



Sell Global. Feel Local

## The Nine Components of an Excellent, Glocalized Cross-Border Customer Experience

How to create an experience your global shoppers will love



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How do you create an online presence that prospective international customers will visit, browse, and ultimately buy from?

A huge untapped market awaits your product in Russia, or perhaps Australia or Brazil. But how do you create an online presence that those prospective international customers will visit, browse, and ultimately buy from? How do you drive repeat business?

The answer: provide an excellent, “glocalized” international online shopping experience from start to finish. Excellence is important because online shoppers everywhere increasingly expect more from retailers, and because the quality of a shopper’s experience reflects on your brand. Glocalization—the adaptation of a product or service specifically to each locality or culture in which it is sold (Wikipedia)—is what makes your international shopper comfortable on your website and comfortable doing business with you. If international shoppers are not comfortable, they will become confused or lose trust and look elsewhere.

To create a website and services your global shoppers will love, you should offer the following:



## 1. GLOBALIZED CONTENT

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In Russia until recently only five percent of the population considered themselves fluent in English.

Quality translation into Russian or Portuguese (or whatever the local language) is a must. Although English is taught in schools around the world, most people outside of the U.S., Canada, Australia, the U.K., and a few pockets here and there are more comfortable reading and speaking in their mother tongue, which is not English. In Russia, for instance, until recently only five percent of the population considered themselves fluent in English. Today more Russians are learning and speaking English but they are still much more comfortable on Russian language sites.



Even if your target consumers live in a country that speaks English, if their English is not American English, you can't assume that everything on your site will be easily understood. (Check out [British Words that Mean Something Else in the U.S.](#) for examples of very different meanings for the same English words on each side of the Atlantic.) Optimizing the experience for a shopper who speaks British English also means using the term "Basket" instead of "Cart" to contain the items waiting to be purchased.

Word for word translation via Google Translate or other automated translation is definitely not sufficient. You need to use a native speaker or at the very least someone who is fluent in the local language and understands local colloquialisms to ensure that you translate messages correctly, with all the proper nuances.



12/10/15=which date?

**In the U.S.:** December 10, 2015,  
**In Europe:** October 12, 2015,  
**In Japan:** October 15, 2015

In addition to translating text fields, be sure to translate the text embedded inside graphics and on buttons, banners, labels, and message boxes. Displaying dates, times, dates, and addresses in the local format also increases your shopper's comfort level and avoids possible confusion.

\$100.00 **vs** €76,19

Finally, to make purchasing as easy as possible, prices must be in the local currency, with the local currency formatting—e.g., commas instead of decimals, or vice versa.

If possible, design your website so that it can be scaled in the future when you expand to other countries. Design templates should take into account the extra space needed for text in some languages. For instance, text in Russian tends to take up 60% more space than the same content in English.<sup>1</sup> Colors and design styles too can vary across cultures. (See Cultural Color for examples of how different colors are interpreted in different countries.)



## 2. LOCAL PAYMENT PREFERENCES

Customers in your target country may prefer different payment methods than credit card or PayPal.

Your U.S. e-commerce customers probably use a credit card or PayPal, but customers in your target country may prefer different payment methods. Visa and Mastercard might not even be options for them. In Germany, for instance, most consumers prefer to pay by bank transfer or direct debit. In Russia, cash on demand is still one of the most common forms of payment, followed by “e-wallets” funded by bank accounts or cash deposits into local kiosks. In China, online consumers primarily use AliPay, Tenpay, Union Pay, or 99bil debit cards.<sup>2</sup>

If you want people to buy from your website, it must allow them to pay using the local payment options they prefer.

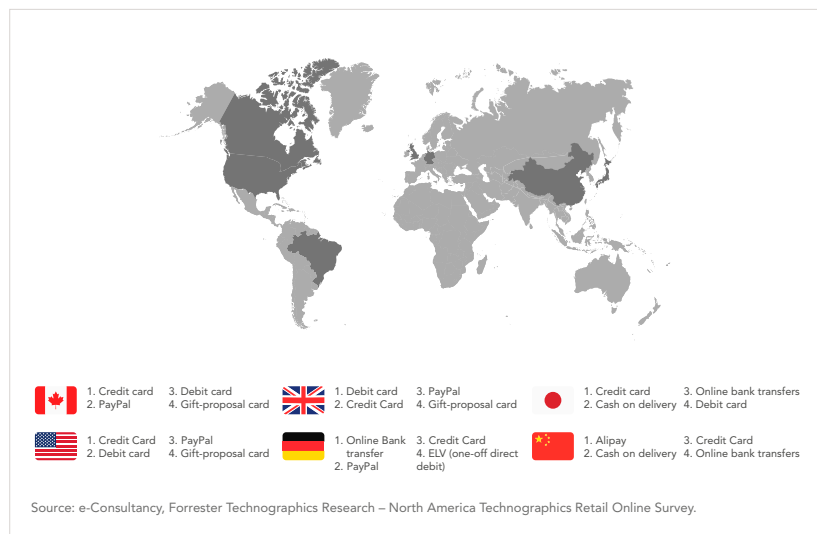


Fig. 1. Preferred online payment methods across the globe.



