

White Paper (Partial) – Qordoba, now Writer.com)

One of my biggest challenges was generating and nurturing leads from Qordoba's audience of big-time e-commerce brands. The brief: a white paper on international shopping cart abandonment, in part to teach brands that translation issues and even cultural differences can lead shoppers in non-English-speaking countries to hesitate.

I had to research using paid databases (international shopping cart abandonment, to this day, isn't a particularly popular topic), synthesize a ton of information, and distill it into something digestible and interesting for the target audience. This is just part of a 20+ page white paper.

Outline:

Executive Summary

Growth/Local Competition

Pricing

- Currencies**
- Perceptions**
- Payment methods**
- Coupon code boxes**

Shipping

- Balancing costs + wait times**
 - (Local priorities—some value speed, some value cost)**
- Taxes, tariffs, customs**
- Localize shipping promos**

Trust

- Culturally-appealing design**
- Localized product reviews/ratings**
- Trust badges**
- Local support**

UX

- Fluidity + Localization of checkout experience**
- Mobile strength**
- Persistent shopping carts**

Begin White Paper

Executive Summary

Internet access, smartphones, and increases in expendable cash the world over: these three factors are expected to drive growth in the global e-commerce market to a phenomenal [\\$4 trillion by 2020](#). Moreover, a remarkable portion of this growth will come from the non-English-speaking world, saturated by new consumers without established brand affinities, making these regions ripe with opportunities for new global players.

However, expanding into the global e-commerce market comes with a set of nuanced challenges reaching far beyond simply translating web content into local languages. Retailers will also be challenged by the perceptions of consumers from diverse cultures—consumers whose expectations can vary considerably from region to region.

Global companies that struggle to navigate these challenges will likely notice the signs along the way, one of them being higher rates of shopping cart abandonment. Domestically, shopping cart abandonment already contributes to wells of untapped revenue, prompting numerous surveys intended to better understand this facet of consumer behavior and ultimately mitigate it.

International shopping cart abandonment, on the other hand, deserves to be studied from an adjusted angle. Here, we learn that tapping into that abandoned-cart revenue potential requires e-tailers to consider international customers' perceptions of a number of fundamental e-commerce properties including design and UX, shipping, pricing, and trust.

The following insights and recommendations are designed to help businesses expanding into (or who have already expanded into) global markets better understand why international customers may abandon shopping carts, and how to work towards reducing this variety of cart abandonment.

Reducing International Shopping Cart Abandonment

+ Design and UX

It may not be surprising to learn that almost [a quarter of online shoppers](#) say they've abandoned their shopping cart because the site was too complicated to use. This can be further

exacerbated when selling to international customers who may be grappling with an online shopping cart in a language that is not native to them, or that doesn't correspond with their expectations.

Suffice it to say, the biggest global e-commerce winners will be those who have provided the most custom-tailored, natural experience for their international audiences, minimizing or eliminating cognitive overload via UX optimization. As Steve Krug famously titled his seminal book: [Don't Make Me Think!](#)

Pay attention to form fields

Naturally, all form fields should be checked over to ensure customers in the targeted market won't trip over them. However, some forms in particular deserve extra testing.

For example, some users may need 3 street address lines in their shopping cart's shipping address form field, such as in the UK. Others may be confused to find a form requesting they input a state and zip code, when they actually live in a province with a postal code. These differences may feel nuanced, but can frustrate international customers and communicate a lack of appreciation for their business. Furthermore, customers who can't input their shipping address in a format that feels native to them may not feel 100% confident that their items will even arrive.

Localize content from 3rd party providers

There are a number of reasons a merchant may need to inject 3rd party content into their e-commerce platform. One may be to offer [coupon codes on site](#), within the shopping cart. Another reason may be to integrate user or customer reviews.

While significant resources may be spent localizing the storefront, it's not uncommon for e-tailers to forget that this 3rd party content needs to be localized as well. Otherwise, customers' easy browsing may be interrupted by an unfamiliar, foreign language, complicating the shopping experience and prompting cart abandonment.

