriate for small, light parcels and time-sensitive products; sea freight should be the mainstay for bulk cargo and goods that are not time-sensitive; sellers already using platform warehouses should give priority to the platform's official logistics services; and for categories with stable repeat purchases in mature markets, sellers may adopt local delivery from overseas warehouses. Enterprises should establish a

shipping mix that combines fast and slow lanes: stock bestsellers in overseas warehouses in advance, replenish regular products by sea freight to average down costs, and regularly compare freight forwarders' quotes to dynamically optimize their logistics solutions.

(3) Overseas Warehouse Stocking: Improving Delivery Speed

Overseas warehouses can cut last-mile delivery time from two weeks to one to three days, significantly enhancing the user experience and the repeat purchase rate. For SMEs, however, blindly building their own warehouses means asset-heavy investment and a heavy management burden; the right approach is to choose a model that fits their stage of development.

Table 9 Inventory Management Strategies for Three Product Classes

Class	Characteristics	Inventory Strategy	Inventory Replenishment Model
Class A: high-value, high-frequency	High unit price, large sales volume	Precise forecasting, higher safety stock	Dynamic replenishment, weekly review
Class B: medium-value, medium-frequency	Moderate unit price, stable sales	Routine management, quarterly stocktaking	Cyclical replenishment (biweekly or monthly), safety stock threshold
Class C: low-value, low-frequency	Low unit price, low sales volume	Minimal inventory, on-demand purchasing	On-demand replenishment, avoiding overstocking

Table 10 Comparison of Different Logistics Options

Shipping Options	Delivery Time	Cost	Best Suited For
International express (DHL/UPS/FedEx)	3–7 days	High	Urgent replenishment; high-value goods
Air freight	7–15 days	Medium to high	Small, light parcels; time-sensitive products
Sea freight	30–45 days	Low	Bulk cargo; goods that are not time-sensitive
Platform official logistics services	7–20 days	Medium	Shipments via FBA and platform warehouses

Table 11 Comparison of Three Overseas Warehouse Models

Model	Strengths	Weaknesses	Best-Fit Stage
Platform warehouses (e.g., Amazon FBA)	Traffic allocation preference, platform endorsement, fast delivery	High storage fees, strict rules, inventory locked into a single platform	Proven bestsellers; in-depth operation on a single platform
Third-party overseas warehouses (3PL)	Inventory shared across multiple platforms, high flexibility, selectable services	Service quality requires careful vetting; inbound plans must be managed in-house.	Multi-platform sales; stage of steady SKU growth
Self-built warehouses	Full autonomy, lowest long-term costs	Large upfront investment, complex management, local team required	Mature enterprises with annual sales at the million-dollar level or above

When selecting an overseas warehouse service provider, enterprises should focus their evaluation on four dimensions—location, systems, fees, and after-sales service—and keep the following golden rules in mind:

- The warehouse is located close to the core logistics hubs of the target market;
- The warehouse management system (WMS) is full-featured and supports order integration with multiple platforms;
- Storage and handling fees are transparent, with no hidden charges;
- Proven return and exchange handling services are provided, including quality inspection and relisting.

(4) Reverse Logistics: Return Management Strategy

Cross-border returns entail high costs and a lengthy processing chain, and any mishandling

can substantially erode profits. The core strategy for SMEs is to "handle returns locally whenever possible rather than shipping them back," minimizing reverse transportation costs.

Specifically, returned goods can be handled by condition: brand-new, unopened items can be relisted and sold directly from the overseas warehouse at the lowest cost; items with minor defects that do not affect usability can be cleared through local discount channels to recover part of the cost; items with serious quality problems should be destroyed locally, with destruction records kept, as shipping them back usually costs more than the goods are worth; and high-value, repairable items can be shipped back to China for repair and resale, an option that applies only to products with a high AOV.

3. Enhancing Customer Experience in Fulfillment

The final recipient of fulfillment is the consumer, and every step of logistics fulfillment directly affects the user experience and brand trust. Customer service is the key link connecting the fulfillment chain with user expectations: information on delivery times, package status, and return and exchange handling all needs to be conveyed to consumers accurately and promptly through customer service. SMEs should embed customer service management into the fulfillment system across the full lifecycle of order processing, using proactive and transparent service to offset the inherent shortcomings of cross-border logistics, namely the long chains and many uncontrollable factors.

(1) Pre-fulfillment: Expectation Management and Proactive Confirmation

A consumer's order is only the beginning of the experience. Before shipment, customer service should confirm order details through automated replies or emails. For products with a high AOV or those requiring specific certifications in particular, proactively verify the delivery address and customs clearance information. At the same time, expected delivery time should be clearly set in customer service communications and on product detail pages (for example, "estimated delivery in 7–12 days"), so as to prevent user anxiety and repeated delivery inquiries caused by the longer transit times of cross-border shipping.

(2) Mid-fulfillment: Logistics Transparency and Anomaly Interception

Cross-border logistics involves long chains and many uncontrollable factors, and logistics anomalies are often a major source of negative reviews. Customer service teams should establish an early-warning mechanism for logistics anomalies, using tracking tools such as 17TRACK. Once a package is found to be held up in transit, delayed at customs clearance, or to have failed last-mile delivery, customer service should reach out to the consumer at the first opportunity to explain the situation and offer service recovery options (such as small-value compensation coupons or repeat purchase discounts). At the delivery confirmation stage, automated customer service messages can be triggered to confirm that "the package has been signed for" and provide usage instructions, completing the fulfillment cycle.

(3) Post-sale Reverse Logistics: Rapid Response and Return/Exchange Guidance

Returns and exchanges are the touchstone of customer service capability. In response to after-sales requests, customer service must commit to responding within eight hours, using pre-configured multilingual FAQ templates to quickly answer high-frequency questions such as "Where is my package?" and "How do I return an item?" When a return is genuinely necessary, customer service should guide consumers to the local return channel of the overseas warehouse. By providing clear return shipping labels and operating instructions, sellers can turn an otherwise high-friction, high-cost reverse logistics process into an opportunity to rebuild user trust.

(4) Tool Empowerment: Configuring Multilingual AI Customer Service

Given the limited staffing of SMEs, it is advisable to introduce AI-powered customer service tools (such as Zendesk AI or automated reply systems integrated with DeepL Translator) to provide initial multilingual responses

24/7. Routine inquiries such as order tracking and requests to expedite delivery can be handled by AI, while human agents focus on complex complaints, damage claims, and after-sales disputes. This division of labor maximizes the customer experience at low cost.

Table 12 Key Touchpoints for Enhancing Customer Experience in Fulfillment

Key Touchpoint	Consumer Expectations	Practical Approaches for SMEs	Expected Outcomes
Delivery speed	Delivery on par with or faster than the mainstream standard in the target market	Prioritize shipping from platform warehouses or overseas warehouses to shorten local delivery time	Significantly reduce negative reviews caused by logistics delays
Packaging experience	A sense of surprise; memorable branding	A thank-you card, small stickers, and usage tips, with costs kept within 1%–2% of the AOV	Increase the likelihood of organic social media sharing
Customer service response	No longer than the average response time of mainstream sellers in the target market	Automated FAQ replies plus prompt human responses during business hours	Reduce negative reviews and prevent the escalation of disputes
Ease of returns and exchanges	A clear process and fast handling	Pre-configured return templates; returns routed preferably through local warehouses	Reduce the proportion of negative reviews related to the return experience
Proactive after-sales service	Care beyond expectations	A logistics update three days after shipment, a usage guide five days after delivery, and a repurchase reminder at 30 days	Increase the repeat purchase rate

4.Compliance Essentials

Compliance is not an option; it is the bottom line for survival in cross-border business. A single false declaration or missing certification can result in the detention of goods, fines, or even account suspension.

Specifically, for export declaration, the product name, HS code, and declared value must be consistent with the actual goods; under-declaring the value will incur customs penalties. For customs clearance, the commercial invoice, packing list, certificate of origin (where applicable), and test reports must all

be in place, and the information across these documents must be consistent with one another. For product certification, the mandatory certifications of the destination country must be completed in advance: products must carry mandatory certifications such as CE (EU), FCC/CPSC/FDA (US), and PSE (Japan) before they can be listed. For labeling and packaging, the language and labeling requirements of the destination country must be met: the European Union requires instructions in the language of the destination country, the United States requires English warning labels, and certain categories require traceable barcodes. With regard to prohibited and restricted items,

sensitive goods such as batteries, liquids, powders, and magnets require advance confirmation of whether the logistics channel can accept them, together with compliant declarations of certifications such as UN38.3. With regard to tax compliance, enterprises must register for tax identification numbers in destination countries and file and pay taxes on time; in case regimes such as EU VAT and the Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) number, U.S. sales tax, or Japan Consumption Tax (JCT) are involved, enterprises must confirm their own filing obligations even in regions where platforms withhold and remit taxes on their behalf.

5. Practical Tools

Table 13-1 Summary of Practical Tools for Supply Chain and Logistics Fulfillment

Tool	Core Functions	Applicable Scenarios
17TRACK	Multi-country shipment tracking	End-to-end package tracking, covering more than 200 countries
DHL Global Forwarding	Global logistics inquiries and solution consulting	Planning sea and air freight solutions for large-volume shipments
Flexport	Freight forwarding visibility and supply chain management	First-leg shipment tracking, customs declaration, and inventory coordination
Freightos	Real-time rate lookup for global sea and air freight	Rate comparison and solution selection for first-leg logistics
Intertek online inspection platform	Online booking of third-party inspection and testing	In-production inspections; product certification testing
Inventory Turnover Calculator	Simple inventory turnover calculation	Quick assessment of inventory health
QA International	Remote inspection services	Inspection of newly engaged suppliers
QIMA	Low-cost inspection for small items; online booking of inspections	Inspection of small and medium-sized orders, with transparent fees

Table 13-2 Summary of Practical Tools for Supply Chain and Logistics Fulfillment

Tool	Core Functions	Applicable Scenarios
QIMA	Low-cost inspection for small items; online booking of inspections	Inspection of small and medium-sized orders, with transparent fees
ShipBob	Third-party logistics fulfillment management	Integrated overseas warehousing, picking, and delivery
ShipStation	Multi-channel order management and logistics fulfillment	Last-mile label printing; consolidation of orders from multiple platforms
Stock Alert	Inventory threshold alerts	Automatic alerts for stockouts and slow-moving inventory
TradeGecko (QuickBooks Commerce)	Inventory management tailored to SMEs worldwide	Multi-warehouse inventory accounting and synchronization

Usage Recommendations

SMEs do not need to adopt all these tools at once. It is advisable to introduce them progressively as the business develops: at the startup stage, use Freightos to check freight rates, 17TRACK to track packages, and QIMA for inspections; once order volumes stabilize, introduce ShipStation to manage last-mile delivery; and after launching overseas warehouse operations, integrate ShipBob or ShipStation for warehouse-delivery coordination.

prudently utilize financing channels, and strictly observe compliance requirements in fund and payment processes, so as to keep funds operating securely, efficiently, and at low cost.

1.Payment Tool Selection Strategies

Selecting payment tools calls for defining the strategy first and choosing the tools second. The right payment solution varies widely with an enterprise's development stage and business profile; comparing fee rates without regard to one's own circumstances will rarely lead to a truly suitable choice. Enterprises may define their strategic positioning across four dimensions: cost control, efficiency priority, risk diversification, and market expansion. In practice, these can be grouped into four typical strategy combinations:

First, the cost-control strategy, which is suited to high-turnover, low-margin categories: priori-

(III) Finance and Payments

Payment, settlement, and fund management run through the entire process of cross-border operations, directly affecting capital security and turnover efficiency. SMEs should choose payment tools rationally, continuously optimize their fund flows, proactively manage exchange rate risks,

tize tools with low fees and minimal currency conversion losses, such as the pairing of Ping-Pong and Wise, to keep payment costs to a minimum. **Second**, the efficiency-first strategy, which is suited to enterprises operating on multiple platforms with large order volumes: prioritize tools with robust API integration capabilities and fast settlement, such as the pairing of Airwallex and Stripe, to automate fund flow management. **Third**, the risk-diversification strategy, which is suited to enterprises with a high share of sales in a single category or with concerns about account freezes: deploy multiple tools such as Airwallex, PayPal, and WorldFirst in parallel to spread funds across channels, preventing a single point of failure from disrupting the funding chain. **Fourth**, the market-expansion strategy, which is suited to enterprises that have entered multiple national markets and need local payment capabilities: prioritize tools that support local payment methods, such as Adyen, PayPal, and local payment gateways, to increase checkout conversion rates. Enterprises should identify the strategy combination that fits their own profile and adjust it dynamically as the business scales.

