The Future of Commerce 2026

and beyond

ECDB

What This Report Covers

A forward look at where global commerce is heading, built on ECDB modeled data and forecasts through 2030. Five chapters, one question: where does the next decade of growth come from, and what has to change to capture it.

Sources: ECDB

The Next Five Years in Four Numbers

Global e-commerce keeps compounding. The headline figures every leadership team should carry into 2026.

2026 REVENUE	2030 FORECAST	ANNUAL GROWTH	ONLINE SHARE
$5.31 tn	**$7.14 tn**	**~8 %**	**28 %**
Global e-commerce revenue in 2026	**Forecast global e-commerce revenue by 2030**	**Average annual growth, 2025–2030**	**Of global retail projected to be online by 2030**
The first year the market clears five trillion dollars, up from $4.89 tn in 2025.	Roughly $2.2 tn of net new demand added in just five years.	Growth has settled into a structurally higher steady state after the post-pandemic swing.	Up from about 25% in 2025. The channel keeps taking share, year after year.

WHAT IT MEANS

The story of the next five years is not disruption of the channel but its **quiet dominance** . E-commerce no longer needs a crisis to grow. The open questions are where that growth lands, and who is positioned to capture it.

Notes: Growth figure is the compound annual growth rate of modeled global e-commerce revenue, 2025 to 2030.
Sources: ECDB

A New Steady State

After the pandemic surge and the slowdown that followed, global e-commerce has settled into a higher, steadier rhythm. Annual growth runs between **seven and nine percent** through 2030, with no return to the double-digit swings of the early decade.

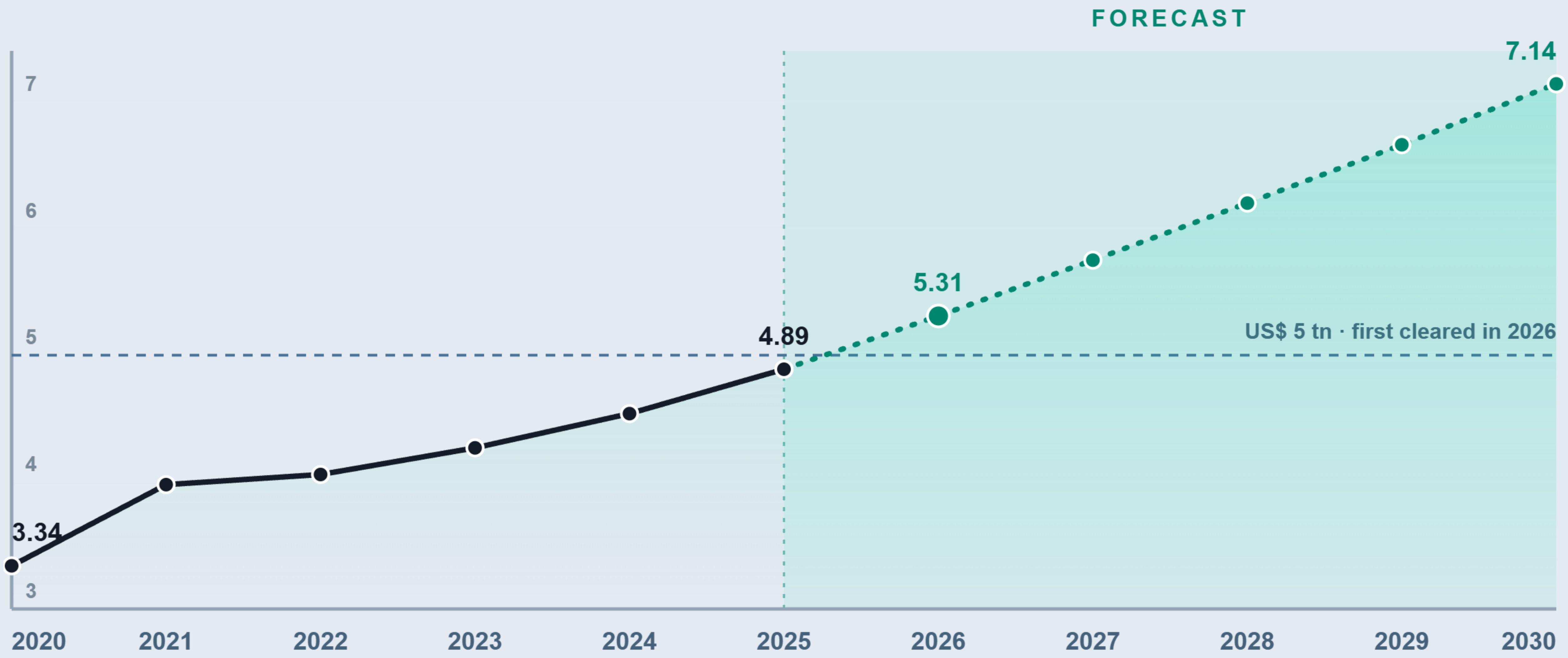
The milestone year is **2026** , when the market clears five trillion dollars for the first time. By 2030 it approaches $7.1 tn. The channel no longer depends on shocks to expand. It compounds.

