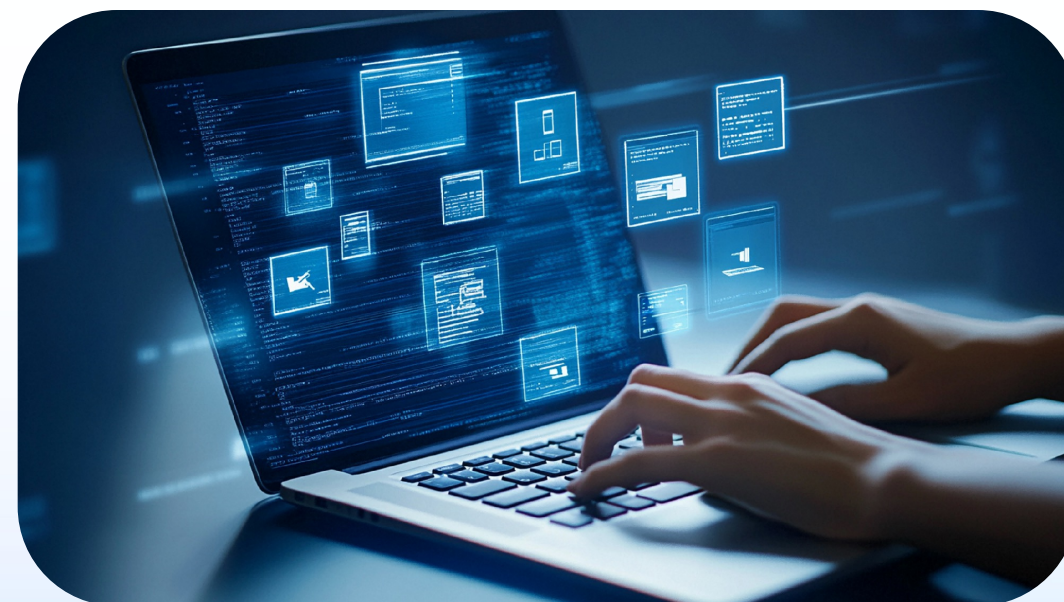




Q&A Series:

How to Future-Proof Independent
Commerce Operations

- Running a cross-border independent site requires merchants to manage product selection, site development, pricing, payments, logistics, and customer service cohesively. For early-stage merchants, this operational complexity can become a key barrier to efficient global expansion.
- To address these challenges, 36Kr Chuhai and Ant International (Antom) jointly present Q&A Series: How to Future-Proof Independent Commerce Operations. Organised into three connected sections, the series provides a systematic framework covering site setup, operational execution, and growth optimisation.
- From foundational concepts to practical operations and data-driven improvement, the series offers actionable guidance to help start-up cross-border merchants build scalable and sustainable independent site businesses.



Part I

From Awareness to Entry:
Understanding the Foundations of Independent Sites

Understanding the Foundations of Independent Sites



- Starting from zero, what preparations do small and medium-sized cross-border merchants need to make before launching an independent site?
- This section introduces core business scenarios, website setup fundamentals, and essential concepts, helping merchants overcome common entry barriers.

Q1

As a new cross-border merchant, where should I start with an independent site?

A1

Most beginners first test products and categories on established platforms. This helps merchants identify suitable categories before launching an independent site. The aim is to explore opportunities while reducing initial risk.

- **Product Selection and Positioning**

Choose products that are commercially viable, profitable, and sustainable. Popular platform items may not automatically succeed on independent sites. Tools like Google Trends, Exploding Topics, and Amazon rankings help validate demand.

- **Target Market**

Consumer preferences, habits, and seasonal peaks vary by region. Similarweb and Google Market Finder highlight trends and popular categories. Selecting the right market ensures product-market fit.

- **Competition Analysis**

Understanding competitors reduces traffic costs and improves conversion. Ahrefs and Semrush reveal keyword opportunities and less competitive niches. Competitor pricing and positioning help identify differentiation.

- **Customer Insights**

Identify your target customers' age, interests, spending power, and purchase channels. Young consumers may prioritise design and sustainability, while families focus on practicality and value. Audience insights guide marketing and content decisions.

Understanding the Foundations of Independent Sites



Key Considerations for New Cross-Border Independent Site Merchants

Demand Authenticity

Prioritise products with long-term or steady growth rather than short-lived trends.

Core question:

Is demand sustainable or merely seasonal/fashion-driven?

Competition Intensity

Highly homogeneous search results, ads, or independent sites increase entry costs.

Core question:

Is there room for differentiation and a defensible competitive advantage?

Price Range Reasonableness

Prices must cover acquisition costs without discouraging customer decisions.

Core question:

Does the price align with perceived value and allow sufficient profit margin?

Fulfilment Complexity

Lighter, smaller, and durable products simplify logistics and reduce after-sales issues.

Core question:

Can logistics costs remain below 15% and after-sales manageable?

Purchase Motivation

Products should meet frequent, essential needs or offer clear functional/design/value differentiation.

Core question:

Can the product's problem-solving value be communicated in a single sentence?

Profit Potential

Gross margin after product, logistics, advertising, platform, and after-sales costs should enable growth.