2. Fund Flow Optimization and Transaction Risk Control

Fund flow management directly affects the actual profits of cross-border operations. Lengthened settlement cycles, multiple layers of intermediary conversion, and chargeback losses without supporting evidence all create imperceptible drains on funds. Following the principle of keeping funds "visible, manage-

able, and fast-moving," SMEs should focus on three areas: accelerating settlement, day-to-day fund management, and transaction risk control.

(1) Faster Settlement: Shortening the Collection Cycle

The biggest pain point in cross-border collection is the loss of time and cost between the buyer's payment and the arrival of funds in the seller's account. Traditional bank wire transfers often take three to five working days, with additional fees incurred at each intermediary bank. A new generation of cross-border collection tools has substantially reduced this loss of time and cost. Tools such as Airwallex, PingPong, and WorldFirst generally support multi-currency collection so that platform withdrawals can be settled on a T+1 or even same-day basis; some tools can achieve real-time settlement in major currencies, with overall fee rates markedly lower than those of traditional wire transfers, significantly improving capital turnover efficiency. When selecting tools, enterprises should compare settlement speed and overall fee rates side by side, rather than focusing solely on low fees while overlooking the hidden cost of capital tied up in transit.

It should be noted that the final settlement time is determined jointly by two segments of the chain. The first is the e-commerce platform's own settlement cycle, which varies considerably from platform to platform: Amazon typically disburses funds on a 14-day settlement cycle, Southeast Asian platforms such as Shopee and Lazada mostly settle weekly or semi-monthly, and some platforms

impose longer disbursement review periods on new sellers or high-risk categories. The second segment is the time from withdrawing funds from the platform to a third-party payment and collection tool and then converting and transferring them back to a domestic account, which depends on the withdrawal speed of the chosen collection tool. When calculating capital turnover, enterprises should add the two segments together and, on that basis, time their withdrawals appropriately and choose collection tools that support fast withdrawal, so as to minimize the time that funds spend in transit.

(2) Day-to-day Fund Management: Four Practical Principles

Getting funds settled is only the first step; day-to-day management directly determines capital efficiency and currency conversion losses. SMEs should follow four practical principles:

First, collect and settle in the same currency.

If sales are made mainly in the U.S. dollar zone, prioritize collecting in U.S. dollars and paying for overseas procurement or advertising in U.S. dollars, so as to reduce unnecessary currency conversion. The ideal state is to match the currency of income with the currency of expenditure: the fewer the conversion steps, the lower the exchange losses.

Second, diversify collection accounts to prevent a single point of failure. The risk of account freezes in cross-border payment tools is ever-present and can be triggered by compliance reviews, risk control misjudgments, or platform policy changes. Configure at least

two primary collection tools, complete Know Your Customer (KYC) verification for each, and complete a successful test withdrawal before gradually channeling the main transaction volume into them. Do not switch tools on short notice before peak seasons or major promotions.

Third, use multi-currency accounts to plan the timing of foreign-exchange settlements.

For collection platforms that support multi-currency accounts (such as Airwallex and Payoneer), foreign-currency receipts do not require immediate settlement; settlement may be deferred until exchange rates are more favorable. Overseas procurement payments and advertising fees in day-to-day operations can also be paid directly from foreign currency accounts, further reducing conversion losses.

Fourth, automate reconciliation. Connect payment tools to the financial system through their APIs to enable automatic reconciliation, which reduces manual error rates and provides a sound basis for subsequent data analysis and tax filing.

(3) Transaction Risk Control: Identifying High-risk Orders and Reducing Chargeback Losses

Chargebacks are among the most difficult capital risks to manage in CBEC. Buyers can apply to their banks for a chargeback, often bypassing the seller to take the payment back directly, while the seller also bears additional penalties. Prevention and control begin with advance identification and end with evidence-backed dispute responses.

Before a transaction, identify high-risk orders: stay alert to warning signs such as first orders from new accounts, high AOVs, IP addresses from unusual locations, and mismatches between delivery addresses and IP geolocations. Where necessary, delay shipment or request additional verification, keeping the chargeback rate below 0.5%. During a transaction, retain complete transaction evidence, including shipping records, screenshots of delivery confirmation, and communication records with buyers. Make it a standard practice to archive all records with every shipment, so as to leave sufficient evidence for contesting chargebacks. After a dispute arises, submit a complete evidence package within the time window prescribed by the platform, and use the dispute response templates provided by payment tools to standardize the presentation, thereby shortening the fund freeze period. In addition, prioritize payment tools equipped with buyer and seller protection mechanisms and AI-based fraud detection (such as PayPal and PingPong) to move chargeback interception upstream.

Beginner's Tip

A chargeback is not a refund.

A refund is initiated voluntarily by the seller, with funds returned from the seller's account to the buyer. A chargeback, by contrast, is a dispute initiated by the buyer with the bank: the bank debits the seller's account directly. Responding promptly and retaining evidence are the lowest-cost strategies for dealing with chargebacks.

3.Exchange Rate Risk Management

Exchange rate fluctuations directly affect the final profits of cross-border operations. SMEs' receipts and payments are characterized by small amounts, high frequency, multiple currencies, and thin margins: an order that is profitable to begin with may end up losing money by the time of settlement if the exchange rate turns unfavorable. Enterprises should identify where exchange losses come from and establish an exchange rate management mechanism suited to their scale.

(1) Understanding Where Exchange Losses Come From

Exchange losses in cross-border collection typically arise from three sources. First, the "FX spread" charged by payment platforms at the point of conversion, usually a markup of 0.5% to 3% over the mid-market rate; second, forced settlement at unnecessary points in time, such as automatic conversion triggered when an account balance exceeds its limit; third, compounding losses from multiple conversions, as in the route from a foreign currency to the U.S. dollar and then to Chinese yuan, where each conversion incurs a loss. Only by identifying the sources of losses can enterprises control them in a targeted manner.

Beyond these operational sources, attention should also be paid to the depreciation risk of target market currencies themselves. The currencies of some countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia have depreciated considerably in recent years. Enterprises should assess exchange rate stability when deciding whether to enter these markets, prioritize settlement in

currencies such as the U.S. dollar in their collection arrangements, and minimize the holding period of weak currencies, so that payments received do not keep shrinking in value while being held.

(2) A Four-Step Approach to Exchange Rate Risk Management for SMEs

In response to the sources of losses described above, SMEs can establish an exchange rate management mechanism in the order of "zero-cost measures first, low-cost measures second, and professional tools last":

First, natural hedging (zero cost). Pay overseas expenses, such as advertising and overseas warehouse fees, directly in the market of the income currency, thereby reducing conversion steps. This is the first line of defense at zero additional cost, suitable for sellers of all sizes.

Second, building an exchange loss buffer into pricing (zero cost). Reserve a margin of 2% to 3% for exchange losses in the product pricing model, especially for categories with relatively fixed prices that cannot be adjusted frequently. In this way, short-term exchange rate fluctuations are absorbed by pricing rather than eating directly into profits.

Third, holding funds in multi-currency accounts (low cost) and settling at an opportune time. With collection platforms that support multiple currencies, enterprises need not rush to settle foreign currency receipts; settlement can wait until the target exchange rate appears (target-rate alerts can be set for automatic conversion). This turns passive

acceptance into proactive timing. The only cost involved is the monthly account fee, making this approach suitable for sellers with monthly revenue below USD 20,000.

Fourth, locking in exchange rates through forward contracts (a professional tool). Sellers with monthly revenue above USD 20,000 and sizable expected settlement needs may negotiate forward exchange contracts with banks or payment platforms to lock in the settlement rate for the coming three to six months as protection against significant adverse exchange rate movements.

Operational Guidance

The essence of exchange rate management is to "reduce unnecessary conversions and increase control over the timing of conversion." Do not pursue the "lowest possible exchange loss," but a "stable and predictable exchange rate cost" instead. Only predictable costs can support stable pricing and profit models.

4. Financing Services and Supply Chain Finance

Adequate and stable fund supply is the fundamental guarantee for the normal operation of cross-border business. Funding gaps may arise at critical junctures, such as peak-season stocking, rapid large-scale SKU listing, and responding to unexpected logistics delays. The root causes of the "difficult, expensive, and slow" financing for SMEs lie in the fact that banks lack the basis for assessing the opera-

tional capabilities of CBEC businesses, while sellers themselves lack traditional collateral. A new form of supply chain finance built on platform transaction data is filling this gap.

(1) Four Types of Available Financing Channels and Their Applicable Scenarios

First, purchase order loans and platform-based credit: short-term credit facilities extended by platforms or partner institutions, underpinned by sellers' historical sales data, store ratings, and order records. Representative products include Shopee Financing Services, Amazon Lending, JD Corporate Finance, and others. These products feature a short approval cycle (typically 3 to 7 days) and require no collateral. However, their limitations lie in the credit limit being directly tied to platform sales, and any account anomaly may compromise loan eligibility.

Second, accounts receivable financing (early payment): To address the settlement cycles (typically 14 to 21 days) on platforms such as Amazon and Shopee, certain payment tools (e.g., Payoneer's Early Payments service) allow sellers to receive 80%–90% of their pending settlement amounts in advance, thereby accelerating capital repatriation for inventory replenishment or advertising payments. With rapid capital turnover, this financing channel is well-suited for cross-border sellers facing tight cash flows yet maintaining stable order volumes.

Third, pre-stocking financing: Secured against purchase contracts or existing inventory prior to peak-season stocking, this channel alleviates the pressure of short-term, large-scale

purchases. It should be noted that pre-stocking financing inherently entails the risk of inventory overstocking. It is advisable to apply for such financing only for categories with confirmed orders or a proven track record of stable sales, thereby avoiding aggressive stockpiling that could lead to cash flow disruptions.

Fourth, supply chain finance platforms: Certain fintech platforms specializing in CBEC, such as WorldFirst Supply Chain Services and LianLian Finance, offer comprehensive supply chain finance services, covering scenarios such as procurement payments, logistics advance financing, and accounts receivable collection. With relatively market-based interest rates, they present a lower barrier to entry than traditional banks.

Table 14 Comparative Analysis of Different Financing Channels

Financing Channels	Approval Cycles	Interest Rates and Cost	Applicable Scenarios	Key Risks
Platform-based Credit and Purchase Order Loans	3–7 days	Annual percentage rate: 8%–15%	Stable order flows coupled with rapid inventory replenishment needs	Loan suspension triggered by account anomalies
Early Payment of Accounts Receivable	1–3 days	Monthly fee: 0.5%–2%	Extended settlement cycles coupled with strained cash flows	Only 80%–90% of funds can be advanced
Pre-stocking Financing	5–10 days	Annual percentage rate: 10%–18%	Concentrated stocking for peak seasons	Inventory overstocking risk is borne by the seller
Supply Chain Finance Platform	3–7 days	Annual percentage rate: approximately 6%–12%	Multi-scenario funding requirements	Subject to platform qualification reviews

(2) Core Principles for Financing

While financing channels are becoming increasingly diversified, more financing is not always better. SMEs should adhere to three core principles: First, offset financing costs with predictable revenue by securing funding only for products with confirmed orders or a proven track record of stable sales; second, control financing exposure by keeping the total financing amount within 30% of average monthly revenue to prevent sudden cash flow disruptions under high leverage; third, use free tools before resorting to paid financing solutions. Early payment of accounts receivable generates service fees lower than those for short-term loans and requires no additional approval, making it a priority consideration.