WHAT IT MEANS

Plan for a market that grows **reliably rather than explosively** . The advantage now comes from taking share inside a steadily expanding channel.

Commerce Enters a Phase of Steady, Compounding Growth

Global e-commerce revenue, 2020–2030 (US$ tn)



Notes: 2026 to 2030 are modeled forecasts. Figures are nominal, not inflation adjusted.

Sources: ECDB

ECDB

Three Forces Will Define the Next Era of Commerce

Steady growth hides a market being rebuilt underneath. The same 8% that looks calm globally is the sum of forces pulling in different directions. Three will shape strategy more than any seasonal trend.

01

~3 %

Artificial Intelligence

Conversion sits near 3% while most carts are abandoned. **AI agents target exactly that friction.**

02

96 %

Geopolitics & Trade

Up to 96% of a market's purchases made abroad go to a **single country: China.**

03

24 %

Sustainability

US fashion returns reach 24%, turning logistics into a **margin and emissions problem.**

WHAT IT MEANS

None of these forces is a forecast. They are **present tense**. The question for leaders is not whether they arrive, but how fast to position for them.

Notes: Conversion, returns and import figures are modeled, 2025.

Sources: ECDB

Artificial Intelligence, Geopolitics and Sustainability

What each force changes, and the signal already visible in the data

Artificial Intelligence

- Only about **3% of visits convert** , and the figure is lower in China and India.
- Most carts are abandoned, from **63% in the UK to 81% in China** .
- Agents and AI search target this friction, compressing discovery into one step.

Geopolitics & Trade

- When shoppers buy abroad, **74–96% of that spend goes to China** .
- Buying abroad is a single-digit to mid-teens share of each market, but it is concentrated.
- As tariffs and origin rules tighten, that concentration turns from efficiency into **risk**.

Sustainability

- Fashion returns reach **24% in the US** and around 19% in Europe.
- Returns move from a service feature to a **margin and emissions problem** .
- Demand tilts toward consumables, with grocery the fastest-growing major category.

