



Emerging Markets: The Next Growth Frontier for Nordic Retailers

Where Demand Is Accelerating and How Nordic
Brands Can Capture It Through Execution.

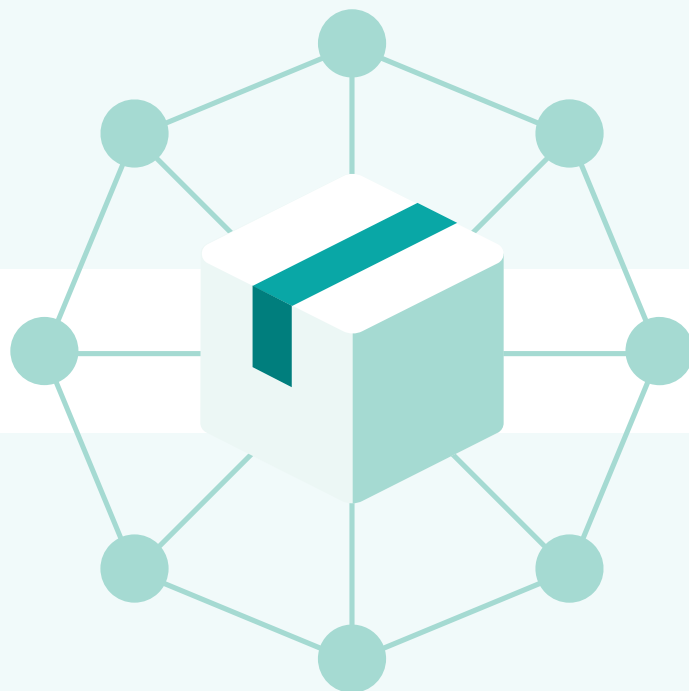


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Why the Next Phase of Growth Requires a Shift in Focus

Nordic brands and retailers have historically succeeded by prioritising trust, quality, and long-term value creation. As growth in core markets matures, these strengths must now be applied with greater focus to international expansion beyond Europe and North America.

But the next phase of growth will not be driven by these markets alone. While they remain core, they are **mature, highly competitive, and increasingly price-led**. Incremental growth is shifting toward markets where ecommerce adoption is accelerating, and brand loyalty is still forming.

Consumers in **South Korea, Mexico, Turkey, and the Middle East** are shopping online more frequently, spending more per purchase, and actively trading up to international brands.



“As growth in core European markets matures, the next phase for Nordic brands lies in digitally advanced, high-intent regions such as Asia, LATAM and MENA, with markets like South Korea, India, Mexico, Turkey and the GCC already demonstrating strong demand for trusted international brands. In these regions, trust, localisation, and operational precision ultimately determine who wins.”

Henrik Dahl, Sales Director Nordics, ESW

Why This Matters Now

Worldwide ecommerce growth is diverging. Mature markets are stabilising. High-growth markets are not.



According to ESW Global Voices, **18% of consumers in Mexico and 18% in the Middle East** plan to increase online spending ^[1], well above the worldwide average of 11%. Premium and international brands are capturing a disproportionate share of this momentum.

Forces that are accelerating the shift:

1

MOBILE-FIRST COMMERCE

In Mexico, nearly 80% of ecommerce transactions are completed on mobile. ^[2] Across Turkey and GCC markets, smartphone-led browsing and checkout now dominate. ^{[3][4]} Experiences designed for desktop-first markets underperform immediately.

2

LOCALISATION OF SPEND

Consumers increasingly buy locally rather than abroad. Brands win when pricing, payments, delivery, and returns feel predictable and familiar.

These markets are not future bets; they are active demand pools today. Every quarter of delay increases customer acquisition costs, erodes pricing power, and allows competitors and marketplaces to lock in loyalty.

The Nordic Advantage

Nordic brands are defined by functional design, quality craftsmanship, and authenticity, supported by a strong reputation for sustainability. Together, these qualities resonate strongly with consumers in high-growth markets looking for premium international brands they can trust.

Where Nordic Brands Should Focus Next

Each market plays a distinct strategic role:



1

South Korea: Influence-Led Growth

South Korea is one of the most digitally advanced ecommerce markets worldwide.