5.Compliance Essentials

The compliance requirements for funds and payment processes are stringent, and the cost of violations is high. A single account misalignment or inaccurate declaration can lead to account freezes and fund seizures. Enterprises must uphold compliance baselines across the following five domains.

First, the "three-flow (funds, logistics, and documentation) consistency": The recipient account, the VAT tax registration, and the entity behind the bank statements must be one and the same. Any mismatch will trigger scrutiny from both the platform and regulatory authorities. Meanwhile, it is necessary to ensure that transactions, funds, logistics, invoicing, and tax data are fully traceable and reconcilable. Enterprises must retain supporting documents, including orders, customs

declarations, invoices, and declaration receipts, to substantiate declarations and facilitate dispute resolution.

Second, upfront tax registration: VAT registration must be completed in the target market before formal sales commence. Markets with substantive sales are required to file returns on schedule, and delays under the pretext of "low sales volume" are not permitted. In most EU countries, the standard look-back period for tax audits is three to five years. Where serious violations such as deliberate tax evasion are established, some member states may recover back taxes, late-payment penalties, and fines that together can reach more than 200% of the tax due.

Third, foreign exchange compliance: Cross-border collections must be conducted through legitimate channels possessing foreign exchange business qualifications. It is essential to ensure that the source of funds is traceable and their use justifiable, while strictly adhering to national foreign exchange regulations. Violations involving the use of illicit channels will result in penalties and fund seizures.

Fourth, anti-money laundering (AML) compliance: Maintain complete transaction records and contractual documents, and cooperate with the Know Your Customer (KYC) reviews of payment tools. Large or abnormal transactions must be accompanied by reasonable commercial justifications; otherwise, accounts may be subject to mandatory freezing and investigation.

Fifth, data privacy compliance: The collection of buyer card numbers, billing addresses, and

transaction behavior data during payment must comply with regulations such as GDPR and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA). Enterprises should collect only essential data, clearly disclose its purpose, and provide options for deletion and export. Reselling data to third parties is strictly prohibited; violations will result in substantial fines and the termination of partnerships with payment service providers.

△ Compliance Red Lines

Tax compliance and payment compliance are not matters to be addressed "when the business scales up." The tax authority's look-back period starts from the moment of your first local sale—not from the day your VAT number is registered. It is recommended to initiate VAT registration before sales in a new market exceed the local reporting threshold (e.g., an annual turnover of approximately 90,000 GBP in the UK or 22,000 EUR in Germany) to avoid being subject to retrospective investigations.

6. Practical Tools

Table 15 Globally Universal Payment Tools

Payment Tools	Core Functions	Total Fee Rate	Settlement Speed	Multi-currency Capability	Risk Level	Applicable Scenarios
Adyen	Omni-channel payments, mature-stage enterprises	Complex fee structures, starting at approximately 1.5%	Starting from T+1	140+ currencies	★★	Large enterprises and omnichannel payments
Airwallex	Multi-currency accounts, currency exchange, global collection, and corporate cards	FX markup starting from 0.5% + 1%	Starting from T+1, with certain transactions settled in real-time	20+ currencies	★★	Multi-market, multi-currency operations, and growth-oriented enterprises
Payoneer	Global coverage, platform collections, and virtual accounts	1%–2% (including exchange rate differences)	Several hours to 2 days	150+ currencies	★★★	Multi-platform, multi-market operations, and freelancers
PayPal	Global coverage, buyer protection, and high brand trust	Starting from 2.9% + \$0.3	Several hours to 2 days	20+ currencies	★★	Initial collections in North America and Europe, and trust-building for independent websites
Stripe	Independent website integration, developer-friendly, and multi-currency support	Starting from 2.9% + \$0.3	2–7 days	135+ currencies	★★	Independent DTC websites, SaaS, and subscription services
Wise	Low-cost currency exchange, multi-currency accounts, and transparent fee rates	Currency exchange fee of approximately 0.5%	Several hours to 2 days	50+ currencies	★	Currency exchange optimization and cross-border transfers

Table 16-1 Regionally Localized Payment Tools

Payment Tools	Key Markets	Core Functions	Total Fee Rate	Settlement Speed	Applicable Scenarios
2C2P	Southeast Asia	Multi-currency support and local payments in Southeast Asia	2%–3%	T+1–T+3	Independent websites or platforms in Southeast Asia
Flutterwave	Africa	Multi-currency payments in Africa	2.5%–4%	T+2–T+5	African markets such as Nigeria and Kenya
Klarna	Europe and North America	Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL)	2.5%–5.5%	T+1–T+3	High Average Order Value (AOV) and European consumers
Mercado Pago	Latin America	Local payments and installment plans in Latin America	2.5%–4%	T+1–T+3	Mercado Libre sellers and the Latin American market
Mollie	Europe	Localized payment integration in Europe	1.5%–2.5%	T+1–T+3	Localization of independent websites in Europe
Paymob	The Middle East and Africa	Payment Gateways for the Middle East and Africa	2%–3%	T+1–T+3	The Egyptian and Middle Eastern markets
Paystack	Africa	Online payments in Africa	1.5% + local fees	T+1–T+3	English-speaking African markets such as Nigeria
PingPong	Chinese sellers and global platforms	Low fees and seller-friendly terms	0.4%–1% (comprehensive)	Starting from T+1, with certain transactions settled within 2 hours	Collections on platforms such as Amazon and Chinese cross-border sellers
Pix (Central Bank of Brazil)	Brazil	Instant payments and free transfers	Very low or free	Real-time	The preferred payment method for Brazilian consumers

Table 16-2 Regionally Localized Payment Tools

Payment Tools	Key Markets	Core Functions	Total Fee Rate	Settlement Speed	Applicable Scenarios
Razorpay	India	Local payments in India, with Unified Payments Interface (UPI)	About 2%–3%	T+1–T+2	Essential for entering the Indian market
Telr	Middle East	Card payments and local wallets in the Middle East	2%–3%	T+1–T+3	Independent websites in the UAE and Saudi Arabia
Xendit	Southeast Asia	Local payments in Indonesia and the Philippines	2%–3%	T+1–T+3	The Indonesian and Philippine markets
WorldFirst	Chinese sellers and the Alibaba ecosystem	Alibaba ecosystem, with low fee rates	Capped at 0.3%	As fast as 1 minute, operating 365 days a year without interruption	Collections on Alibaba-affiliated platforms, and Chinese cross-border sellers
LianLian	Southeast Asia and Chinese sellers	Deep engagement and localization in Southeast Asia	Approximately 0.5% (comprehensive)	Near real-time to same-day	Collections on Shopee in Southeast Asia, and Chinese cross-border sellers

(IV) Marketing and Advertising

Marketing and advertising are directly linked to traffic acquisition and brand building in cross-border business. SMEs should coordinate product mix and pricing strategies, in-platform advertising, off-platform content traffic generation, influencer collaborations, visual marketing, and localized adaptation. They must strictly adhere to compliance requirements at every stage, thereby enhancing marketing effectiveness in a cost-efficient and actionable manner.

1. Product Mix and Pricing

Product mix planning serves as the foundation of marketing strategies. SMEs should clearly delineate the roles and tactics for three categories of products:

First, traffic-driving products: Accounting for approximately 20% of the portfolio, these are products with high search volume, moderate competition, and strong repeat purchase rates. Priced at a low margin or even at a slight loss, they serve to attract traffic and capture

user touchpoints, rather than to generate profit.

Second, high-margin products: Accounting for approximately 60% of the portfolio, these are products with stable demand and room for differentiation. Maintaining a gross margin above 30%, they serve as the main revenue contributor.

Third, image-building products: Accounting for approximately 20% of the portfolio, these are products with technological leadership or unique design. Priced at a premium with a gross margin above 50%, they serve to establish the brand benchmark.

Pricing strategies must comprehensively factor in landed costs, competing product price bands, and the target customers' ability to pay. A common mistake among SMEs is adopting an "across-the-board low-price" strategy, which causes high-margin products to be dragged down by the price anchoring of the traffic-driving products. The correct approach is to establish a reasonable price spread (typically 2 to 3 times) between traffic-driving products and high-margin products, thereby creating a clear price gradient. This allows consumers to recognize that "higher prices come with justifiable reasons." At the same time, user reviews and store rankings accumulated by traffic-driving products help boost the search ranking and conversion efficiency of high-margin products.

Furthermore, the product mix is not static. Regular reviews should be conducted on the sales share and profit contribution of these

three categories. Traffic-driving products that consistently incur losses and fail to drive associated sales must be phased out in a timely manner. Meanwhile, high-margin products that have proven successful should be rotated into the traffic-driving tier, thereby forming a dynamically optimized product portfolio.

2. In-platform Advertising

In-platform advertising is a crucial tool for cross-border businesses to shift from organic growth to proactive growth. Without advertising, it is difficult for new products to achieve their first sale, and for established products to defend their market position. For SMEs with limited advertising budgets, the key is not whether to advertise, but how to improve advertising efficiency. The following provides a transferable advertising framework categorized by two platform types: search-based and content-based platforms.

Table 17 Comparison of Advertising Strategies by Platform Type

Platform Type	Representative Platforms	Logic behind Keyword and Product Selection	Creative Content Formats	Core Metrics	Bidding Strategy	Budget Characteristics
Search-based	Amazon, eBay, Lazada, Mercado Libre, Rakuten, Shopee, Walmart	Keyword-driven, automated ad discovery and, manual precision targeting	Product main image, title, and detail page	CTR, ACOS	CPC	Steady placement, with budget adjustments based on ranking fluctuations
Content-based	Instagram Shopping, TikTok Shop, YouTube Shopping	Interest tags, influencer tags, and keywords, prioritizing content creation before ad placement	Short videos, live streaming, and influencer-led product discovery	Completion rate, engagement rate, and conversion rate	CPM / oCPM	Pulsing schedule, with a concentrated release of content during peak periods

3. Off-platform Traffic Generation and Content-driven Customer Acquisition

The role of off-platform traffic generation is to drive in-platform conversions through external traffic. For SMEs with limited budgets, the key is not to roll out all channels, but to select the most efficient combination of traffic generation methods based on product characteristics and user decision-making paths.

Before applying specific traffic generation tactics, enterprises should first ground themselves in three general principles.

First, phased placement: Prioritize testing 1–2 channels during the initial stage. Once you've identified a main channel with stable ROI, gradually scale up to avoid budget fragmenta-

tion. Since content-driven traffic generation typically takes 2–3 months to materialize, immediate returns should not be expected.

Second, adopt a scientific approach to influencer collaborations: prioritize engagement rate over follower counts, favor niche influencers over generalists, and replace exclusive contracts with a diversified portfolio of small-batch collaborations to mitigate risks and control costs.

Third, tailor strategies to the platform: Independent websites should establish search intent capture (e.g., Google Shopping Ads) and email nurturing (e.g., Klaviyo) as their core traffic pools, thereby accumulating user assets that can be repeatedly engaged. Conversely,

platform sellers should redirect off-platform traffic back to their platform storefronts and leverage the platform's native conversion capabilities to close sales.

