2024

Cross-border eCommerce:

Key trends and strategies for global success

Airwallex

This report draws on insights from research carried out during Q1 2024 with the support of consulting firm Edgar, Dunn & Company.

Insights come from two primary sources, a global survey of 3,010 consumers in Australia, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, the UK, and the US, and interviews with leading merchants, as well as secondary research.

In this report, we will discuss how emerging technologies and shifting consumer behaviours are driving an upswing in cross-border eCommerce, and analyse how merchants can leverage these trends in order to win and retain more customers in an increasingly global eCommerce market.

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Executive Summary

- **Over the next 6-12 months, over half of global consumers expect to increase their purchase frequency from overseas merchants, despite macroeconomic tailwinds.** The influence of social media, the convenience of digital payment methods, and the sheer variety of competitively priced, quality products offered by overseas merchants are all factors that have contributed to a steep rise in cross-border purchasing.

- **Growing consumer confidence in international merchants is another key factor driving cross-border purchasing. The majority of respondents (61%) perceive international merchants to be trustworthy.** The majority of respondents (65%) also expressed confidence in the security of their personal and financial information when buying from international merchants. Attitudes may be influenced by emerging digital payment technologies which provide additional security to consumers when paying online.

- **Pricing in local currencies and offering local payment methods at checkout is now essential,** with 93% of consumers claiming that seeing products priced in their local currency impacts their decision to purchase, and 77% claiming they are likely to abandon their cart if their preferred payment method is unavailable. The ideal technology stack should be agile enough to meet the evolving needs of consumers, enabling a fully localised and seamless experience for overseas customers as well as domestic ones.

- Although credit and debit cards remain the most popular payment method across regions, a significant proportion of consumers in Australia (37%), the UK (33%), and the US (27%), now **prefer to pay via global digital wallets** such as Apple Pay, Google Pay, and PayPal. **Almost half of consumers in China (48%) prefer to pay via digital wallets, including local options** such as Alipay and WeChat Pay.

- Across markets, 75% of consumers say that **endorsement from international influencers is likely to impact their trust in overseas merchants and their overall purchase decision** when shopping on social media channels. Influencers have a particularly strong impact in China, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Merchants looking to leverage social media to maximise overseas sales should take note of regional consumer trends.

- **Merchants should invest in world-class logistics solutions to optimise their shipping, returns, and refunds processes.** 47% of consumers say that lengthy refund processing times present a challenge when shopping online from international merchants, and 44% of consumers cite the cost of return shipping as an issue.

- Cross-border eCommerce is a multi-trillion dollar opportunity that merchants can't afford to miss. **The winners will be businesses that invest in building cross-border customer experiences that are as seamless as their domestic ones.** Marketing strategy, payments technology, and logistics infrastructure must all play a part in facilitating streamlined, localised customer experiences at a global scale.

The great cross-border eCommerce opportunity

The cross-border eCommerce market is growing rapidly. According to our report, over the next 6-12 months, 54% of consumers will increase the frequency with which they purchase from overseas merchants. In China and Hong Kong, that number rises to 76% and 70% respectively.

There are several factors behind the shift towards a more globalised eCommerce landscape. An obvious one is that, in recent years, technology has changed the way consumers and merchants interact online. Marketplaces like Alibaba and Amazon have opened up global customer bases for merchants, removing logistical barriers to international expansion. Platforms like Shopify and WooCommerce empower merchants of all sizes to easily create and manage online stores. Social media has also played a part in breaking down borders by exposing consumers to international brands through influencers, content creators, and advertising. Meanwhile, digital payment technology enables merchants to collect funds compliantly from customers at a global scale while reducing the risk of fraud, eliminating unnecessary currency conversion fees, and making it easier than ever before for customers to purchase products online. In some cases, all it takes is one click.

Percentage of consumers in each market that consider international merchants to be trustworthy

61% Trustworthy

Global

43% Australia

87% China

77% Hong Kong

65% Singapore

42% UK

54% US

● Trustworthy   ○ Neutral   ○ Untrustworthy
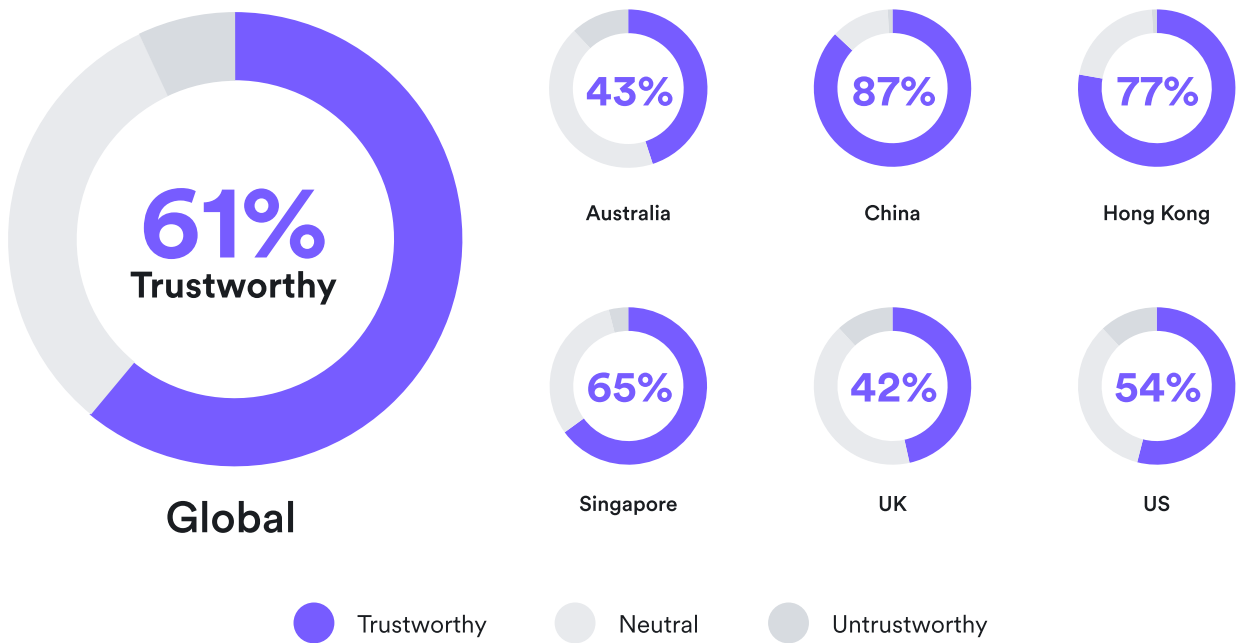
Confidence in the security of personal and financial information when buying from international merchants