MARKET SNAPSHOT



Ecommerce sales exceed **US\$100 billion**, placing South Korea among the world's largest digital commerce markets. ^[5]



Near-universal internet penetration (~97%) and high smartphone usage underpin a highly connected, mobile-first consumer base. ^[6]



Social commerce is expanding rapidly, reaching **US\$24.7 billion** in 2025, reinforcing the role of digital discovery in purchase decisions. ^[7]

Why it matters to Nordic brands:

South Korea is an **influence-driven market** where relevance determines scale. Nordic brands bring credibility, but success depends on disciplined localisation; creator integration, mobile-first execution, and consistent delivery. Brands that execute precisely can convert cultural visibility into sustained demand in a market that quickly amplifies winners and sidelines followers.

Mexico: Mobile-Scale Market

Mexico offers one of the fastest routes to volume growth.

MARKET SNAPSHOT



Mexico's ecommerce market reached **USD \$54.4 billion** in 2025, with an expected CAGR of 21.2% through 2033 - one of the world's fastest-growing markets. ^[2]



Close to **80%** of online sales come from mobile commerce, signifying the importance of mobile-first strategies. ^[2]



51% of Mexican shoppers perceive online shopping as less expensive than in-store. ^[1]

Why it matters to Nordic brands:

Mexico offers **rapid access to volume**, but only for brands that execute flawlessly. Mobile dominates and consumers are highly price-aware. Nordic brands can differentiate through transparent pricing, predictable delivery, and reliable service, turning operational discipline into a competitive advantage in a market that punishes friction immediately.

Turkey: Gateway Market

Turkey combines scale, high ecommerce penetration, and geographic leverage.

MARKET SNAPSHOT



Ecommerce growth from USD \$16.2B in 2019 to **USD \$44.8B** by 2030 (CAGR ~7.5%), making it one of the region's most dynamic digital economies. ^[8]



94% online shopper penetration ^[8]



Fashion and accessories now lead ecommerce by volume, with **49%** of fashion ecommerce revenue from apparel. ^[9]

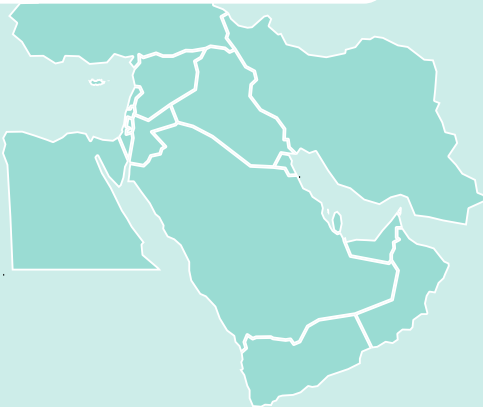
Why it matters to Nordic brands:

Turkey is both a **demand market** and a **strategic base**. High ecommerce penetration and a strong appetite for European brands create immediate opportunity, while geographic positioning enables regional expansion into Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Nordic brands that localise payments and logistics early can use Turkey as a controlled launchpad, scaling efficiently without fragmenting operations.

Middle East: Margin and Brand Integrity Market

The GCC remains a premium stronghold with rising online demand.

MARKET SNAPSHOT



Ecommerce market projected to grow from USD \$27.9B (2025) to **USD \$49.5B** by 2030 at a CAGR of 12.10%. ^[10]



Consumer intent: **18%** plan to increase online spending. ^[1]



High willingness to pay for premium delivery and returns.

Why it matters to Nordic brands:

The GCC rewards **pricing integrity, premium service and trust**. As the region shifts from 'loud luxury' toward sophisticated consumption, Nordic brands' reputation for sustainability and high-trust innovation provides a unique competitive edge. By delivering operational reliability and transparent value, Nordic brands can position themselves as the conscious alternative to legacy luxury, protecting margins and winning loyalty in a market that now values authenticity and lasting quality.

The Execution Challenges Nordic Brands Must Address

In emerging markets, demand is not the constraint. Execution is.

Nordic brands consistently encounter the same structural barriers, issues that determine whether growth scales or stalls.

1 CHECKOUT FRICTION

Cart abandonment regularly exceeds 70% when local payment methods, installment options, or upfront duties are missing. In mobile-first markets, even minor friction leads to immediate drop-off.

