THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE DIGITAL MARKETPLACES OF ALIBABA TO THE EUROPEAN ECONOMY AND THE INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMES – SECOND EDITION

Research project commissioned by Alibaba

Carlo Altomonte
Carlo Alberto Carnevale Maffè
Guia Beatrice Pirotti
Stefano Riela

SDA Bocconi School of Management

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy
No part of this publication may be copied, stored, transmitted, reproduced or distributed in any form or medium whatsoever without the permission of the copyright owner.

Carlo Altomonte, Carlo Alberto Carnevale Maffè, Guia Beatrice Pirotti, Stefano Riela

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE DIGITAL MARKETPLACES OF ALIBABA TO THE EUROPEAN ECONOMY AND THE INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMES – SECOND EDITION

INDEX

- Executive Summary 5
- The macro picture in a nutshell 6
- How European SMEs turn platforms into performance 7
- Policy recommendations: a pragmatic roadmap to 2030 8

1. Platforms 10
   - Taobao 10
   - Taobao Global 10
   - Tmall 10
   - Tmall Global 10
   - Lazada 11
   - Fliggy 11
2. The Economic Contribution of Alibaba's Platforms to the European Economy 12
   - 2.1. European Union 12
   - 2.2. Belgium 17
   - 2.3. France 21
   - 2.4. Germany 26
   - 2.5. Italy 30
   - 2.6. The Netherlands 35
   - 2.7. Spain 40
   - 2.8. United Kingdom 44
3. The Contribution of Alibaba's Platforms to SMEs business development 50
   - 3.1 The business case: Pharmanutra - Nutraceutical science from Italy 50
   - 3.2 The business case: Plameca - Natural health from Spain 52
   - 3.3 The business case: WHC Labs - Health and sustainability from Belgium 54
   - 3.4 The business case: Pip Studio - Creativity and design from the Netherlands 56
   - 3.5 The business case: Biocyte – Beauty and nutricosmetics from France 58
   - 3.6 Alibaba's end-to-end logistics spine: A catalyst for European SME internationalisation 59
   - 3.7 From analytics to advocacy: Building brand-consumer digital relationships for EU SMEs 62
   - 3.8 How Alibaba applies AI to help European SMEs access Asian markets 64
   - 3.9 Alibaba's permanent training & education for SMEs 67
4. Policy Recommendations and Conclusions 70
5. Methodology 78

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES

Europe and China have been in conversation for centuries - sometimes whispered in the ledger books of Venetian merchants, sometimes sung in the courts of emperors and scholars. Marco Polo carried gifts and stories, the cartographers carried maps and science, and generations of traders carried trust.

As researchers, our task is to show how that conversation continues today in digital form: millions of small encounters and large exchanges, orchestrated by platforms, compounding into growth for European firms. Where once caravans carried silk, today signals carry symbols and stories, storefronts and service. The names have changed - from khans and caravansaries to dashboards and data lakes - but the ambition is familiar: to make distance smaller and opportunity larger, to build bridges, not walls.

Marco Polo's chronicle spoke of horizons; hand-drafted maps taught how to navigate them. Between them stretched a practice of crossing: learning the other's language, calibrating measures, building trust. The digital economy has not erased that craft - it has accelerated it.

Here we take stock of what that acceleration means for Europe's businesses, especially for small and mid-sized enterprises. Because the Silk Road was never one single road: it was a web of passes, ports, and patient negotiation. Diplomatic missions, from medieval embassies to Jesuit scholars, taught Europe that China could be reached not only by sea and land, but by shared rules and shared purpose. Today's digital platforms redraw those maps in code. Let's follow them and carry on the conversation.

Executive Summary

In this second edition, the research analyses the contribution Alibaba 's cross border B2C activities make to the economy of the European Union (EU) as a whole, and the economies of Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain (the EU6) and the UK. This report also looks at how SMEs in these countries experience "going abroad" to get new business. More broadly, we look at Alibaba's economic impact and contribution in two ways:

- at the macro level (in terms of output, gross domestic product (GDP), tax revenue and the number of persons employed),
- and at a micro level (with a focus on SMEs), offering further guidelines of "data-driven policies" for decision makers and European authorities.

The analysis takes into consideration the last three years (2022-2024) and the following Alibaba platforms, primarily dedicated to marketing and selling European products and services to Chinese and Southeast Asian consumers[1]: Taobao, Taobao Global, Tmall, Tmall Global, Lazada, and Fliggy[2].

1 Lazada operates also across Southeast Asia.

2 We would like to thank Prof. Sara Bricchi and her team from Bocconi University for their valuable contribution to the tourism data analysis.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Table ES-1. Key macroeconomic findings (aggregated 2022-2024 totals in 2024 prices; jobs = 2024)			
Geography	**GDP contribution 2022-2024 (all platforms)**	**Tax revenues 2022-2024 (all platforms)**	**Jobs supported in 2024 (sum of direct, indirect and induced)**
EU6 aggregate (BE, FR, DE, IT, NL, ES)	€ 38,577.6 m	€ 16,125.0 m	143,184
Belgium	€ 171.8 m	€ 73.0 m	501
France	€ 13,722.1 m	€ 6,101.4 m	50,435
Germany	€ 9,887.9 m	€ 3,821.8 m	33,473
Italy	€ 10,418.4 m	€ 4,463.6 m	43,274
Netherlands	€ 2,964.4 m	€ 1,136.7 m	8,153
Spain	€ 1,412.9 m	€ 528.5 m	7,349
United Kingdom	£ 17,275.1 m	£ 6,108.7 m	74,379

Notes: EU6 totals sum Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain. UK values shown in GBP as per source. All figures are as reported in the 2025 edition, measured in 2024 prices using the report's deflators and national I-O tables.

Across 2022–2024, Alibaba's platforms connected European producers and destinations with millions of Asian consumers and Chinese travelers, generating sizable macroeconomic effects while teaching SMEs how to succeed digitally abroad. In the EU6 (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain), platform-enabled activity contributed €38.6 billion to GDP, €16.1 billion in tax receipts (2024 prices), and supported ~143,200 jobs in 2024; in the UK, the combined GDP contribution over the three years reached £17.3 billion with approximately 74,400 jobs supported in 2024[3]. These gains bucked wider trade headwinds. The aggregated Gross Merchandise Value of goods sold from EU27 via Alibaba's Taobao and Tmall in the three years across 2022-2024 reached €89.3 billion. Sales of EU products in China via Alibaba's platforms outperformed overall export trends: between 2022 and 2024, total exports from the EU6 to China dropped by 8.4%, whereas sales through Alibaba's platforms fell by only 2.4%. Moreover, from 2023 to 2024, sales of EU6 products in China via Alibaba grew 7.5% while total EU6 exports to China fell 6.3%. Beauty/chemicals and fashion led the mix, with Taobao and Tmall the main retail engines, Lazada adding Southeast Asia reach, and Fliggy re-linking Chinese tourist demand to European destinations.

The macro picture in a nutshell

Three channels drive the aggregate numbers. Firstly, EU goods sold to Chinese consumers on Taobao and Tmall: €36.6 billion GDP over 2022–2024 (2024 prices) and 131,484 jobs in 2024. Secondly, EU goods sold in ASEAN countries on Lazada: at least €421 million GDP over the three years and 1,298 jobs in 2024, based on approximately 300 EU6 brands. Thirdly, Chinese tourist spending in the EU6 booked on Fliggy: €1.61 billion GDP over 2023–2024 and 10,402 jobs in 2024. Country patterns reflect product mix and national I-O structures: France's strength in beauty and premium goods yields the largest EU6 total €13.7 bn, followed by Italy €10.4 bn and Germany, €9.9 bn; the Netherlands and Spain contribute €3.0 bn and €1.41 bn respectively; Belgium adds €172 m. The UK, analysed separately, totals £17.3 bn with a strong tourism component.

Two dynamics stand out. First, resilience vs. total exports: platform-mediated sales rose even as overall EU exports to China softened, suggesting platforms can hedge cyclical shocks by shortening go-to-market paths. Second, category concentration: beauty/chemicals and apparel account for the bulk of EU6 retail sales; this specialization matters when designing support instruments for SMEs in those supply chains.

3 These figures sum up direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Methods. We apply a standard Input–Output framework using the most recent national I-O tables, deduct retail margins paid abroad, and convert output to GVA-GDP by product category; tax effects use OECD tax-to-GDP ratios and jobs use GDP per person employed. Estimates are conservative (no cross-country spillovers) and reported in 2024 prices.
Just a symbolic snapshot on jobs. Only in 2024 did Italy discover that one its biggest private-sector "factory" has no gates or smokestacks: with ≈43k jobs supported (direct, indirect and induced), Alibaba-enabled activity surpasses the direct headcounts of some of Italian largest manufacturing corporations - evidence that the country's most powerful industrial "plant" may now run on APIs, not assembly lines. For clarity: as stated above, "jobs supported" are estimated via input–output modelling and capture direct, indirect, and induced employment along platform-enabled value chains; they are not Alibaba payroll jobs. The metric is also flow-contingent, it scales with trade volumes and multipliers - and is gross, not net of any displacement. Within those bounds, the comparison is meaningful and policy-relevant: platform rails act as employment multipliers in SME-dense sectors, showing that smart support for digital export channels can yield a national employment footprint on par with top manufacturers.

How European SMEs turn platforms into performance

Beneath the macro aggregates sits a consistent micro story: European SMEs exploit platform capabilities to learn quickly, adapt offers, and scale cross-border operations without heavy fixed costs. **Five business cases** illustrate this arc. *Pharmanutra* (Italy) used Tmall Global as a "data lab," shifting from campaign peaks to always-on, KPI-driven retail while Alibaba's logistics arm Cainiao simplified customs and fulfillment. SiderAL and ApportAL brands, owned by Pharmanutra, entered China thanks to the Tmall Global technology ecosystem. *Plameca* (Spain) leveraged Tmall Partners, live-streaming and AI recommendations to localize formats and accelerate time-to-market. *WHC Labs* (Belgium) relied on Alibaba's traffic tools and end-to-end logistics to launch a technical nutraceutical proposition and sustain rapid response in customer service. *Pip Studio* (Netherlands) used analytics to re-think tableware bundles for Chinese households and leaned on content-led discovery over keyword search. *Biocyte* (France) made cross-border compliance and packaging adaptation tractable by pairing distributor know-how with Tmall Global's data loop and curated marketing. Together, these cases show that platform data and services substitute for missing scale in small firms.