65% Very Confident

Global

48% Australia

87% China

77% Hong Kong

65% Singapore

51% UK

60% US

● Very Confident/Confident   ○ Neutral   ○ Not Confident/Not at all Confident

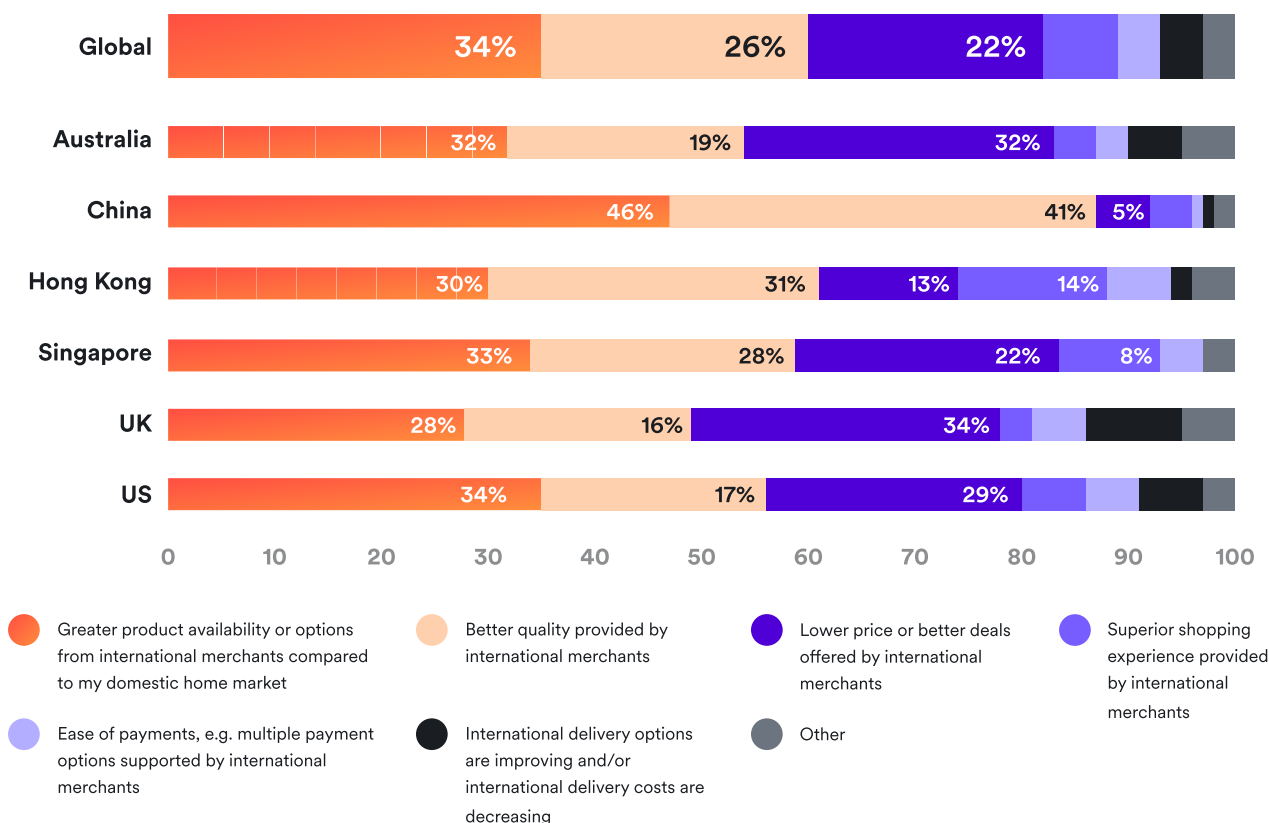Cross-border eCommerce: Key trends and strategies for global success
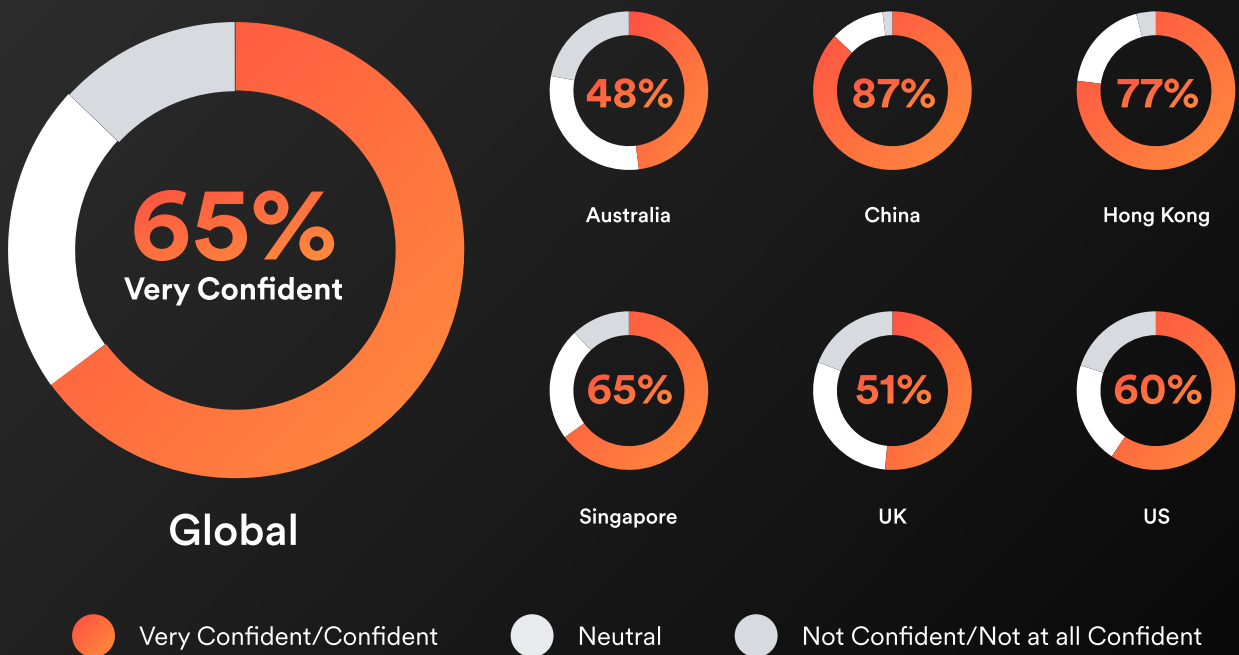
Advances in payment technology and logistics solutions appear to have had a positive effect on consumer trust. **According to our survey, the majority of global consumers perceive international merchants to be trustworthy and expressed confidence in the security of their personal and financial information when shopping cross-border.** Respondents in China, Hong Kong, and Singapore indicated a greater sense of trust towards international merchants, while those from the US, Australia, and the UK tend to be slightly more sceptical.

The development of paradigm-shifting technology and the resulting rise in consumer trust has run parallel to the rapid growth of emerging eCommerce markets[1], creating favourable conditions for merchants that wish to grow their revenue beyond the confines of their domestic market. As a result, the global cross-border eCommerce market is expected to reach US$7.9 trillion by 2030[2]. On the one hand, this presents a significant opportunity for ambitious global businesses. On the other, businesses that fail to expand their operations internationally may face increasing competition domestically as consumers turn to overseas sellers for greater product choices at competitive prices.

Consumer motivations for cross-border shopping

- 🔴 Greater product availability or options from international merchants compared to my domestic home market
- 🟠 Better quality provided by international merchants
- 🟣 Lower price or better deals offered by international merchants
- 🟪 Superior shopping experience provided by international merchants
- 🟦 Ease of payments, e.g. multiple payment options supported by international merchants
- ⚫ International delivery options are improving and/or international delivery costs are decreasing
- ⚫ Other

Cross-border eCommerce: Key trends and strategies for global success

1. Daniela Coppola, 'Leading countries based on retail e-commerce sales growth in 2023', Statista, August 29, 2023

2. Koen Van Gelder, 'Cross-border business-to-consumer (B2C) e-commerce market value worldwide in 2021 and 2030', Statista, 11 July, 2023

From the consumer perspective, the benefits of cross-border shopping vary by region. Our data suggests that shoppers in China are motivated by the greater choice and quality of products offered by overseas merchants. In the UK, the US, and Australia, price is a key incentive, whilst in Singapore, product quality, price, and diversity of choice are all driving factors.

66%
of global survey respondents

claim that the location of a merchant significantly impacts their decision to buy.

Despite embracing cross-border shopping, consumers still care about where they purchase goods from. When asked which regions they prefer to buy from, **36%** of consumers chose the US as their primary source of overseas goods. This rose to **55%** for consumers in China. China is the second most popular country for cross-border shopping and is the primary country that US consumers expect to purchase from. Canada and Australia came a distant third and fourth place respectively.

The popularity of China and the US amongst global consumers is unsurprising considering that, between them, they take a **72%** share of the global eCommerce market[3]. But with trillions of dollars on the table, even a small slice of the cross-border eCommerce pie will result in significant rewards for merchants, including those that hail from smaller markets.

48%
of executives

say that they are unprepared for setting up adequate payment processing infrastructure, international shipping, and account for handling of taxes[4].

Despite this, there are still barriers that stand in the way of merchants' global expansion. According to a study by Visa, 51% of executives say they do not feel completely confident that they know how to maximise cross-border sales[4]. In the following chapters, we will address these issues and discuss how merchants can leverage local consumer trends and emerging technology to achieve global success.

Cross-border eCommerce: Key trends and strategies for global success

3. Andrew Buck, 'eCommerce Market Size by Country', MobiLoud, January, 2024

4. 'Visa Global Merchant eCommerce Study', Visa, 2020

Key consumer trends in cross-border eCommerce

There are plenty of similarities in the way consumers shop globally, but there are also some key differences. From social media trends to local payment preferences, merchants should take the time to understand regional shopping habits before launching in a new market. By taking a localised, data-driven approach to the user experience, merchants can strike the right note with global customers, building trust and ultimately growing their cross-border profits.

Shopping trends

Platforms that consumers are likely to buy overseas goods from

Directly from merchant's website:

81%
Global

75%	89%	86%	86%	77%	74%
Australia	China	Hong Kong	Singapore	UK	US
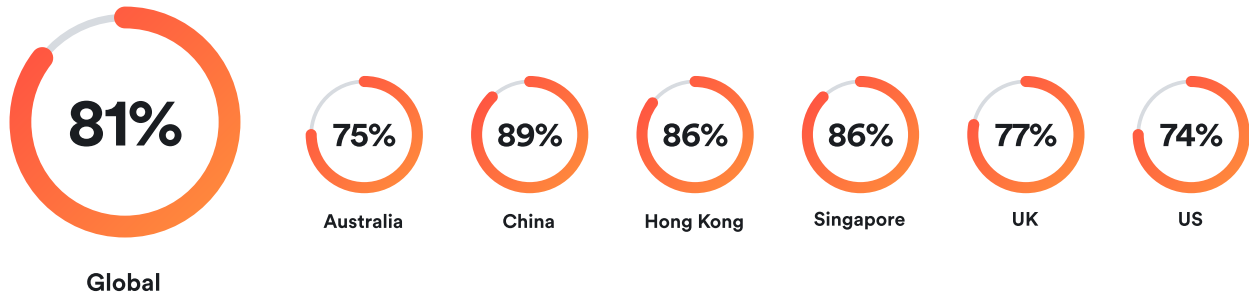
Large international marketplaces, e.g. Amazon, eBay, and AliExpress:

89%
Global

86%	93%	87%	91%	89%	88%
Australia	China	Hong Kong	Singapore	UK	US
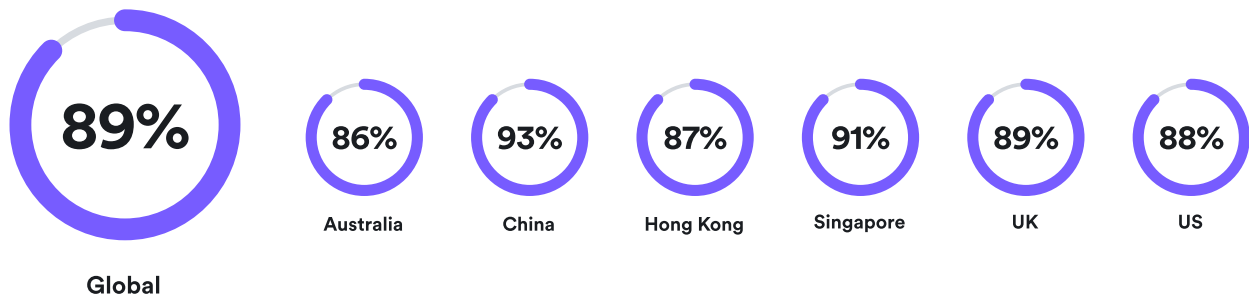
Smaller, niche marketplaces:

63%
Global

47%	84%	79%	63%	50%	57%
Australia	China	Hong Kong	Singapore	UK	US
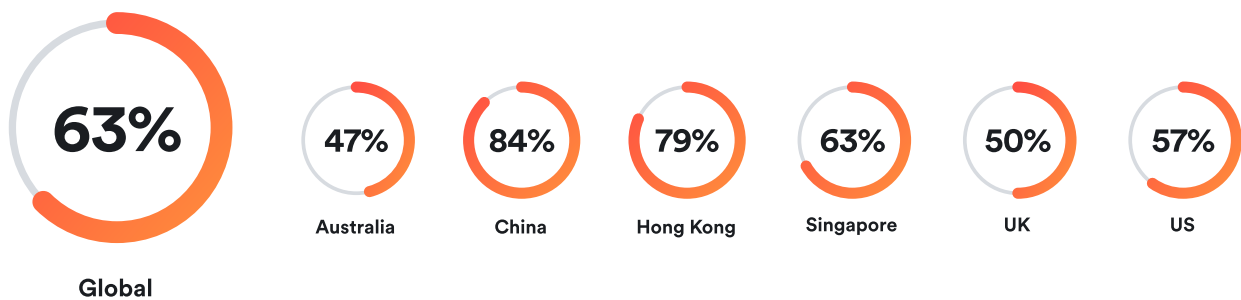
Social media platforms, e.g. Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok:

59%
Global

40%	86%	76%	62%	32%	57%
Australia	China	Hong Kong	Singapore	UK	US

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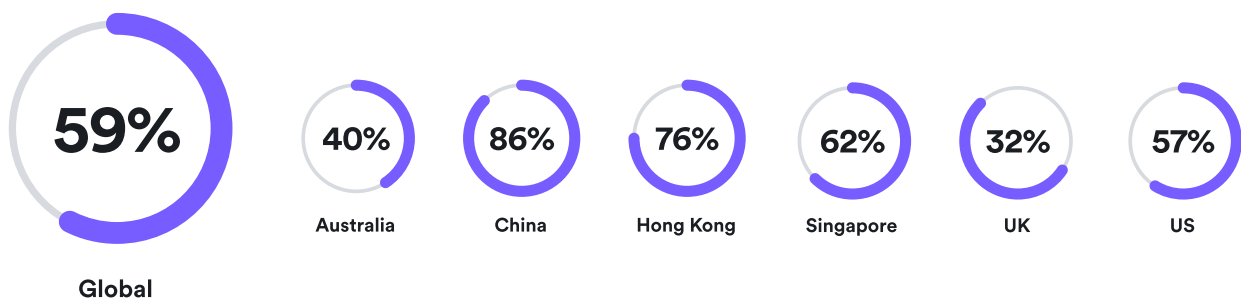
One of the first considerations for merchants expanding overseas is product discovery: How will international consumers hear about their brand and which channels will they purchase from?

According to our report, when buying from overseas merchants, consumers in all markets are likely to shop from a range of channels, including directly from merchant websites, global marketplaces such as Amazon and AliExpress, niche marketplaces, and social media platforms. However, there is some regional variation in the popularity of certain channels versus others.

Whilst consumers in China, Hong Kong, and Singapore are relatively channel agnostic when it comes to purchasing overseas goods, consumers in the US, the UK, and Australia show a preference for shopping directly from merchant websites and through global marketplaces. Consumers in Australia and the UK are the least likely of the markets we surveyed to purchase international goods via social media.

Based on our survey results, we did not observe any statistical difference in terms of consumers' purchase preferences across product categories. Across markets, there is no expected change in their inclination towards buying luxury goods or lower-cost goods.

Most popular social media channels for cross-border purchases by region

Legend: TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, X/Twitter, WhatsApp, WeChat, Snapchat/Other

Region	TikTok	Instagram	Facebook	YouTube
Global	22%	20%	28%	15%
Australia	14%	23%	37%	15%
China	49%	14%	17%	8%
Hong Kong	13%	25%	20%	23%
Singapore	25%	23%	22%	16%
UK	10%	21%	32%	14%
US	21%	15%	39%	13%
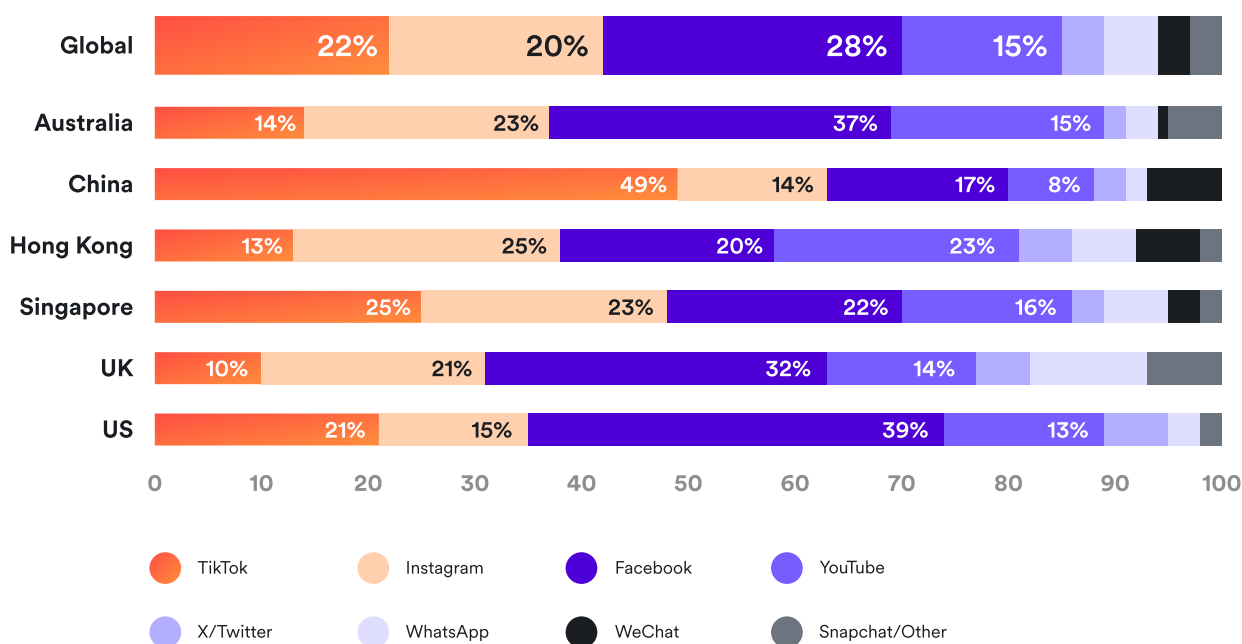
When building a social media strategy, merchants should consider a range of factors, including the age, geographical location, and interests of their target audience. According to our report, Facebook is the most popular global social media channel for cross-border shopping in all regions except China and Singapore, where the most popular channel is TikTok.

Reasons consumers buy from international merchants via social media

Global
- Quicker purchases by avoiding redirection to merchant's website: 37%
- Preference for interactive online selling, such as live shopping on TikTok: 38%
- Preference for personal recommendations: 42%
- Better deals/offers on social media platforms: 49%
- Better buying experiences compared to merchant websites and marketplaces: 23%
- Other: 7%

Australia
- 35%
- 22%
- 30%
- 44%
- 21%
- 13%

China
- 34%
- 64%
- 45%
- 58%
- 38%
- 0%

Hong Kong
- 39%
- 54%
- 60%
- 53%
- 16%
- 2%

Singapore
- 41%
- 43%
- 47%
- 52%
- 23%
- 3%

UK
- 31%
- 18%
- 29%
- 37%
- 15%
- 16%

US
- 45%
- 27%
- 37%
- 49%
- 25%
- 5%

Legend:
- Quicker purchases by avoiding redirection to merchant's website
- Preference for interactive online selling, such as live shopping on TikTok
- Preference for personal recommendations
- Better deals/offers on social media platforms
- Better buying experiences compared to merchant websites and marketplaces
- Other

Across markets, access to deals and special offers, as well as speed and ease of purchasing, are key motivations for shopping cross-border via social media. For consumers in China, Hong Kong, and Singapore, interactive online selling, such as 'live shopping' on TikTok, was highlighted by consumers as one of the main reasons for shopping from overseas merchants.