Core question:

Can overall margin exceed 30% while covering acquisition costs?

Antom offers market insights and consumer behaviour reports to help merchants understand why and how overseas customers buy. Upcoming content will cover SEO strategies to boost independent site traffic.

Understanding the Foundations of Independent Sites



Tips: Antom offers market insights and consumer behaviour reports to help merchants understand why and how overseas customers buy. Upcoming content will cover SEO strategies to boost independent site traffic.

Q2

Once I have chosen my direction, how should I start building the site?

A2

Building an independent site is more than displaying products; it forms the backbone of your operations. The choice of platform affects product management, order flow, logistics, and after-sales efficiency.

Main Approaches:

- 1** Hosted Platforms (e.g., Shopify): Offer complete infrastructure including servers, SSL security, product and order management, inventory tracking, logistics sync, and customer service tools. Ideal for merchants with limited technical resources who want to launch quickly and focus on marketing and product selection.
- 2** Open-Source Platforms with Plugins: Provides flexible functionality through plugins for inventory, logistics, and customer service, supporting multi-language and multi-site setups. Suitable for merchants with some technical ability seeking a balance between customisation and cost, but requires self-management of servers, security, and plugin compatibility.
- 3** Fully Custom Development: Involves designing and building product, order, logistics, and customer service systems from scratch. Best for larger operations with complex processes or high localisation needs. Offers maximum control and flexibility but demands strong technical teams and long-term maintenance.

Summary:

Choosing a build method is a strategic trade-off between efficiency, cost, and control. Select the option that best fits your business size, technical capacity, and growth plans.

Understanding the Foundations of Independent Sites



Q3

Pricing on independent sites is fully flexible and comes with no platform guidance. How should I design a profit model and price my products?

A3

On an independent site, pricing is not simply a matter of profit margins but a core factor influencing traffic efficiency, conversion, repeat purchases, and brand perception. Effective pricing must cover costs, align with customer expectations, and leave room for upselling and repeat orders. The goal is not to maximise profit per order, but to identify the price point at which customers are most willing to complete purchases and make repeat purchases.

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Understanding the Foundations of Independent Sites



Three Common Pricing Approaches for Independent Sites

Customer Acquisition Cost-Based Pricing

Pricing is anchored to an acceptable customer acquisition cost. By estimating conversion rates and cost per click, merchants calculate the maximum ad cost per order and reverse-engineer the minimum viable selling price. This establishes a price floor that ensures the business remains viable even when traffic or conversion performance fluctuates.

Example:

With a 2% conversion rate and a cost per click of \$1, the advertising cost per order is approximately \$50, meaning the product price must be set well above this level to allow for profit.

Minimum Viable Price Threshold

This is the lowest price that remains profitable after accounting for fulfilment, returns, and essential operating costs. The final price can then be adjusted upwards based on product differentiation, brand positioning, and customers' willingness to pay. This approach prevents the business from being driven purely by market price competition.

Competitor-Anchored Pricing

Prices are benchmarked against comparable independent sites selling similar products. Merchants typically analyse 3-5 competitors with mature pages, sustained ad spend, and similar target audiences, reviewing core SKU prices, discount structures, and bundle tiers.

Practical execution:

Offer tiered options (entry, core, and premium), pricing the main product around the market median. Price differences should be justified through configuration, quantity, or service, reinforcing perceived value rather than competing solely on low price.

Summary:

A sound pricing system balances cost recovery, perceived value, and long-term profitability. By combining acquisition economics with competitor benchmarks and ongoing behavioural feedback, independent merchants can build pricing models that are both resilient and scalable.

Understanding the Foundations of Independent Sites



Q4

As the final step of a transaction, payment services are critical. How should I understand the payment process of an independent site?

A4

- In cross-border e-commerce, the payment process involves multiple parties. Each participant performs a specific role to ensure funds move securely and efficiently from the customer to the merchant.
- The payment gateway encrypts payment data, performs risk checks, and forwards the request to the acquiring institution. The acquirer then routes the request to the issuing bank for authorisation and fraud screening.
- The result is returned through the payment gateway to the merchant system. Once payment is confirmed, fulfilment or service delivery can begin.
- While each participant performs a different role, all parties work together to maintain secure, traceable, and compliant transactions.
- Before enabling payment services, merchants must complete onboarding and compliance procedures. Requirements vary across markets and payment providers.
- In most cases, merchants need to provide business registration documents, bank account information, tax registration details, and proof of business operations.
- Depending on the market and business model, payment providers may also request product descriptions, fulfilment policies, operating history, or compliance documentation.
- These reviews form part of the provider's fraud-prevention and risk-control framework. Only after approval can merchants begin accepting online payments.
- Small and mid-sized businesses should also pay close attention to payment costs. Payment-related expenses are often distributed across transaction fees, FX costs, settlement charges, and channel service fees.
- Without systematic cost analysis, these expenses can gradually erode margins as transaction volume grows. This may eventually affect pricing strategy and cash-flow management.

Tips

Leveraging Antom's global acquiring experience and market-level fee insights can help merchants anticipate cost fluctuations and optimise payment expenses. For a deeper dive into cost management, refer to Q&A Series: How to "Cost-Proof" Cross-Border Payments jointly published by 36Kr Chuhai and Antom.