Four fact sheets generalize the lessons:
Logistics spine. Alibaba's five-stage export rail - from EU pre-export to bonded zones and last-mile - cuts lead times and paperwork, lets SMEs choose between direct air lanes for speed or EU hubs for efficiency, and makes costs and Service Leve Agreements (SLA) predictable, while significantly reducing the overall environmental impact. The operational effect is lower working-capital lock, faster product-market fit cycles, and reliability visible in one dashboard.
CRM & analytics. Data consoles (Business Advisor/Data Cube), Alimama's ad stack, live-commerce, and membership (88 VIP) compress the path from first impression to repeat purchase. SMEs gain enterprise-grade audience targeting and loyalty mechanics without building a bespoke MarTech stack.
AI backbone. Language and creative tools (MT, AIGC, visual search), production recommenders (DIN/DIEN), Qwen-powered assistants for merchant ops and service, and Cainiao's AI routing raise media efficiency, speed up localization, keep response times low at peak, and stabilize delivery promises - particularly decisive for first-time exporters to China and ASEAN.
Permanent training. An "always-on" learning layer - Lazada University, Taobao/Alibaba academies, Netpreneur Masterclass and AWE Europe, the Partner Program, and the university pipeline - moves teams from onboarding to strategy and builds a talent bench. This lowers entry errors, shortens time-to-first-sale, and sustains continuous improvement.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Policy recommendations: a pragmatic roadmap to 2030

Our policy chapter translates the evidence into a six-pillar agenda that "finishes the plumbing" of export-oriented digital platforms in the public interest - payments, customs data, trusted artificial intelligence and data use - and funds the capabilities that let more small and medium-sized enterprises plug into the rails that already exist.

1. **Equip one million EU SMEs to sell into Asia.**
   Through an Export-by-Platform Track delivered by the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and the European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs), plus simple digital export vouchers to co-finance first listings, localization, logistics set-up, and pilot campaigns. A dedicated China-ready program brings tourism SMEs up to speed on Chinese-language service, payments, and platform presence.

2. **Reduce transaction frictions end-to-end.**
   Accelerate adoption of instant euro payments under Regulation (EU) 2024/886 so upstream EU suppliers are paid in seconds; publish an "ICS2-for-SMEs" playbook and micro-grants to comply with the Import Control System 2 (ICS2) data requirements for Entry Summary Declarations; pass a strong Late Payment Regulation with an enforceable 30-day standard and real penalties.

3. **Build trusted AI and data rails for cross-border commerce.**
   Stand up export-oriented regulatory sandboxes under the EU Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) by 2026 to safely trial pricing, translation, creative generation, and fraud-risk models; publish toolkits for lawful EU-China data transfers using Standard Contractual Clauses (SCCs) and Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs); issue model clauses under the EU Data Act so SMEs can access logistics/after-sales data and switch providers fairly.

4. **De-risk market entry and compliance.**
   Expand the EU SME Centre and the China Intellectual Property (IP) SME Helpdesk as the default coaching stack on market rules, IP protection, and contracts; publish official cross-border e-commerce (CBEC) route guides (e.g., Tmall Global pathways, "positive list" categories, labeling and tax rules); pilot export finance that recognizes platform order/settlement data (via the European Investment Fund and national export-credit agencies).

5. **Strengthen local capability at scale.**
   Create a permanent Digital Export Academy (public–private) offering modular certificates in catalog quality, compliance, ICS2, payments, analytics, and applied AI; add short executive programs for SME leaders; issue micro-credentials for tourism staff on Chinese platforms, service standards, and QR/wallet payments.

6. **Govern and measure what matters.**
   Launch an EU+National & Asia Digital Trade Accelerator to co-publish open playbooks, reference application programming interfaces (APIs), and model contracts (aligned with the AI Act, Data Act,p and SCCs); add a Digital Decade Export Dashboard that tracks SME platform exports, instant-payment uptake, ICS2 readiness, and AI use cases by Member State and sector.

Timing and ambition. These recommended policies line up with the EU's legislative calendar - AI Act sandboxes due by 2026; ICS2 fully phased for maritime/road/rail by 2025; instant payments obligations starting in 2025; and the Digital Decade targets for 2030. They also answer what our micro-evidence shows SMEs need most: clear rules they can act on, operable templates they can reuse, and practical coaching embedded where they already work.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

EU e-commerce rulebook: what changes for SMEs and platforms. Between 2025 and 2027, the EU e-commerce rulebook tightens across product safety and liability (GPSR, new PLD), VAT/customs (ViDA, ICS2 and customs reform), consumer-facing fairness (incoming Digital Fairness Act) and environmental responsibility (EPR under PPWR and the Batteries Regulation). For SMEs, this means practical housekeeping: publish complete product safety data, retain software/update logs for liability, cleanse VAT and customs master data for ICS2/ViDA, harden UX and influencer compliance, and register under EPR schemes (packaging, WEEE, batteries) with country-by-country proof. The prize is lower risk and smoother access to platform demand - exactly where the macro evidence shows growth is concentrated.

What success looks like by 2030. On the capability side, 90% of SMEs reach basic digital intensity and 75% of enterprises use cloud/AI/big-data tools. On the trade side, hundreds of thousands of European SMEs are selling to Asian consumers and travelers via online platforms, and platform-enabled EU-to-Asia sales consistently outpace overall extra-EU exports - the very pattern our macro analysis already documents for 2024.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

1. PLATFORMS

Alibaba was originally established in 1999. Since its founding and the establishment of its first digital marketplace – which continues to support small and medium sized enterprises from China and all over the world to source and sell globally – Alibaba Group has grown to comprise businesses including Alibaba China E-commerce Group, Alibaba International Digital Commerce Group, Cloud Intelligence Group and other platforms and technology solutions.

Alibaba offers multiple e-commerce platforms around the globe. While Alibaba does provide local and cross border B2C services to European consumers, Alibaba's marketplaces constitute a very relevant economic channel for European brands, SMEs and companies of all sizes to sell European products to consumers in the China market and in other markets around the world.

This research report specifically examines Alibaba platforms such as Taobao, Taobao Global, Tmall, Tmall Global, Lazada and Fliggy, focusing, in particular, on how they facilitate the sale of European products and services in the Chinese and Southeast Asian markets[4].

Taobao

Launched in 2003, Taobao means "search for treasures". It provides Chinese consumers from both large cities and less developed areas with an engaging, personalized shopping experience, optimized by digital technology.

Through specific content and interactive formats with real-time updates from merchants, consumers can learn about products and new trends. They can also interact with each other and their favourite merchants and Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) among Chinese consumers in the market through a broad range of interactive features such as livestreaming and short-form videos. Merchants on Taobao are primarily individuals and small businesses[5].

Taobao Global

Taobao Global, launched by Alibaba Group in 2007, is a cross-border e-commerce platform designed to help international brands - particularly small and medium-sized enterprises - enter the Chinese market. The platform connects foreign brands to a network of approximately 60,000 independent online Chinese retailers to sell their products in China.

Tmall

Launched in 2008, Tmall caters to Chinese consumers' ever-growing demand for high-quality products and premium shopping experiences. It serves as a platform for consumers in China to buy both domestic and international branded products as well as products not available in traditional retail outlets.

Many international and Chinese brands and retailers have established storefronts on Tmall. Tmall is also known for hosting large-scale online shopping events, including the "11.11" Global Shopping Festival. Together with Taobao, it contributes to Alibaba's broader digital retail ecosystem[6].

Tmall Global

In 2014, Alibaba launched Tmall Global which focuses on imports into China.

It is a leading e-commerce platform in China that addresses the increasing demand of Chinese consumers for international products and brands. It serves as an effective channel through which overseas brands and retailers reach consumers in China, build brand awareness and gain consumer insights in forming their overall China strategies, without the need for physical operations in China. More than 80% of international brands on Tmall Global made their China debut on the platform[7].

4 *Lazada operates also across Southeast Asia*
5 *www.alibabagroup.com*
6 *www.alibabagroup.com*
7 *www.alibabagroup.com*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Lazada

Lazada, founded in 2012, is an e-commerce platform in Southeast Asia, operating in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The platform connects consumers with brands and sellers across various product categories, through both LazMall (its premium marketplace) and its general marketplace. Acquired by Alibaba Group in 2016, Lazada benefits from Alibaba's technological infrastructure, logistics capabilities, and payment solutions. Lazada, in fact, has expanded its presence by integrating technology, logistics, and payment solutions[8].

Fliggy

Founded in 2016, Fliggy is Alibaba Group's online travel platform. It serves as a comprehensive travel booking service, offering flights, hotels, vacation packages, and other travel-related experiences. The platform integrates a comprehensive suite of services, encompassing destination planning, transportation, accommodation, and local attractions. Through collaborations with global travel enterprises, a range of reliable travel experiences has been curated, accessible via a digital platform.

The company applies technological innovation to adapt to the changing needs of Chinese tourists. Additionally, Fliggy provides international travel businesses with opportunities to engage with the Chinese travel market and expand their reach by connecting with a broad network of travelers[9].

8 *https://www.lazada.com/en/about/*
9 *https://www.fliggy.hk/#/home*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

2. THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF ALIBABA'S PLATFORMS TO THE EUROPEAN ECONOMY

2.1. EUROPEAN UNION

2.1.1. MAIN FINDINGS

The six European Union (EU) countries considered in this analysis - Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands (hereafter, EU6) - collectively account, as of 2024, for 80% of the EU27's exports to China and 71% of its gross domestic product (GDP).
Over the 3 years from 2022 to 2024, the aggregated Gross Merchandise Value[10] (GMV) of goods sold from EU27 via Alibaba's Taobao and Tmall reached €89.3 billion. Between 2023 and 2024, sales from Europe (EU27 and EU6) in China through Alibaba's platforms registered positive growth, in contrast with the contraction observed in total exports.