How influencers impact consumer trust and purchase decisions

Impact on initial product discovery

71% Global

| Australia | China | Hong Kong |
| 59% | 91% | 86% |

| Singapore | UK | US |
| 78% | 47% | 64% |

Impact on trust in international merchant

75% Global

| Australia | China | Hong Kong |
| 64% | 94% | 85% |

| Singapore | UK | US |
| 80% | 56% | 71% |

Likely (6-10)   Neutral (5)   Unlikely (1-4)
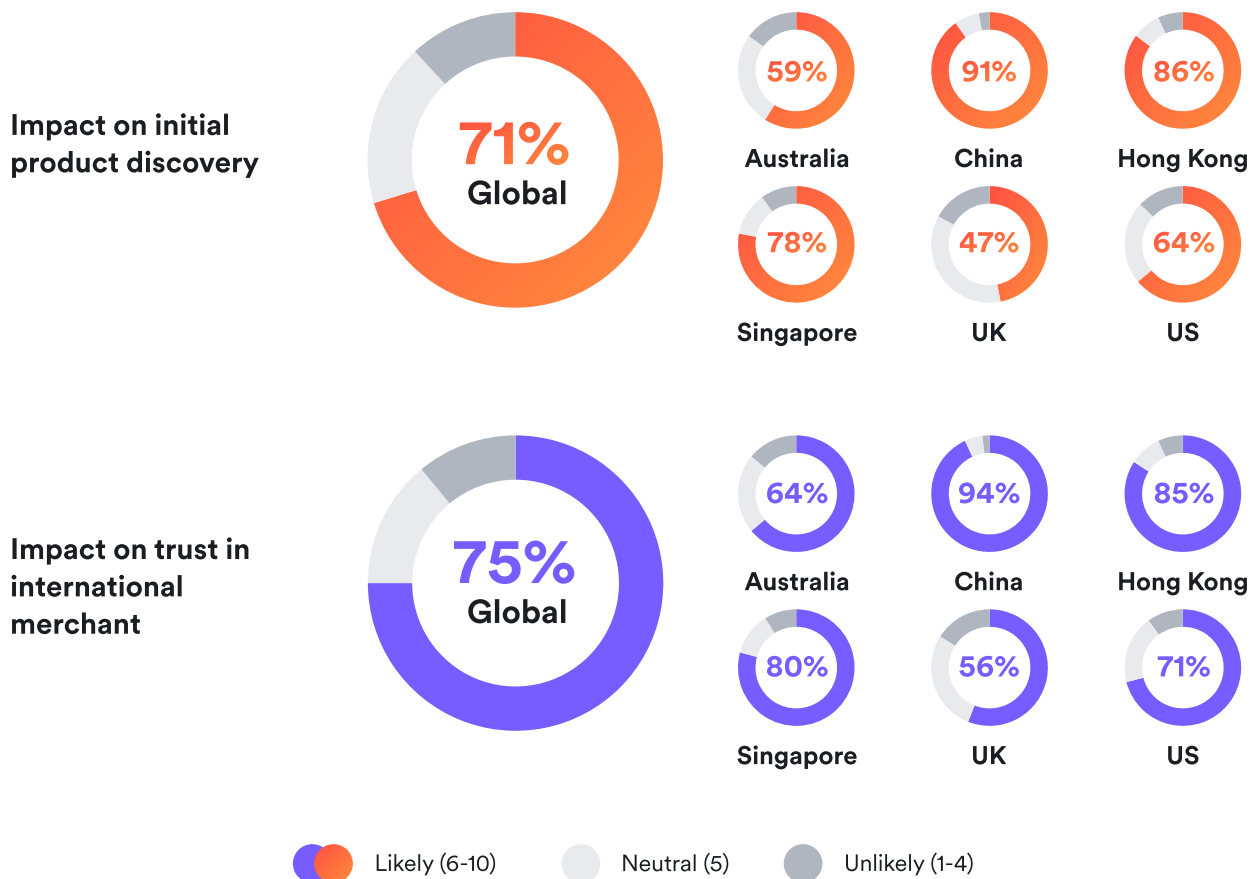
Consumers in all markets say that endorsement from international influencers and content creators is likely to impact their trust in overseas merchants, their discovery of products, and their overall purchase decision. This is especially true of consumers in China and Hong Kong.

Payment preferences

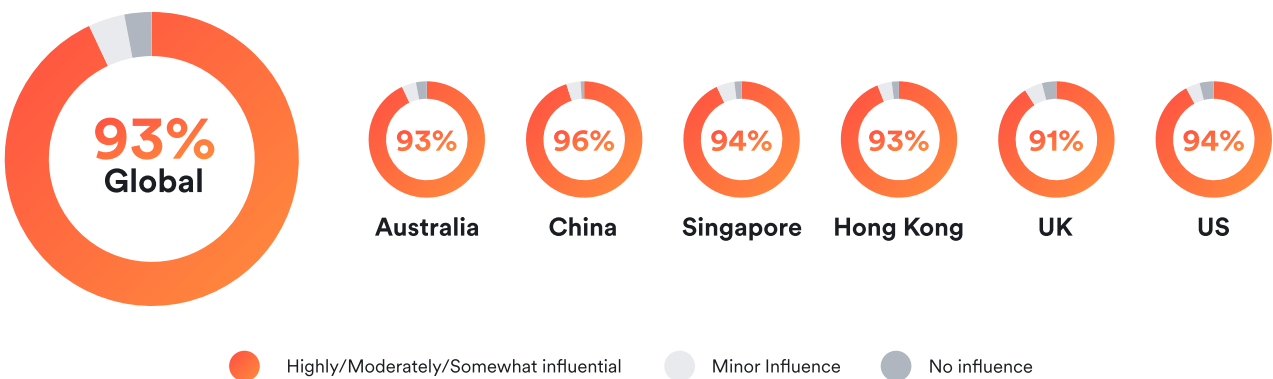The rise of digital payment methods is a key reason today's consumer feels comfortable buying goods and services from anywhere in the world[5]. But as payments technology has improved, consumer expectations have also risen.

When shopping from overseas merchants, consumers now expect to see products priced in their local currency. They expect to be able to pay via the payment method of their choice, and they expect the payment process to be smooth and transparent. Merchants that fail to employ world-class payments technology to achieve the ideal user experience risk an increase in cart abandonments.

How pricing in local currencies affects consumer purchase decisions

93% Global					
93% Australia	96% China	94% Singapore	93% Hong Kong	91% UK	94% US

● Highly/Moderately/Somewhat influential   ○ Minor Influence   ● No influence

How likely consumers are to abandon their cart if their preferred payment method is not available

77% Global					
78% Australia	72% China	72% Hong Kong	79% Singapore	80% UK	81% US

● Highly likely/Likely   ○ Neutral   ● Unlikely/Highly Unlikely

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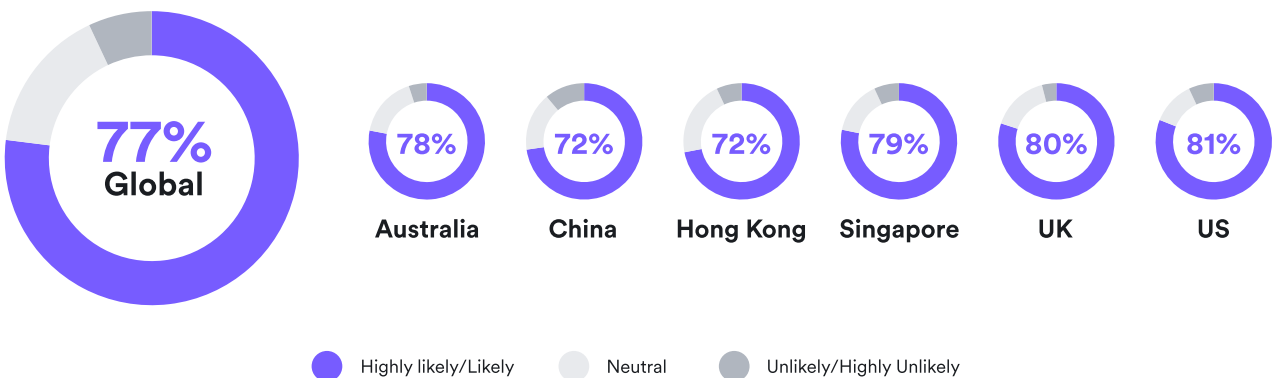
5. Daniel Thomas and David Stirling, 'What challenges do SMEs face entering the cross-border eCommerce space', Raconteur

Across markets, 93% of consumers claim that seeing products priced in their local currency impacts their decision to purchase, and 77% say they are likely to abandon their cart if their preferred payment method is not available at checkout.

How likely customers are to return to an international vendor after being charged hidden costs such as currency conversion fees

46%
Global

32%
Australia

62%
China

56%
Hong Kong

51%
Singapore

28%
UK

50%
US

● Highly likely/Likely　　○ Neutral　　○ Unlikely/Highly Unlikely
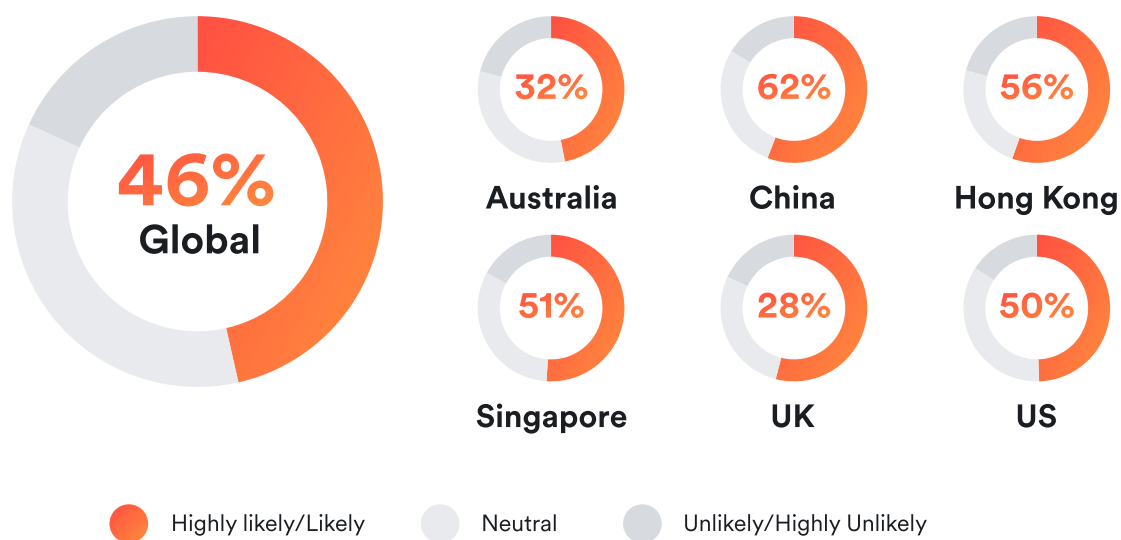
Hidden costs, such as currency conversion and international fees, impact customer loyalty. 35% of consumers claim they are unlikely to return to a merchant after being charged hidden fees. In the UK, this rises to 54%, and in Australia, it's 47%. According to our survey, most consumers expect to pay 1%-2% in foreign exchange fees when buying from international merchants.