WHAT IT MEANS

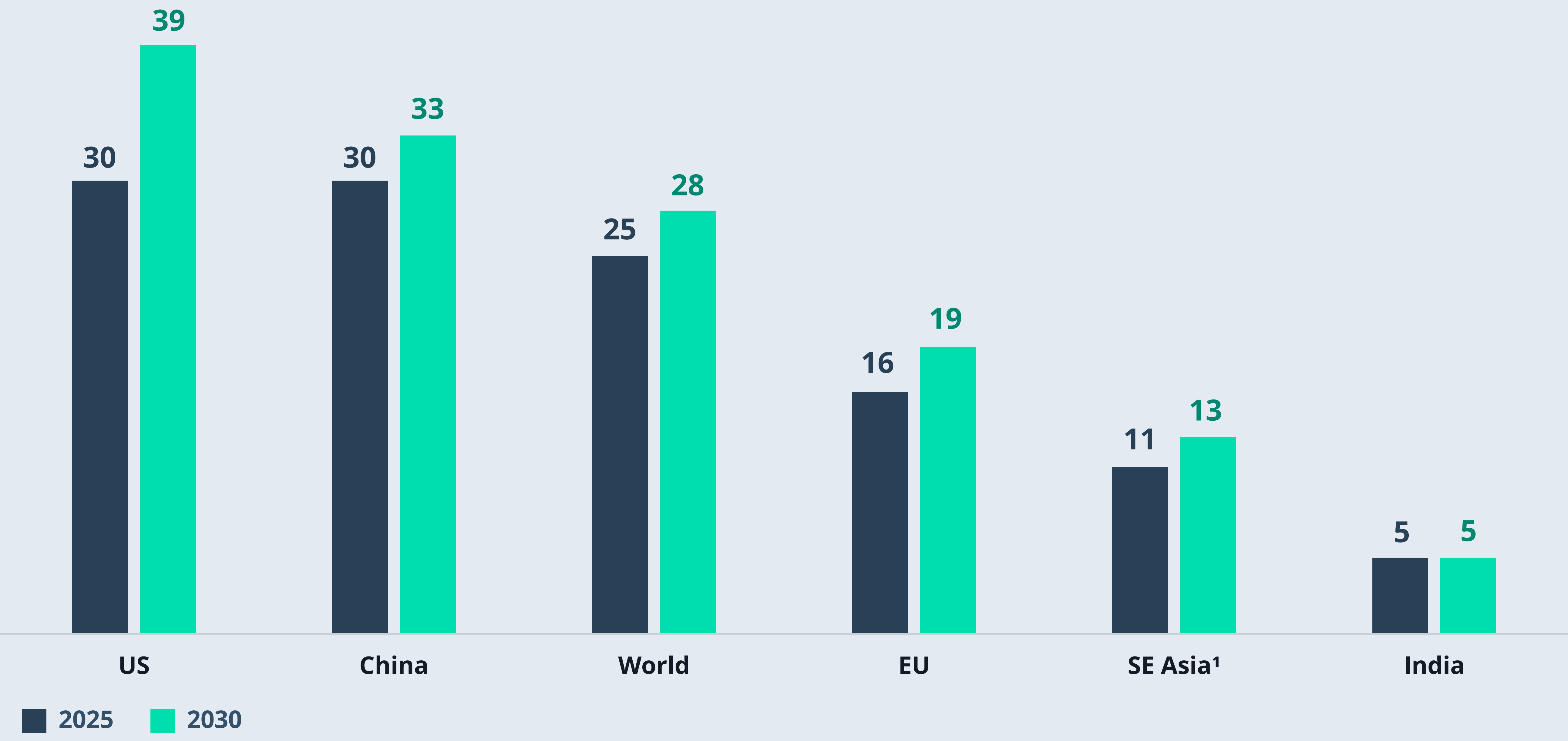
These forces compound. **AI accelerates discovery, trade policy constrains supply, and sustainability reprices the whole loop.** Strategy now has to hold all three at once.

Notes: Conversion, cart abandonment, returns and import figures are modeled, 2025.

Sources: ECDB

Online Share Keeps Rising, But the Headroom Is Uneven

E-commerce as a share of total retail, 2025 vs 2030 (percent)



Two Speeds, One Direction

Mature markets are approaching saturation. The **US crosses 38%** of retail online by 2030. China sits around a third and grows slowly from there.

The real headroom is elsewhere. **India is still near 5% online** , so its offline retail is the largest untapped pool in the world. Southeast Asia sits in the low teens with years of runway.

WHAT IT MEANS

Saturation in the West makes share a fight. In emerging markets, **the channel itself is still being built** . Different playbooks, same decade.

Notes: Online share is modeled e-commerce revenue as a percent of total retail. / (1) Southeast Asia

Sources: ECDB

Growth Is Not Evenly Spread

The largest categories are not the fastest growing. **Electronics and fashion** still hold the most revenue, but they grow slowest. Grocery and everyday consumables grow fastest, reshaping the online basket through 2030.