Strengthen the mobile experience

By 2021, [78% of Asia Pacific online sales](#) are expected to happen on mobile devices. While nearly all major online storefronts are mobile responsive today, many shopping carts still remain unoptimized, or poorly optimized, for mobile. Localization can make responsive design even more challenging.

For instance, the average word in the English language is [8.23 letters](#). On the other hand, most major languages—like Spanish, French, and Russian—are much longer, with German words

averaging 11.66 letters each. In the confines of a mobile screen, those additional letters can wreak havoc on even the best laid designs.

Another part of mobile optimization may include persistent shopping carts, or carts that utilize cookies to save the customer's order even if they navigate away. This is because mobile shoppers are more likely to be interrupted, perhaps because they're browsing while waiting on a train, or in line at a cafe. For this reason, persistent shopping carts can have a major impact on reducing shopping cart abandonment, especially where mobile is concerned.

Finally, don't forget how different [payment methods](#) can affect a shopping cart's mobile layout. Some payment methods even work better on mobile, where UX designers can experiment with ways to eliminate billing and shipping fields that may be more cumbersome on smaller screens.

Use culturally appealing photography and [design](#)

Design and photography can turn window-shoppers into buyers by inspiring them to think about the person they aspire to be. Even more importantly, it has the power to instill and nurture trust.

Remember that different cultures hold different values, such as individuality versus collectivism. Likewise, different cultures can react differently to varying colors and symbols—something UX, graphic, and web designers alike must keep in mind in order to help reduce shopping cart abandonment.

For example, [writing someone's name in red](#) is a taboo in China, as this can indicate that someone has died, or been cut out of one's life. In the [Middle East](#), orange is associated with mourning and loss. Designers also need to be sure that product photography depicts local-appealing situations with locally-appealing models.

+ Shipping

[61% of online shoppers](#) say they've walked away from their shopping cart after shipping and taxes considerably increased their total purchase price. This shipping "sticker shock" can be compounded for international customers, as can shipping wait times. The result: abandoned carts, abandoned revenue.

However, understanding regional shipping preferences; studying pertinent taxes, tariffs, and customs fees; and localizing shipping promotions can help reduce cart abandonment, and allow global players to compete more readily with local retailers who get to operate without any [international shipping burdens](#).

Learn what to prioritize: lower shipping fees, or shorter shipping wait times

Devising an attractive international shipping strategy requires retailers to consider shipping times, costs, and even delivery locations. The key is to study local preferences, and provide customers with applicable options.

For instance: Dutch and Belgian customers want to be able to choose the [fastest](#) shipping times. Conversely, customers in developing countries may be more price sensitive, and want the option to choose cheaper shipping options, even if they're slower. Regarding delivery, Scandinavians want the option to pick packages up at [collection points](#).

No matter customer's preferences, retailers should note that partnering with local and regional fulfillment centers, when possible, is one way to offer international customers a domestic shipping experience, eliminate the cross-border trek, and minimize both shipping burdens and cart abandonment.

Pay attention to taxes, tariffs, and customs

International customers wary of potential customs issues (such as surprise customs inspections, the costs of which tend to fall on the customer) are going to be less likely to follow through with purchasing any items they may have placed in their carts. Businesses should work to proactively address these concerns either by practicing diligence in their fee calculations, displaying international shipping policies at checkout, or both.

E-tailers with more static product catalogs will have an easier time predictably and consistently factoring taxes, tariffs, and potential customs' fees into their shipping costs. On the other hand, those whose catalogs are frequently scaling and changing will need to be more careful. This is because tax, tariff, and customs fees that aren't calculated correctly into the total shipping cost may be inconveniently absorbed by the customer at delivery, potentially resulting in a bad rap for the retailer.

Integrating with a [service provider](#) can help prevent this. Additionally, including international shipping policies at checkout (like [this one](#) provided by the U.S. International Trade Administration) makes retailers appear more trustworthy and transparent. Shoppers' appreciation of a retailer's transparency can lend itself to a more positive brand reputation.

Ensure shipping promotions are localized

Shipping promotions at checkout can increase conversions and limit shopping cart abandonment. However, shipping promotions that work domestically (such as a \$50 spending target, common in NA) may not work everywhere.