Table 18 Comparison of Different Traffic Generation Methods

Traffic Generation Methods	Core Logic	Typical Platforms and Tools	Key Metrics	Budget Characteristics	Applicable Stages
Social ad traffic generation	Precision targeting of potential users based on audience profiles and interest tags, with click-through driven by creative ad content	LinkedIn Ads, Meta Ads, Snapchat Ads, TikTok Ads	CPA, CTR, ROAS	Prioritize brand exposure during the cold start phase, then shift toward conversion in the stable growth phase	All stages; particularly well-suited for DTC brands
Search intent capture	Capturing users' active search behaviors, where clear intent translates into high conversion rates; a long-tail keyword strategy drives both cost reduction and efficiency gains	Bing Ads, Google Ads, Yandex (for the Russian-language market only)	CPC, conversion rate, ROAS	Continuous targeting of long-tail keywords at low CPC, coupled with moderate competition for core keywords	B2B and independent websites; high AOV categories
Content-driven marketing and KOL-led product discovery	Replacing hard-sell ads with influencer trust endorsements, and driving purchase decisions through the emotional resonance of content	Influencer search tools such as Influency, paired with cross-platform influencer collaborations (platform-agnostic)	Engagement rate, conversion cycle, and CPE	Primarily "free samples plus commission"; sign long-term agreements upon validation	High-consideration categories (Beauty, Electronics, Home & Living)
Affiliate and rebate marketing	The pay-per-sale model ensures zero-risk customer acquisition; leveraging rebate sites and price comparison platforms to convert users at the bottom of the funnel	CJ Affiliate, Rakuten Advertising, Skimlinks	Commission ratio and incremental order ratio	Pure performance-based pricing, with a commission rate of 5%–20%	Established products with proven sales records
Owned audience and email nurturing	Building user assets that can be repeatedly engaged to reduce reliance on platform traffic	Klaviyo, Mailchimp, Omnisend	Open rate, click-through rate, and LTV	Low monthly fees for tools, with the core cost lying in operational manpower	Categories with repeat purchase attributes; essential for independent websites

4.A Three-Stage Practical Guide to Content Marketing

Content marketing has become a vital channel for SMEs to build brand awareness and reduce customer acquisition costs. Industry data shows that the global influencer marketing market surpassed USD 32.55 billion in 2025, and most brands have achieved higher returns from influencer marketing than from traditional advertising. Given their limited resources, SMEs should allocate KOL/KOC collaboration resources across three progressive stages: awareness building, interest stimulation, and conversion promotion, allowing content effects to transmit through each layer and gradually accumulate into actual orders.

The first stage is awareness building, leveraging KOL-led product discovery in videos to reach a broad audience. Select mid-tier KOLs (with 50K–500K followers) whose style aligns with the brand tone. Develop contextual product discovery content focused on boosting brand awareness. Collaborations are primarily based on product exchange plus a modest fee, with a single engagement capped at USD 300–800. The key metrics to evaluate are completion rate and engagement rate.

The second stage is interest stimulation, building trust through in-depth KOC reviews and user-generated content. Select niche KOCs with 10K–100K followers to create authentic experience content and pain-point comparison content, thereby stimulating purchase interest. KOCs enjoy higher follower trust and typically deliver a superior ROI compared to top-tier KOLs. Collaborations are

primarily based on free samples plus commission splits, keeping costs manageable. The key metrics to evaluate are click-through rate and save rate.

The third stage is conversion promotion, facilitating purchases through user testimonials and promotional incentives. Collect authentic user reviews and customer photos for ad creatives, and combine them with limited-time discounts and spend-and-save promotions to drive final conversion. The key metrics to evaluate are conversion rate and repeat purchase rate.

After content is published, monitor its performance data for 48 to 72 hours. Scale up ad spend on top-performing content within 7 days, and cut losses promptly on underperforming content.

Minimum-budget Marketing Plan (monthly promotion spend under USD 500)

(1) In-platform advertising: Invest USD 250 per month, focusing on 1–2 core keywords with a daily budget of USD 7. Prioritize "long-tail keywords plus exact match," keeping ACOS below 25%;

(2) Social media content: Zero investment (labor only), posting 1–2 short videos daily on TikTok/Instagram, using a smartphone for filming plus free editing tools (e.g., CapCut);

(3) Off-platform traffic generation: Invest USD 100 per month to partner with 2–3 KOCs with less than 10K followers, adopting a "free samples plus commission" model;

(4) Influencer marketing: Invest USD 150 per month to partner with 3–5 mid-tier influencers for product reviews, adopting a product-exchange model. Key principles: Start free before paid, content before ads, and small-scale testing before scaling up.

5. Visual Marketing and Localization

Localization is not merely about translation and image swapping; it is a systematic adaptation across four dimensions: language, culture, vision, and trust. Given their limited resources, SMEs need not create content from scratch for every market. Instead, they can build upon a universal content library, incrementally layering on localization adaptations based on market priorities.

First, language localization: Replace dictionary-style literal translations with the everyday expressions of locals. Titles should incorporate popular local search terms—for instance, using "affordable" instead of "cheap," which carries a connotation of low quality.

Second, cultural compliance: Proactively establish a list of taboos for the target market, paying close attention to sensitive points such as religious symbols, dress codes, animal symbolism, and color connotations. For instance, avoid revealing clothing, alcohol, and pork-related elements in the Middle East, and refrain from using cattle leather products in India.

Third, visual preferences: Determine the composition, color tone, and information density by benchmarking against the main image styles of top local brands. For example, the Japanese market favors white space and low saturation, while the Southeast Asian market prefers high saturation and promotional tags.

Fourth, trust signals: Use trust elements familiar to the target market, including local certification marks, pricing in local currency, local warehouse identifiers, and reviews from local buyers, effectively alleviating consumers' concerns when making purchasing decisions.

6. Compliance Essentials

Compliance in marketing must prioritize prevention. Before launching any marketing initiative, one should first verify its alignment with platform rules, target market regulations, and intellectual property requirements, thereby avoiding the high costs and brand damage associated with ex-post remediation.

First, advertising content compliance: False advertising and exaggerated efficacy claims are strictly prohibited. Unsubstantiated absolute claims, such as "100% cure" and "world's number one," would be deemed illegal in both the EU and North America. Efficacy claims must be supported by verifiable evidence, and sensitive product categories must include a disclaimer.

Second, intellectual property compliance: Images, videos, and copy must not plagiarize competitors' content. Fonts and music must be licensed for commercial use, and propri-

etary trademarks must be registered in the target market.

Third, data usage compliance: Adhere to regulations such as GDPR and CCPA; collect only essential data, clearly disclose its purpose, provide opt-out and deletion options, and never resell user data to third parties.

Fourth, platform rule compliance: Practices such as fake orders, fake reviews, and review ranking manipulation are strictly prohibited. Fabricating original prices to create fake discounts is banned, and all advertising policies of each platform must be strictly followed.

Fifth, influencer collaboration compliance: KOL/KOC-related content must be labeled as "Sponsored" or "Advertisement" in accordance with disclosure regulations formulated by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the UK Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), and other relevant bodies. Partnership agreements must clearly define the intellectual property ownership, content review rights, and clauses for handling violations.

Any violations in the above areas may result in consequences ranging from product take-downs or account suspensions to hefty fines or lawsuits. Enterprises must embed compliance checks into the very beginning of every marketing initiative.

7. Practical Tools

Table 19-1 A Collection of Practical Marketing and Advertising Tools

Tool Category	Tool	Core Functions	Application Notes
Keyword Research	Helium 10 / Jungle Scout / SellerSprite	Keyword mining and competitor analysis	Mainstream tools within the Amazon ecosystem
	Keyword Tool Dominator / Merchant Words	Long-tail keyword expansion and search volume estimation	Supplementary keyword tools
	Ahrefs / Semrush	Web-wide SEO keywords and competitor traffic analysis	Independent websites and content SEO
Advertising Management	Pacvue / Perpetua / Teikametrics	Ad automation, budget allocation, and bid optimization	Multi-platform ad hosting
	Adtomic (under Helium 10) / Quartile	Amazon PPC smart advertising	Amazon sellers
	AiHello	Automated ad optimization and reporting	Friendly to small and medium-sized sellers

Table 19-2 A Collection of Practical Marketing and Advertising Tools

Tool Category	Tool	Core Functions	Application Notes
Creative Generation	Meta Advantage+ / TikTok Symphony	Platform-native AI-powered creatives and creative content automation	Social media advertising
	Adobe Firefly / Canva Magic Studio	AI image generation and design templates	Rapid production of graphic and text content
	Bannerwise / Creatopy	Batch generation of multi-size ad images	Efficiency gains from multi-platform advertising
Influencer Marketing	Influencity / Upfluence	Influencer screening and collaboration management	Mid-to-large budget
	Aspire / Grin	Influencer relationship management and performance tracking	Commonly used by DTC brands
	Collabstr / Heepsy / Modash	Low-cost influencer databases and small-batch collaborations	Startup-friendly
Traffic Monitoring	Google Analytics 4 / Microsoft Clarity	In-platform traffic analysis and heatmaps	Essential for independent websites
	Brand24 / Mention	Brand volume and sentiment monitoring	Reputation management
	Hotjar / SimilarWeb	Competitor traffic analysis and user behavior insights	Market research and conversion optimization
Visual Design	Adobe Express / Canva	Template-based design and team collaboration	Most commonly used
	Leonardo.ai / Looka / Midjourney	AI logo, brand visuals, and image generation	Brand image and creative design
	Photoroom / Remove.bg	One-click background removal and replacement	Product main image processing
	Envato Elements / Pexels / Unsplash	Free and paid content libraries	Licensed content sources
Video Editing	CapCut	Free editing, multilingual subtitles, and multi-platform templates	The top choice for SMEs worldwide
	Descript / InVideo / VEED	AI subtitles, talking-head editing, and template-based video production	Content team productivity tools
	Opus Clip / Pictory	Automated long-form to short-form video conversion	Content redistribution
	Runway	AI video generation and special effects	Advanced creative needs

Table 19-3 A Collection of Practical Marketing and Advertising Tools

Tool Category	Tool	Core Functions	Application Notes
Social Media Content Management	Buffer / Later / Metricool	Multi-platform scheduling and timed publishing	Lean teams
	Hootsuite / Sprout Social	Social media publishing, data analysis, and customer service response	Multi-account management
Email and Owned Audience Marketing	Klaviyo / Omnisend	E-commerce email automation and abandoned cart recovery	The core of independent website repeat purchases
	Brevo (formerly Sendinblue) / Mailchimp / MailerLite	Email list management and newsletter	Early-stage friendly
Independent Website SEO	Ahrefs / Moz / Semrush	Backlinks, keywords, and ranking monitoring	In-depth SEO operations
	Screaming Frog / Ubersuggest	Keyword suggestions and in-platform technical SEO audits	Low-cost entry
AI Copywriting and Localization	ChatGPT / Copy.ai / Jasper	Multilingual copy, headlines, and ad copy generation	Accelerated content production
	DeepL / Phrase / Smartling	Machine translation and localization workflow	Multilingual product listing
User Reviews and UGC	Judge.me / Loox / Yotpo	Review collection, photo reviews, and UGC display	Conversion rate uplift
	Trustpilot	Third-party review management and brand trust endorsement	Trust building for independent websites

Part IV

Practical AI Application Guidelines

AI is reshaping every aspect of CBEC, emerging as a crucial pillar for SMEs to reduce costs, boost efficiency, and foster innovation. SMEs should develop a rational understanding of AI's application value, select appropriate tools based on their business stage, and promote AI integration into the entire operation and management process in a gradual manner. Meanwhile, they must uphold the bottom line of data security and compliance, ensuring that technological dividends are truly transformed into tangible business results.

(I) Core Value of AI in Empowering Cross-border Expansion

For SMEs, the core value of AI lies not in simply replacing human labor, but in amplifying the capabilities of teams, thereby enabling small teams to accomplish tasks that would otherwise require significant manpower and specialized expertise. Specifically, AI provides SMEs with core value support in four areas for cross-border expansion.

AI can significantly lower technical barriers and labor costs. AI tools enable SMEs to accomplish tasks, such as multilingual translation, intelligent customer service, ad optimiza-

tion, and image processing, that originally required highly skilled talents, all without hiring specialized teams. This allows them to concentrate their limited human resources on core areas such as product selection and supply chain management. Take customer service as an example: With the help of intelligent customer service tools, just one or two employees can handle daily inquiries across multiple markets and in multiple languages.

AI can improve quality and efficiency across the entire business operation process. AI can process massive datasets and extract insights. At the market entry stage, it assists in analyzing macro data and consumption trends, shortening the research cycle. During product selection, it identifies blue ocean categories by

analyzing search volumes, reviews, and competitor dynamics. During business operations, it optimizes titles, keywords, and detail pages. At the marketing stage, it generates and tests ad creatives at scale. For customer service, it enables 24/7 multilingual responses. This comprehensively enhances decision-making accuracy and execution efficiency.