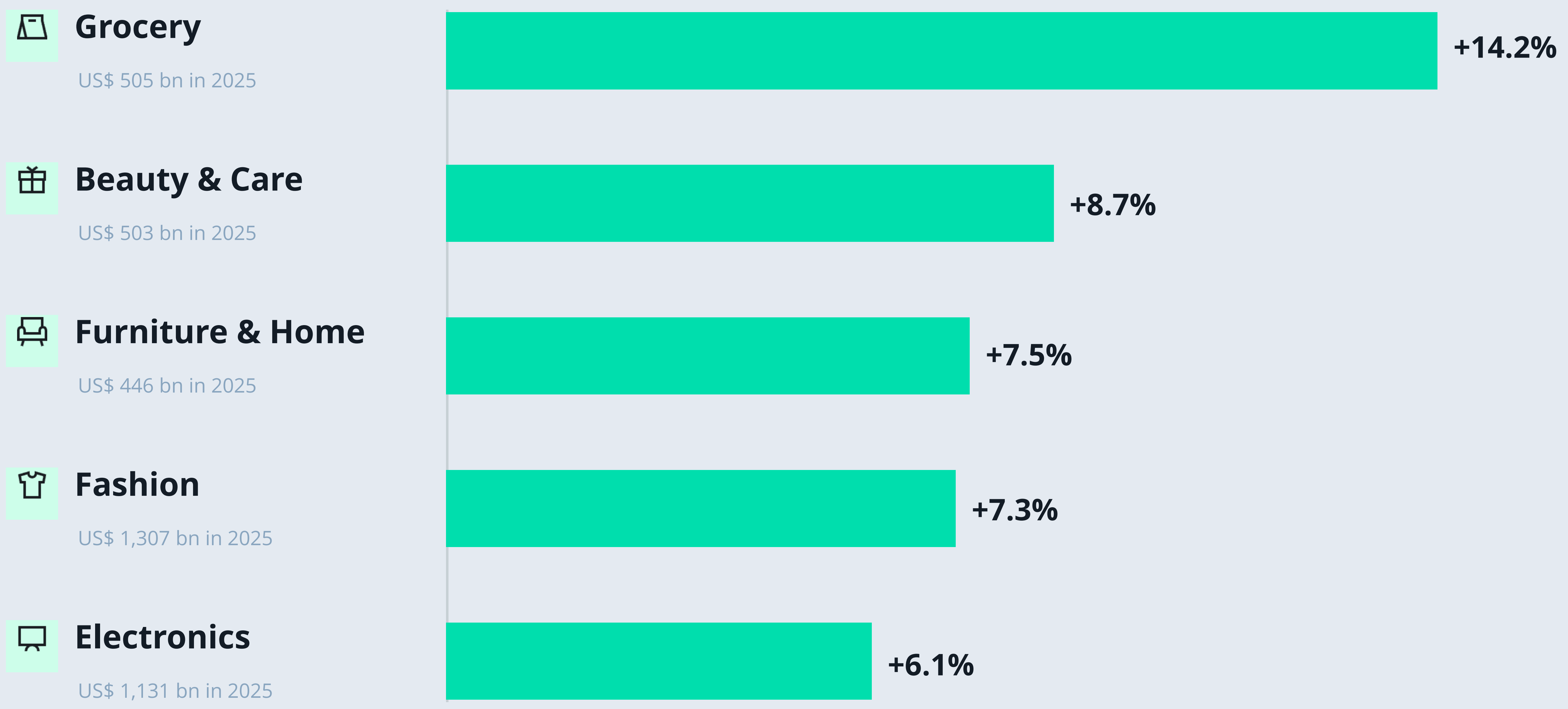
Grocery alone is modeled to grow about **14% a year** , more than double the pace of electronics. Repeat-purchase categories are taking share from one-time buys.

WHAT IT MEANS

The center of gravity moves toward **frequent, lower-ticket purchases** . Loyalty, replenishment and basket economics start to matter more than one-time high-value sales.

The Basket Shifts Toward Everyday and Consumable Goods

Major categories by annual growth (CAGR), 2025 to 2030.