## 3. TRANSPARENT PRICING - TOTAL LANDED COST

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Russia has historically waived the duty for imported items under 31kg in weight and €1000 (about \$1300) and charged a 30% flat fee for items above those amounts.

Your international buyers will want to know the full landed cost of the item(s) they are purchasing. In addition to the purchase price, the landed cost includes shipping, insurance, customs duties, and any taxes.

Some countries have flat fees or fairly straightforward rules for calculating customs and duties, but other countries have complex rules. Russia, for instance, has historically waived the duty for imported items under 31kg in weight and €1000 (about \$1300) and charged a 30% flat fee for items above those amounts. (The duty-free limit is likely to be lowered in the near future.)

China, on the other hand, has a very complex system for determining customs fees. Import duties are variable by category and material and range from 0 to 100%, with an average duty rate of 12.5%.<sup>3</sup> Some products, such as laptops and other electronic products, can be imported with a free or reduced import duty, and others, such as alcohol, jewelry, cosmetics and golf equipment, are levied an additional consumption tax. In addition, like domestic items, imported items are subject to a Value Added Tax (VAT) of 17% or 13%, depending on the product.



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It is important to rely on experts familiar with all the tax and compliance issues related to doing business in your target country.

Yes, customs can be very complicated. In a recent survey of e-commerce companies, tax and compliance issues topped the list of significantly challenging aspects of implementing global e-commerce. That's why it is important to rely on experts familiar with all the tax and compliance issues related to doing business in your target country.

Whether calculating the total landed cost is simple or complex, providing it is a non-negotiable. Your international customer will want to be able to easily discern the fully landed cost before clicking to purchase—and, ideally, as soon as possible in the buying process.



## 4. RELIABLE, COST-EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING AND DELIVERY

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It may not be feasible or even possible to ship merchandise to your international shopper via FedEx, UPS, or other common express carriers you currently use.

Like customers everywhere, your international consumers want to receive their goods in a reliable, timely, and cost-effective manner. It may not be feasible or even possible to ship merchandise to your international shopper via FedEx, UPS, or other common express carriers you currently use. You may have to rely on completely different express carriers and courier services or the national postal service. Some countries, such as Belgium and Switzerland have very efficient, dependable national postal services; others, such as Russia, have historically slow and unreliable postal services. (Because so many parcels sent via the Russian Post never reach their destination, use of courier services is common, and couriers often are expected to wait while the consumer inspects the merchandise before they receive payment.)

Of course, if at all possible, you offer fast delivery at a reasonable cost. If fast delivery is expensive, you should also offer less expensive, albeit slower, alternatives. To save transit time between order and delivery, it may make sense to have a warehouse inside the target country stocked with your merchandise.





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Knowing delivery options available in your target country, helps to know which options customers prefer and what level of service they desire.

In addition to knowing which delivery options are available in your target country, it helps to know which options customers prefer and what level of service they desire. For instance, 39% of consumers in Denmark expect to receive delivery within three days but only 16% of Finns and 21% of Norwegians expect to receive parcels that fast.<sup>4</sup> Danes also prefer to have packages shipped directly to their homes, whereas Norwegians, Swedes, and Finns tend to be not mind picking up at a collection point—though the general trend across the Nordic countries is home delivery.<sup>4</sup>

Logistics is rarely a B2C core strength. It is almost always makes sense to find a reliable, experienced partner that can ensure shipping from warehouse to doorstep and delivery within a specified timeframe.



## 5. HIGH QUALITY, LOCALIZED CUSTOMER SERVICE

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The presence of a local phone number helps shoppers feel confident that they can obtain the local support they need.

International customers are more likely to purchase from you if you can provide answers to their questions and concerns quickly and in a manner they can clearly understand. Providing high quality customer service results in happier customers and protects your reputation and brand.

Ideally, you can give your shoppers a local phone number with a native speaker on the other end, one who is truly knowledgeable about your products, services, and policies. Even if the number is never called, the presence of a local phone number helps shoppers feel confident that they can obtain the local support they need—which can favorably influence their buying decision.

If a local customer service phone line is not an option, a “live chat” option, also with a native speaker on the other end, is an alternative. In any case, your website should display prominently how and when shoppers can converse with a live person who speaks their language if they need to do so. Ideally, your international customers can talk to customer service at a time that is convenient for them, including after work and on weekends.



## 6. EASY RETURNS

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The return policy should be easy to find on your website and have easy-to-follow instructions.

Excellent customer service also implies the ability for customers to return merchandise without hassle, as easily as your U.S. customers can return items. The return policy should be easy to find on your website and have easy-to-follow instructions. Ideally, customers should not have to send the returned item across the border but can instead send to a regional location. If necessary, you can require that customers first procure an RMA number, but make it easy for them to do so.