AI can support unified operations across multiple languages, markets, and platforms.

AI's multilingual capabilities enable SMEs to expand into multiple markets simultaneously without having to assign dedicated operation teams for each market. Whether for product description translation, customer service responses, ad creative localization, or compliance document review, AI can significantly lower the barriers to cross-border operations and shorten the trial-and-error cycle of global expansion.

AI can accelerate market response and iteration. AI compresses tasks that used to take weeks, such as content production and data analysis, into mere hours. This enables SMEs to conduct multiple rounds of product testing and creative iteration at lower cost to validate market hypotheses, thereby seizing the first-mover advantage in markets characterized by rapid demand shifts and narrow competitive windows.

(II) Practical Roadmap for AI Application

For SMEs constrained by capital, talent, and technical capabilities, it is crucial to

adhere to the principles of "demand-driven, incremental, and learning-by-doing" adoption. They should prioritize AI application in business areas that can quickly generate returns, and then progressively evolve toward operational decision-making, business collaboration, management optimization, and AI-native workflows. Overall, AI application by SMEs can be divided into four stages: efficiency-driven substitution, decision support, business integration, and AI-native operations.

1. Stage 1: Efficiency-driven Substitution

Enterprises new to AI should prioritize its application to highly repetitive, standardized tasks that require significant manual effort. At this stage, no adjustments to the organizational structure or business processes are needed; mature tools can be directly leveraged for assistance.

Product Content Production. Leverage tools such as ChatGPT, DeepSeek, and Jasper to generate product titles, descriptions, and marketing copy, and optimize them locally based on the linguistic habits of the target market to improve product listing efficiency.

Multilingual Translation. Utilize tools such as DeepL to translate product information, after-sales instructions, and customer service responses, thereby reducing the costs of multilingual operations.

Visual Content Production. Leverage tools such as Canva AI, Seedance, and Kling to assist

in producing product main images, marketing posters, and short videos, providing support for overseas marketing.

Customer Inquiry Handling. Establish an FAQ knowledge base and integrate it with intelligent customer service tools such as Zendesk AI and Intercom Fin to handle common inquiries, thereby improving response efficiency.

Financial and Tax Document Processing. Leverage AI OCR tools to automatically recognize multilingual e-invoices and customs clearance documents, extract key fields such as tax IDs, amounts, and product details, and archive them, thereby reducing manual data entry workload.

The goal of this stage is to help enterprises transition from "manual execution" to "AI-assisted execution," redirecting limited human resources toward higher-value business activities.

Hands-on Essentials

(1) Investment considerations: At this stage, there is no need to create new dedicated positions or purchase paid tools. Existing roles can embed AI into their original workflows. Since most tools offer free basic versions, enterprises can start with zero incremental cost.

(2) Launch sequence: Prioritize scenarios with the most obvious pain points and the highest frequency. Develop at least one reusable prompt template and a manual review checklist, and only expand to a second scenario after confirming

the process works.

(3) Common pitfalls: First, tool overload: signing up for too many accounts at once, which increases the team's cognitive burden; second, misaligned expectations: over-relying on AI while neglecting manual review; third, lack of knowledge retention: treating every AI interaction as a one-off conversation without building a team-shared prompt library and a knowledge base of high-quality cases, resulting in a total loss of efficiency whenever team members change.

2.Stage 2: Decision Support

As the number of products, order volumes, and target markets continue to expand, relying solely on AI to handle basic tasks can no longer meet operational needs. Enterprises can further leverage AI to analyze market data, consumer demand, and operational performance, shifting the focus from "efficiency improvement" to "decision quality enhancement."

Market Research and Trend Analysis. Leverage tools such as ChatGPT, DeepSeek, Exploding Topics, Google Trends, and Baidu Index to comprehensively analyze market size, consumption trends, and the competitive landscape. This shortens the research cycle and provides a reference for market selection and product portfolio planning.

Product Development and Selection Optimization. Use tools such as Helium 10, Jungle

Scout, SmartScout, and Dianxiaomi ERP to identify latent demand by analyzing consumer reviews, keyword search data, and competitor information, thereby supporting product development and selection decisions.

Marketing Operations Optimization. Leverage platform-native intelligent tools such as Google Performance Max, Meta Advantage+, TikTok Symphony, and Ocean Engine to generate ad creatives and optimize ad placement, thereby improving the efficiency of ad testing.

It must be emphasized that while AI can provide data analysis and trend judgments, it cannot replace business operators' comprehensive assessment of market conditions, industry characteristics, and consumer needs. Enterprises should adhere to the principle of "AI-assisted analysis and human-driven decision-making," and avoid over-relying on AI-generated results.

Hands-on Essentials

(1) Investment considerations: At this stage, tools are primarily paid subscriptions. It is necessary to evaluate the ratio between tool investment and human resource allocation, which can be handled concurrently by existing operations, product selection, or advertising roles. First, use one core tool to complete a full decision-making loop; once you've confirmed that it provides tangible benefits to the business, expand to a second tool.

(2) Capacity-building focus: The core of

this stage is whether the team can develop the working habit of AI-assisted decision-making. It is essential to establish a collaborative workflow of "AI initial screening and human review," cultivate the team's data interpretation skills, and ensure that operators can understand the logic behind AI outputs.

(3) Common pitfalls: First, data overreliance: over-relying on AI-generated traffic data and trend forecasts while ignoring industry common sense and supply chain realities; second, tool silos: lack of data interoperability between different tools leads to contradictory analytical conclusions, making it impossible to form a unified operational judgment; third, decision-making absence: no one on the team takes responsibility for making trade-offs based on AI analysis, resulting in plenty of insights but no actual change in decisions.

3.Stage 3: Business Integration

When an enterprise establishes stable cross-border business and simultaneously manages multiple platforms or overseas markets, it can further promote the deep integration of AI with business processes and gradually build an intelligent operation system.

Business Process Automation. Automate the end-to-end connection of processes such as order processing, inventory updates, logistics tracking, and customer notifications. This can

be achieved by leveraging the built-in AI capabilities of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems and fulfillment management tools like ShipStation.

Demand Forecasting and Inventory Optimization. Leverage tools such as RELEX, ShipBob AI, and Freightos to conduct demand forecasting, inventory level management, and logistics price comparison, thereby reducing stockouts and inventory overstocking.

Business Data Analysis. Conduct centralized analysis of sales, inventory, advertising, logistics, and customer data to establish a business monitoring and risk early-warning mechanism, thereby providing data support for corporate management.

Cross-departmental Intelligent Collaboration. Establish an enterprise knowledge base to centrally manage product information, operational guidelines, and after-sales policies, providing intelligent support for customer service, operations, and sales teams.

This stage places greater emphasis on the integration of AI with the enterprise's operational system, rather than the application of individual tools. Enterprises should, based on their business scale and digital infrastructure, reasonably control the pace of investment and avoid blindly pursuing the development of complex systems.

Hands-on Essentials

(1) Investment considerations: The core investment at this stage is to establish data flows and coordinate between

departments, usually requiring one to two dedicated IT or operations staff. Avoid rolling out all modules at once; it is recommended to proceed gradually with a complete business closed loop.

(2) Implementation path recommendations: Prioritize core pain points such as order processing, inventory synchronization, and logistics tracking; then integrate demand forecasting and inventory level management, and gradually introduce intelligent decision-making capabilities; finally, establish an enterprise knowledge base and cross-departmental collaboration mechanisms.

(3) Common pitfalls: First, system silos: purchasing multiple independent systems whose data cannot communicate with each other; second, feature redundancy: procuring services far exceeding current needs, resulting in a large number of idle features while paying the full price. Third, the data quality trap: if the underlying data contains omissions or errors, AI outputs will be systematically distorted, misleading decision-making.

4.Stage 4: AI-native Operations

Once an enterprise has completed the first three stages of capacity building and established stable business processes and a solid data foundation, it can enter the AI-native operations stage. The core shift at this stage is that AI is no longer merely a tool embedded in existing

processes; instead, it begins to function as an independent production unit, assuming full business functions. The enterprise thus transitions from having people use AI to having people manage AI agents. For most SMEs, capacity building in the first three stages is sufficient to support current operations. The content of this stage can serve as a forward-looking reference.

AI Agent-enabled Operations. Amelia, Amazon's AI assistant for sellers, can automatically analyze store performance, diagnose listing issues, and execute certain optimization actions. Shopify Sidekick can automatically complete cross-module tasks such as product listing and discount setup based on natural language instructions, simplifying operations that were originally scattered across multiple systems into a single conversation.

AI-native Workflow Platforms. Accio Work reconstructs the entire workflow—from product selection and listing to advertising and customer service—around AI agents, driving end-to-end tasks through natural language instructions. Platforms such as Dify and Coze (by ByteDance) also empower enterprises to customize Agent workflows, making them ideal for sellers with specific requirements. Enterprises can choose between mature platforms or custom-built solutions based on their technical capabilities and business complexity.

Digital Employee Management. Enterprises must establish management mechanisms for digital employees: setting clear responsibility boundaries, performance indicators, and

exception escalation rules for each AI Agent. It is recommended to start with a single business process, verify the return on investment (ROI) of digital employees, and then gradually expand to more functions, such as ad management and product selection recommendations.

Hands-on Essentials

(1) Investment considerations: This stage requires a dedicated person responsible for the design, testing, monitoring, and optimization of AI agents. The core capabilities for this role are to clearly define task boundaries, determine whether AI outputs are usable, and know how to intervene when anomalies are detected.

(2) Implementation strategy: Start with low-risk and highly repetitive scenarios to establish a collaboration mechanism of "AI execution and human review." After confirming that the output is stable and controllable, gradually expand the scope of automation.

(3) Common pitfalls: First, premature delegation: allowing AI agents to directly execute transaction-impacting operations before establishing effective anomaly monitoring and circuit-breaker mechanisms; second, neglecting continuous optimization: ignoring prompt iteration and data feedback, causing output quality to gradually deviate from business requirements; third, ambiguous accountability: failing to clarify who is accountable, how to roll back, and how to correct errors when AI agents malfunction, which easily

triggers internal disputes and customer complaint risks in actual operations.

Regardless of the stage, the output of AI tools should be subject to human review, particularly in critical areas such as compliance, pricing, and customer communication, where human-AI collaboration remains the best practice. As AI Agent technology matures, the "digital employees" in the fourth stage still require human intervention to set goals, review outputs, and drive continuous optimization.

(III) AI Tool Selection and Investment Guidelines

Tool selection stands as a critical step in AI implementation for SMEs. Choosing the wrong tools not only wastes capital but also prolongs the trial-and-error cycle and undermines team morale. While the aforementioned practical roadmap addresses the question of "what capabilities to use at what stage," tool selection tackles the question of "how to procure and choose based on budget." It is recommended to follow the principle of "free trial first, paid expansion later," and plan investments according to three annual budget tiers.

Tier 1: Lightweight startup (annual budget: USD 0–700), corresponding to Stage 1 (efficiency-driven substitution). This tier is intended for enterprises with a monthly revenue below USD

15,000, a team of 3–5 members, and who are just beginning to explore AI. At this stage, free versions of tools should be prioritized. It is recommended to introduce them gradually in the sequence of "content generation, translation, visual content, and customer service." The core principle is to first validate scenario feasibility with free tools and only consider upgrading after a workflow has been proven successful.

Tier 2: Business expansion (annual budget: USD 700–7,000), corresponding to Stage 2 (decision support). This tier is intended for enterprises with a monthly revenue of USD 15,000–150,000, operating across multiple platforms, and possessing an established product line. At this stage, paid tools are the primary focus. It is recommended to allocate investments in the sequence of "product selection analysis, ad optimization, intelligent customer service, and data analysis." The core principle is to prioritize solving the bottlenecks that have the greatest impact on monthly revenue, rather than distributing the budget evenly.