Part II

From Selection to Operations:
Building the Core Business Framework

Building the Core Business Framework



- Once an independent site goes live, what operational requirements must be met beyond front-end sales?
- This section helps merchants structure essential operational processes, including logistics, after-sales support, and settlement management.

Q5

I understand payment bridges conversion and fulfilment. What should I focus on when integrating a payment system?

A5



In an independent-site model, payment integration is the step that connects payment acquiring directly with the merchant's operational systems. It determines not only whether transactions succeed, but also how smoothly sales connect to fulfilment and post-purchase processes.



For small and mid-sized merchants, credit cards are a minimum requirement, but broader coverage is strongly recommended. Using a third-party payment platform that supports cards, digital wallets, and local bank transfers helps match regional payment preferences and significantly improves conversion rates across markets.



Merchants should also decide early whether to offer instalments or subscription payments. These models require reliable recurring billing, automatic retries, failure notifications, and synchronisation with order and accounting systems to ensure accurate reconciliation and financial visibility.



Discounts, coupons, and loyalty incentives must be calculated consistently at checkout and payment submission. Any mismatch between the discounted order amount and the authorised payment value can lead to failed transactions or order exceptions.



Unified payment management is critical for operational efficiency. A single back-office view allows merchants to track transactions, settlements, refunds, and disputes across payment methods, reducing reconciliation errors and customer service friction.



Finally, payment stability and risk control are essential. Technical reliability protects conversion rates, while robust fraud prevention and chargeback management are essential to safeguard margins, compliance status, and long-term trust with payment partners.

Tips

Antom supports merchants across the full growth cycle, from payment method integration and subscription management to rewards, retention, and advanced risk defence. Its global coverage and Antom Shield risk engine help merchants adapt to local payment habits while improving dispute success rates; for more insights, see [Q&A Series: How to "Risk-Proof" Cross-Border Payments](#) by 36Kr Chuhai and Antom.

Q6

Once payment is completed, how should I choose the right logistics strategy to ensure successful delivery?

A6

In independent-site operations, logistics is not just about product delivery; it is a key factor in customer experience and brand trust. Delivery speed and reliability directly affect satisfaction, repeat purchase rates, and advertising efficiency.

Compared with domestic e-commerce, cross-border logistics involves longer chains, more handover points, and higher risk exposure. Logistics decisions therefore require a strategic balance between cost control, delivery speed, transparency, and service assurance.

Logistics and supply chain form an inseparable part of the transaction lifecycle.

Merchants must align shipping methods with target markets and ensure that order status and tracking information are fully synchronised in backend systems.

After dispatch, logistics systems should automatically update tracking details for customers. Returns and refunds should be triggered based on confirmed delivery and return status to minimise disputes and operational friction.

Merchants should also assess transit time, cost structures, and customs rules by country. Clear disclosure on the storefront helps prevent misunderstandings and reduces after-sales pressure.

Building the Core Business Framework



Common Logistics Strategies for Independent Sites: Key Trade-offs



Domestic Direct Shipping

This model ships orders directly from the home country and is the most widely used option. It suits lightweight, high-margin products but often involves longer delivery times and variable shipping costs.



Dropshipping

Orders are forwarded to suppliers who ship directly to customers, requiring minimal inventory investment. While entry barriers are low, merchants have limited control over product quality and tracking accuracy.



Overseas Warehousing

Inventory is stored in destination markets and shipped locally after purchase. This significantly improves delivery speed and returns handling but requires upfront stock commitment and higher operational costs.



Virtual Overseas Warehousing

Orders are processed domestically but presented as local dispatch through last-mile labelling. It reduces inventory risk and improves perceived trust, though actual transit times may remain relatively long.



Amazon FBA

Merchants use Amazon's fulfilment network for storage, picking, and delivery. This ensures high delivery standards but involves service fees and strict packaging and labelling requirements.

Q7

After fulfilment is completed, how should I manage settlement and fund repatriation?

A7

- Settlement and fund repatriation represent the final stage of the payment cycle and directly affect cash flow stability. Efficient settlement is essential to maintaining liquidity and supporting ongoing operations.
- Merchants must first choose the appropriate settlement account, such as a domestic bank account, an overseas bank account, or a third-party payment account. Each option involves trade-offs between convenience, foreign exchange costs, compliance requirements, and operational complexity, and should be selected based on transaction volume and target markets.
- Reducing foreign exchange costs is a key priority in cross-border settlement. Using multi-currency settlement, foreign currency accounts, or automated FX tools can minimise conversion losses, while optimised settlement cycles help improve capital efficiency.
- Compliance and fund security are equally critical. Merchants must meet KYC and AML requirements and ensure that settlement partners have robust risk controls to keep funds traceable, secure, and fully compliant.

Tips

In practice, integrating acquiring and settlement tools can significantly improve efficiency. Combining Antom's global acquiring capabilities with WorldFirst's multi-currency merchant accounts enables consolidated fund management, faster settlement, and greater flexibility for scaling cross-border operations.