Retailers penetrating the developing world in particular will want to tweak their purchase-to-shipping targets along with their total customer wallets in consideration of variations in local spending power.

Additionally, the unique buying patterns of the market might influence shipping promotions. Free shipping spending targets can increase overall cart values for retailers whose most popular products are complementary or disposable—on the other hand, low-cost shipping options may be better if the products are more durable or stand-alone.

+ Pricing

Pricing communicates different things to different buyers for different products in each market; in a way, it's a language of its own. Consider the fact that the number one reason shoppers around the world say they've made a cross-border purchase is price advantage. This statistic alone suggests that reducing international shopping cart abandonment should involve a meticulously localized pricing strategy.

Leading Factors that Influence Digital Shoppers Worldwide* to Make Cross-Border Ecommerce Purchases, Aug 2015

% of respondents



*Note: ages 18+; *Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, South Korea, Russia, UK and US*

Source: Pitney Bowes, "Global Online Shopping Study" conducted by ORC International (Opinion Research Corporation) as cited in press release, Oct 14, 2015

199302

www.eMarketer.com

Based on data, some key, pricing-related focal points for e-tailers may include: displaying local currencies; ensuring customers' preferred methods of payment are available; understanding local perceptions of promotions and discounts; and weighing the benefits and drawbacks of coupon-code boxes at checkout.

Display appropriate local currencies

The idea that shoppers need to see prices listed in their local currency may seem obvious, or even rudimentary, but given its importance (and how surprisingly easy it can be to overlook) it still bears mentioning. Research shows that 13% of customers will abandon their shopping carts, or even leave a retail site completely, when they discover that prices are not listed in their local currency. After all, asking shoppers to do something as basic as convert prices into their own currency is dead giveaway that a business may not really value the local market.

The solution here is fairly straightforward: ensure prices on the online storefront are listed in the currency relevant to the shopper. This helps encourage trust, and keeps the funnel flowing smoothly and speedbump-free for customers.

Study local perceptions of pricing

This notion is multi-faceted, concerning both the different purchasing power parities of the applicable market, as well as locals' perceptions of any advertised promotions and discounts.

For one, companies may find that they need to lower their prices in markets where their products aren't valued as much; on the bright side, however, the opposite may be also true, and companies may find that a product is valued more internationally than it is domestically.

Additionally, while it's true that discounts, sales, and promotions are valued to one extent or another by consumers worldwide, non-localized promotions could fall short in international markets. For instance, in some regions, a discount advertised by a regionally less-familiar brand may convey that a product is of lesser quality.

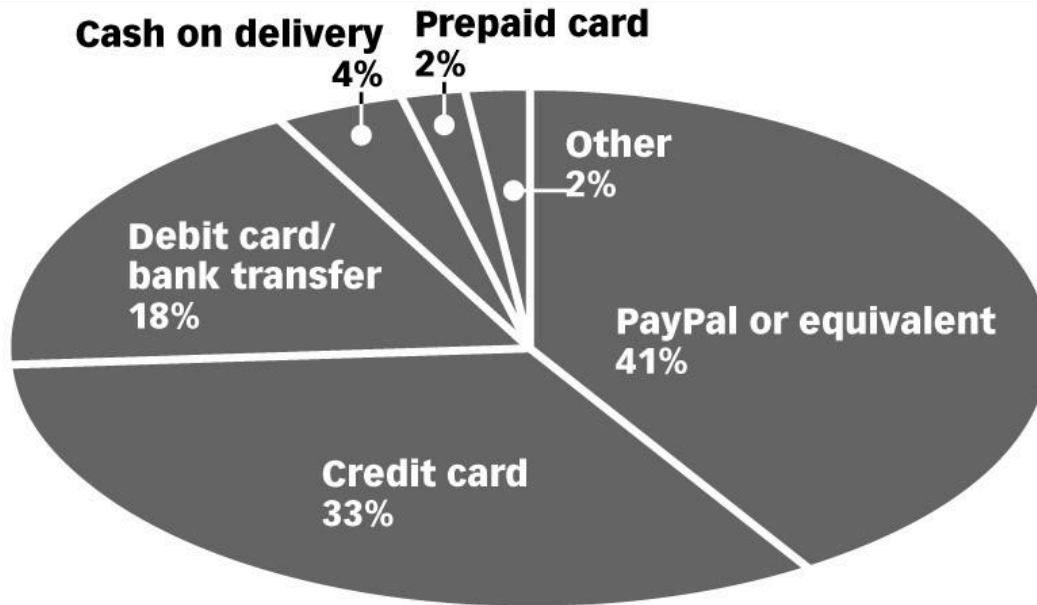
Another example is the presentation of the discount: in most regions, a 10% discount implies that the product is 10% off the original price. In China, however, "10%" indicates that the product is actually 10% of it's original price—in other words, a 90% discount.