Tier 3: System construction (annual budget: USD 7,000 or more), corresponding to Stages 3 and 4 (business integration and AI-native operations). This tier is intended for enterprises with a monthly revenue exceeding USD 150,000, operating across multiple markets and platforms, and with a team of over 10 members. At this stage, the focus is not on acquiring more new tools, but on connecting data flows between existing tools and gradually introducing AI agents to handle end-to-end tasks, thereby avoiding tool overload and data silos.

With the budget tier determined, choose tools in the following four steps. **Step 1:** Identify requirements. Start by listing the three most painful business processes in the enterprise. Do not pursue comprehensive coverage; instead, focus on solving only one core pain point per quarter. **Step 2:** Free trial. For each scenario, select 2–3 candidate tools and test them in practice using free versions or trial periods for 1–2 weeks to determine whether they truly solve the pain point. **Step 3:** Check integration. Prioritize tools that can integrate with your existing systems to avoid creating data silos and incurring additional manual data transfer costs. **Step 4:** Keep a fallback option. Choose tools that support data export to ensure your core data will not be locked into any single platform when you switch tools in the future, thereby reducing long-term migration costs.

(IV) Risk Early-warning

While AI applications enhance efficiency, they also introduce risks such as content infringement, cultural offense, data privacy concerns, and brand homogenization. SMEs should proactively identify potential risks and establish corresponding prevention and control mechanisms.

Risk 1: Infringement in Generated Content. AI-generated copy and images may inadvertently replicate the expressions or visual elements of existing works, leading to intellectual property disputes. The preventive approach is to conduct a secondary review

and plagiarism check on all AI-generated content, especially key expressions in product descriptions and image materials.

Risk 2: Cultural Offense in Translation. Although the accuracy of AI translation is improving, it may still produce expressions that do not align with the cultural norms of the target market, and may even violate religious or cultural taboos. The preventive approach is to have native speakers conduct a final review of key content, especially when it involves sensitive topics such as religion, gender, and politics.

Risk 3: Data Privacy Violations. Feeding customer data into public AI tools may violate privacy regulations such as the GDPR and the CCPA. The preventive approach is to establish a "data classification" system, prohibit the input of sensitive data (such as customer names, addresses, and payment information) into public AI tools, and select AI services that support data encryption and on-premises deployment.

Risk 4: Unclear Brand Identity Caused by Over-reliance on AI. Relying entirely on AI-generated content may lead to a monotonous brand style and a loss of distinctive characteristics. The preventive approach is to position AI as an "assistive tool" rather than a "substitute tool," with human oversight still required for core brand creativity and tone.

Annexes:

Practical Resource Toolkit

Annex A: A Guide to Mainstream Platform Onboarding

Table 20-1 Summary of Onboarding Information for Mainstream Platforms

Platform Name	Key Markets	Suitable Sellers	Core Onboarding Requirements	Fee Structure	Onboarding Difficulty	Recommended Categories
Allegro	Eastern Europe (primarily Poland)	Sellers targeting the Eastern European market	An EU-incorporated company or Polish VAT registration, with Polish-language customer service	No monthly fee; commission 3%–15%	★★★	Home goods, electronics, automotive parts
Amazon	Global (18 sites)	Brand owners and factories with supply chain advantages	Business license, dual-currency credit card, overseas bank account, UPC/EAN code	Monthly fee USD 39.99 plus sales commission 8%–15%	★★★	All categories, with 3C, home goods, and apparel as core strengths
Bol.com	Netherlands, Belgium	Sellers in the Benelux market	An EU-incorporated company with a local return address	No monthly fee; with commission	★★★	Books, toys, home goods

Table 20-2 Summary of Onboarding Information for Mainstream Platforms

Platform Name	Key Markets	Suitable Sellers	Core Onboarding Requirements	Fee Structure	Onboarding Difficulty	Recommended Categories
Coupang	South Korea	Brand sellers targeting the South Korean market	A Korean-incorporated company or with an overseas direct-mail scheme, and Korean-language customer service	No monthly fee; commission 5%–10%	★★★★	Food, maternity & baby, home goods, beauty products
eBay	Global (180+ countries)	Start-up sellers and sellers of secondhand or scarce goods	Business license, personal ID, PayPal account	Insertion fee plus transaction fee (10%–12%)	★	Secondhand, collectibles, automotive parts, industrial goods
Etsy	Global (primarily Europe and America)	Sellers of handicrafts, designers, and niche brands	Both individuals and companies are accepted; items must be original, handmade, or vintage	Insertion fee USD 0.2 per item plus transaction fee 6.5%	★	Handicrafts, jewelry, home decor
Flipkart	India	Sellers targeting the Indian market (registration of an Indian company required)	An Indian-incorporated company with an Indian GSTIN	No monthly fee; with commission	★★★★	Fashion, electronics, home goods
Jumia	Africa (14 countries)	Pioneer sellers targeting the African market	Business license, local logistics solutions	No monthly fee; with commission	★★★	Electronics, fashion, home goods
Lazada	Southeast Asia (6 countries)	Quality-focused sellers targeting the Southeast Asian market	Business license, brand authorization (for selected categories)	No monthly fee; commission 1%–4%	★★	Branded goods, home goods, electronics

Table 20-3 Summary of Onboarding Information for Mainstream Platforms

Platform Name	Key Markets	Suitable Sellers	Core Onboarding Requirements	Fee Structure	Onboarding Difficulty	Recommended Categories
Mercado Libre	Latin America (18 countries)	Top sellers in the Latin American market	A local company or with a local tax ID and local warehouse	No monthly fee; commission 13%–18%	★★★	Electronics, home goods, automotive parts
Noon	Middle East (Saudi Arabia, UAE)	Sellers targeting the Middle Eastern market	A local Middle Eastern company, or KSA/UAE VAT registration	No monthly fee; with commission	★★★★	Electronics, fashion, home goods
Otto	Europe (primarily Germany)	Sellers with a company registered in Germany or the EU	An EU-incorporated company, German VAT registration, German-language operations	Monthly fee plus commission	★★★★	Fashion, home goods, electronics
Rakuten	Japan	Brand sellers targeting the Japanese market	A Japanese company or Japan-based agent, with Japanese-language operational capability	Monthly fee and system usage fee, plus commission	★★★★	All categories preferred by Japanese consumers
Shopee	Southeast Asia, Taiwan	Sellers prioritizing the Southeast Asian market	Business license, local receiving account	No monthly fee; commission 2%–6%	★★	Fashion, home goods, beauty products
Walmart Marketplace	United States, Canada, Mexico	Sellers with US local capabilities	A US company with a local tax ID, US return address, and prior e-commerce experience	No monthly fee; commission 6%–20%	★★★★	Home goods, electronics, apparel
Tmall Global	China (import)	Overseas brands, authorized dealers	Overseas entity or brand authorization, CBEC retail import qualification	Security deposit and platform service fee, plus commission	★★★	Beauty products, maternity & baby, health supplements

Table 20-4 Summary of Onboarding Information for Mainstream Platforms

Platform Name	Key Markets	Suitable Sellers	Core Onboarding Requirements	Fee Structure	Onboarding Difficulty	Recommended Categories
Douyin Global	China (import)	Brand owners, live-streaming merchants	Brand authorization, CBEC retail import qualification	Security deposit plus commission	★★	Beauty products, food, apparel
JD Worldwide	China (import)	Overseas brands, authorized dealers	Overseas entity, brand authorization, CBEC retail import qualification	Security deposit plus commission	★★★	3C electronics, maternity & baby, beauty products, food

Table 21 Onboarding Strategy Recommendations

Target Market	Priority Platforms	Alternative Platforms	Key Considerations
North America	Amazon, eBay	Etsy, Walmart	Tax compliance (US Sales Tax) is the biggest barrier
Europe	Amazon Europe, Allegro	Bol.com, Otto	VAT registration is a prerequisite and must be planned in advance
China (import)	Tmall Global and JD Worldwide	Xiaohongshu, Kaola, Douyin Global, VIP International	CBEC retail import filing and "three-document verification" (order, payment, logistics) must be completed, and the brand must have its trademark registered in China
Southeast Asia	Lazada, Shopee	Tokopedia (primarily Indonesia)	Strong social commerce attributes; content marketing must be prioritized
East Asia	Coupang (primarily South Korea), Rakuten (primarily Japan)	Yahoo Shopping (primarily Japan)	High requirements for localization capabilities (language, customer service, and returns)
Latin America	Mercado Libre	Americanas, Magazine Luiza	Logistics is the biggest challenge; the platform's official logistics services are recommended
Middle East	Amazon.ae/sa, Noon	Souq (merged into Amazon)	Strict cultural compliance requirements; payment must support COD
Africa	Jumia	Konga (primarily Nigeria)	The market is still in its incubation phase; logistics and payment infrastructure remain underdeveloped

Table 22 Checklist of Core Onboarding Documents (General)

Document Type	Description	Applicable Platforms
Business License	Certificate of incorporation, requiring translation and notarization	All platforms
Legal Representative Identity Document (Passport or ID Card)	Passport or ID card	All platforms
Bank Account	Used for payment collection; some platforms require a local account	All platforms
VAT Number	Mandatory for markets such as the EU, the UK, and the Middle East	Amazon Europe, Otto, etc.
Brand Authorization	Required when selling branded goods	All platforms (branded categories)
Product Certification	CE, FCC, PSE, etc., depending on category and market	Electronics, children's products, etc.
UPC/EAN Code	Product barcodes; required by some platforms	Amazon, Walmart, etc.
Local Return Address	Mandatory on some platforms	Amazon (selected sites), Walmart

Table 23 List of Channels for Obtaining Target Market Information

Information Type	Recommended Channels	Purpose
Macro Market Data	ecommerceDB, Euromonitor, Statista	Queries on basic data such as population, GDP, e-commerce scale, and growth rate
Tariffs and Trade Policy	RCEP official website, WTO tariff profile database, Ministry of Commerce's FTA service website	MFN tariff rate lookup; FTA applicability check
Customs Regulations by Country	Official customs websites by country (e.g., U.S. CBP, Japan Customs, EU TARIC)	HS code classification, import tariff rate, and list of prohibited and restricted goods
Platform Onboarding Information	Amazon Seller Central, Mercado Libre Seller Onboarding Page, Shopee Seller Center	Store opening conditions, fee rates, and logistics requirements
Competitive Intelligence Tools	Helium 10, Jungle Scout, Keepa, SellerSprite	Category search volume, competitor sales estimates, price history, review analysis
Search Trends	Google Trends, Keyword Planner	Category demand trajectory and regional search interest comparison
Social Media Trends	Instagram Trends, Pinterest Trends, TikTok Creative Center	Content trends, viral creative references, and local user preferences
Payment Data	Statista Digital Payments report, central bank payment statistics of respective countries	Digital payment penetration rate, COD share, and mainstream local payment methods
Logistics and Infrastructure	UPU Postal Statistics, official websites of local courier companies, and the World Bank's LPI report	Logistics performance, customs clearance time, and last-mile delivery coverage
Policy Risk	World Trade Uncertainty Index (WTUI), trade remedy investigation websites of respective countries, and Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)	Trade policy stability and updates on anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations
Trademarks and Intellectual Property Rights	The WIPO Global Brand Database and the official websites of trademark offices of respective countries (e.g., EUIPO and USPTO)	Trademark search and squatting risk screening
Certification and Testing	Intertek/SGS/TÜV online platforms and official websites of standardization bodies in target countries	Certification requirements and quotations for CE, FDA, KC, SABER, etc.
Industry Reports and Case Studies	EqualOcean, eMarketer, Ebrun Think Tank, Baijing Global	Cross-border industry trends, in-depth reports on emerging markets, and case studies of companies expanding overseas