Q8

Post-sales operations also directly affect overall business outcomes. How should merchants prepare?

A8

- In independent site operations, after-sales service is not an add-on but a key contributor to brand trust, repeat purchases, and long-term reputation. Unlike marketplace sellers, independent merchants lack platform-backed dispute resolution, meaning all service outcomes are attributed directly to the brand.
- As a result, the objective of after-sales operations is not to handle issues on a case-by-case basis, but to establish a consistent, predictable, and scalable handling framework. Clear internal rules reduce ambiguity, lower customer service pressure, and ensure service quality remains stable as teams scale.
- Merchants should define standard responses for common scenarios such as delivery delays, damaged goods, missing items, incorrect descriptions, and customer-initiated returns. Each case should have a predefined resolution path, such as replacement, partial refund, or refund after return confirmation.
- Equally important, customer communication should be managed as a structured operational process. Support teams should clearly explain causes, timelines, and expected outcomes to avoid vague commitments and build confidence in the resolution process.

Building the Core Business Framework



Common After-sales Scenarios and Handling Principles for Independent Sites

Delivery delays or no tracking updates

Cross-border shipping delays are common and should be assessed against standard carrier transit times.

- ① Check pickup time and latest tracking scan
- ② No scan for over 3 days: confirm with the supplier whether the parcel has been dispatched
- ③ Exceeding standard transit time by 20-30%: classify as abnormal delay
- ④ Provide shipment monitoring with extended delivery commitment, or offer reshipment/refund

Marked as delivered but not received

A frequent issue for independent sites and a key risk control point.

- ① Request proof of delivery (POD) from the logistics provider
- ② Ask the customer to check their mailbox, property management, or neighbours
- ③ Decide on reshipment or refund based on product value

Damaged items, missing parts, or product mismatch

Long cross-border transit increases damage risk; common resolutions include replacement without return or partial refunds. Customers should provide photo or video evidence to verify the issue and prevent after-sales abuse.

Order cancellation or address changes

- ① **Not yet shipped:** orders can be cancelled or the address updated directly.
- ② **Already shipped:** assess whether last-mile changes are possible; if not, offer alternatives such as reshipment or discount compensation.

Building the Core Business Framework



Q9

Inventory management involves coordination across multiple stages, and even small missteps can create fulfilment risks. What strategies can help me manage inventory effectively?

A9

- Inventory management for independent sites covers the full operational chain, from procurement and stock control to fulfilment and replenishment. Merchants should design inventory strategies based on their business model, operational scale, and sales structure.
- For merchants operating multiple warehouses or overseas fulfilment centres, dynamic inventory allocation is essential. Systems should assign inventory based on delivery location, stock availability, and fulfilment cost. Once payment is completed, inventory should be locked immediately and synchronised across warehouse locations.
- Promotional campaigns can quickly create inventory pressure. Discounts, bundled offers, instalment plans, and seasonal campaigns may rapidly increase order volumes. Without real-time inventory synchronisation, merchants risk overselling, delayed fulfilment, or order cancellations.
- To reduce these risks, inventory systems should validate stock availability during checkout. Replenishment alerts should also be triggered automatically when inventory levels fall below predefined thresholds.
- Inventory management should also support sales forecasting and operational planning. Historical sales data, seasonal trends, and campaign performance can help merchants estimate future inventory demand more accurately.
- For overseas warehouse operations, security and operational control are equally important. Merchants should evaluate warehouse management across three areas: physical security, operational procedures, and system visibility.
- Surveillance systems, access controls, and clearly defined handling permissions help reduce unauthorised access and inventory loss. Critical processes such as inbound receiving, shelving, picking, stocktaking, and returns handling should include verification procedures and traceable records.
- At the system level, inventory data should remain synchronised with order management systems in real time. This helps merchants identify damaged goods, missing inventory, or stock discrepancies more efficiently.
- Merchants should also assess warehouse emergency preparedness. This includes fire safety measures, insurance coverage, extreme weather response plans, and backup power systems.
- Strong inventory management not only improves fulfilment efficiency but also supports long-term operational stability and customer satisfaction.

Building the Core Business Framework



Common Steps and Strategies for Inventory Management on Independent Sites

1. Automated purchase orders

- Automatically generate purchase orders through inventory management systems to ensure sufficient stock and reduce manual workload.
- Develop 12-24 month supply plans based on demand forecasting and work with reliable suppliers to secure timely replenishment.
- Maintain relationships with multiple suppliers and plan contingency stock to mitigate disruptions or unexpected events.

2. Inventory control strategies

- ABC analysis: classify inventory into A (high value), B (medium value), and C (low value) items, prioritising control over critical SKUs.
- Set minimum stock thresholds and trigger automatic replenishment to prevent revenue loss from stockouts.
- Monitor inventory turnover to identify slow-moving items and release tied-up capital through promotions or discounts.

3. Demand forecasting and sales analysis

- Forecast future demand using historical sales data, seasonality, and market trends.
- Apply AI and machine learning to analyse multi-channel sales data, improving forecast accuracy and reducing both shortages and excess inventory.