From 2022 to 2024, EU6 products sold on **Taobao and Tmall** in China contributed 36,551 million euros to EU6's GDP and 15,279 million euros to the tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 131,484.

Based on approximately 300 sample EU6 brands from 2022 to 2024, products sold on **Lazada** in Southeast Asia (SEA) contributed at least 421 million euros to EU6's GDP and 171 million euros to tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to at least 1,298.

From 2023 to 2024, products and services sold to Chinese tourists who used **Fliggy** to visit EU6 countries contributed 1,605 million euros to the GDP and 675 million euros to the tax revenues of the six countries (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 10,402.

Between 2022 and 2024, activities related to EU6 sales in China and SEA, as well as Chinese tourist spending in the six countries via Alibaba's platforms, contributed approximately €38.6 billion to EU6 GDP, generated €16.1 billion in tax receipts, and supported around 143,184 jobs in the six countries (Table 1).

Table 1 - Aggregate picture (2022 – 2024, values in 2024 prices)

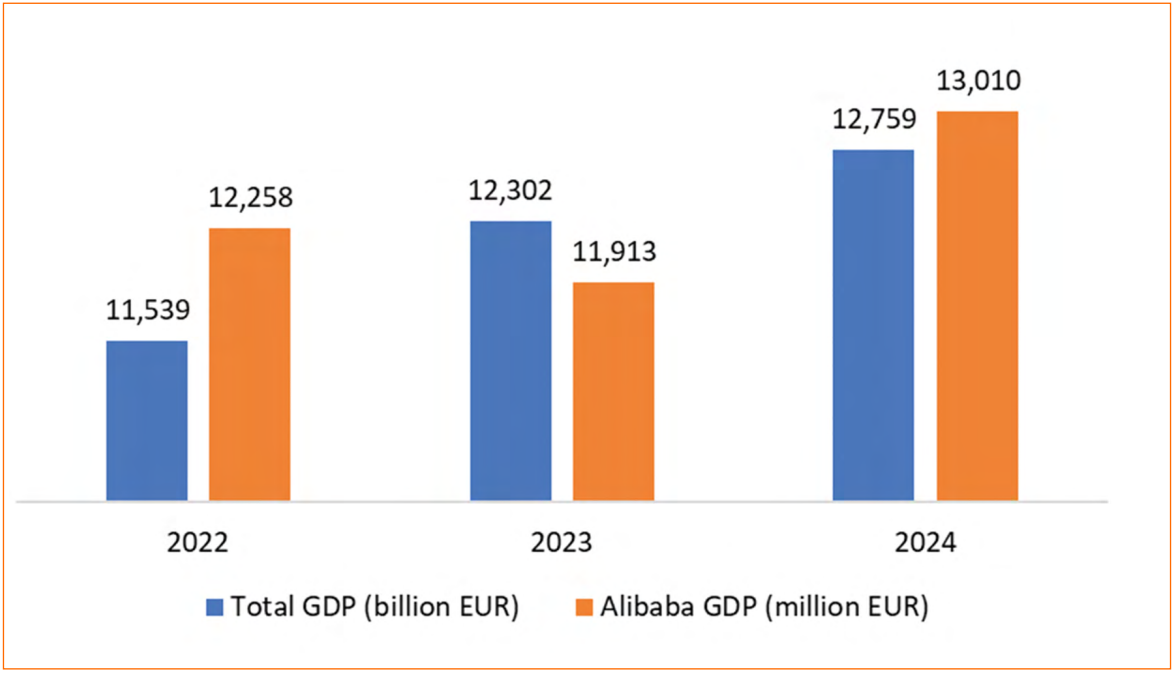
Metric	Taobao + Tmall	Lazada	Fliggy	Total
GDP contribution	€ 36.551 m	€ 421 m	€ 1.605 m	**€ 38.577 m**
Tax revenues	€ 15.279 m	€ 171 m	€ 675 m	**€ 16 125 m**
Jobs supported in 2024	131,484	1,298	10,402	**143,184**

GDP from sales via Alibaba's platforms outperformed the overall GDP of the EU6 over the 2023-2024 period: the total GDP of the EU6 increased by 3.7% in current prices (from 12,302 to 12,759 billion euros), while the GDP generated by the total effects of sales through Alibaba's platforms increased by 9.2% (from 11,913 to 13,010 million euros) (Figure 1).

10 *GMV refers to the value of goods and services sold via e-commerce platforms, calculated before deducting any fees or expenses.*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Figure 1 – GDP of the EU6: Total Increase of EU6 GDP (billion EUR) and Contribution to EU6 GDP Attributable to Sales on Alibaba's Platforms (million EUR)

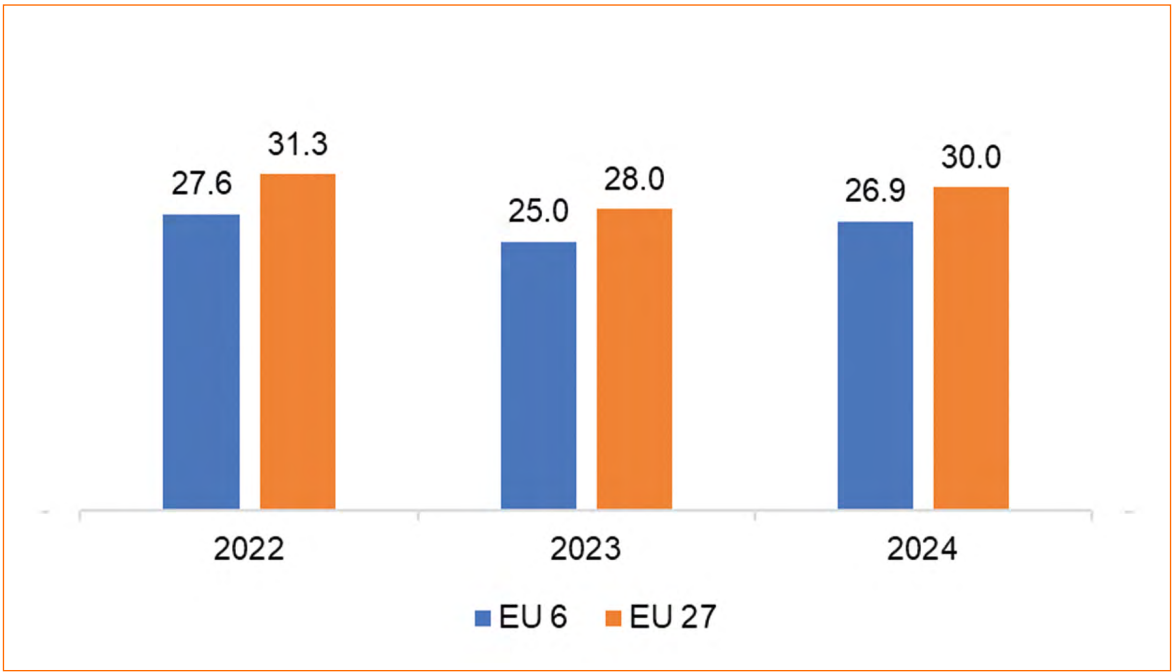


Source: Alibaba Group, Eurostat, and CBS

2.1.2. TAOBAO AND TMALL

In 2024, companies of the 27 countries of the EU sold 30,030 million euros worth of products - the Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) - to consumers in China on Taobao and Tmall, while companies of the six EU countries chosen for this research study sold 26,890 million euros. (Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Gross Merchandise Value (billion EUR)

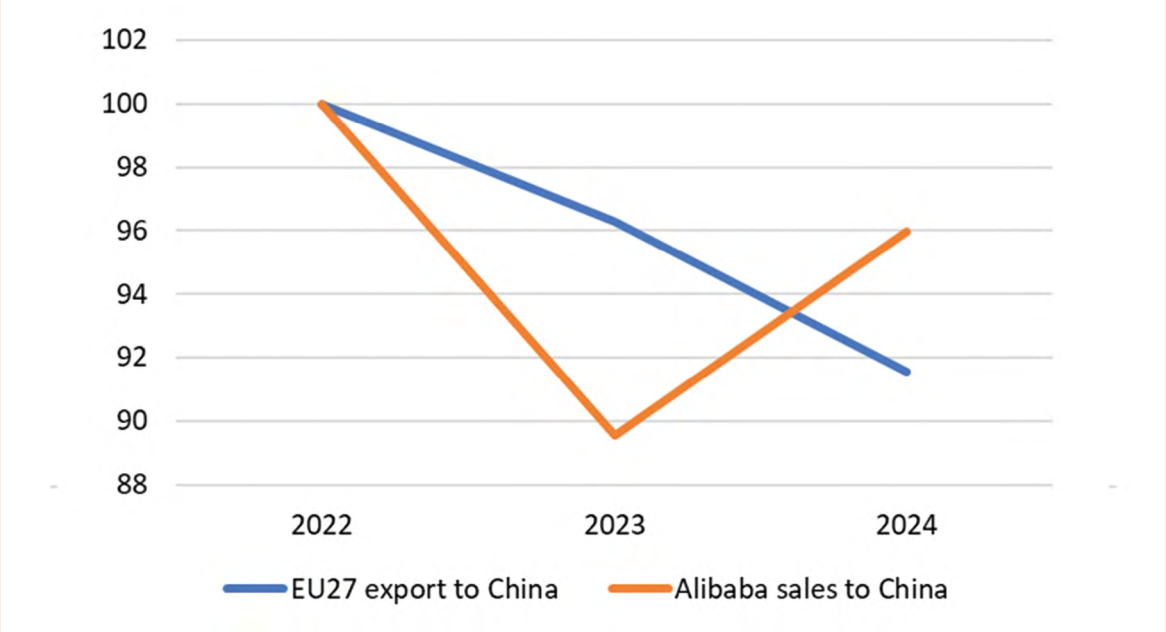


Source: Alibaba Group

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Sales in China via Alibaba's platforms outperformed overall export trends. Between 2022 and 2024, total exports from the EU6 to China dropped by 8.4%, whereas sales through Alibaba's platforms fell by only 2.4%. Between 2023 and 2024, total exports from the EU6 to China dropped by 6.3%, whereas sales through Alibaba's platforms increased by 7.5%.
Similarly, between 2022 and 2024, total exports from the EU27 to China decreased by 8.4%, while sales through Alibaba's platforms declined by 4.0%.
Between 2023 and 2024, total exports from the EU27 to China dropped by 4.9%, whereas sales through Alibaba's platforms increased by 7.2% (Figure 3), indicating relative resilience - subject to the caveat that the export baskets being compared differ in composition.