Offer customers their preferred method of payment.

As one might assume, when customers are presented with unfamiliar payment options, trust is diminished—in fact, one of the leading reasons shoppers abandon their carts is because their preferred method of payment isn't supported.

Preferred Method of Payment for Digital Purchases According to Digital Buyers Worldwide, Oct 2016

% of respondents



Note: n=24,331 ages 16+ who have purchased goods online in the past 3 months and made a cross-border purchase online in the past year
Source: International Post Corporation, "Cross-Border E-Commerce Shopper Survey 2016," Jan 19, 2017

222905

www.eMarketer.com

For example, online shoppers in India and Indonesia still love to pay with cash. In fact, some may be surprised to learn that young mobile online shoppers in India—who, in many cases, are also the most tech-savvy—still prefer to pay for goods using cash on delivery (COD.) Similarly, in Indonesia, COD remains the #2 most preferred method of payment.

For the most part, though, shoppers the world over still prefer credit and debit cards. Visa and Mastercard remain popular options in many regions, but exceptions, like China, where regulations are only now starting to allow foreign payment cards, remain.

Here are some preferred payment options to consider, by country. (Also, an interesting note—most of these involve cash payments):

- China: AliPay, UnionPay, and WeChat Pay
- India: Cash options (especially COD,) and online bank transfer
- Indonesia: Online bank transfer, cash options
- Japan: Konbini (where shoppers pay for items by cash at kiosk-type locations)

- Thailand: 123 (a payment location where shoppers can pay cash for goods purchased online)
- Argentina: Cash options including PagoFácil and RapiPago
- Brazil: Boleto, a type of payment ticket that permits online shoppers to pay in cash at ATMs and other locations
- Mexico: Cash options, such as OXXO, a convenience store where shoppers can pay for online purchases
- France: CarteBancaires
- Germany: SEPA direct debit
- The Netherlands: iDEAL

Reconsider promo or coupon code boxes.

The presence of a coupon or promo code box at checkout may be driving customers away. Why? Seeing the promo code box can trigger shoppers to navigate away from the shopping cart in order to search the web for applicable coupon codes. Often, they either become distracted, or they find a better deal somewhere else.

One way that Macy's (the #1 department store chain ranked by e-commerce sales) has mitigated this problem is by enabling shoppers to look up coupon codes right in the shopping cart during the checkout process.

Companies who decide to experiment with this still need to keep localization in mind: though a store's primary e-commerce system may be impeccably localized, it can be easy for developers to forget to localize content injected into the system via a 3rd party service—including those that power the likes of the aforementioned coupon search engines. International customers prompted to search for coupon codes on-site may be frustrated to return results that are not in their local language or currency, for example.

+ Trust considerations

Trust is an essential part of the online shopping experience. E-tailers that don't establish trust with the customer throughout the buying and checkout process will see much higher shopping cart abandonment rates. In fact, 70% of shoppers have canceled their online orders simply because they didn't "trust" the transaction. While veteran e-commerce managers may know this, it's still easy to overestimate how trusted one's brand may be in international markets.

Localize product reviews & ratings

Research published this February shows that the #1 thing customers rely on to help establish trust with a brand and make purchasing decisions are [customer product reviews](#). It's important then, to consider how international customers may feel about the product reviews on a cross-border e-commerce site.