Notes: Bars show the compound annual growth rate (CAGR), 2025 to 2030. Revenue label is modeled 2025 revenue.

Sources: ECDB

From Searching to Instructing

For thirty years, online shopping meant a person navigating a store. Agentic commerce breaks that assumption: the shopper states an intent, and an **AI agent searches, compares, decides and buys** on their behalf.

The interface stops being a website and becomes a conversation. That single shift rewrites discovery, loyalty, pricing and the meaning of a brand at the point of sale.

WHAT IT MEANS

When the buyer is an agent, being **findable and machine-readable** matters more than being memorable. Optimising for a human eye is no longer enough.

Agentic Commerce Moves Shopping From Browsing to Delegating

The same purchase, before and after an agent enters the loop

TODAY Five steps, all performed by a person

Human → Search → Browse → Compare → Buy

AGENTIC One instruction. The agent does the rest, often without opening a store

Human → Instruction → Agent buys

The Funnel Collapses Into a Single Instruction

The classic path to purchase compresses when an agent does the work, and the middle is where the budget lives

THE PATH TODAY

- Awareness
- Consideration — where budget lives
- Search
- Compare
- Checkout

THE PATH WITH AN AGENT

- Intent
- Agent acts
- Purchase

The middle of the funnel, where most marketing budget lives today, is exactly the part an agent **removes**.

~3 % of store visits convert to a purchase today

63–81 % of started carts are abandoned across major markets

96–98 % of sessions end without a sale, the friction agents remove

WHAT IT MEANS

Today most demand leaks away before checkout. An agent closes that gap by deciding for the shopper, so the brand that wins is the one the agent can **read, trust and justify**. Clean product data and defensible performance signals become the new shelf space.

Notes: Conversion and cart abandonment are modeled, 2025, major markets.
Sources: ECDB

What Agentic Commerce Changes for Brands and Retailers

Four shifts, one common thread. As decisions move to machines, position beats noise.

Discovery

Being machine-readable beats being memorable. Structured product and performance data is the new storefront.

Loyalty

Defaults and agent trust replace habit. If the agent does not surface you, the customer never sees you.

Pricing

Agents compare instantly and constantly. Price and value gaps are exposed in real time, not at the shelf.

Measurement

Knowing real market share and competitor performance matters more when a machine is doing the comparing.

The Common Thread

Every change points the same way. As decisions move to machines, the winners are the companies that understand their **real position in the market** , not the ones with the loudest campaign. Agents reward evidence.

WHAT TO DO

Start treating your market data as **infrastructure** . The agent era rewards companies that already know, in numbers, where they stand.

Sources: ECDB

Social and Live Commerce Become the Discovery Engine

Emerging Asia sets the pace, and much of that demand starts inside a feed

Revenue growth 2026

+13.1 %
Southeast Asia
Fastest-growing major region, social- and video-led

+13.2 %
India
Mobile-first demand, much of it born in feeds

+8.6 %
China
Still the largest single market in the world

Where Demand Is Created, Not Just Fulfilled

The open question is no longer how people pay but **where demand is created** in the first place. Social feeds and live shopping are becoming the front end of commerce, especially across Asia.

This is most visible where the channel is youngest. Southeast Asia is forecast to grow about **13% in 2026** , and much of that demand starts inside a social or video feed rather than a search bar.

WHAT IT MEANS

Discovery is moving upstream into entertainment. Brands that treat social as a **content channel, not a sales channel** , will keep underinvesting where demand is actually born.

Notes: Growth figures are modeled forecasts for 2026.
Sources: ECDB

When Shoppers Buy From Abroad, They Buy From China

China's share of each market's purchases made abroad. The bar is China's share; the sub-note is how much of the market is bought abroad at all.

WHAT IT MEANS

A cross-border base this concentrated is efficient until policy changes. As tariffs, de-minimis limits and origin rules tighten, a single rule shift can **reprice the part of a market that is bought abroad overnight**. Diversification is a strategic hedge, not a cost line.