Figure 3 – EU27 export and Alibaba sales to China (2022 = 100)



Source: Alibaba Group and Eurostat

In 2024, 33% of total sales were for products belonging to the category "Chemicals and chemical products", such as perfumes, beauty, personal care, and make-up products, and 29% to the category "Textiles, wearing apparel, leather and related products" (Table 2).

Table 2 – Sales by product category (2024)	
Chemicals and chemical products	33%
Textiles, wearing apparel, leather and related products	29%
Food, beverages and tobacco products	9%
Furniture and other manufactured goods	7%
Electrical equipment	4%
Others	18%

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

For the 2022–2024 period, we estimate the impact on EU6's output from the sale of products and services by domestic companies to Chinese consumers, based on the most recent available Input-Output tables for each country. The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects[11].
In this calculation, we subtract the retail margins paid abroad from the GMV, disaggregated by platform, business unit, store type, and product category. According to our estimates, in 2024, the average

11 See methodology

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

margin on GMV is in a range between 25.8% and 28.2%; this range is in line with Damodaran's estimates for operating and net margins in the retail sector[12].
To estimate the impact on EU6's gross domestic product (GDP), we sum the total effects in the six countries for the gross value added (GVA) of each product category. GVA measures the value of goods and services produced minus the cost of intermediate inputs used in production. The GVA of individual products and services contributes directly to a country's GDP.
In 2024, sales of products by EU6 companies on Taobao and Tmall contributed 11,952 million euros to EU6's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 36,551 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to EU6's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 4,960 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 15,279 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in the EU6 as a result of these sales is estimated at 131,484 in 2024 (Table 3).

Table 3 – Impact on the EU6 economy

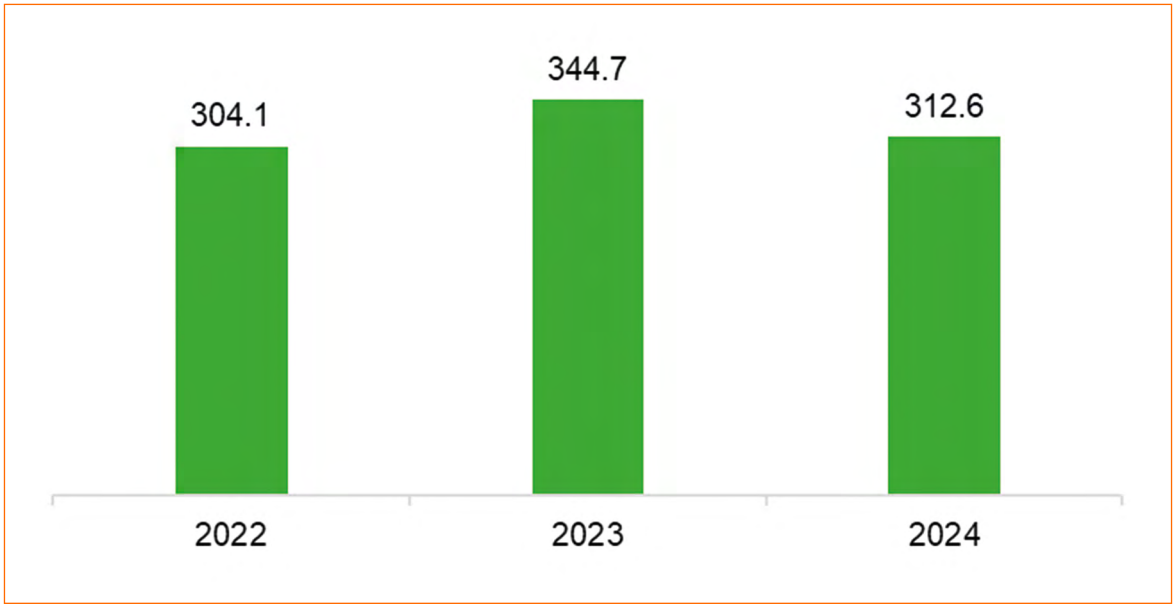
	2022	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	12,122	11,114	11,952
Tax revenues (million EUR)	5,144	4,605	4,960
Persons employed	142,970	124,889	131,484

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, CBS, and OECD

2.1.3. LAZADA

Based on approximately 300 sample brands, in 2024, EU6 companies sold 312.6 million euros worth of products – the GMV - to consumers in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam on Lazada (Figure 4).For the 2022-2024 period, we estimate the impact on EU6's output from the sale of products and services by domestic companies to Southeast Asia (SEA) consumers, based on the most recent available Input-Output tables for each country.

Figure 4 - Gross Merchandise Value (million EUR)



Source: Alibaba Group

12 See methodology

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

In this calculation, we deduct from the GMV the retail margins paid abroad, based on Damodaran's estimates of operating and net margins for the retail sector[13].

In 2024, sales of products by the top 50 brands of each EU6 country on Lazada contributed 27.0 million euros to EU6's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 421.0 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to EU6's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 51.2 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 171.0 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in the EU6 as a result of these sales is estimated at 1,298 in 2024 (Table 4).

Table 4 – Impact on the EU6 economy

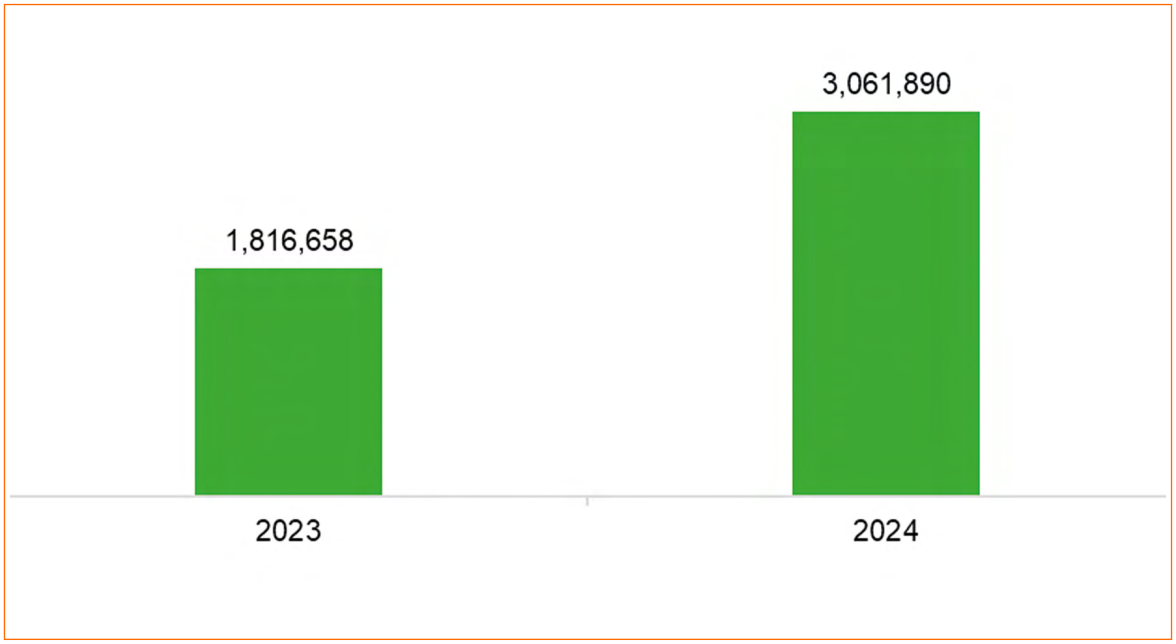
	2022	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	135.2	140.8	127.0
Tax revenues (million EUR)	56.0	56.5	51.2
Persons employed	1,498	1,485	1,298

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, CBS, and OECD

2.1.4. FLIGGY

In 2024, tourists using Fliggy who visited the six EU countries under analysis spent almost 3.1 million days in the markets, up 69% from the previous year. (Figure 5).

Figure 5 - Number of days spent by tourists in the EU6 countries



Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

13 See methodology

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

In the absence of data on expenditure by product and service category by tourist nationality, we derived the breakdown using estimated total expenditure data, primarily from the European Travel Commission (ETC) and the Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA) provided by national statistical authorities. For the 2023–2024 period, we estimate the impact on EU6 GDP from the sale of products and services by EU6 companies to Chinese tourists, using the Input-Output tables.

In 2024, sales of products and services by EU6 companies to tourists who used Fliggy to visit the six countries contributed 931.1 million euros to EU6's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2023-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 1,605.0 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to tax revenue from these sales by the six countries is estimated at 391.8 million euros in 2024. Over the 2023-2024 period, this totals 674.9 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in the six countries as a result of these sales is estimated at 10,402 in 2024 (Table 5).

Table 5 – Impact on the EU6 economy

	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	657.4	931.1
Tax revenues (million EUR)	276.1	391.8
Persons employed	7,625	10,402

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, national statistics authorities, and OECD

2.2. BELGIUM

2.2.1. MAIN FINDINGS

From 2022 to 2024, Belgian products sold on **Taobao and Tmall** in China contributed 163.7 million euros to Belgium's GDP and 69.6 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 477.
Based on approximately 50 sample Belgian brands, from 2022 to 2024, products sold on **Lazada** in Southeast Asia (SEA) at least contributed 6.80 million euros to Belgium's GDP and 2.89 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to at least 19.
From 2023 to 2024, products and services sold to Chinese tourists who used **Fliggy** to visit Belgium contributed 1.24 million euros to Belgium's GDP and 0.53 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 5.

