European cross-border e-commerce increased its revenue by 17% in 2021, growing to €171.2 billion. The sector, which is expected to be worth €220 billion this year, sees Germany as the European leader, ahead of the UK, France, Spain and the Netherlands. Four fashion players were ranked among the top 10 sites revenue-wise: H&M, Zalando, About You and Zara.

In the ranking created by Cross-Border Commerce Europe (CBCE), Ikea once again took top slot, followed by another Swedish group, H&M, ahead of Danish group Lego. They were followed by a trio from Germany composed of Zalando, Lidl and About You, the Otto Group’s fashion subsidiary. Jysk, a Norwegian home decoration and equipment specialist was ranked seventh, ahead of Inditex-owned Zara. The latter was followed by German company Bauhaus and Dutch group Euronics.

Of the €171.2 billion revenue generated by European cross-border e-commerce, €100 billion came from direct-to-consumer sales. A record figure, the result of an 11.5% annual increase on top of the 14.6% rise recorded in 2020. CBCE’s study indicated that fashion, jewellery and baby products remained the most popular categories in European cross-border e-tail, capturing 41% of cross-border sales. CBCE also observed that the number of multi-channel players among the top 500 is shrinking, while the number of brands launching into the direct-to-consumer business increased by 50%.
Business increased by 50%.

“Major groups like Richemont, LVMH and Kering [as well as Adidas], are investing in better direct-to-consumer operations in order to reduce their dependence on leading e-marketplaces,” said CBCE, underlining that pure players and marketplaces now account for 47% of the Top 500.

“The number of e-marketplaces has risen from 28 to 42, generating a record revenue of €20 billion, equivalent to a 45% increase over 2021. European e-tailers have strengthened their position with respect to American ones, thanks to the phenomenal growth of names like Zalando, Decathlon and About You.”

Last year, the 500 largest cross-border sites in Europe captured a 58.3% share of the continent's cross-border sales. Among them were also some digital native vertical brands, including Swedish fashion label NA-KD, ranked 26th, and British sportswear site Gymshark, ranked 108th.

UK cross-border e-tail sites suffered from a Brexit effect in 2021, with a 12% drop in European cross-border orders placed on UK sites. With €29 billion in cross-border sales, the UK fell behind Germany, now leading the nations ranking with a revenue of €32 billion (up by 18%). Behind them France with €23 billion (up 16%), Spain with €11.3 billion (up 13%) and the Netherlands with €4.8 billion (up 9%).

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