4. Fulfilment and after-sales management

- Track key fulfilment metrics, including first-attempt fulfilment rate, same-day dispatch rate, order accuracy, port-to-stock lead time, and return processing speed.
- Adopt technology such as barcode scanning, voice picking, and AI-driven inventory forecasting to improve perfect order fulfilment.

5. Multi-channel inventory management

- Synchronise inventory across channels using cloud-based systems, RFID, and barcode scanning to avoid overselling or stockouts.
- Integrate ERP and IMS systems to centrally manage inventory, orders, customers, and finance, enabling automation, data visibility, and accurate reporting.

6. Inventory security management

- Control risks across personnel management, process management, and system management.
- Assess warehouse emergency readiness, including fire safety, insurance coverage, extreme weather response, and power outage contingency plans.

Part III

From Operations to Optimisation:
Building a Sustainable Growth Engine

Building a Sustainable Growth Engine



- Operating an independent site is a continuous process of iteration and refinement. Sustainable growth depends not on one-off traffic acquisition, but on long-term improvements in operational efficiency.
- This section explores pricing strategies, product selection optimisation, marketing optimisation, and how data-driven insights can improve efficiency and conversion rates.

Q10

During operations, what points should I focus on to continuously optimise performance?

A10

The market environment is constantly evolving. Operational performance cannot be improved through isolated optimisations alone, but through dynamic, coordinated optimisation across three key dimensions: market, users, and supply chain.

- Market data (e.g., category growth, market size, competition intensity) helps assess overall market opportunity.
- User data reveals customer preferences and purchasing behaviour.
- Supply chain data (e.g., procurement costs, inventory turnover, logistics speed, supplier reliability) determines whether the business can maintain sustainable profitability.

Merchants should validate market direction, adapt continuously to user demand, and maintain an efficient supply chain to support sustainable profitability.

Building a Sustainable Growth Engine



Independent Site Operational Optimisation Framework



Market Dimension

Is the Opportunity Still Viable?

Market Size & Growth

- Compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of the category
- Trends in overall market size
- Growth differences across market segments
- Seasonal fluctuation patterns

Competitive Landscape Analysis

- Market share changes of leading players
- Number and growth of new entrants
- Price band distribution and concentration
- Evolution of differentiation points

Market Entry Barriers

- Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC) trends
- Advertising density and cost
- Degree of content homogenisation
- Patent and compliance barriers



User Dimension

Are User Needs Being Met?

Demand Insights

- Trends in core search terms
- Distribution of long-tail keywords
- Proportion of problem-oriented searches
- User satisfaction scores

User Behavior

- Conversion funnel analysis
- Average order value (AOV) trends
- Repeat purchase rate and purchase cycle
- Customer lifetime value (LTV)

User Feedback

- Net Promoter Score (NPS) and overall reputation
- Sentiment analysis of review keywords
- Complaint type proportions
- Adoption rate of user suggestions



Supply Chain Dimension

Can Profitability Be Sustained?

Cost Control

- Procurement cost volatility
- Cost reduction from scale effects
- Optimisation of packaging materials
- Unit logistics cost

Inventory & Turnover

- Inventory turnover rate (ITO)
- Stock aging and slow-moving products
- Safety stock levels
- Forecast accuracy

Fulfilment & Risk

- On-time order fulfilment rate
- Logistics damage rate
- Supplier on-time delivery rate
- Return and refund processing efficiency

Q11

How can I continuously optimise product selection in day-to-day operations?

A11

In independent site operations, order and transaction data support not only reporting and reconciliation, but also product selection optimisation.

Merchants can analyse order volumes, transaction values, conversion rates, and cancellation or return ratios to assess the actual performance of different products across markets. For instance, by comparing sales quantities and revenue across SKUs, merchants can identify best-selling versus slow-moving products and understand which categories, styles, or price ranges resonate most with users in particular countries or regions.

During analysis, merchants must adhere to data privacy and compliance requirements, focusing only on aggregated order and product-level data without involving sensitive user information.

Order and sales performance data can also guide product mix and SKU structure optimisation:

- SKUs with low conversion or high return rates may indicate pricing issues, unclear product descriptions, misaligned use cases, or fulfilment problems. Merchants can adjust inventory allocation, reduce low-performing SKUs, and improve overall warehouse and logistics efficiency.
- Conversely, products with stable sales and low return rates should be pre-planned for replenishment to prevent stockouts and lost sales opportunities.

Building a Sustainable Growth Engine



Independent Site Product Selection Optimisation Guide

TikTok / Instagram: Observe content that spreads organically among users

YouTube review videos: Assess whether products have display or demonstration value

Reddit / Quora: Monitor genuine user pain points and complaints

Key Tips: User feedback is often more persuasive than raw view counts. For example, comments such as “Where can I buy this?” indicate real interest.

Trend Analysis

Google Trends: Check if keyword interest is stable and shows sustained demand

SimilarWeb: Analyse traffic scale and main acquisition channels of comparable independent sites

Product Research Tools: Tools such as Niche Scraper / Ecomhunt can identify trending products

Facebook Ads Library: Focus on products that are advertised consistently, rather than single ads

Example: If a category such as smart home devices maintains stable search interest and ad creatives are continuously updated, this often indicates sustainable sales and profit, rather than one-off testing.