Table 6 – Aggregate picture (2022 – 2024, values in 2024 prices)

Metric	Taobao + Tmall	Lazada	Fliggy	Total
GDP contribution	€ 163.7 m	€ 6.80 m	€ 1.24 m	**€ 171.8 m**
Tax revenues	€ 69.6 m	€ 2.89 m	€ 0.53 m	**€ 73.0 m**
Jobs supported in 2024	477	19	5	**501**

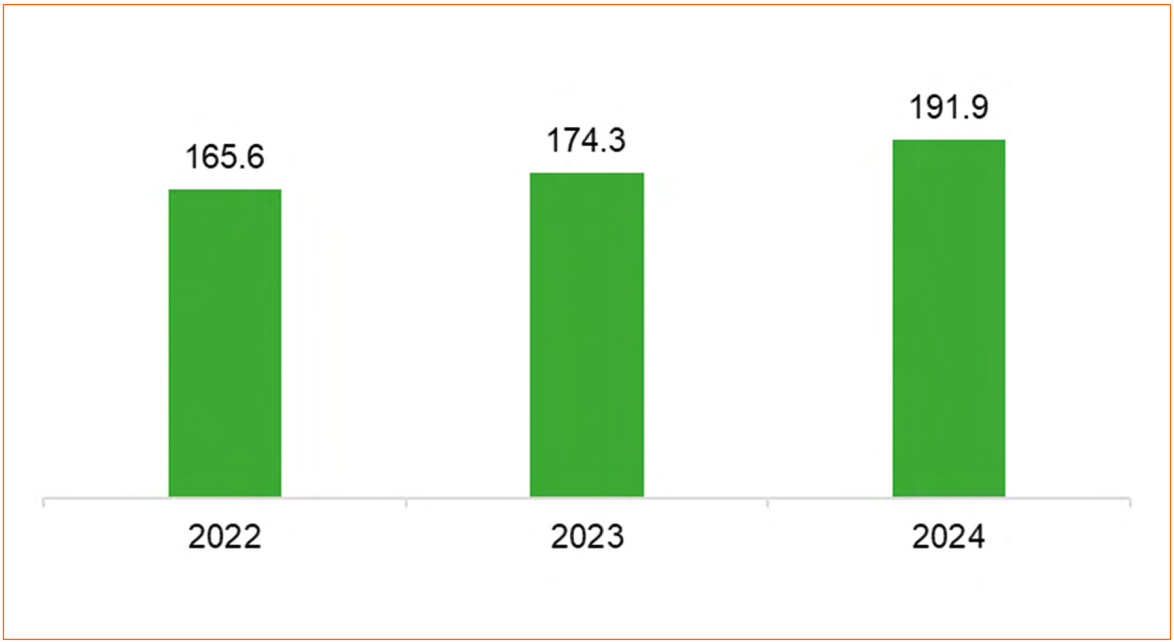
Between 2022 and 2024, activities related to Belgian products sold in China and SEA, as well as Chinese tourist spending in Belgium via Alibaba's platforms, contributed approximately €172 million to Belgian GDP, generated €73 million in tax receipts, and supported around 501 Belgian jobs (Table 6).

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

2.2.2. TAOBAO AND TMALL

In 2024, Belgian companies sold 191.9 million euros worth of products – the Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) - to consumers in China on Taobao and Tmall (Figure 6).

Figure 6 - Gross Merchandise Value (million EUR)



Source: Alibaba Group

In 2024, 38% of total sales were for products belonging to the category "Basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations", and 35% to the category "Food, beverages and tobacco products" (Table 7).

Table 7 – Sales by product category (2024)	
Basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations	38%
Food, beverages and tobacco products	35%
Textiles, wearing apparel, leather and related products	14%
Chemicals and chemical products	5%
Others	8%

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

For the 2022–2024 period, we estimate the impact on Belgium's output from the sale of products and services by Belgian companies to Chinese consumers, based on the most recent available Input-Output table. The latest Input-Output table published by Eurostat refers to the year 2020.
In this calculation, we subtract the retail margins paid abroad from the GMV, disaggregated by platform, business unit, store type, and product category. According to our estimates, in 2024, the average margin on GMV is 26.5%, a figure that is in line with Damodaran's estimates for operating and net margins in the retail sector[14].
Belgian companies generated a total output of 243.6 million euros from selling their products and services to Chinese consumers across Taobao and Tmall platforms in 2024 (Table 8). The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects[15].

14 *See methodology.*
15 *See methodology.*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Table 8 – Total impact on output in Belgium (million EUR)		
2022	**2023**	**2024**
219.6	225.4	243.6

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and Eurostat

To estimate the impact on Belgium's gross domestic product (GDP), we use the gross value added (GVA) of each product category. GVA measures the value of goods and services produced minus the cost of intermediate inputs used in production. The GVA of individual products and services contributes directly to a country's GDP. For example, in Belgium, the GVA for the category "Basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations" is 16% of output.
In 2024, sales of products by Belgian companies on Taobao and Tmall contributed 57.3 million euros to Belgium's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 163.7 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to Belgium's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 24.4 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 69.6 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in Belgium as a result of these sales is estimated at 477 in 2024 (Table 9).

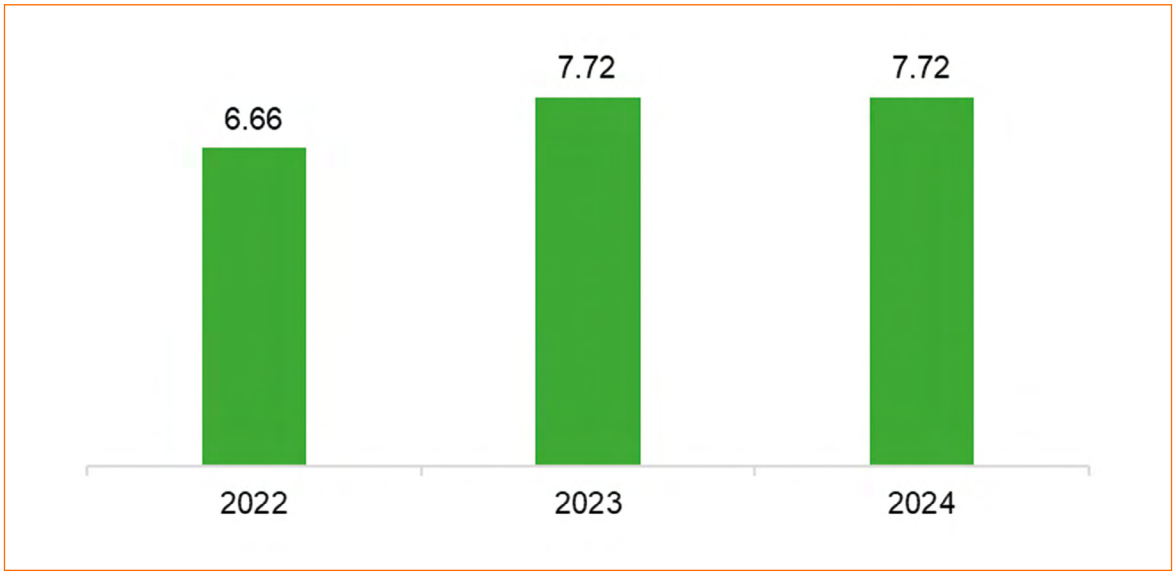
Table 9 – Impact on Belgium's economy			
	2022	**2023**	**2024**
GDP (million EUR)	49.8	52.2	57.3
Tax revenues (million EUR)	21.1	22.2	24.4
Persons employed	447	446	477

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, and OECD 2.2.3. Lazada

2.2.3. LAZADA

Based on approximately 50 sample Belgian brands, in 2024, Belgian companies sold 7.72 million euros worth of products – the GMV - to consumers in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam on Lazada (Figure 7).

Figure 7 - Gross Merchandise Value (million EUR)



Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Source: Alibaba Group

For the 2022–2024 period, we estimate the impact on Belgium's output from the sale of products and services by Belgian companies to SEA consumers, using the 2020 Input-Output table. In this calculation, we deduct from the GMV the retail margins paid abroad, based on Damodaran's estimates of operating and net margins for the retail sector.

Belgian companies generated at least a total output of 9.79 million euros from selling their products to consumers on Lazada in 2024 (Table 10) with the contribution of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 10 – Total impact on Belgium's output (million EUR)

2022	2023	2024
8.83	9.98	9.79

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and Eurostat

To estimate the impact on Belgium's GDP, we use the GVA of each product category. In 2024, sales of products by Belgian companies on Lazada contributed at least 2.30 million euros to Belgium's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to at least 6.80 million euros in 2024 prices.

Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to Belgium's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 0.98 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 2.89 million euros in 2024 prices.

Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in Belgium as a result of these sales is estimated at 19 in 2024 (Table 11).