Merchants can gain a competitive advantage by leveraging multi-currency payments technology to eliminate currency conversion fees and pass savings on to customers. In 2022, Australian luggage brand July saw explosive growth in overseas markets. In order to avoid unnecessary cross-border fees, the company leveraged Airwallex to collect and settle payments from global customers in multiple currencies and pay out funds to international vendors without being subject to costly currency conversions.

> One thing was clear: We needed a simple-to-use, truly global financial solution that allowed us to seamlessly accept money from customers in multiple markets, convert it to other currencies only when needed, and pay vendors in different countries. In other words, we needed to trade globally — not just Australia.
>
> **Richard Li**
> Co-Founder & CEO, July

Preferred payment methods for cross-border purchases

Global
- Credit Cards: 39%
- Debit Cards: 23%
- Global Digital Wallets: 26%
- Local Digital Wallets: 8%
- Bank Based Transfers: 2%
- Buy Now Pay Later: 3%

Australia
- Credit Cards: 29%
- Debit Cards: 23%
- Global Digital Wallets: 37%
- Local Digital Wallets: 1%
- Bank Based Transfers: 1%
- Buy Now Pay Later: 7%

China
- Credit Cards: 31%
- Debit Cards: 16%
- Global Digital Wallets: 24%
- Local Digital Wallets: 24%
- Bank Based Transfers: 3%
- Buy Now Pay Later: 2%

Hong Kong
- Credit Cards: 50%
- Debit Cards: 14%
- Global Digital Wallets: 19%
- Local Digital Wallets: 14%
- Bank Based Transfers: 2%
- Buy Now Pay Later: 0%

Singapore
- Credit Cards: 45%
- Debit Cards: 31%
- Global Digital Wallets: 16%
- Local Digital Wallets: 5%
- Bank Based Transfers: 3%
- Buy Now Pay Later: 0%

UK
- Credit Cards: 38%
- Debit Cards: 24%
- Global Digital Wallets: 33%
- Local Digital Wallets: 2%
- Bank Based Transfers: 0%
- Buy Now Pay Later: 3%

US
- Credit Cards: 38%
- Debit Cards: 27%
- Global Digital Wallets: 27%
- Local Digital Wallets: 1%
- Bank Based Transfers: 3%
- Buy Now Pay Later: 3%

Legend:
- Credit Cards
- Debit Cards
- Global Digital Wallets (e.g. PayPal, Apple Pay, Google Pay)
- Local Digital Wallets (e.g. Alipay, WeChat Pay, GrabPay)
- Bank Based Transfers (e.g. SEPA, iDEAL, PayNow, Bancontact)
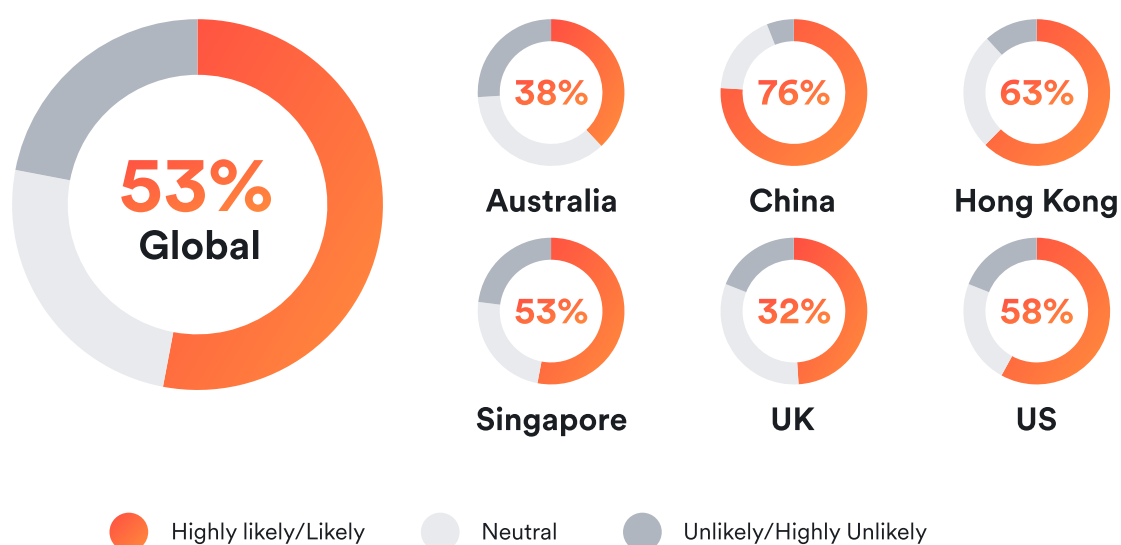- Buy Now Pay Later (e.g. Klarna, Afterpay)

Although credit and debit cards are still the most popular payment method across regions, things are shifting rapidly. 37% of consumers in Australia, 33% in the UK, and 27% in the US now prefer to pay via global digital wallets such as Apple Pay, Google Pay,

and PayPal. Half of the consumers surveyed in China prefer to pay via alternative payment methods such as digital wallets and Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) options.

Local payment methods such as Alipay, WeChat Pay, and GrabPay have become increasingly important in Asian markets. 24% of consumers in China, 14% in Hong Kong, and 5% in Singapore prefer to use these local payment methods.

Likelihood of choosing instalment-based payment methods over other methods when shopping cross-border

53%
Global

38%
Australia

76%
China

63%
Hong Kong

53%
Singapore

32%
UK

58%
US

● Highly likely/Likely ● Neutral ● Unlikely/Highly Unlikely

Over half of consumers across the in-scope markets suggest that they would be open to using instalment-based payment methods such as Klarna or Apple Pay Later when shopping internationally. In China, 76% would be open to this and in Hong Kong, 63%.

Logistics expectations

As with payments technology, advancements in eCommerce logistics, spurred on by global marketplaces such as Amazon, have led to higher consumer expectations. Today's consumer wants products to arrive in good time, even when purchasing from overseas merchants. If a product is not to their liking, they expect to be able to follow a simple returns process.

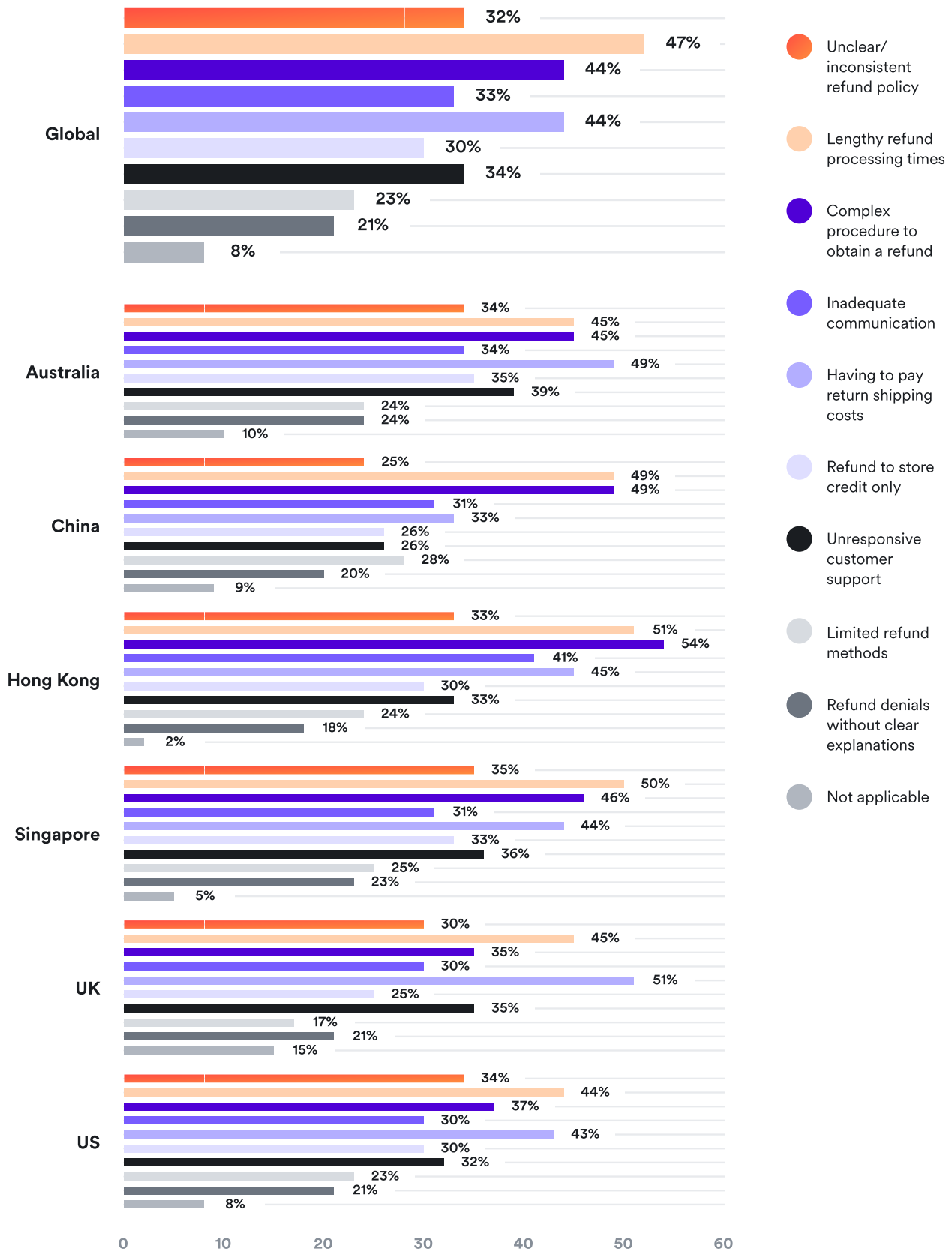# Most important features consumers look for when evaluating an international merchant's shipping policy