Notes: Share of purchases made abroad, by destination country (modeled, 2025). The sub-note shows purchases abroad as a percent of each market.

Sources: ECDB

A Fragmented Rulebook Becomes a Strategic Variable

Three policy shifts that now move faster than supply chains

De-Minimis Thresholds

The low-value import exemptions that made cross-border parcels cheap are being cut. **Landed cost rises overnight** when they change.

Tariffs & Origin Rules

Trade policy now moves faster than supply chains. **Where a product is made** is becoming a board-level question.

Platform & Data Rules

Marketplaces, content and data face diverging rules by region. **One global playbook** no longer fits every market.

From Back Office to Boardroom

Compliance used to be a back-office cost. In a fragmenting world it becomes a source of advantage or sudden disadvantage. A single rule change can **reprice an entire cross-border business in a quarter** .

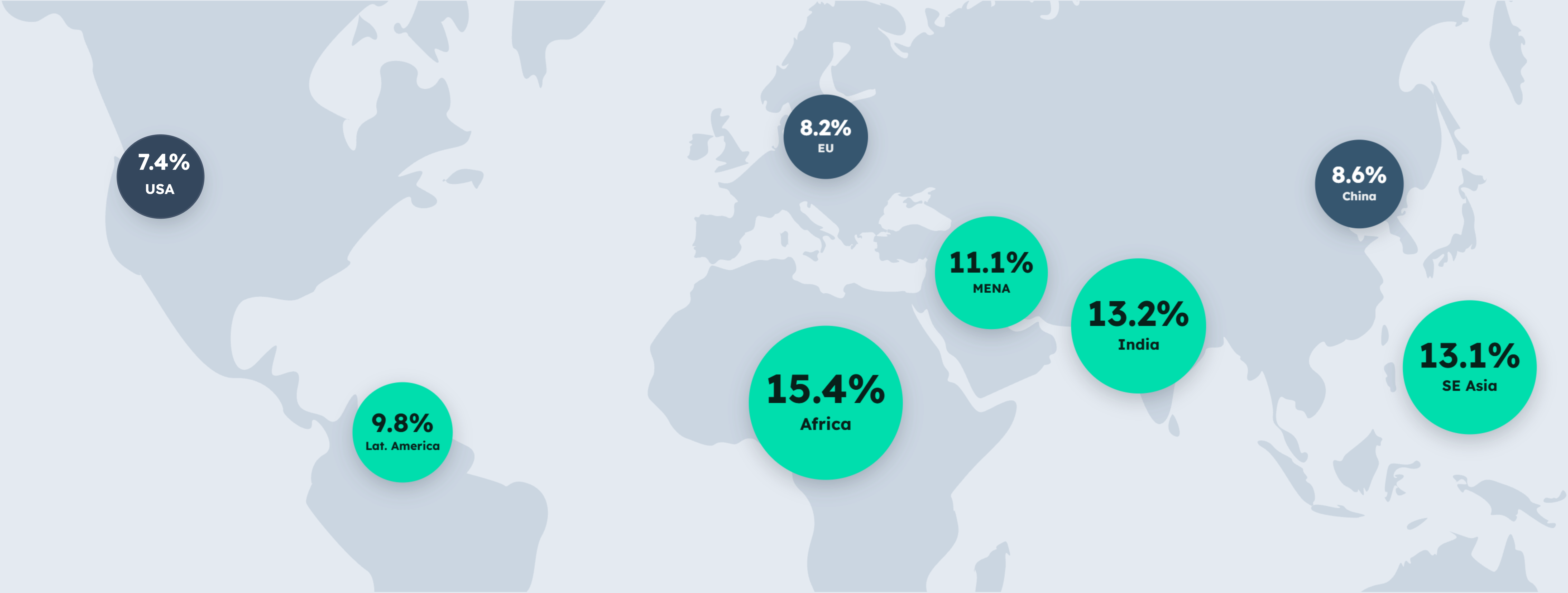
WHAT IT MEANS

Treat regulation as a **live planning input** , not an annual review. Those who monitor it as closely as demand will absorb shocks their competitors never see coming.