Analyse best-selling products on platforms

Amazon Best Sellers: Examine review volume and iteration frequency

AliExpress Top Products: Look for clear price advantages or feature differences

eBay Trending Products: Assess acceptance of non-standard or functional products

Core Insight: Avoid blindly selling identical products. Consider whether the product can perform well on an independent site and whether it can be enhanced through branding, functionality, or use-case packaging.

Study high-performing independent sites

Analyse competitor sites for featured products and page structures

Evaluate traffic sources: Are they healthy (advertising / search / social)?

Check if resources are concentrated on a few core SKUs

Evaluation Standard: If a site consistently focuses on a core product with dedicated content, advertising, and pages, it usually indicates that the product has sustained profitability potential.

Q12

After operating my independent site for some time, I notice a slowdown in sales. How can I optimise pricing strategy to boost performance?

A12

Once an independent site reaches a stable operational stage, the focus of pricing should shift from “how to set the price” to “how to continuously optimise it” .

In practice, merchants need to track the composition and fluctuations of operating costs. As previously mentioned, pricing is not a one-off decision; it is a dynamic management task that requires constant adjustment based on market feedback.

Merchants should observe sales performance, user feedback, and after-sales pressure at different price points to determine whether current pricing achieves a balance:

- Acceptable to the target customer
- Provides sufficient margin to support overall operations

Pricing optimisation is not the same as frequent discounting. Rather, it involves fine-tuning price structures and presentation. For instance, the same product may encounter different price sensitivities across markets, seasons, or sales stages.

Merchants can conduct phased tests to identify:

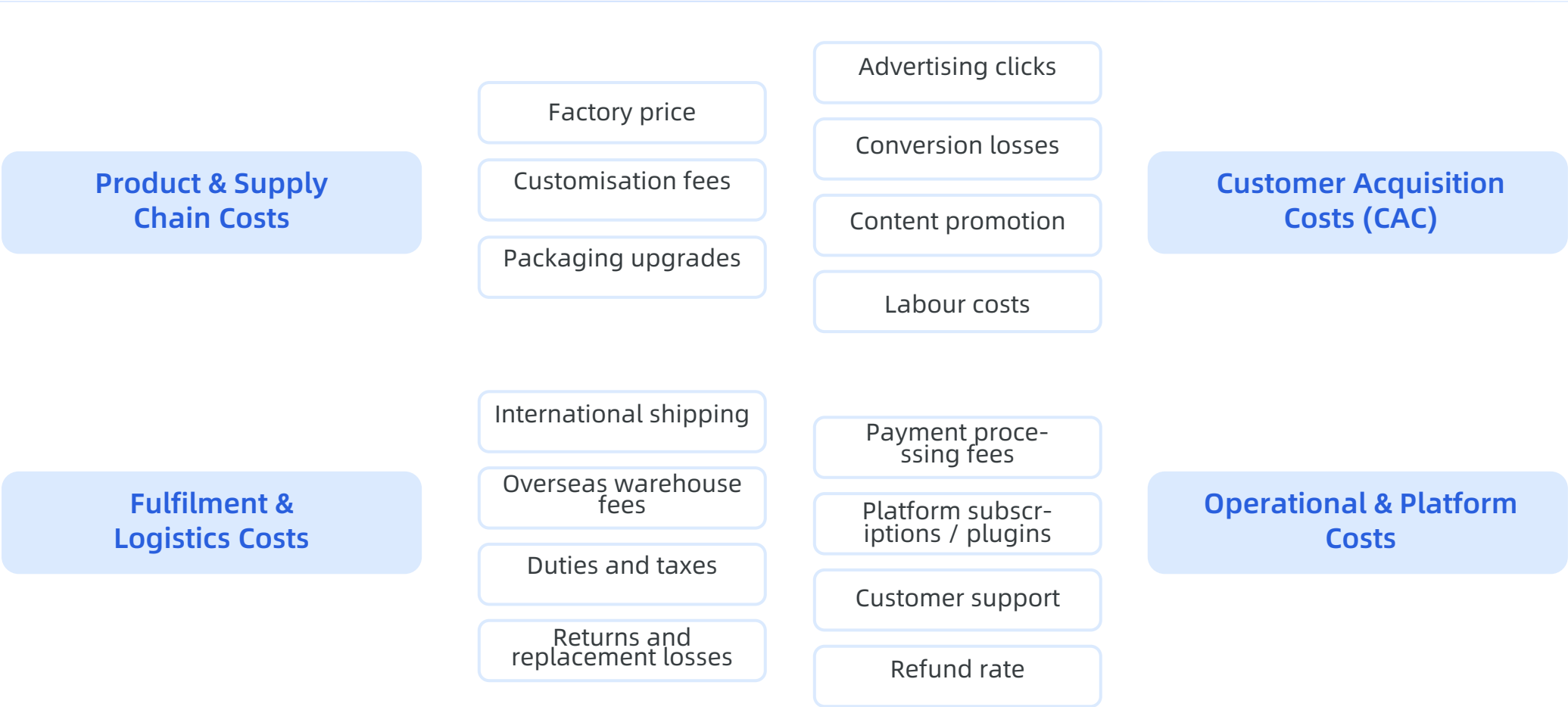
- Situations where small price adjustments can significantly improve conversion
- Situations where adjustments may harm brand perception or profit margins

Additionally, optimising price tiers, bundles, or variant options can guide users to make selections favourable to overall merchant revenue, rather than competing solely on lowest price.