Legend:
- 🔴 Shipping speed options
- 🟣 Shipping costs and transparency
- ⚫ Order tracking and notifications
- ⚪ Shipping carrier options
- 🔘 Delivery time estimates
- 🔘 Other

Global
- Shipping speed options: 24%
- Shipping costs and transparency: 41%
- Order tracking and notifications: 11%
- Shipping carrier options: 9%
- Delivery time estimates: 8%
- Other: 7%

Australia
- Shipping speed options: 22%
- Shipping costs and transparency: 49%
- Order tracking and notifications: 8%
- Shipping carrier options: 5%
- Delivery time estimates: 10%
- Other: 6%

China
- Shipping speed options: 22%
- Shipping costs and transparency: 40%
- Order tracking and notifications: 16%
- Shipping carrier options: 6%
- Delivery time estimates: 2%
- Other: 8%

Hong Kong
- Shipping speed options: 16%
- Shipping costs and transparency: 34%
- Order tracking and notifications: 15%
- Shipping carrier options: 17%
- Delivery time estimates: 8%
- Other: 10%

Singapore
- Shipping speed options: 22%
- Shipping costs and transparency: 45%
- Order tracking and notifications: 9%
- Shipping carrier options: 12%
- Delivery time estimates: 7%
- Other: 5%

UK
- Shipping speed options: 19%
- Shipping costs and transparency: 49%
- Order tracking and notifications: 10%
- Shipping carrier options: 6%
- Delivery time estimates: 12%
- Other: 4%

US
- Shipping speed options: 38%
- Shipping costs and transparency: 27%
- Order tracking and notifications: 9%
- Shipping carrier options: 6%
- Delivery time estimates: 13%
- Other: 7%

Our report suggests that, when evaluating the shipping policy of an international merchant, shipping cost and transparency are the most important considerations for consumers in all markets except the US, where speed of delivery is the most important.

The survey also suggests that most consumers are happy to pay extra for faster delivery and tracking when shopping from international merchants versus domestic merchants. This is particularly the case in China (82%), Hong Kong (69%), and the US (68%).

Aspects of the refund process which cause the most problems for consumers shopping cross-border

Global
- Unclear/inconsistent refund policy: 32%
- Lengthy refund processing times: 47%
- Complex procedure to obtain a refund: 44%
- Inadequate communication: 33%
- Having to pay return shipping costs: 44%
- Refund to store credit only: 30%
- Unresponsive customer support: 34%
- Limited refund methods: 23%
- Refund denials without clear explanations: 21%
- Not applicable: 8%

Australia
- Unclear/inconsistent refund policy: 34%
- Lengthy refund processing times: 45%
- Complex procedure to obtain a refund: 45%
- Inadequate communication: 34%
- Having to pay return shipping costs: 49%
- Refund to store credit only: 35%
- Unresponsive customer support: 39%
- Limited refund methods: 24%
- Refund denials without clear explanations: 24%
- Not applicable: 10%

China
- Unclear/inconsistent refund policy: 25%
- Lengthy refund processing times: 49%
- Complex procedure to obtain a refund: 49%
- Inadequate communication: 31%
- Having to pay return shipping costs: 33%
- Refund to store credit only: 26%
- Unresponsive customer support: 26%
- Limited refund methods: 28%
- Refund denials without clear explanations: 20%
- Not applicable: 9%

Hong Kong
- Unclear/inconsistent refund policy: 33%
- Lengthy refund processing times: 51%
- Complex procedure to obtain a refund: 54%
- Inadequate communication: 41%
- Having to pay return shipping costs: 45%
- Refund to store credit only: 30%
- Unresponsive customer support: 33%
- Limited refund methods: 24%
- Refund denials without clear explanations: 18%
- Not applicable: 2%

Singapore
- Unclear/inconsistent refund policy: 35%
- Lengthy refund processing times: 50%
- Complex procedure to obtain a refund: 46%
- Inadequate communication: 31%
- Having to pay return shipping costs: 44%
- Refund to store credit only: 33%
- Unresponsive customer support: 36%
- Limited refund methods: 25%
- Refund denials without clear explanations: 23%
- Not applicable: 5%

UK
- Unclear/inconsistent refund policy: 30%
- Lengthy refund processing times: 45%
- Complex procedure to obtain a refund: 35%
- Inadequate communication: 30%
- Having to pay return shipping costs: 51%
- Refund to store credit only: 25%
- Unresponsive customer support: 35%
- Limited refund methods: 17%
- Refund denials without clear explanations: 21%
- Not applicable: 15%

US
- Unclear/inconsistent refund policy: 34%
- Lengthy refund processing times: 44%
- Complex procedure to obtain a refund: 37%
- Inadequate communication: 30%
- Having to pay return shipping costs: 43%
- Refund to store credit only: 30%
- Unresponsive customer support: 32%
- Limited refund methods: 23%
- Refund denials without clear explanations: 21%
- Not applicable: 8%

When it comes to returns and refunds, there are myriad pain points consumers face when shopping from overseas merchants. 47% highlight lengthy refund processing times as a challenge, 44% say having to pay return shipping costs is a problem (this rises to 51% in the UK and 49% in Australia), and 44% point to refund procedures being too complex.

Overly-complex refund processes can also have a damaging effect on customer loyalty, with 37% of consumers claiming they are unlikely to revisit a merchant if the refund process is substandard. In the UK, this rises to 54%.

Suffice to say, merchants selling to overseas customers should invest in world-class logistics solutions to expedite shipping and ensure they have the infrastructure to enable an efficient returns and refunds process.

How merchants can optimise for global success

It's clear from our report that merchants must leverage regional shopping trends, world-class payments technology, and premium logistics infrastructure in order to attract, convert, and retain overseas customers. In this chapter, we'll go into more detail on how merchants can achieve the ideal cross-border customer journey.

Capitalise on the 'impulse purchase' mindset

Whilst some regions are more engaged with social commerce (the act of purchasing via social media) than others, there is no doubt that social media has significantly impacted the eCommerce landscape, particularly in regards to cross-border selling.

> Social media's trump card lies in its ability to enable each step of the customer journey on a single platform. From product discovery and community building to customer service and checkout, social media allows consumers to go from mindless scrolling to spontaneous purchasing without breaking step. This gives merchants an unparalleled opportunity to capitalise on the 'impulse purchase' consumer mindset.

The impulse purchase mindset differs from the considered purchase mindset that consumers typically have when shopping on eCommerce platforms. Generally speaking, when a customer visits a merchant's website or a marketplace, they have already decided what they want to buy and are now weighing up the options.

When dealing with considered purchasers, a merchant should focus on making their product appear superior versus competitors — whether that's in terms of price, product quality, or brand recognition. Tapping into the impulse purchase mindset requires a different strategy. In some cases, merchants are targeting customers that have never heard of their product, let alone their brand.

According to a survey from financial information site Bankrate, almost half (48%) of social media users in the US have made an impulse purchase after spotting something on their social media feed[6].

6. Chris Taylor, 'Got to have it: The dangers of social media impulse buying', Reuters, 28 September, 2023

$71B

in 12 months

combined spend by an average impulse buyer on products from social media[6]

In 2023, the average impulse buyer in the US spent US$754 on products from social media[6]. Whilst these statistics have caused some concern, the reality is that impulse buying is not new.

Supermarkets, catalogue companies, and door-to-door salespeople have been capitalising on our impulsive shopping habits for decades. The exciting thing about social commerce from a merchant's perspective is that it brings impulse shopping online. That means businesses of any size, niche, and geographic location can reach new audiences without needing a local brick-and-mortar store or an oversized marketing budget.

The person scrolling through social media becomes like the person strolling down the high street. Just as in the physical world, merchants have an opportunity to catch their attention and persuade them to make a purchase. A well-executed social media campaign does just that, drumming up billions of views and introducing new audiences to products they may never have considered purchasing previously.