For vendors that have reviews, the ideal scenario is displaying local ones for each market, including those that may address local concerns like shipping or customs issues. However, if you don't have local reviews, consider translating them from other languages. Translated reviews in local languages should read as naturally and organically as possible. If your reviews have awkward wording or phrasings, it may come across as disingenuous and actually erode trust.

Use the right trustmarks at checkout

Badges at checkout—like security, privacy, trust or assurance seals—are also helpful in reducing shopping cart abandonment. One Marketing Sherpa study found that trust badges increase [conversions](#) by as much as 14%. Another study found that as many as 79% of online shoppers [expect to see](#) a trust badge on the retailer's website, and 61% actually decided against completing a transaction because there were no trust badges, or they weren't familiar with the ones they saw.

It is, however, important to consider the power trust badges may—or may not—hold in each market. In Latin America and [Spain](#), where shoppers can be highly distrustful of online stores, trust badges are almost a requirement. The opposite is generally true in [South Korea](#) and Scandinavia.

The following is a list of locally regionally popular trustmarks:

- Norton security badges rule the [U.S.](#) (SSL)
- [Webshop Trustmark](#) is the seal of choice for Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. (Measures the reliability of online shops.)
- [ConfianzaOnline](#) represents over 10,000 online retailers in Europe (A quality assurance mark that also helps mediate any issues that may arise between retailers and shoppers.)
- [iCERT](#) is highly recognized in Spain (Measures both security, but also reliability of an online store.)
- [eCommerce Europe](#) is a trustmark highly valued in 11 European nations (Quality assurance, and mediation between customers and retailers.)
- [elInstituto](#) provides trustmarks for Latin American countries (Quality assurance.)

- [eKomi](#) is valued in South Africa (Inspires shopper trust in customer reviews.)
- The [Hong Kong trust mark](#) helps global shoppers trust Hong Kong-based businesses.
- [This resource](#) lists The European eCommerce and Omni-Channel Trade Association (EMOTA) provides recognized trust marks for a host of countries including Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania, Russia, and more.
- [idEA](#) provides retailers with a trustmark for Indonesia shoppers
- The Association of Internet Trade Companies ([AITC](#)) provides a trustmark honored by Russian online shoppers.

Deliver outstanding local support

A [study](#) by the Atlantic Marketing Journal found that non-localized customer service can have a marked impact on customer trust and satisfaction.

Consider international customers who are poised to buy, but who have additional concerns they'd like addressed first. If they aren't confident that they'll be able to receive adequate customer service due to a language barrier, an opportunity to nurture trust may be lost, and customers are more likely to abandon their carts.

Localizing customer service can be challenging for businesses who haven't yet been able to set up local offices. For these businesses, offering customers self-service options, like FAQs or forums, can be helpful. Chat apps that [translate text naturally and in real time](#) are also available.

+ Global growth and local competition

There's a theme associated with many influential business decisions—they must be made as swiftly as they are made strategically. The same is true for deciding to do business cross-border. While time is required for thoughtful strategizing, businesses must be mindful of the fact that [local competitors are evolving and expanding right alongside the markets they're operating in](#). In other words, when it comes to globalization, some companies need to act fast.

For example, global players interested in certain developing markets will need to begin making moves now so they can get in front of new customers alongside local brands, build relationships early, and take root. The reason for this: in many developing markets, (such as China, Southeast Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East) much of the e-commerce growth is from net-new shoppers who are coming online for the first time as smartphone adoption surges. Often, these shoppers don't yet have many established brand tastes or preferences, making this landscape especially fit for new storefronts.

Furthermore, e-tailers looking to penetrate foreign markets would also be wise to move quickly, as markets are not only growing, but buyer preferences are constantly evolving. To revisit a key

example of a developing market, [shoppers in China](#)—currently a landslide leader in e-commerce growth—enjoy luxury products, and have historically been willing to pay premiums for foreign brands in dozens of categories including staples, like toothpaste, cosmetics, or juice. However, local brands are beginning to emerge with quality products that consumers are growing to trust, making these consumers less and less willing to pay premiums for imports. Here, and in many other comparable locales, international retailers are facing a narrowing window through which to earn these customers' attention and loyalty.