Building a Sustainable Growth Engine



Independent Site Pricing Model Framework



Building a Sustainable Growth Engine



Targeted Pricing Optimisation Based on Performance

ROI Optimisation

Problem: Conversion rate is stable, but advertising ROI is low. Indicates price is acceptable, but CAC eats into profit.

Recommendation:

Slightly increase prices and monitor subsequent conversion changes. Control adjustment magnitude to avoid dramatic conversion drops. Effective if conversion decrease < profit gain.

Conversion Rate Optimisation

Problem: High click-through rate, but low conversion. Direct discounting only offers short-term improvement.

Recommendation:

Introduce bundles or tiered pricing. Place core SKUs in mid-price tiers to reduce negative price perception.

Repeat Purchase Rate Optimisation

Problem: High first-order conversion, but low repeat purchases.

Recommendation:

Distinguish first-order and repeat-order pricing: Offer first-purchase incentives. Return repeat orders to standard price or use membership pricing. Avoid long-term low pricing that distorts user expectations.

Average Order Value (AOV) Optimisation

Problem: AOV consistently below target.

Recommendation:

Lock long-term consumption via membership programmes. Increase transaction value through bundles or multi-item offers. Include high-margin accessories or services in bundles. Highlight "most popular" or "recommended" options to guide purchase.

Net Profit Optimisation

Problem: Sales increase, but net profit stagnates.

Recommendation:

Reassess price floor. Factor in refund rates and after-sales costs. Adjust pricing for SKUs with high after-sales. Avoid "loss-leading" promotions for artificial growth.

Brand Premium Enhancement

Goal: Increase perceived brand value and margin.

Recommendation:

Support price with value narrative. Emphasise product design logic, usage scenarios, and differentiation from lower-priced alternatives. Optimise product descriptions and service guarantees to align perceived value with pricing.

Building a Sustainable Growth Engine



Q13

Which digital marketing touchpoints should I focus on in daily operations to enhance independent site performance?

A13

In cross-border e-commerce, completed transactions and user order behaviours not only represent a sale but also serve as crucial triggers and data sources for digital marketing. Merchants can design automated marketing actions based on key events such as order placement, repeat purchase, or successful payment.

1. Order Placement

By analysing the relationship between completed orders and marketing activities, merchants can continuously optimise strategies. For example, upon completion of a first order, the system can automatically:

- Issue repeat purchase discounts
- Accrue loyalty points
- Send recommendations for new products or usage reminders via email or SMS

This approach, based on actual purchase behaviour, helps extend customer lifetime value by turning one-time buyers into long-term, engaged customers. Conversely, if promotions lead to higher cancellation or return rates, this may indicate misleading pricing or promotional messaging, signalling a need to adjust the offer or communication.

2. Repeat Purchase

Merchants can segment customers according to purchase frequency, average order value (AOV), and after-sales behaviour:

- High-value customers: Push new products, exclusive offers, or membership benefits
- Potential customers: Nurture via regular promotions and content engagement
- One-time customers: Monitor for future engagement opportunities

This data-driven approach improves marketing ROI, reduces ineffective outreach, and strengthens loyalty and repeat purchase intent.

A13

3. Payment Completion

Payment events can trigger marketing actions, for example:

- Automatically issuing coupons or loyalty points
- Sending repeat purchase reminders via email or SMS

To implement this, merchants should integrate the payment status with the marketing system so that a successful payment automatically triggers the relevant marketing actions. This converts payment events into long-term customer value and improves repeat purchase probability.

4. Product & Market Insights

- By analysing sales feedback across products, markets, and time periods, merchants can:
- Identify products suitable for price-driven promotions
- Plan seasonal campaigns, bundle offers, or new product recommendations
- Optimise promotional timing and intensity

Building a Sustainable Growth Engine



Common Digital Marketing Categories, Formats and Use Cases for Independent Sites

Customer Acquisition Campaigns

Core objective: Lower the barrier to first purchase while acquiring qualified traffic and user data.

Typical formats: First-order discounts, limited-time offers (24h/48h), free shipping or tax subsidies, and social-exclusive codes (KOL/TikTok).

Best used when: Launching a new site, entering a new market, or testing conversion efficiency before scaling paid traffic.

Conversion Rate Optimisation Campaigns

Core objective: Improve on-site conversion without increasing traffic costs.

Typical formats: Countdown promotions, reference pricing (strikethrough vs final price), volume discounts, and exit-intent pop-ups.

Best used when: Click-through rates are high, dwell time is long, but conversions remain low.

Average Order Value (AOV) Growth Campaigns

Core objective: Increase order value without raising customer acquisition costs.

Typical formats: Bundles, spend-threshold discounts, paid upgrades or gifts, and multi-item discounts.