(To simplify the process on your end, the right partner can handle the returns for you, reclaim any duties that were paid on it, and enable you to put the product back in circulation as soon as possible.)



## 7. SEO AND PERSONALIZATION

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Before you even begin translating your site, you should know the keywords and key terms, in the target language, that consumers use to search for your offerings.

All of these e-business attributes are wonderful but if your cross-border shopper can't find you on the Internet, they are worthless. Before you even begin translating your site, you should know the keywords and key terms, in the target language, that consumers use to search for your offerings. Then you should use those words and phrases on your site and in your marketing communications. You should also know which search engines your target consumers use. Google is not the default search provider in every country.

Just like consumers at home, cross-border shoppers desire personalized content to help them with their purchasing decisions. In a May 2014 study of U.S. and U.K. online shoppers, Accenture found that personalization outweighs privacy concerns. The vast majority (80%) of people 20 to 40 years old felt that total data privacy was no longer possible and 49% did not object to having their buying behavior tracked if it would result in more relevant offers.<sup>5</sup>

Your international shoppers will also appreciate—and your business will benefit—if you understand and accommodate their buying behaviors. For instance, Clarks, the shoe company, found that Germans care a lot about shoe technology, shop by type of shoe (boots, sandals, etc.), rely heavily on internal website search and navigation capabilities, and plan ahead, buying at the beginning of the season or even before the season starts. French shoe buyers, on the other hand, tend to shop much more “emotionally”; they use internal navigation much less, click more often on links tied to graphics, engage with fashion and inspirational content, and purchase as needed, rather than in advance.<sup>6</sup> Knowing preferences such as these helps you structure your site and provide the content that will be most interesting and engaging to your shopper.



## 8. MOBILE PURCHASING

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eMarketer expects smartphone adoption to continue rising rapidly through 2017, with 15 countries having smartphone penetration of more than 50% by 2015 and one-third of the people on the planet using smartphones by 2017.

M-commerce is on the rise everywhere. As Forrester Research points out in no market is mobile commerce shrinking as a percent of total e-commerce revenues. As smartphones become more affordable and 3G and 4G networks expand, the number of smartphone and tablet users continues to explode across the globe. eMarketer expects smartphone adoption to continue rising rapidly through 2017, with 15 countries having smartphone penetration of more than 50% by 2015 and one-third of the people on the planet using smartphones by 2017.<sup>7</sup>

As the number of smartphones increase so does the volume of mobile commerce. In the U.S., for instance, mobile phone and tablet commerce is expected to more than double between 2014 and 2018, from \$114 billion to \$293 billion, according to Forrester Research<sup>8</sup>. In many other countries, consumers already make many more purchases from their smartphones and tablets than their U.S. counterparts. According to a 2014 study by Digitas LBi, 75% of smartphone and tablet users in China used at least one of their devices to make an online purchase in the preceding three months, compared to 50% in the U.K. and Germany and 40% in the U.S.<sup>9</sup>

Even if your target country has been slower to adopt m-commerce, it won't be long before consumers there want to be able to purchase your product using their mobile device. The ability to browse and buy easily via phone or tablet also goes on the "must do" list, if not today in the near future, for the e-business that your global shopper will love.



## 9. LIFESTYLE INTEGRATION - SOCIAL MEDIA, OMNI-CHANNEL

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Depending on where your target shoppers are located, social media may be even more important to them than to your U.S. customers.

Social media is a two-way street. You can use it to convey your marketing messages and interact with consumers and they can use it to receive and share information about your brand and products. Depending on where your target shoppers are located, social media may be even more important to them than to your U.S. customers. For instance, according to a report by KPMG, approximately 40% of online shoppers in China read and post reviews, versus less than 20% in the U.S.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, a dedicated presence on Facebook, WeChat, Vkontakte, or the social media of choice may also be an important component in the quest to provide a top notch cross-border customer experience.

Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, and other forms of social media are just one of many ways today's consumer is becoming informed about your brand and your products. Consumers across the globe—but particularly in countries such as China and South Korea—are increasingly using all channels—store, web, mobile, catalog, call center—to shop. They are more informed and connected than ever before. Their online and offline purchasing habits are blurring, with consumers in brick-and-mortar stores using their smartphones to compare prices with online options and download coupons and vouchers. Back in 2009, IDC Retail Insights astutely noted that omni-channel shopping “requires providing an immersive and superior customer experience regardless of channel.”<sup>11</sup> It may take some time, but glocalizing all channels will eventually be a fact of life for global retailers everywhere.



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eShopWorld is a leader in Global eCommerce and Logistics Management, with the only modular solution that gives online retailers control over the end-to-end customer journey – from global checkout to returns. The company enables B2C brands to sell globally, but feel local to cross-border shoppers.

eShopWorld's innovative software, extensive logistics infrastructure and cross-border expertise empower retailers to efficiently sell into international markets while delivering a seamless, globalized online shopping experience.

**For more information,**  
visit [www.eshopworld.com](http://www.eshopworld.com),  
or follow @eshopworld.



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