Sources: ECDB

The Next Growth Will Not Come From the West

Forecast e-commerce revenue growth in 2026, by region. Emerging regions grow at double the US pace.



Emerging   Developed

Circle size reflects the 2026 growth rate

Notes: Modeled forecast revenue growth for 2026.

Sources: ECDB

Five-Year Forecast by Region

Modeled e-commerce revenue, 2025 and 2030, with compound annual growth rate

Region	2025	2030	CAGR '25–'30	Growth Profile
Asia Pacific	US$ 2.66 tn	US$ 3.94 tn	8.2%	Largest pool, still compounding
Greater China	US$ 2.04 tn	US$ 2.97 tn	7.8%	Mature, vast, steady
United States	US$ 1.09 tn	US$ 1.52 tn	6.8%	Rich but slowing
European Union	US$ 470 bn	US$ 673 bn	7.4%	Stable, fragmented
Southeast Asia	US$ 188 bn	US$ 319 bn	**11.1%**	High growth, young channel
Latin America	US$ 179 bn	US$ 273 bn	8.8%	Steady emerging gains
India	US$ 138 bn	US$ 251 bn	**12.7%**	Largest long-term upside
MENA	US$ 88 bn	US$ 148 bn	**11.0%**	Fast, underpenetrated
Africa	US$ 20 bn	US$ 38 bn	**13.9%**	Smallest base, fastest growth
Worldwide	US$ 4.89 tn	US$ 7.14 tn	7.8%	The whole market, compounding

Notes: Regional figures are modeled. Regions overlap (China sits within Asia Pacific), so they do not sum to the worldwide total.

Sources: ECDB

Where the Headroom Is Largest

The smaller the base, the faster the growth. Three frontier markets with the longest runway.

India

4.5%

ONLINE TODAY

The fourth-largest e-commerce market in the world is still barely online. The runway is measured in **years, not quarters**.

Africa

+13.9%

CAGR TO 2030

The smallest base on the map grows the fastest. Today a rounding error, **tomorrow a frontier**.

Southeast Asia

12.6%

ONLINE BY 2030

A young, mobile-first, social-led channel that is still in its **first chapter**.

The Pattern

Africa, India and Southeast Asia combine **low online penetration with large, young, connecting populations** . That is the textbook setup for a decade of compounding.

WHAT TO DO

Decide your emerging-market position **now, while entry is cheap** . The cost of a foothold rises every year the channel matures.

Notes: Online share and CAGR are modeled figures. India online share is 2025.

Sources: ECDB

What This Means for Leaders

Five decisions that follow directly from the data in this report

01	**Plan for compounding, not surges**	Build the operating model around steady 8% growth. The advantage comes from taking share, not waiting for a spike.
02	**Make your data machine-readable**	Agentic commerce rewards the findable and the provable. Treat structured product and performance data as core infrastructure.
03	**Move discovery budget upstream**	Demand is increasingly born in social and video feeds. Fund the front of the funnel where it is actually being created.
04	**Price in trade concentration**	A cross-border base that leans on a single origin is a strategic risk. Build optionality before policy forces it.
05	**Take an emerging-market position now**	The fastest growth is in the youngest channels. Entry is cheapest before the market proves itself.

Sources: ECDB

How We Model This

Every figure in this report is **modeled e-commerce intelligence**. ECDB draws on multiple independent sources, with real transaction signals at the core, cross-validated with retailer data, traffic data and public market data.

These are modeled estimates, not a 1:1 transaction feed. Forecasts through 2030 reflect current trajectories and are subject to change. Figures are nominal, not inflation-adjusted, and regional aggregates can overlap.

WHAT IT MEANS

Treat these numbers as **solid directional context** for planning, comparable across markets, categories and time.

Where the Numbers Come From

Transaction signals at the core, cross-validated and modeled into comparable intelligence

WHAT THE DATA COVERS

- Revenue, growth and online share by market and category
- Retailer and market performance, benchmarked on GMV
- Cross-border flows and where purchases abroad go
- Forecasts through 2030 across every region