Table 11 – Impact on Belgium's economy

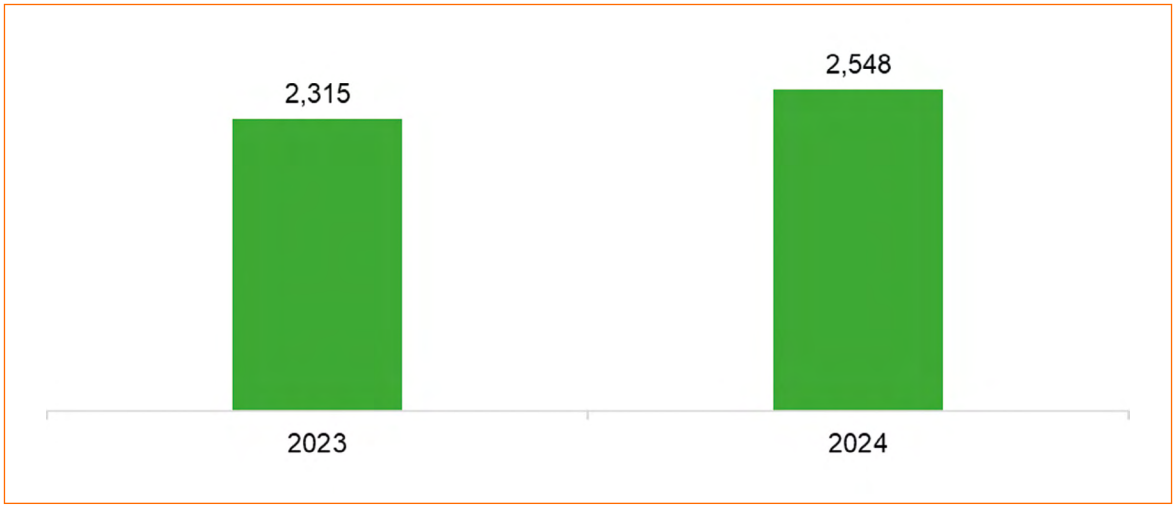
	2022	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	2.00	2.31	2.30
Tax revenues (million EUR)	0.85	0.98	0.98
Persons employed	18	20	19

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, and OECD

2.2.4. FLIGGY

In 2024, tourists using Fliggy to visit Belgium spent 2,548 days in Belgium, up by 10% from the previous year (Figure 8).

Figure 8 - Number of days spent by tourists in Belgium



Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

In the absence of data on expenditure by product and service category by tourist nationality, we derived the breakdown using estimated total expenditure data from the European Travel Commission (ETC), overnight stay data from ETC through TourMIS, and expenditure type information from the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) provided by Toerisme Vlaanderen and used as a proxy for the national data.
In 2024, the average daily expenditure of tourists from China is 166 euros, of which 17% spent on accommodation and 24% on food and beverages.
For the 2023–2024 period, we estimate the impact on Belgium's output from the sale of products and services by Belgian companies to Chinese tourists, using the 2020 Input-Output table.
Belgian companies generated a total output of 1.01 million euros from selling their products and services to tourists who used Fliggy to visit Belgium in 2024 (Table 12). The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 12 – Total impact on Belgium's output (million EUR)

2023	2024
0.97	1.01

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, ETC, and Toerisme Vlaanderen

To estimate the impact on Belgium's GDP, we use the GVA of each product and service category. For example, for the category "Accommodation", the gross value added as a percentage of the output is 34%.
In 2024, sales of products and services by Belgian companies to tourists who used Fliggy to visit Belgium contributed 0.60 million euros to Belgium's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2023-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 1.24 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to Belgium's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 0.26 million euros in 2024. Over the 2023-2024 period, this totals 0.53 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in Belgium as a result of these sales is estimated at 5 in 2024 (Table 13).

Table 13 – Impact on Belgium's economy

	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	0.63	0.60
Tax revenues (million EUR)	0.27	0.26
Persons employed	5	5

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, ETC, Toerisme Vlaanderen, and OECD

2.3. FRANCE

2.3.1. MAIN FINDINGS

From 2022 to 2024, French products sold on **Taobao and Tmall** in China contributed 12,589.4 million euros to France's GDP and 5,604.2 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 43,660.
Based on approximately 50 sample French brands, from 2022 to 2024, products sold on **Lazada** in Southeast Asia (SEA) at least contributed 132.3 million euros to France's GDP and 58.9 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to at least 423.
From 2023 to 2024, products and services sold to Chinese tourists who used **Fliggy** to visit France contributed 1,000.4 million euros to France's GDP and 438.3 million euros to the country's tax revenues

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

(in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 6,352.

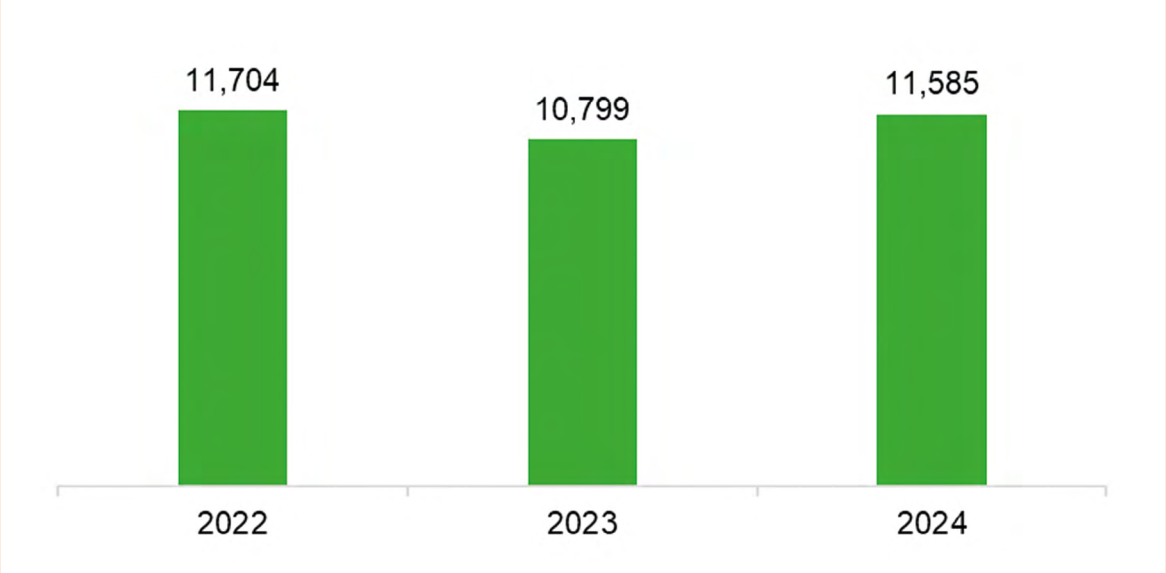
Table 14 – Aggregate picture (2022 – 2024, values in 2024 prices)				
Metric	**Taobao + Tmall**	**Lazada**	**Fliggy**	**Total**
GDP contribution	€12 589.4 m	€132.3 m	€1 000.4 m	**€13 722.1 m**
Tax revenues	€5 604.2 m	€58.9 m	€438.3 m	**€6 101.4 m**
Jobs supported in 2024	43,660	423	6,352	**50,435**

Between 2022 and 2024, activities related to French products sold in China and SEA, as well as Chinese tourist spending in France via Alibaba's platforms, contributed approximately €13.72 billion to French GDP, generated €6.10 billion in tax receipts, and supported around 50,435 French jobs (Table 14).

2.3.2. TAOBAO AND TMALL

In 2024, French companies sold 11,585 million euros worth of products – the Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) - to consumers in China on Taobao and Tmall (Figure 9).

Figure 9 - Gross Merchandise Value (million EUR)



Source: Alibaba Group

In 2024, 62% of total sales were for products belonging to the category "Chemicals and chemical products", such as perfumes, beauty, personal care, and make-up products, and 20% to the category "Textiles, wearing apparel, leather and related products" (Table 15).

Table 15 – Sales by product category (2024)	
Chemicals and chemical products	62%
Textiles, wearing apparel, leather and related products	20%
Food, beverages and tobacco products	7%
Furniture and other manufactured goods	6%
Others	5%

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

For the 2022–2024 period, we estimate the impact on France's output from the sale of products and services by French companies to Chinese consumers, based on the most recent available Input-Output table. The latest Input-Output table published by Eurostat refers to the year 2021.

In this calculation, we subtract the retail margins paid abroad from the GMV, disaggregated by platform, business unit, store type, and product category. According to our estimates, in 2024, the average margin on GMV is 25.8%, a figure that is in line with Damodaran's estimates for operating and net margins in the retail sector[16].
French companies generated a total output of 15,471.7 million euros from selling their products and services to Chinese consumers across Taobao and Tmall platforms in 2024 (Table 16). The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects[17].

Table 16 – Total impact on output in France (million EUR)

2022	2023	2024
15,603	14,360	15,472

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and Eurostat

To estimate the impact on France's gross domestic product (GDP), we use the gross value added (GVA) of each product category. GVA measures the value of goods and services produced minus the cost of intermediate inputs used in production. The GVA of individual products and services contributes directly to a country's GDP. For example, in France, the GVA for the category "Chemicals and chemical products" is 14% of output.

In 2024, sales of products by French companies on Taobao and Tmall contributed 4,162.9 million euros to France's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 12,589.4 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to France's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 1,824.0 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 5,604.2 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in France as a result of these sales is estimated at 43,660 in 2024 (Table 17).