Annex B: Policy Updates Subscription Channels

Table 24 List of Major Policy Subscription Channels

Policy Domain	Key Focus Areas	Global Subscription Channels	Regional and Country-specific Access Channels
Customs and Import-Export	Tariff rates, HS code updates, rules of origin, and a list of prohibited and restricted goods	WTO tariff database, World Customs Organization (WCO) announcements	Official websites of regional customs unions (e.g., EU Customs, ASEAN Customs, and North American Customs), and customs authorities of destination countries
Taxation and VAT/GST	VAT rates, tax registration requirements, digital services tax, and bilateral tax treaties	OECD Tax Policy Database, IBFD Tax Research Platform	Official websites of tax authorities in destination countries, EU Taxation and Customs Union thematic pages, and regional tax information portals
Product Compliance and Safety	Mandatory certification updates (CE, FCC, PSE, etc.), product recalls, and safety standard upgrades	Updates from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and announcements from major certification bodies (SGS, Intertek, TÜV, etc.)	Official websites of product safety regulators in destination countries (e.g., U.S. CPSC, EU RAPEX, and Japan Consumer Affairs Agency)
Data Privacy and Cybersecurity	Data localization requirements, cross-border data transfer rules, and cookie compliance	GDPR official portal, and APEC Cross-Border Privacy Rules (CBPR)	Official websites of data protection authorities in destination countries (e.g., UK ICO and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada)
Platform Policy	Platform fee adjustments, category admission rules, logistics policies, and advertising policies	Official announcement pages on major platforms, and policy update pages on Seller Center	Platform-specific policy pages (e.g., Amazon Seller Central policy page and eBay Policy Center)
Trade Agreements and Tariff Preferences	FTA updates, tariff exemption lists, and certificate of origin requirements	WTO Regional Trade Agreements Database, and national FTA portals	FTA sections on customs websites of destination countries, and official websites of respective ministries of commerce and trade
Payments and Foreign Exchange	Cross-border payment compliance, foreign exchange controls, and anti-money laundering requirements	FATF (Financial Action Task Force) announcements	Official websites of central banks and financial regulatory authorities in destination countries, and announcements from foreign exchange administration bureaus

Annex C: Toolkit Links

The tools and links listed in this annex are provided solely as examples of commonly available resources on the market, and do not represent a recommendation or endorsement of any specific tool by these guidelines. Readers should independently evaluate and select applicable tools based on their own needs.

Readers may directly search for the tool name in a browser or visit the corresponding official website link below. Links are periodically verified; if any link is found invalid, please use the latest one published by the tool provider.

Table 25 Product Selection and Localization

Tool	Official Website URL	Purpose
Ahrefs	https://ahrefs.com	Web-wide SEO keywords and competitor traffic analysis
Exploding Topics	https://explodingtopics.com	Emerging trend forecasting and blue ocean category identification
Google Trends	https://trends.google.com	Search trend analysis and hotspot judgment
Helium 10	https://www.helium10.com	Amazon keyword mining and competitor analysis
Jungle Scout	https://www.junglescout.com	Product research and sales estimation
Keepa	https://keepa.com	Price history tracking and BSR trends
Merchant Words	https://www.merchantwords.com	Long-tail keyword expansion
Semrush	https://www.semrush.com	Keyword ranking and competitor ad analysis
SmartScout	https://www.smartscout.com	In-depth competitor analysis and category opportunity mining

Table 26 Supply Chain and Logistics Fulfillment

Tool	Official Website URL	Purpose
17TRACK	https://www.17track.net	Multi-country shipment tracking
DHL Global Forwarding	https://www.dhl.com	Global bulky cargo transportation and customs clearance
Flexport	https://www.flexport.com	Digital freight forwarding and first-mile logistics management
Freightos	https://www.freightos.com	Global freight rate query and comparison
Intertek	https://www.intertek.com	Global quality inspection and product certification
Inventory Turnover Calculator	Search "inventory turnover calculator free"	Inventory turnover calculation
QA International	https://qainternational.com	Remote inspection services
QIMA	https://www.qima.com	Third-party quality inspection and factory audit
SGS	https://www.sgs.com	Global testing, certification, and inspection services
ShipBob	https://www.shipbob.com	Third-party overseas warehouse fulfillment management
ShipStation	https://www.shipstation.com	Multi-channel order processing and logistics fulfillment
Stock Alert	https://www.stockalert.io	Stock alert tool
TradeGecko (QuickBooks Commerce)	https://quickbooks.intuit.com/commerce	Inventory and order management

Table 27 Finance and Payments

Tool	Official Website URL	Purpose
Adyen	https://www.adyen.com	A global payment gateway, suitable for mature enterprises
Airwallex	https://www.airwallex.com	Multi-currency account and low-cost cross-border collection
Mercado Pago	https://www.mercadopago.com	Local payment solutions in Latin America
Payoneer	https://www.payoneer.com	Global collection and virtual bank account
PayPal	https://www.paypal.com	Global online payment and buyer trust building
PingPong	https://www.pingpongglobal.com	Cross-border collection and highly competitive fee rates
Razorpay	https://razorpay.com	Local payment solutions in India
Stripe	https://stripe.com	Independent website payment integration, developer-friendly
Wise	https://wise.com	Low-cost foreign exchange, multi-currency account
WorldFirst	https://www.worldfirst.com	Cross-border collection, under Ant Group

Table 28 Practical AI Tools

Tool	Official Website URL	Purpose
Canva AI	https://www.canva.com/	AI design assistant
ChatGPT	https://chatgpt.com	AI copywriting and multilingual translation
Copy.ai	https://www.copy.ai	Ad copy and social media content generation
DeepL	https://www.deepl.com	High-quality machine translation
Intercom Fin	https://www.intercom.com	AI customer service chatbot
Jasper	https://www.jasper.ai	AI-generated marketing copy
Runway	https://runwayml.com	AI video generation and special effects
Writer	https://writer.com	Enterprise-grade AI copywriting
Zendesk AI	https://www.zendesk.com	AI-powered customer service

Table 29 Marketing and Advertising

Tool	Official Website URL	Purpose
Adobe Firefly	https://www.adobe.com/firefly	AI image generation and creative design
Aspire	https://aspireiq.com	Influencer relationship management and performance tracking
Brand24	https://brand24.com	Brand volume monitoring and sentiment management
Canva Magic Studio	https://www.canva.com	AI design and template-based graphic and text content
CapCut	https://www.capcut.com	Free video editing and multilingual subtitles
Collabstr	https://collabstr.com	Influencer collaboration matchmaking platform
Google Analytics 4	https://analytics.google.com	In-platform traffic analysis and conversion tracking
Grin	https://grin.co	DTC brand influencer marketing management
Heepsy	https://www.heepsy.com	Low-cost influencer discovery tool
Hotjar	https://www.hotjar.com	User behavior analysis and conversion optimization
InfluencerCity	https://www.influencerCity.com	Influencer screening and collaboration management
Mention	https://mention.com	Brand mention monitoring and social media listening
Meta Advantage+	https://www.facebook.com/business	Intelligent ad placement on Meta platforms
Microsoft Clarity	https://clarity.microsoft.com	User behavior heatmaps and session recordings
Modash	https://modash.io	Influencer databases and small-batch collaborations
SimilarWeb	https://www.similarweb.com	Competitor traffic analysis and market research
TikTok Symphony	https://ads.tiktok.com	AI creative tool on the TikTok platform
Upfluence	https://www.upfluence.com	Influencer marketing management platform

Table 30 Email and Owned Audience Marketing

Tool	Official Website URL	Purpose
Brevo (formerly Sendinblue)	https://www.brevo.com	Email and SMS marketing
Klaviyo	https://www.klaviyo.com	E-commerce email automation and abandoned cart recovery
Mailchimp	https://mailchimp.com	Email list management and newsletter
MailerLite	https://www.mailerlite.com	Lightweight email marketing tool
Omnisend	https://www.omnisend.com	Omni-channel marketing automation

Table 31 Social Media Content Management

Tool	Official Website URL	Purpose
Buffer	https://buffer.com	Multi-platform scheduled publishing
Hootsuite	https://www.hootsuite.com	Unified social media management
Later	https://later.com	Social media scheduling and visual planning
Metricool	https://metricool.com	Multi-platform data analysis
Sprout Social	https://sproutsocial.com	Social media publishing and customer service response

Table 32 Visual Design and Creative Assets

Tool	Official Website URL	Purpose
Envato Elements	https://elements.envato.com	Paid design asset library
Pexels	https://www.pexels.com	Free stock images and videos
Photoroom	https://www.photoroom.com	Product image background replacement
Remove.bg	https://www.remove.bg	One-click background removal
Unsplash	https://unsplash.com	Free royalty-free stock images

Table 33-1 Cross-border Taxation and Electronic Invoicing

Service Category	Service Provider Name	Official Website URL	Purpose
E-invoice Issuance and Submission	Avalara	https://www.avalara.com	Global e-invoicing compliance and tax automation
	Baiwang Cloud	https://www.baiwang.com	E-invoice issuance, digital finance and taxation, and input-output tax management
	Kingdee Invoice Cloud	https://www.kingdee.com	E-invoice issuance, expense reimbursement, and input tax management
	Nuonuo (Aisino Corporation)	https://www.nuonuo.com	E-invoice and electronic document issuance, and tax digitalization
VAT/GST/sales tax registration and filing	Avalara	https://www.avalara.com	U.S. sales tax and global VAT/GST calculation and filing
	AVASK	https://www.avask.com	VAT registration and filing in Europe, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific Region
	TaxJar	https://www.taxjar.com	Automated sales tax filing and compliance across U.S. states
	SellerGrowth	https://www.sellergrowth.com	Cross-border taxation, VAT registration & filing, and tax planning
	EVAT MASTER	https://www.evatmaster.com	European VAT registration, filing, and EPR compliance
Cross-border tax and financial compliance consulting	Ernst & Young (EY)	https://www.ey.com	Cross-border tax planning and compliance consulting
	KPMG	https://home.kpmg	Cross-border tax and transfer pricing consulting
	Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC)	https://www.pwc.com	Cross-border tax and global compliance consulting
	Deloitte	https://www2.deloitte.com	Cross-border tax compliance and M&A consulting

Table 33-2 Cross-border Taxation and Electronic Invoicing

Service Category	Service Provider Name	Official Website URL	Purpose
Cross-border data compliance	OneTrust	https://www.onetrust.com	Privacy management, consent management, and data compliance platform
	TrustArc	https://trustarc.com	Privacy compliance automation and cross-border data governance
	Zhong Lun Law Firm	https://www.zhonglun.com	Legal services for cross-border data transfer and privacy compliance
	King & Wood Mallesons (KWM)	https://www.kwm.com	Legal consulting on data compliance and cross-border data transfer

Annex D: Glossary

(English terms listed in alphabetical order)

1688 Global Exclusive: A dedicated cross-border sourcing channel on Alibaba's 1688 platform, aggregating supplier resources that support dropshipping, small-batch customization, and cross-border logistics.

17TRACK: An international parcel tracking tool that supports one-stop trajectory queries across hundreds of global logistics carriers, and is used to monitor cross-border logistics exceptions.

3PL (Third-Party Logistics): An operating model where professional logistics providers offer fulfillment services such as warehousing and distribution, serving as the common operating model for overseas warehouses.

Accounts Receivable Financing: A service that provides early access to funds based on pending settlement amounts on a platform, accelerating capital repatriation and reducing the cash-flow lock-up caused by platform settlement cycles.

Advertising Cost of Sale (ACOS): The advertising cost of sale refers to the ratio of advertising spend to the sales generated by that advertising.

Advertising Standards Authority (ASA): The UK Advertising Standards Authority, which regulates the authenticity and compliance of advertising content; influencer collaborations must adhere to its disclosure requirements.

AI Agent: An AI system with autonomous perception, decision-making, and execution

capabilities, capable of undertaking complete business functions.

AI-native Workflow: A working method that centers on AI agents to design and drive business processes, rather than embedding AI into traditional processes.

Application Programming Interface (API): An application programming interface used for data integration and automated interaction between different systems.

Average Order Value (AOV): The average amount spent per customer transaction, reflecting product pricing strategy and cross-selling effectiveness.