Merchants can combine the viral power of social media with the elegance and simplicity of modern payments technology by embedding Payment Links into their social media channels. Payment Links enable merchants to easily collect payments globally without directing customers to their website, thereby facilitating a seamless payment experience that is secure and globally compliant. In fact, Payment Links enable merchants to collect payments even if they don't have a website, opening the door for anyone to become a global seller, no matter the size of their enterprise.

6. Chris Taylor, 'Got to have it: The dangers of social media impulse buying', Reuters, 28 September, 2023

Leverage influencers and social proof to build trust

In 2019, beauty brand e.l.f. Cosmetics launched a TikTok campaign which inspired over three million user-generated videos, including unsponsored content from celebrities such as Lizzo, Ellen DeGeneres, and Reese Witherspoon. The campaign is recognised as one of the most successful TikTok marketing drives of all time, generating billions of views worldwide[7]. Whilst this may be an extreme example, it demonstrates the full potential of influencer and user-generated content when leveraged correctly.

According to our survey, endorsement from international influencers and content creators has a significant impact on consumers' decision to purchase from an overseas merchant.

As well as generating awareness, influencers help brands build trust with consumers in markets where they are not yet established. However, in order to reach the desired outcome, influencer endorsements must come across as authentic rather than transactional. To achieve this, merchants should choose influencers that align with their company's brand values and have a genuine connection with their followers.

75%
of survey participants

claim that ratings and customer reviews play a more important role in decision to buy from international sellers VS domestic sellers

Customer reviews are also critical to building consumer confidence in expansion markets. Merchants should spend time generating authentic customer reviews on local websites. These reviews serve a double function of increasing consumer trust and helping brands rank on local marketplaces and search engines.

7. Rebecca Jennings, 'The brands finally understand TikTok', Vox, 11 October, 2019

Upgrade your end-to-end payments infrastructure

Once a merchant has successfully convinced a customer that they must have a product, the sale is theirs to lose. Unfortunately, as our report highlights, there are many reasons a customer might be dissuaded from purchasing at the last minute.

In order to increase checkout conversion rates, merchants should do everything in their power to streamline the customer experience.

70%
global online cart abandonment rates[8]

Payments technology plays an essential role in helping merchants improve the customer experience. With the right payments partner, merchants can price in local currencies, offer local payment methods such as Alipay, SEPA, and WeChat Pay at their checkout, and avoid unnecessary currency conversion costs that could make them less price competitive than their domestic counterparts.

Alipay S€PA WeChat Pay PAYNOW

GrabPay Klarna. iDEAL afterpay

While there are plenty of solutions that can help merchants resolve specific pain points, using an end-to-end provider can not only enable a better customer experience, but also, reduce the operational complexity of managing global fund flows.

8. '49 cart abandonment statistics', baymard institute, 11 july, 2023

In practice, this means a merchant can collect payments from customers in multiple currencies, settle payments 'like for like' (without having to convert currencies) into their accounts, and use funds to pay overseas suppliers, all whilst avoiding costly foreign exchange fees. Merchants can also leverage multi-currency accounts to collect funds from global marketplaces such as Amazon and Alibaba, thereby avoiding the currency conversion fees and international settlement costs that marketplaces charge.

For example, Airwallex allows merchants to collect payments, convert currencies, transfer funds, pay bills, manage team expenses, and more on a global scale from a single platform.

Global Accounts
Get currency accounts with local bank details

Online Payments
Start accepting payments on your website from your global customers

Payment Links & Plugins
Embed unique payment links in invoices, emails or SMS to your customers

FX Conversions & Account
Manage multiple currencies and access market-leading FX rates

Transfers
Make faster domestic and international payouts

Borderless Cards
Issue Visa cards to your team with pre-set spending limits

Expenses
Capture and manage employee expenses globally

Bill Pay
Upload, approve, pay, and reconcile company bills all in one place

"Scalability matters. Otherwise, you're rebuilding processes every time you grow. That's very time-consuming. And while you do that, you're not spending time improving the top line and bottom line. Others out there have offered discounts, but the temporary savings don't matter when we feel like we have a partner and a solution that is scalable and easy. The difference between Airwallex's UI and that of other competitors we've demoed is night and day. When we have bills to pay from 15 different accounts on a single day, being able to do that on a single platform is a huge timesaver."

Foley Shmidt
CFO, Profound Commerce

Manage fraud and risk whilst increasing payment authorisation rates

30%
of survey respondents
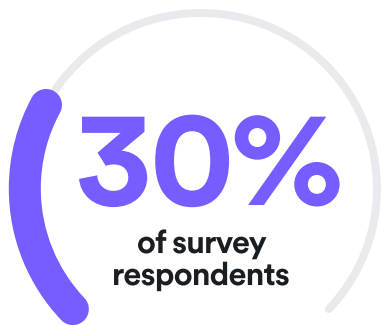
have very often or frequently experienced problems with payments to overseas merchants.

In addition to checkout localisation, merchants should work with their payments partner to optimise payment acceptance rates. According to our survey, **more than half of consumers have experienced problems** with payments to overseas merchants being blocked, declined, or unsuccessful.

Payment declines occur for a number of reasons, including if the customer's card has insufficient funds, the card details are incorrect, or there is suspicion of fraud. Payment declines are designed to keep both businesses and customers safe from fraudulent activity and the risk of non-payment. However, problems can occur if merchants frequently experience payment declines from legitimate customers.

Merchants should work with their payment processors to gain greater visibility and control of their fraud strategy to improve payment authorisation rates from valid customers whilst protecting against risk. For example, **with Airwallex's Risk Dashboard, merchants can analyse their key risk metrics, including payment success rate, fraud rate, disputes, and more**. They can view historical risk data to track patterns over time and compare fraud and dispute rates against similar businesses to benchmark their performance. This data can be used to understand how the risk engine is impacting their overall payment success and fraud rates. Merchants can customise their risk strategy to suit their business, including adding customers to specific watchlists based on a number of data features, applying 3D Secure (3DS) to certain transactions, and setting the risk engine to one of five levels, depending on the risk appetite of the business. If a transaction does result in a dispute, it's also possible to automate the dispute management process using the Airwallex API.

Airwallex's Risk Dashboard is designed to help you reduce fraud losses, boost authorisation rates, and gain valuable insights.
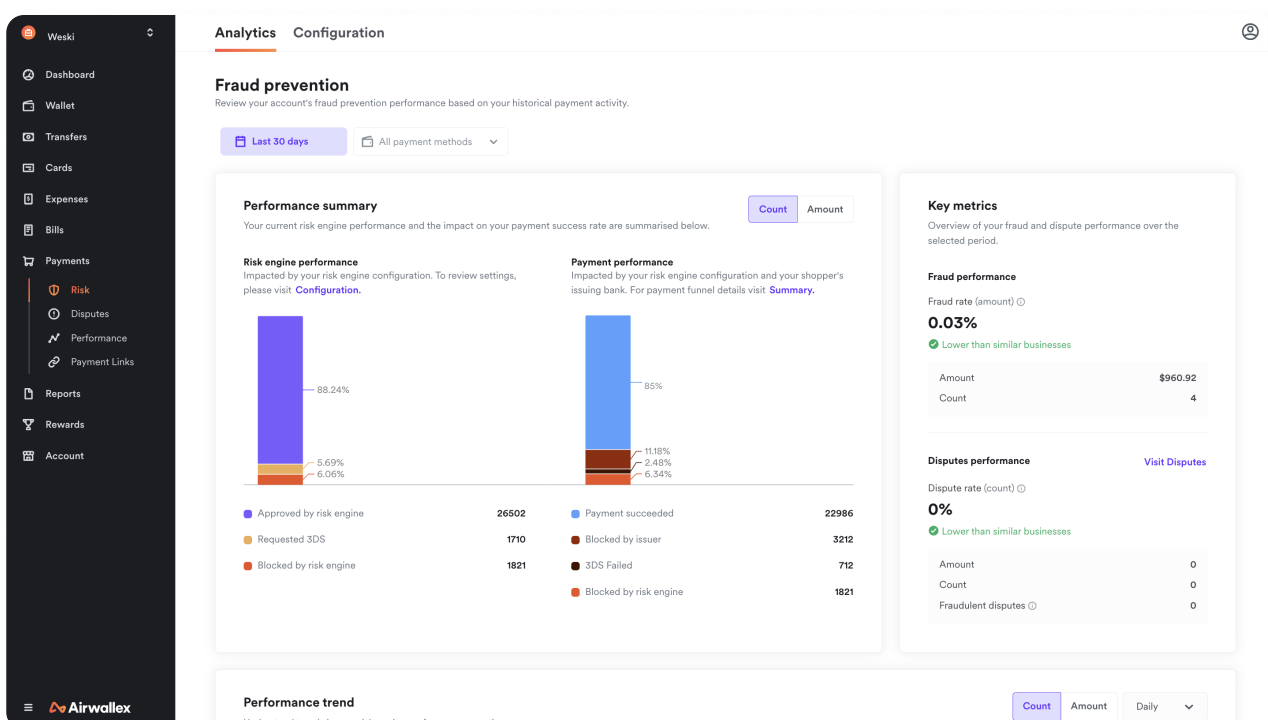
As a global payment processor, **Airwallex facilitates automatic compliance with regional legislation such as PSD2 in Europe, ensuring Strong Customer Authentication (SCA) standards are met in relevant countries whilst keeping the user experience as seamless as possible.** The Airwallex risk engine automatically picks an optimal strategy based on transaction risk, applicable regulatory exemptions, and policies. That means 3DS (where customers are asked to authenticate themselves before a transaction is processed) will only be applied to necessary transactions. This enables merchants to remain compliant whilst optimising payment acceptance rates. Additionally, Airwallex's optimisation engine uses data and machine learning models to constantly lower payment costs and improve authorisation rates.

