

Market Expansion Strategies for Cross-Border E-Commerce in Italy Under the Background of Digital Transformation

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Abstract: Driven by factors such as consumption upgrading, policy support and the gradual improvement of infrastructure, Italy's e-commerce market has shown a growth momentum, creating important opportunities for cross-border enterprises. Based on an analysis of Italian consumers' behavioral preferences, mobile shopping trends, social e-commerce ecosystem and the current situation of the logistics system, this paper suggests that enterprises should strengthen compliant operations. They can expand market coverage through the integration of online and offline businesses, optimization of mobile terminal layout, construction of an efficient and collaborative cross-border logistics system and the implementation of multi-channel parallel operation strategies, thus gaining sustainable development advantages in competition.

Keywords: Cross-border e-commerce; Italian market; Social e-commerce

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1. Introduction

The process of global trade integration is accelerating continuously. Many Chinese e-commerce enterprises are turning their attention overseas, actively laying out the cross-border e-commerce field to explore broader business space and enhance their own competitiveness and profit potential. As the third largest economy in the European Union and an important consumer market in the world, Italy's e-commerce sector is showing a vigorous growth momentum and structural changes, creating important opportunities for China's cross-border e-commerce exports^[1]. In recent years, under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, China-Italy economic and trade cooperation has been continuously deepened, and Italian consumers' recognition of Chinese commodities has also been steadily improved^[2]. The Italian market has unique characteristics in terms of consumption preferences, laws and policies. Chinese export enterprises need to deeply understand the development opportunities and local features of Italy's cross-border e-commerce market, optimize export strategies and enhance market competitiveness^[3].

2. Opportunities and driving factors for the development of cross-border e-commerce in Italy

In recent years, driven by the synergy of multiple factors, Italy's cross-border e-commerce market has developed rapidly.

2.1. The online consumption ecosystem has gradually matured

Italy's Internet penetration rate and digitalization process are accelerating. While enterprises are stepping up their digital transformation, Italian consumers' shopping habits are also changing, shifting from offline to online shopping models, which provides demand-side support for the expansion and deepening of the e-commerce market ^[4].

2.2. The government has actively guided the development of the e-commerce market

The Italian government attaches great importance to supporting the e-commerce industry. On the one hand, it has created a fair, transparent and predictable legal environment for the market by formulating relevant laws and policies; on the other hand, it encourages innovation and entrepreneurship and supports enterprises to explore and practice in the e-commerce field ^[4].

2.3. The upgrading of the financial payment system has improved market convenience

Italy has promoted the reform of the modern payment system, authorized a number of banks to provide online payment services and realized real-time settlement with banks in other euro zone countries, thus facilitating the smoother transaction process of cross-border e-commerce and further expanding the market coverage. In addition, the optimization of the logistics system provides a guarantee for the steady development of e-commerce.

At present, Italy's logistics and distribution network is constantly improving, enabling commodities to be delivered to consumers accurately and in a timely manner, which has enhanced consumers' satisfaction with online shopping ^[5].

3. Analysis of the current development status and trends of Italy's e-commerce market

3.1. Behavioral preferences and characteristics of Italian e-commerce consumers

In terms of online shopping categories, Italian consumers have a relatively high acceptance of fashion apparel, electronic products, personal care and beauty products, home decoration and toys. In terms of consumer groups, in addition to young and middle-aged shoppers, the "silver economy" has growth potential, mainly because the proportion of the elderly population in Italy is higher than the European average and the local aging process is accelerating. In terms of consumers' concerns, product quality, commodity delivery time limit and payment security are the key points, and such concerns also extend to the choice of stores. Consumers value the brand reputation and credibility of stores and are more willing to choose online stores with official certification and good user reviews. In terms of shopping habits, consumers are willing to seek a balance and integration of online and offline shopping through online information retrieval and offline physical experience. Notably, Italian consumers have high requirements for product quality, and the concept of green and environmentally friendly consumption has gradually been recognized ^[6].

3.2. Development of mobile e-commerce and transformation of payment methods

With the popularization of mobile devices such as smartphones and tablet computers, more and more consumers

tend to conduct online shopping anytime and anywhere through mobile terminals. At the same time, consumers' payment habits have also changed accordingly. The credit card and debit card payment models that once dominated the Italian market are being replaced by more convenient electronic payment. With the advantages of convenience and high efficiency, electronic payment has gradually become the preferred payment method for Italian consumers in online shopping.