Best Sellers Rank (BSR): Amazon's bestseller ranking, which reflects a product's sales ranking within its category, serving as a key metric for assessing competitor sell-through.

Business-to-Business Platform (B2B Platform): An e-commerce wholesale platform where businesses sell to business buyers, supporting small-batch quick-response orders, customized orders, and bulk wholesale orders, such as Alibaba.com.

Business-to-Consumer Platform (B2C Platform): An e-commerce retail platform where businesses sell directly to consumers; sellers list products on the platform and sell to consumers under the platform rules, such as Amazon and Shopee.

Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL): A payment

method where consumers receive goods before paying in installments, with relatively high penetration in markets such as Europe.

California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA): The California Consumer Privacy Act grants California residents the rights to know, delete, and opt out regarding their personal data, and applies to CBEC businesses operating in California.

Cash on Delivery (COD): A payment method where consumers pay for goods upon receipt, still a primary payment method in markets such as the Middle East and Southeast Asia, though with high fluctuations in delivery success rates.

Category Saturation: The ratio of product supply to consumer demand within a specific category. Higher saturation indicates fiercer competition and greater barriers to entry for new sellers.

CE Marking (Conformite Europeenne): The European product safety conformity certification mark, indicating that a product complies with the EU's health, safety, and environmental protection standards; it is a mandatory requirement for entering the EU market.

Chargeback: An action taken by a consumer to request the issuing bank to reverse a completed payment transaction, bypassing the seller to directly retrieve the funds; the seller also incurs additional penalties.

Click-Through Rate (CTR): The ratio of ad clicks to impressions, serving as a core metric for measuring the attractiveness of ad creatives.

Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC):

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, responsible for formulating and enforcing consumer product safety standards, with particularly strict oversight of children's products.

Conversion Rate: The proportion of users who visit a product page or store and complete a purchase order, serving as a core metric for measuring e-commerce operation efficiency.

Cost Per Action (CPA): One of the mainstream billing models for performance-based advertising where advertisers pay for each specified action (such as placing an order or completing a registration).

Cost Per Engagement (CPE): An advertising bidding model where payment is based on user engagement (such as likes, comments, and shares).

Cost Per Click (CPC): One of the mainstream billing models for performance-based advertising where advertisers pay for each click on their ads.

Cost Per Mille (CPM): A bidding model where payment is based on every 1,000 ad impressions; oCPM refers to optimized cost per mille, where bidding is based on an optimization objective.

Delivery Success Rate: The proportion of COD orders that consumers actually sign for upon delivery. A delivery success rate lower than expected directly increases return logistics costs and capital lock-up.

Digital Employees: Virtual work units that

perform specific business functions in the form of AI agents, requiring humans to define their responsibility boundaries, performance indicators, and exception escalation rules.

Direct-to-Consumer (DTC): A business model where brands reach end consumers directly through self-built independent websites, bypassing intermediary platforms or retailers, enabling the accumulation of brand equity and user data.

Dual-Supplier System: A strategy of assigning a primary supplier and a backup supplier for core product categories. The primary supplier handles the majority of order volume, while the backup supplier maintains a small-volume collaboration to ensure supply flexibility.

Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI): A registration and identification number used for customs declaration and import-export clearance in the EU, constituting a mandatory registration for entering the EU market.

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP): An enterprise management software system that integrates modules such as orders, inventory, finance, and logistics; in CBEC, it is used for unified management across multiple platforms.

Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG): Three dimensions used to measure corporate sustainability. Compliance requirements in European and American markets have shifted from voluntary disclosure to mandatory enforcement.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): A

regulatory system that requires producers to take responsibility for the environmental impact of their products throughout their entire life cycle, including packaging recycling and waste disposal.

FAQ Knowledge Base: A database of frequently asked questions that, when integrated with AI-powered customer service, enables 24/7 multilingual automated responses, reducing customer service labor costs.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC): The regulatory agency that conducts electromagnetic compatibility certification for wireless communications and electronic equipment sold in the United States.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA): The regulatory agency that oversees the safety of food, drugs, cosmetics, and medical devices sold in the United States.

Forward Exchange Contract: A contract signed with a bank or payment platform to lock in the settlement exchange rate for a specific future date, used to mitigate the risk of significant exchange rate fluctuations.

Free Trade Agreement (FTA): An agreement between contracting parties to mutually reduce tariffs and ease market access.

FTC (Federal Trade Commission) Compliance: The U.S. Federal Trade Commission requires that social media promotional content clearly disclose commercial partnerships, and that KOL collaborations include disclosures such as "sponsored" or "advertisement."

Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA): An Amazon

logistics service where sellers ship their products to Amazon warehouses, and Amazon handles storage, packaging, shipping, and customer service. It improves shipping speed and makes listings eligible for the Prime badge.

Fully Managed Model: A business model in which merchants are only responsible for supplying products and stocking them in warehouses, while the platform handles all aspects, including traffic operations, pricing, customer service, fulfillment, and after-sales support. This model is suitable for factory-based sellers.

FX Spread: The margin added by payment platforms on top of the mid-market rate during currency conversion, serving as a common source of hidden costs in cross-border collection.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR): The EU's General Data Protection Regulation, which imposes strict requirements on the collection, processing, storage, and cross-border transfer of personal data, with violation fines reaching up to 4% of global annual revenue.

Goods and Services Tax (GST): A turnover tax levied in multiple countries, including Australia, India, and Canada; cross-border sellers are required to register and file returns.

Harmonized System Code (HS Code): The Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, an internationally standardized commodity classification coding system used for customs declaration, tariff collection,

and trade statistics.

Independent Website: A self-built official e-commerce website operated independently under its own domain name, without relying on third-party platforms; it serves as the core carrier of the DTC model.

In-platform Advertising: Paid promotions placed within e-commerce platforms, such as Amazon SP/SB/SD ads, which bid on keywords to gain search ranking placements.

Japan Consumption Tax (JCT): Cross-border sellers must register in Japan and file and pay this tax once their sales exceed the prescribed threshold.

KC (Korea Certification) Certification: Product safety certification in South Korea. Imported products must obtain the KC mark before they can be sold in the South Korean market.

Key Opinion Consumer (KOC): A content creator who is an ordinary consumer primarily sharing authentic usage experiences, with smaller follower counts but a higher trust level.

Key Opinion Leader (KOL): A content creator with a large follower base and significant influence on social media platforms, who drives brand exposure and traffic through collaborations.

KYC (Know Your Customer): A compliance process through which payment platforms and financial institutions conduct identity verification and qualification reviews of users. Cross-border collection tools must complete KYC authentication.

Large Language Model (LLM): An AI model trained on massive text datasets, possessing capabilities such as text generation, translation, and analysis; examples include ChatGPT and DeepSeek.

Large-Scale SKU Listing: A strategy of uploading a large number of products on a platform to cover more search keywords and categories, commonly used in the early stages of platform-based e-commerce.

Lifetime Value (LTV): The total value a customer contributes to a business over the entire lifecycle of the relationship, used to assess long-term profitability.

Listing: Product detail page, the core carrier for displaying product information (title, images, description, price, etc.) on e-commerce platforms, directly affecting search ranking and conversion rate.

Market Share: The proportion of total sales volume within a specific market or category that is captured by a company or brand, serving as a fundamental metric for assessing competitive position.

Minimum Order Quantity (MOQ): The minimum purchase quantity a supplier accepts for an order, affecting small-batch pilot sales and inventory strategies.

Multi-Currency Account: A receiving account that supports holding multiple foreign currencies, such as USD, EUR, and GBP, simultaneously, allowing businesses to settle at favorable exchange rates and thus reduce conversion losses.

ODM (Original Design Manufacturer): A manufacturer that completes the design, R&D, and production of products, from which the commissioning party simply selects an existing ready-made design and has the products sold under its own brand.

OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer): A manufacturer that processes and produces products according to the product design and technical specifications provided by the commissioning party; the finished products are sold under the commissioning party's brand, and the manufacturer does not participate in product design or R&D.

Off-platform Traffic Generation: A marketing method of obtaining traffic from channels outside e-commerce platforms (social media, search engines, email, etc.) and directing it to stores or independent websites.

Overseas Warehouse: A warehousing facility established in the target market, allowing sellers to pre-stock inventory locally so that last-mile delivery time is compressed from several weeks of cross-border shipping to 1–3 days.

Partially Managed Model: A business model in which merchants retain control over pricing, marketing, and other key operations, while the platform provides logistics and fulfillment infrastructure. This model is suitable for early-stage sellers lacking professional operation teams.

Pay Per Click (PPC): An advertising model where payment is based on the number of clicks an ad receives; Amazon's in-platform

advertising primarily uses this model.

Prompt: A natural language instruction input by a user to an AI model, which directly affects the quality of the AI's output; continuously optimizing prompts is a core capability for AI deployment.

PSE Certification: The product safety certification stipulated under Japan's Electrical Appliances and Materials Safety Act. Electrical products sold in Japan must bear the PSE mark.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP): A free trade agreement covering China, ASEAN, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, among its members.

Repeat Purchase Rate: The proportion of customers who have made a first purchase and subsequently make another purchase, reflecting customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Request for Quotation (RFQ): A buyer's inquiry and quotation request for procurement needs published on a B2B platform, through which sellers submit quotes and follow up to secure the order.

Return on Ad Spend (ROAS): The ratio of sales generated by advertising to advertising spend, used to measure ad placement effectiveness.

Return on Investment (ROI): A core financial metric for measuring the input-output ratio, calculated as $(\text{revenue} - \text{investment}) / \text{investment} \times 100\%$.

Reverse Logistics: The logistics process of

moving goods from the consumer back to the seller, including returns, exchanges, repairs, and recycling. Cross-border returns entail high costs and a lengthy processing chain.

SABER: The Saudi product safety certification program under which products entering the Saudi market must be registered in the SABER system and obtain certification.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM): A form of digital marketing that involves placing paid advertisements on search results pages to gain visibility, together with SEO constituting the two main pillars of search traffic acquisition.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): The practice of optimizing website content, structure, and backlink strategies to improve organic search rankings, serving as a key source of free traffic for independent websites.

Social Media and Content Commerce: A model that leverages short videos, live streaming, and image-text content on social platforms such as TikTok and Instagram to drive traffic and enable direct conversion.

Software as a Service (SaaS): A cloud-based software delivery model where businesses access applications via subscription without building their own IT infrastructure, such as the Shopify website builder.

Stock Keeping Unit (SKU): The smallest inventory management unit used to distinguish different products in e-commerce; different colors and sizes of the same product correspond to different SKUs.

Supply Chain Finance: Financial services such

as financing and settlement provided to suppliers or buyers based on transaction data across the supply chain; in CBEC, these services are typically based on platform order data.

Traffic Concentration: The proportion of sales share held by top sellers on a platform (e.g., Top 10/Top 100). Higher concentration indicates a smaller survival space for small and medium-sized sellers.

Traffic-driving Products, High-margin Products, and Image-building Products: A three-tier classification of product mix. Traffic-driving products attract traffic at low prices, high-margin products contribute revenue with reasonable margins, and image-building products build brand equity at a high premium.

Three-flow (Funds, Logistics, and Documentation) Consistency: The recipient account, the VAT tax registration, and the entity behind the bank statements must be under the same legal entity. This is a basic requirement for cross-border fund compliance.

UN38.3: Section 38.3 of the UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, regarding the safety testing standards for lithium battery transport. Products containing batteries must pass this test for export.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI): India's mainstream instant payment system; integration is required for entering the Indian market.

UPC/EAN Code: Product barcode. UPC (Universal Product Code) is used in the North American market, while EAN (European Article Number) is used in the European and other

markets, both serving as unique product identifiers.

User Generated Content (UGC): Content such as reviews and unboxing posts created and published by ordinary users, carrying high trust endorsement value.

Value Added Tax (VAT): A turnover tax levied on goods and services in markets such as the EU. CBEC sellers must register in the target market and file and pay VAT on time.

Warehouse Management System (WMS): An information system used to manage warehouse operations, supporting order integration, inventory tracking, and inbound/outbound management.



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