Cross-border sales: Zalando, Asos, Farfetch lead European e-marketplace ranking

By Matthieu Guinebault - 29 August 2019

Zalando, Fruugo, Asos, Farfetch and Carrefour top the ranking of the most successful European e-marketplaces in terms of cross-border business. An area in which European-owned groups, with €9 billion in cross-border sales generated in 2018, only account for 21% of the total (travel sales excepted), while non-European giants like Amazon have the lion’s share of the business. However, according to CBCommerce, the European groups’ international ambitions are expected to gradually change the picture.

CBCommerce has produced a ranking of these groups based on cross-border sales, various performance indicators, number of countries covered and site visits from other countries. Top of the table was German e-marketplace Zalando, ahead of UK generalist operator Fruugo and its compatriots Asos and Farfetch, with French multi-channel retailer Carrefour in fifth place. Sixth place went to German personalised apparel and gadgets site Spreadshirt, followed by home and garden pure players VidaXL (from Holland) and iamfy (from Germany), with French second-hand clothes specialist Vestiaire Collective in 10th place. Of the other fashion pure players, Lyst (UK) was 13th, Spartoo (France) was 14th and Videdressing (France) 19th.
Notably, the CBCommerce study highlighted the fact that the share of cross-border business in Europe generated by European e-marketplaces is limited. According to the study, online cross-border B2C sales in Europe last year were worth €95 billion, 55% of which were generated by European websites, and 45% by non-European ones. Looking at e-marketplaces alone, the situation was reversed, with €9 billion in cross-border sales generated by e-marketplaces from the EU, and €33 billion generated by non-European ones.

“Nevertheless, European-owned e-marketplaces are likely to enjoy significant growth, estimated at over 50% in 2020, equivalent to €15 billion, bolstered by three elements,” said CBCommerce. According to the study, the leading European e-marketplaces are expected to record significant organic growth next year, notably driven by third-party vendors, which are already said to account for 50% of their cross-border sales.

As for European operators whose business is for the time being mostly concentrated on home soil, they are expected to contribute to the rise in cross-border business by European e-marketplaces as they look for growth opportunities beyond their respective borders. This is likely to be the case for On Buy and Flubit (from the UK), Otto and Real (from Germany), Worten (from Portugal), and French groups Rakuten France, La Redoute and Cdiscount.

The latter was cited as a benchmark, its market share in France being 7.8%, behind Amazon with 14.2%. Currently, Cdiscount generates only 5% of its sales outside France, and therefore has significant room to grow abroad. The study also predicted the expansion of niche e-marketplaces, in the wake of UK success stories like Newegg for electronics, Reverb for musical instruments and Zibbet for independent artists and artisans.

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