3.3. New paths for e-commerce marketing driven by social media

In recent years, the user base and activity of social media in Italy have been continuously increasing, and social media has become an important channel for people's daily communication, information acquisition, leisure and entertainment. In addition to mature platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and Facebook, the short-video application TikTok has also risen rapidly in Italy. Merchants expand their sales channels by virtue of the algorithm recommendation mechanism and social network effect of social media platforms. Through directly displaying commodities, opening online stores, cooperating with influencers for promotion and launching social shopping ads on the platforms, they enable consumers to complete purchases while browsing social content, thus promoting the development of social e-commerce. This trend has been close to that of mature e-commerce markets such as the UK, and social media has become a new platform for interaction between brands and consumers.

3.4. Optimization and innovation of the logistics system driven by geographical advantages and demand upgrading

Located in the heart of the Mediterranean, Italy has a well-developed sea, land and air transportation network and is an important hub connecting Southern Europe, Northern Europe, Central Europe and Africa ^[7]. Italy has a relatively complete logistics infrastructure construction, which can effectively support the circulation of domestic and foreign trade. With the development of cross-border e-commerce, Italian consumers have increasingly higher requirements for logistics and distribution services. Therefore, the speed and convenience of logistics and distribution services have become key factors for e-commerce enterprises to gain competitive advantages. Italy is home to a number of internationally renowned logistics enterprises, including the local giant Poste Italiane, General Logistics Systems (GLS), DHL, United Parcel Service (UPS), TNT Express and Federal Express (FedEx). These companies are constantly upgrading their technical facilities, improving operational efficiency and shortening delivery cycles. They have also introduced a variety of receipt methods such as smart parcel lockers and scheduled delivery, striving to maximize the flexibility and efficiency of consumers' parcel collection while ensuring delivery timeliness.

4. Optimization strategies for cross-border e-commerce exports to Italy

4.1. Promoting the integration of online and offline development of cross-border e-commerce

The Italian market attaches great importance to product quality and service experience. Cross-border e-commerce brands can adopt an online-offline integration strategy to accelerate the localization process and enhance brand influence by setting up offline physical stores. It is necessary to connect online and offline resources to realize information and customer sharing. Physical stores can serve as an important window for brand image display and at the same time drive traffic to online platforms; online channels can send customer flow to offline stores by virtue of digital capabilities, building an integrated sales network. Enterprises can adopt the O2O model to promote two-way traffic diversion between online and offline channels. By guiding online consumers to experience in

physical stores and attracting offline customers to online platforms, a positive interaction can be formed, providing consumers with flexible cross-channel shopping options. The omnichannel service process should be optimized simultaneously to improve the consumption experience. Enterprises can implement service models such as online ordering, in-store trial and after-sales guarantee, and also support order tracking and convenient payment through online platforms after consumers select products in physical stores. Such a seamless service system can effectively improve customer satisfaction and strengthen the brand's market competitiveness^[8].

4.2. Accelerating the mobile terminal layout of cross-border e-commerce

Italy has a high popularity of smartphones and mobile payment, and mobile terminals have become the mainstream scenario for local consumers' online shopping. Lay out mobile terminals is a necessary measure for cross-border e-commerce enterprises to deepen their presence in the Italian market. The popularization of mobile devices has broken the social stratification restrictions of traditional consumption scenarios and covered groups of different ages, income levels and educational backgrounds. By laying out mobile business, cross-border e-commerce enterprises can more flexibly adapt to the consumption habits of different users, such as browsing commodities during commuting hours and completing orders in leisure time, thus expanding the user coverage. It should be noted that there are differences in the mobile terminal usage preferences of different groups: young groups pay more attention to interface interactivity, while middle-aged and elderly groups focus on operational convenience. Targeted optimization can improve user retention rate. The real-time feature of mobile shopping is in line with the modern fast-paced lifestyle, allowing users to browse, select and pay for commodities without time and space constraints. However, there are still pain points in the existing mobile terminal services, such as slow loading speed of some cross-border e-commerce APPs and insufficient multilingual adaptation, which affect users' purchase intention. Cross-border e-commerce enterprises need to optimize the operating performance of APPs, improve Italian-language interfaces and customer service support, and match local payment methods (such as Satispay and PostePay) to strengthen user stickiness^[9]. This layout is not a simple migration of PC-side functions, but requires optimizing services based on the scenario characteristics of mobile terminals. For example, combining Italian consumers' preference for 3C and home categories, develop AR fitting and 3D display functions to make up for the experience shortcomings of online shopping. Existing research has insufficient discussion on the localization adaptation of mobile terminals, and future research can further analyze the optimization paths of mobile terminal services for different categories.