Table 17 – Impact on France's economy

	2022	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	4,178	3,837	4,163
Tax revenues (million EUR)	1,912	1,681	1,824
Persons employed	47,325	41,261	43,660

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, and OECD

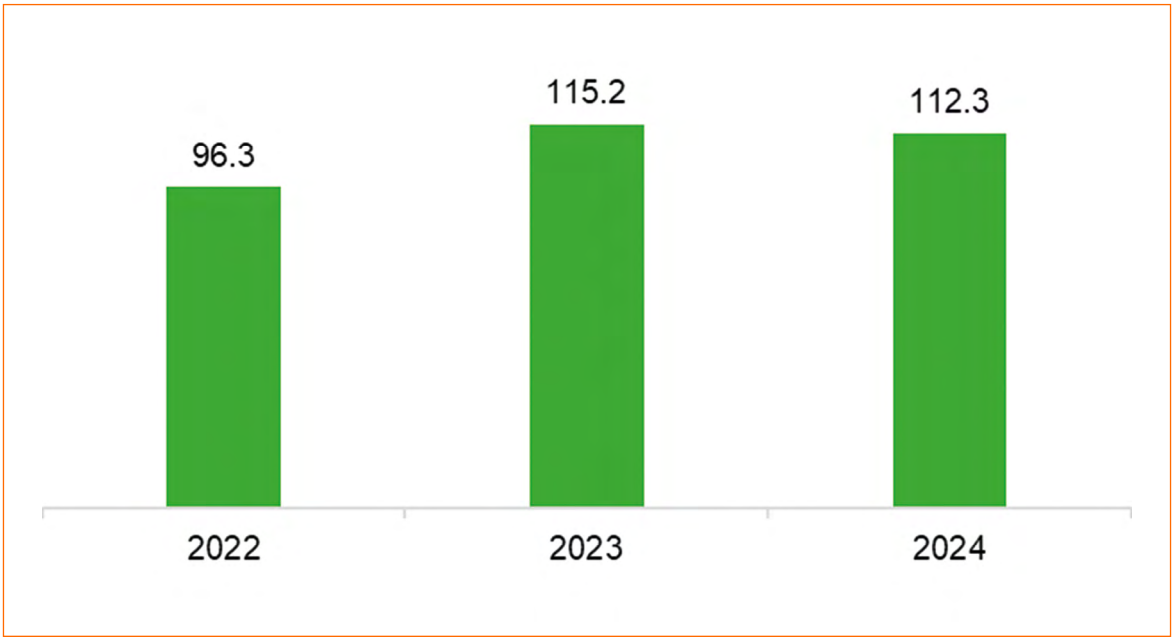
16 *See methodology.*
17 *See methodology.*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

2..3.3. LAZADA

Based on approximately 50 sample French brands, in 2024, French companies sold at least 112.3 million euros worth of products – the GMV - to consumers in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam on Lazada (Figure 10).

Figure 10 - Gross Merchandise Value (million EUR)



Source: Alibaba Group

For the 2022–2024 period, we estimate the impact on France's output from the sale of products and services by French companies to SEA consumers, using the 2021 Input-Output table. In this calculation, we deduct from the GMV the retail margins paid abroad, based on Damodaran's estimates of operating and net margins for the retail sector.
French companies generated at least a total output of 112.3 million euros from selling their products to consumers on Lazada in 2024 (Table 18) with the contribution of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 18 – Total impact on France's output (million EUR)

2022	2023	2024
96.3	115.2	112.3

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and Eurostat

To estimate the impact on France's GDP, we use the GVA of each product category. In 2024, sales of products by French companies on Lazada contributed at least 40.4 million euros to France's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to at least 132.3 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to France's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 17.7 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 58.9 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in France as a result of these sales is estimated at 423 in 2024 (Table 19).

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

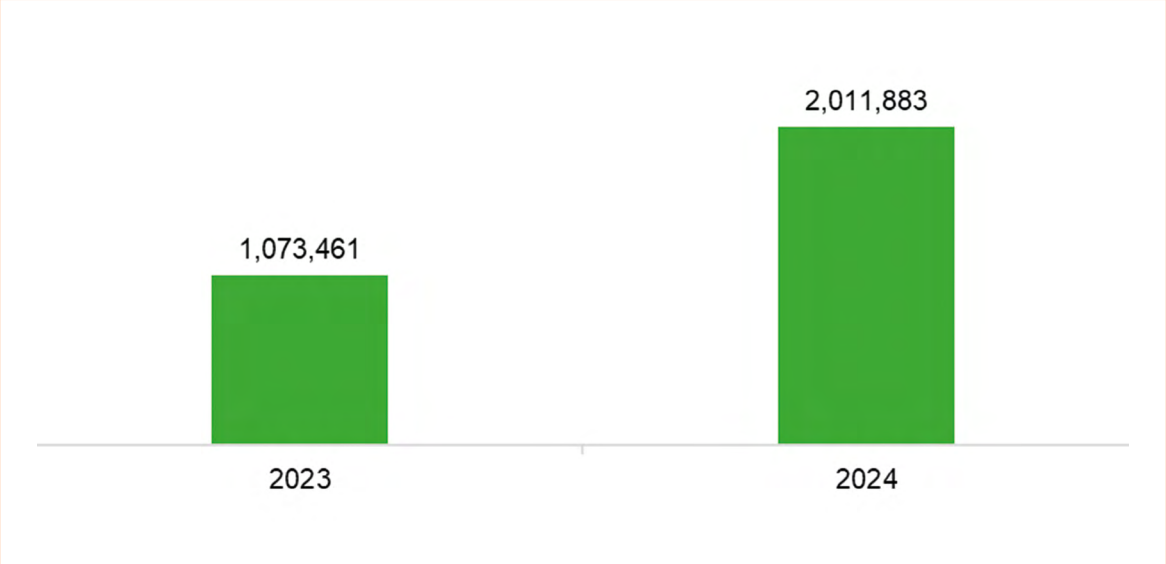
Table 19 – Impact on France's economy			
	2022	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	46.4	40.9	40.4
Tax revenues (million EUR)	21.3	17.9	17.7
Persons employed	526	440	423

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, and OECD

2..3.4. FLIGGY

In 2024, tourists using Fliggy to visit France spent 2,011,883 days in France, up by 87% from the previous year (Figure 11).

Figure 11 - Number of days spent by tourists in France



Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

In the absence of data on expenditure by product and service category by tourist nationality, we derived the breakdown using estimated total expenditure data from the European Travel Commission (ETC), estimated overnight stays from Atout France, data and expenditure type information from the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) provided by Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques (INSEE).
In 2024, the average daily expenditure of tourists from China is 151 euros, of which 40% spent on accommodation and 11% on food and beverages.
For the 2023–2024 period, we estimate the impact on France's output from the sale of products and services by French companies to Chinese tourists, using the 2021 Input-Output table.
French companies generated a total output of 763.7 million euros from selling their products and services to tourists who used Fliggy to visit France in 2024 (Table 20). The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 20 – Total impact on France's output (million EUR)	
2023	2024
486.5	763.7

To estimate the impact on France's GDP, we use the GVA of each product and service category. For example, for the category "Accommodation", the gross value added as a percentage of the output is 38%.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

In 2024, sales of products and services by French companies to tourists who used Fliggy to visit France contributed 605.6 million euros to France's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2023-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 1,000.4 million euros in 2024 prices.

Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to France's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 265.4 million euros in 2024. Over the 2023-2024 period, this totals 438.3 million euros in 2024 prices.

Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in France as a result of these sales is estimated at 6,352 in 2024 (Table 21).

Table 21 – Impact on France's economy

	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	385.9	605.6
Tax revenues (million EUR)	169.1	265.4
Persons employed	4,149	6,352

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, ETC, INSEE, and OECD

2.4. GERMANY

2.4.1. MAIN FINDINGS

From 2022 to 2024, sales of German products on Taobao and Tmall in China generated €9,601.1 million in value added for Germany's GDP and €3,710.9 million in tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, these channels supported 32,133 persons employed.

Drawing on a sample of approximately 50 German brands, sales on Lazada in Southeast Asia (SEA) from 2022 to 2024 contributed at least €128.9 million to Germany's GDP and €49.7 million to tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the number of persons employed amounted to at least 426.
From 2023 to 2024, products and services sold to Chinese tourists who used Fliggy to visit Germany contributed €157.8 million to Germany's GDP and €61.2 million to tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 914.

Between 2022 and 2024, activities related to German products sold in China and SEA, as well as Chinese tourist spending in Germany via Alibaba's platforms, contributed approximately €9.89 billion to German GDP, generated €3.82 billion in tax receipts, and supported around 33,473 German jobs (Table 22).

Table 22 – Aggregate picture (2022 – 2024, values in 2024 prices)

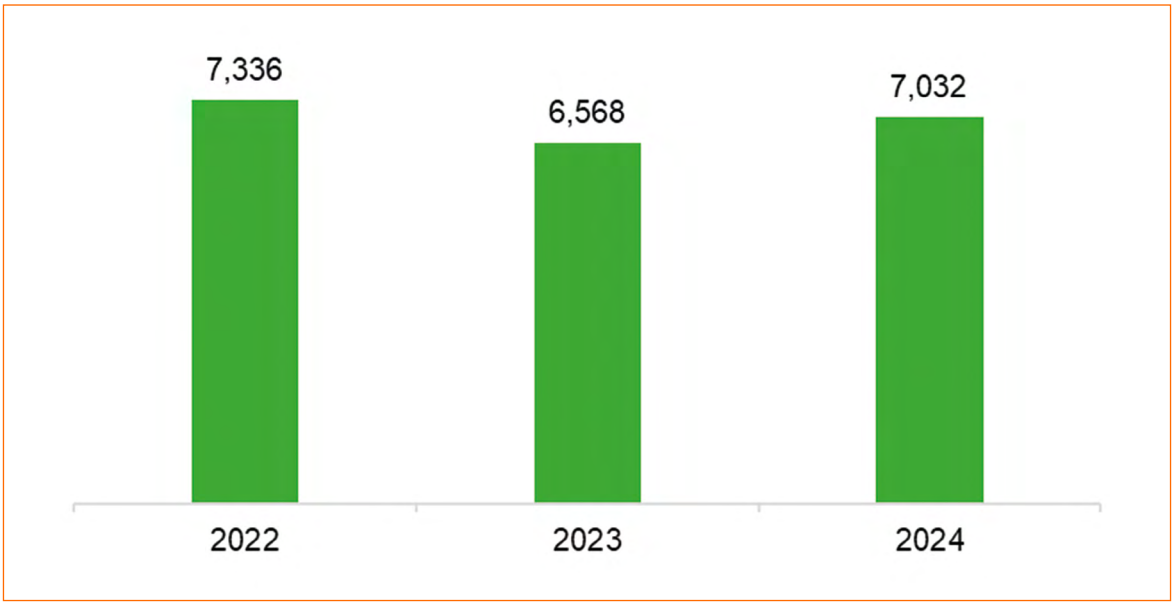
Metric	Taobao + Tmall	Lazada	Fliggy	Total
GDP contribution	€9 601.1 m	€128.9 m	€157.8 m	**€9 887.9 m**
Tax revenues	€3 710.9 m	€49.7 m	€61.2 m	**€3 821.8 m**
Jobs supported in 2024	32,133	426	914	**33,473**

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

2.4.2. TAOBAO AND TMALL

In 2024, German companies sold 7,032 million euros worth of products – the Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) - to consumers in China on Taobao and Tmall (Figure 12).