2 PRICING MISALIGNMENT

Consumers in Mexico and the GCC compare prices aggressively across borders. Any perception of overpricing versus Europe erodes trust instantly, particularly in premium categories.

3 CUSTOMS, DUTIES, AND LOGISTICS COMPLEXITY

Growth often outpaces infrastructure. Turkey faces friction and Mexico fragmented logistics. Delays and unpredictable costs directly impact margins and brand perception.

4 PAYMENTS COVERAGE AND SECURITY

Payment concerns drive 40–60% of cart abandonment. Local wallets, BNPL, and regional gateways are table stakes - not enhancements.

5 LOCALISATION GAPS

Translated European sites do not convert. Success requires mobile-first UX, local language, region-specific service standards, and social commerce integration. Markets such as South Korea and Mexico demand local storytelling and influencer alignment.

These challenges are structural. Ignoring them does not slow growth, it prevents it.

What Nordic Brands Need to Win

Your Cross-Border Readiness Checklist.

Winning in emerging markets comes down to removing friction before scale.

Payments, Pricing & Compliance

- **Local payment methods**
PIX, KNET, BNPL, mobile wallets - without these, conversion collapses.
- **Transparent landed cost**
Show duties, taxes, and fees upfront. No surprises at checkout.
- **EU-aligned pricing controls**
Maintain global price integrity to protect trust and brand equity.
- **Regulatory, tax, and customs compliance**
End-to-end handling to avoid costly missteps.

Data and Intelligence

- **Unified consumer data**
Track spend intent, abandonment triggers, and payment preferences across markets.
- **Market intelligence integration**
Inform assortment, pricing, and promotional strategies with real-time insights.

Experience & Operations

- **Mobile-first checkout flows**
Localised and optimised for mobile-first markets and high-trust experiences.
- **Social commerce integration**
Enable influencer-driven discovery in markets like South Korea.
- **Content localisation**
Adapt storytelling; Arabic & Turkish UX; culturally resonant storytelling.
- **Fast, predictable delivery + easy returns**
Meet rising expectations for convenience and reliability
- **Scalable logistics infrastructure**
Expand into multiple markets without setting up local entities.

The Cost of Waiting

1 LOYALTY LOCKS IN EARLY

Late entrants face higher acquisition costs and reduced pricing leverage.

2 PRICE BENCHMARKS ARE SET FAST

First movers define acceptable price parity and transparency standards.

3 OPERATIONAL LEARNING COMPOUNDS

Early entrants build execution advantage, widening the margin gap over time.

Bottom line: the window is open now. Delay hands control of expectations to competitors who establish trust and norms first.

How ESW De-Risks Scale

As Henrik Dahl notes:

“For Nordic brands and retailers, successful international growth comes from removing operational complexity rather than managing it. A single, compliant operating model allows brands to scale into new markets with speed and confidence, while keeping teams focused on product quality, brand strength and the customer experience.”

ESW enables Nordic and European brands to enter and scale in high-growth markets without operational risk. The platform manages taxes, duties, payments, compliance, fraud, logistics orchestration, and returns, allowing leadership teams to remain focused on product quality, brand strength, and customer experience.

With ESW, brands can launch and grow across 200 global markets on a single, compliant operating model, protecting brand equity while accelerating speed to market.



Sources

[1] [ESW \(2025\) Global Voices Report](#)

[2] [UniVDatos \(2025\) Mexico eCommerce Market](#)

[3] [Statista \(2025\) eCommerce Turkey](#)

[4] [World Bank / GSMA \(2024\), Digital & Mobile Infrastructure – GCC](#)

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[6] [Statista \(2025\) South Korea: Internet Penetration](#)

[7] [Martech Edge \(2025\) - South Korea Social Commerce Market to Reach \\$24.72B in 2025, Fueled by Mobile, Live Commerce, and Social Integration](#)

[8] [Statista \(2025\) eCommerce Turkey](#)

[9] [Ken Research. \(2025\) Turkey Luxury Retail and E-Commerce Market. Ken Research Reports. Fashion and accessories category leadership.](#)

[10] [Mordor Intelligence \(2024\) Saudi Arabia Ecommerce Market](#)