4.3. Constructing an efficient and collaborative Sino-Italian cross-border e-commerce logistics system

In terms of port cooperation, efforts should be made to actively promote the joint construction and optimization of coastal port facilities with Italy and enhance the radiation capacity of regional shipping hubs. By improving terminal facilities, optimizing customs clearance procedures and enhancing operational efficiency, the connection between the two countries in the international logistics network should be strengthened. Focus on the synergistic optimization of land transportation, and further deepen railway transportation cooperation relying on the China Railway Express (CR Express). At present, the CR Express has realized interconnection between China and Italy, but it is limited by the small number of routes, low frequency of departures, as well as traffic control and facility conditions of transit countries such as Russia and Poland, resulting in insufficient timeliness and stability. In the follow-up, Italy's core cities should be included in the planning of the main lines of the CR Express, local railway transportation resources should be integrated, top-level communication and customs coordination between China,

Italy and transit countries should be strengthened, and the time consumed for transit customs clearance should be reduced, so that railway transportation can become the backbone support for China-Italy cross-border trade. Overseas warehouses have multiple advantages such as pre-stocking of goods, fast delivery, localized services and supply chain guarantee, which can meet Italian consumers' demand for delivery speed. Enterprises can make innovative practices in brand marketing, diversified services and localized operations by utilizing this model, thus improving logistics efficiency while enhancing the shopping experience, elevating the brand image and market competitiveness of commodities, and helping brands take root deeply and develop steadily in the local market.

4.4. Vigorously promoting the synergistic development of multi-channels

At present, the user and traffic dividends of traditional e-commerce platforms are gradually saturating, and emerging platforms and new traffic sources have opened up new development paths for the cross-border e-commerce industry, with the pattern of channel diversification taking shape at an accelerated pace. In the cross-border e-commerce field, the distribution of traffic shows a fragmented trend. To avoid dependence on a single platform and seek a more independent operation space, many enterprises have begun to build independent websites with mature website building technologies. Cross-border e-commerce independent websites have not only become an important carrier for enterprises to expand international business, but also driven the development of the relevant ecosystem. For example, the usage rate of website building tools such as Shopify in the Italian market has been on the rise in recent years. This model enables enterprises to reach consumers more directly, accumulate brand equity and reduce the regulatory constraints of intermediate links. The change in Italian consumers' shopping habits has provided a new direction for channel expansion, which has directly driven the rise of the cross-border live-streaming e-commerce model in the Italian market. By virtue of local mainstream social platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, enterprises can enhance product attractiveness through scenario-based display and real-time interaction, and open up the entire conversion link.

4.5. Further strengthening the compliant operation of cross-border e-commerce

The global e-commerce market is expanding continuously and cross-border transactions are becoming increasingly active. To ensure the healthy development of the digital economy and safeguard consumers' rights and interests as well as a fair market environment, the Italian government and relevant departments are constantly strengthening the standardized management of cross-border e-commerce. Conducting cross-border e-commerce business in Italy, compliance is the foundation of steady operation. Enterprises need to strictly abide by tax regulations and implement Italy's value-added tax (VAT) system ^[10]. At the same time, they should comply with laws related to consumer rights protection, safeguard consumers' right to know, and build a high-standard product quality assurance and after-sales service system. Ensure data security and privacy protection: enterprises should establish a strict data protection mechanism in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other EU regulations to prevent information leakage and abuse and safeguard users' privacy rights and interests. Adhere to the principle of fair competition, avoid using unfair competition practices and form a healthy business ecosystem.

5. Conclusion

Global layout and regional adaptation have become important development trends in the cross-border e-commerce industry. Italy's e-commerce market has shown strong development resilience due to multiple favorable factors. Cross-border e-commerce enterprises need to optimize their operation strategies in combination with the local

market ecosystem. This paper provides a basic reference for cross-border e-commerce enterprises to lay out the Italian market. In the future, targeted measures for the sustainable development of the industry can be formulated by further exploring niche markets and leveraging technological empowerment.

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