Best used when: Single-product conversion is stable but AOV falls below the profitability model.

Building a Sustainable Growth Engine



Common Digital Marketing Categories, Formats and Use Cases for Independent Sites

Repeat Purchase and Retention Campaigns

Core objective: Reduce long-term reliance on paid acquisition and increase customer lifetime value (LTV).

Typical formats: Returning-customer discounts, email/SMS reminders, subscription offers (Subscribe & Save), and loyalty or membership programmes.

Best used when: There is an existing repeat purchase base and the product has consumable or replacement characteristics.

Seasonal and Event-Based Campaigns

Core objective: Capture concentrated demand during key commercial or emotional moments.

Typical formats: Site-wide discounts, limited-quantity bestsellers, bundle upgrades, and phased releases with early warm-up.

Best used when: Shopping festivals (e.g. Black Friday), major holidays (Christmas, Valentine's Day), or seasonal and year-end sales periods.

Inventory Clearance and Risk Control Campaigns

Core objective: Release inventory pressure and improve cash flow.

Typical formats: Clearance sections, bundled sell-through, targeted offers to existing customers, and promotions in non-core markets.

Key consideration: Clearance pricing should be isolated from the main pricing system to avoid damaging brand price perception.

Tips: A+ Rewards, developed by Antom in collaboration with digital payment partners, is a one-stop digital marketing platform. It provides merchants with:

- Multi-channel engagement tools for mobile payment users
- Customisable brand zones, gamified interactions, and lead generation strategies
- Targeted campaigns, coupon distribution, subscription discounts, and loyalty rewards

These capabilities help merchants maintain user activity, drive conversions, and deepen engagement with global customers.

Q14

In the after-sales stage, what optimisation measures can be implemented in advance, and can after-sales become a new source of business growth?

A14

The core of after-sales optimisation is the ability to match order data with customer feedback to identify the current order stage and detect potential risks early. This helps reduce disputes, lower return and refund rates, and stabilise operational performance. Effective after-sales management is therefore a proactive risk-control mechanism rather than a passive response.

1

prioritise information transparency and clear and consistent communication.

For cross-border customers, dissatisfaction is often driven more by uncertainty than by the issue itself. Proactive updates on progress, timelines and next steps can significantly reduce anxiety and rebuild trust, even before a case is fully resolved.

2

use payment data as a structural support for after-sales management.

Refund and return rules directly affect cash flow and customer confidence and should be clearly defined in advance. By embedding these rules into backend order logic and linking payment status to customer service workflows, merchants can respond faster to anomalies such as failed payments, duplicate charges or refund requests.

3

build an after-sales system that feeds back into front-end optimisation.

By analysing recurring after-sales issues, merchants can identify structural problems related to products, content or fulfilment. When these insights are used to optimise pricing, product design or logistics strategy, the overall volume of after-sales issues gradually declines.

Building a Sustainable Growth Engine



Common After-Sales Risk Checkpoints for Independent Sites



Label Created

A shipping label has been generated, but the parcel has not yet been collected. If there is no update after 48-72 hours, the supplier should be followed up.



Accepted / Picked Up

The parcel has been collected, but warehouse queuing may still occur. This should be assessed against the average pickup-to-dispatch cycle of the logistics channel.



In Transit

This is the most volatile stage in cross-border delivery. After-sales teams should evaluate delays based on standard transit times for the selected route.

Customs Clearance

The parcel is undergoing declaration and inspection. Extended delays may indicate documentation issues, incorrect declarations or address problems.

Last Mile / Out for Delivery

The parcel is in the final delivery stage and is usually delivered within 1-3 days. Delays may result from address issues or courier mis-scans.

Delivered

The parcel is marked as delivered. If the customer reports non-receipt, proof of delivery, address accuracy and alternative drop-off locations should be verified.

Q15

In cross-border tax and financial compliance, what planning should be done in advance to ensure business security and stable operations?

A15

In cross-border commerce, tax and financial compliance is a foundational requirement that directly affects cash flow, profitability and scalability. Effective planning should be structured around two core dimensions.

Overseas compliance and taxation

Merchants must clarify local registration requirements, VAT/GST obligations, revenue recognition rules and links with payments, logistics and overseas warehouses. Key risks include import duties, tax rate differences across product types, permanent establishment exposure and platform withholding obligations, all of which directly impact pricing and legality.

Domestic tax and settlement compliance

This covers cross-border income repatriation, applicable corporate and indirect taxes, cost deductibility and compliant fund flows. A full-chain framework, from overseas filing to domestic accounting and tax reporting, is essential to mitigate financial and legal risk.

Operational guidance

Tax rules vary significantly by market, and compliance requirements depend on product category and business model. Merchants should assess target markets early and align finance and operations accordingly.

Tips

Tax systems vary significantly by country and region, such as Brazil's ICMS or the EU's distance-selling thresholds. Merchants should always conduct in-depth analysis based on their target markets and specific business models.

Looking ahead, Ant International (Antom) continues to work with global tax and compliance experts. Through market-specific case studies, sector-focused policy analysis and practical compliance strategies, Antom aims to support merchants in achieving sustainable and compliant cross-border growth.