Build consumer confidence with world-class logistics solutions

According to our survey, consumers hold some anxiety around the shipping, returns, and refund processes when purchasing from overseas merchants. In order to reassure customers, **merchants should display their international shipping policies clearly on their website**, including costs, estimated delivery times, and any additional fees and taxes that the customer may be required to pay.

Merchants can overcome the challenges posed by overseas shipping by partnering with an international logistics company such as ShipBob or Easyship. These third-party logistics (3PL) companies help merchants establish an efficient international eCommerce supply chain and expedite the shipping process to international customers. This includes managing international customs and taxes, storing goods in local fulfilment centres, managing inventory, and processing returns. Our report suggests that customers are willing to pay extra for faster shipping and tracking, which 3PL services can also enable.
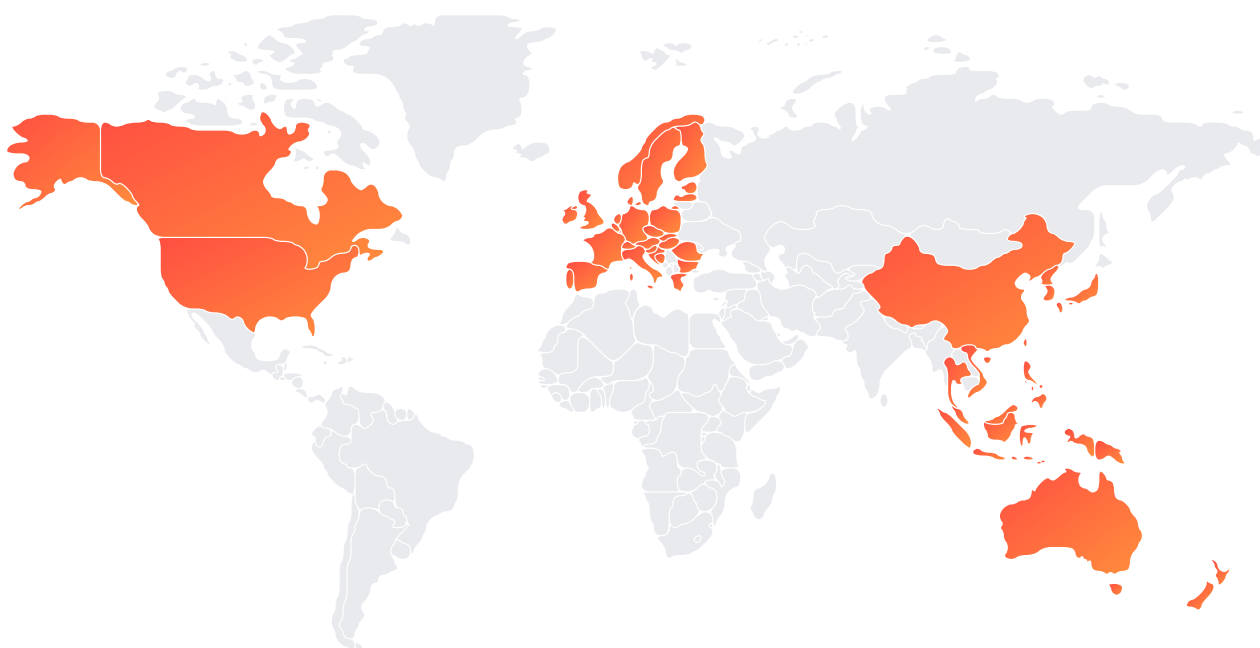
Airwallex:
The payments and financial platform built for global eCommerce businesses

Airwallex is an end-to-end payments and financial platform designed to empower eCommerce businesses of all shapes and sizes to scale globally. With Airwallex as a partner, your business can accept payments from overseas customers through a fully localised and optimised checkout, settle multiple currencies into a Global Account without forced currency conversions, and pay international suppliers via high-speed transfers and multi-currency cards.

Global payment acceptance

- Collect one-time or recurring [payments](#) from customers in 180+ countries and regions. Boost checkout rates by pricing in local currencies and allowing customers to pay with over 160+ payment methods, including Apple Pay, Klarna, WeChat Pay, Alipay, and many more.

- Easily integrate Airwallex payment processing with platforms like [Shopify and WooCommerce](#) and get set up fast with no-code solutions. Alternatively, take full control over your checkout experience by building directly via our API.

- Create, customise, and share [Payment Links](#) via social media, email, or embedded directly into your invoices. No website or coding is needed.

- Benefit from a machine-learning-powered optimisation engine that constantly works in the background to improve payment success rates.

Wide global coverage of 160+ Local Payment Methods

Multi-currency solutions

- Build a localised checkout experience for each market you operate in and settle multiple currencies directly into your Airwallex account whilst avoiding costly currency conversions.
- Open Global Accounts that come with local bank details in 23+ currencies. Connect your accounts to eCommerce platforms and marketplaces to settle your earnings without being forced to convert funds.
- Use your multi-currency balances to make payouts to suppliers and partners across the globe through Airwallex's extensive, cost-effective local payments network.

Fraud & risk management

- Automatically identify suspicious transactions and reduce disputes with our built-in fraud detection engine and dispute management system.
- Leverage 3D Secure to authenticate shoppers before authorising card transactions and stay compliant with regional compliance requirements.
- Set watch lists and adjust risk parameters to your desired risk tolerance within the Airwallex app.
- Enable your operations team to respond to and track disputes faster with intuitive workflows within the Airwallex app.

Transfers, spend management & FX

- Securely payout to manufacturers, wholesalers, and service providers in over 150 countries and regions, with 110+ countries and regions leveraging local rails.
- Upload, approve, and pay invoices with Bill Pay and sync data with your accounting systems to speed up reconciliation.
- Empower teams with multi-currency company cards with specified card limits for software subscriptions or ad spend on Google, Facebook, and other media platforms, while saving on FX fees.
- Issue and manage multi-currency physical and virtual employee cards for employee expenses like travel, employee benefits, and team offsites and track spend globally. Reimburse employees in their local currency if they spend out-of-pocket.

Software integrations

- From eCommerce platforms to accounting, integrate Airwallex with the tools you already use to manage your business. Leverage our no-code plugins to sync data, reconcile transactions, and get started in minutes.

Run an eCommerce marketplace?

- Embed Airwallex's global payment processing solutions into your marketplace, providing an end-to-end solution for processing buyer and seller payments. One of the biggest advantages of using Airwallex is our ability to allow marketplaces to use their pay-in provider or 'acquirer' of choice, whilst leveraging the strengths of Airwallex's global payout and account infrastructure. With our PSP agnostic solution, you can accept payments via the PSP of your choice or multiple PSPs, settle collected funds into an Airwallex account, and choose when funds are to be released to your sellers.

Cross-border eCommerce: Key trends and strategies for global success

30% increase in global business since using Airwallex

Two More Glasses uses Airwallex's native integration with WooCommerce to enable localised payment acceptance and reduce FX erosion of product margins.

"I can safely say that revolutionising our global payment infrastructure with Airwallex has fundamentally transformed and accelerated our global commerce ambitions. Plugging into Airwallex payments infrastructure was like upgrading from country roads to a global superhighway overnight."

Timothy Chow
Managing Director, Two More Glasses

TWO MORE GLASSES

The Challenge

Two More Glasses integrated Airwallex Payments with their WooCommerce platform. High wire transfer fees and unclear transaction status hindered the customer experience, payment approval delays caused inventory management confusion and cash flow unpredictability, and foreign exchange (FX) volatility eroded margins on global wine procurement activities.

The Solution

Two More Glasses integrated Airwallex Payments and its financial infrastructure natively with their WooCommerce platform. The impact has been dramatic. Their global revenue has increased by 30% because it is easier, faster, and cheaper for overseas customers to pay them. FX fees have been reduced by up to 5% and transfer fees by 25%, amounting to a total saving of US$30,000 a year. Centralising and automating reconciliation through the Airwallex platform has also saved the business time spent on managing payments by 50%, despite the increase in orders.

JULY

Achieved 10% financial savings in transfer fees by using Airwallex

July uses Airwallex's Global Accounts and Payment Links to easily collect payments from global customers and pay suppliers in their preferred currency. Airwallex Borderless Cards give their staff an easy way to pay for expenses.

"Having Airwallex as our global trusted partner means we can spend less time on the phone to the bank, and more time focusing on growing our business domestically and internationally."

Richard Li
Co-founder & CEO, July

JULY

The Challenge

Huge growth meant July quickly outgrew their existing banking partner who processed payments slowly and changed rates on the fly. They needed a simple-to-use, truly global financial solution that allowed them to seamlessly accept money from customers in multiple markets, convert it to other currencies when needed, and pay vendors in different countries.

The Solution

With Airwallex as their partner, July now manages global payments on a single platform, improving efficiencies by 50%. They save 10% on transfer fees, and can pay suppliers quickly in their preferred currency. With Airwallex Payment Links, July has reduced payment friction for their customers, allowing them to pay instantly with a handy link. July also uses Airwallex Borderless Cards, so their staff can pay expenses easily anywhere in the world with spend monitoring, limit setting, and approval flows.