Figure 12 - Gross Merchandise Value (million EUR)



Source: Alibaba Group

In 2024, 32% of total sales were for products belonging to the category "Textiles, wearing apparel, leather and related products", and 13% to the category "Food products" (Table 23).

Table 23 – Sales by product category (2024)	
Textiles, wearing apparel, leather and related products	32%
Food, beverages and tobacco products	13%
Furniture and other manufactured goods	11%
Electrical equipment	10%
Chemicals and chemical products	9%
Basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations	8%
Others	18%

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

For the 2022–2024 period, we estimate the impact on Germany's output from the sale of products and services by German companies to Chinese consumers, based on the most recent available Input-Output table. The latest Input-Output table published by Eurostat refers to the year 2021.
In this calculation, we subtract the retail margins paid abroad from the GMV, disaggregated by platform, business unit, store type, and product category. According to our estimates, in 2024, the average margin on GMV is 27.8%, a figure that is in line with Damodaran's estimates for operating and net margins in the retail sector[18].
German companies generated a total output of 9,233 million euros from selling their products and services to Chinese consumers across Taobao and Tmall platforms in 2024 (Table 24). The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects[19].

18 *See methodology.*
19 *See methodology.*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Table 24 – Total impact on output in Germany (million EUR)		
2022	**2023**	**2024**
9,657	8,687	9,233

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and Eurostat

To estimate the impact on Germany's gross domestic product (GDP), we use the gross value added (GVA) of each product category. GVA measures the value of goods and services produced minus the cost of intermediate inputs used in production. The GVA of individual products and services contributes directly to a country's GDP. For example, in Germany, the GVA for the category "Furniture and other manufactured goods" is 25% of output.
In 2024, sales of products by German companies on Taobao and Tmall contributed 3,002.1 million euros to Germany's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 9,601.1 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to Germany's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 1,142.5 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 3,710.9 million euros in 2024 prices.

Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in Germany as a result of these sales is estimated at 32,133 in 2024 (Table 25).

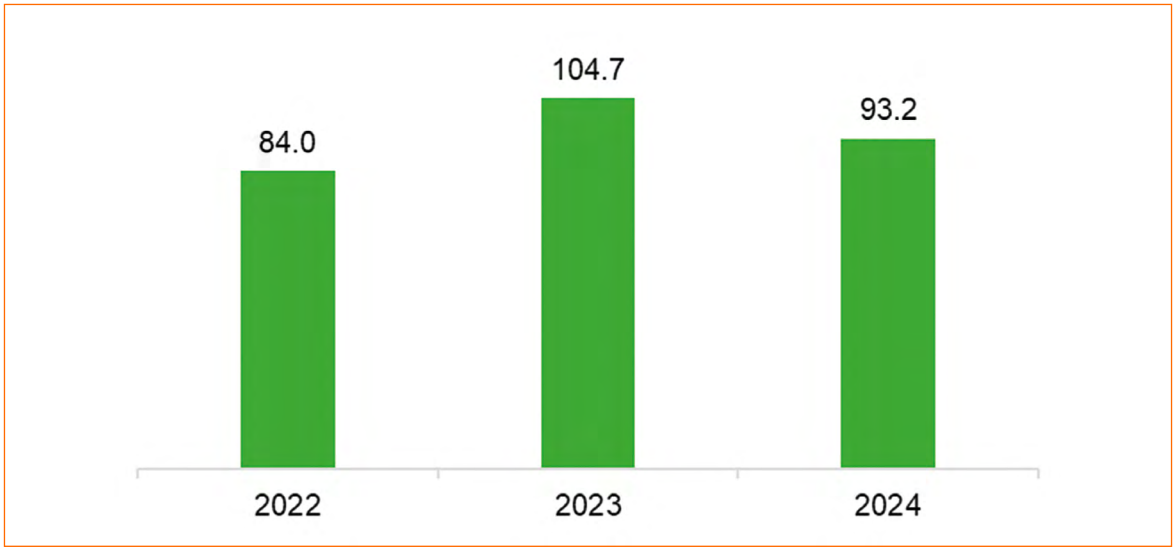
Table 25 – Impact on Germany's economy			
	2022	**2023**	**2024**
GDP (million EUR)	3,275.0	2,924.5	3,002.1
Tax revenues (million EUR)	1,298.5	1,113.0	1,142.5
Persons employed	37,833	32,149	32,133

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, and OECD

2.4.3. LAZADA

Based on approximately 50 sample German brands, in 2024, German companies sold at least 93.2 million euros worth of products – the GMV - to consumers in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam on Lazada (Figure 13).

Figure 13 - Gross Merchandise Value (million EUR)



Source: Alibaba Group

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

For the 2022–2024 period, we estimate the impact on Germany's output from the sale of products and services by German companies to SEA consumers, using the 2021 Input-Output table. In this calculation, we deduct from the GMV the retail margins paid abroad, based on Damodaran's estimates of operating and net margins for the retail sector.
German companies generated at least a total output of 122.4 million euros from selling their products to consumers on Lazada in 2024 (Table 26) with the contribution of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 26 – Total impact on Germany's output (million EUR)

2022	2023	2024
110.6	138.4	122.4

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and Eurostat

To estimate the impact on Germany's GDP, we use the GVA of each product category. In 2024, sales of products by German companies on Lazada contributed at least 39.8 million euros to Germany's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to at least 128.9 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to Germany's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 15.1 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 49.7 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in Germany as a result of these sales is estimated at 426 in 2024 (Table 27).

Table 27 – Impact on Germany's economy

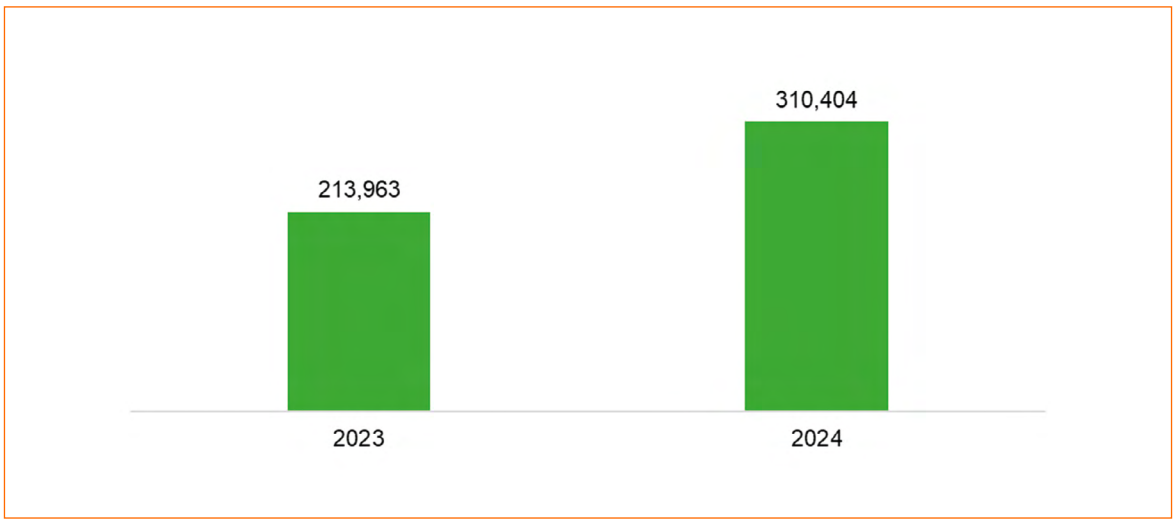
	2022	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	37.5	46.6	39.8
Tax revenues (million EUR)	14.9	17.7	15.1
Persons employed	433	512	426

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, and OECD

2.4.4. FLIGGY

In 2024, tourists using Fliggy to visit Germany spent 310,404 days in Germany, up by 45% from the previous year (Figure 14).

Figure 14 - Number of days spent by tourists in Germany



Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

In the absence of detailed expenditure data by product and service category broken down by tourist nationality, we estimated the breakdown using total expenditure data from the European Travel Commission (ETC), overnight stay data from Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), and expenditure-type distributions from the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), also provided by Destatis.
In 2024, the average daily expenditure of tourists from China is 150 euros, of which 43% spent on accommodation and 19% on food and beverages.
For the 2023–2024 period, we estimate the impact on Germany's output from the sale of products and services by German companies to Chinese tourists, using the 2021 Input-Output table.
German companies generated a total output of 110.7 million euros from selling their products and services to tourists who used Fliggy to visit Germany in 2024 (Table 28). The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 28 – Total impact on Germany's output (million EUR)

2023	2024
91.1	110.7

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, ETC, DEStatis

To estimate the impact on Germany's GDP, we use the GVA of each product and service category. For example, for the category "Accommodation", the gross value added as a percentage of the output is 39%.
In 2024, sales of products and services by German companies to tourists who used Fliggy to visit Germany contributed 85.4 million euros to Germany's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2023-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 157.8 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to Germany's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 32.5 million euros in 2024. Over the 2023-2024 period, this totals 61.2 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in Germany as a result of these sales is estimated at 914 in 2024 (Table 29).

Table 29 – Impact on Germany's economy

	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	70.3	85.4
Tax revenues (million EUR)	27.9	32.5
Persons employed	773	914

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, ETC, DEStatis, and OECD

2.5. ITALY

2.5.1. MAIN FINDINGS

From 2022 to 2024, Italian products sold on Taobao and Tmall in China contributed 10,248.6 million euros to Italy's GDP and 4,390.9 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 42,273.
Based on approximately 50 sample Italian brands, from 2022 to 2024, products sold on Lazada in Southeast Asia (SEA) at least contributed 18.3 million euros to Italy's GDP and 7.8 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to at least 70.
From 2023 to 2024, products and services sold to Chinese tourists who used Fliggy to visit Italy contributed 151.5 million euros to Italy's GDP and 64.9 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 930.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

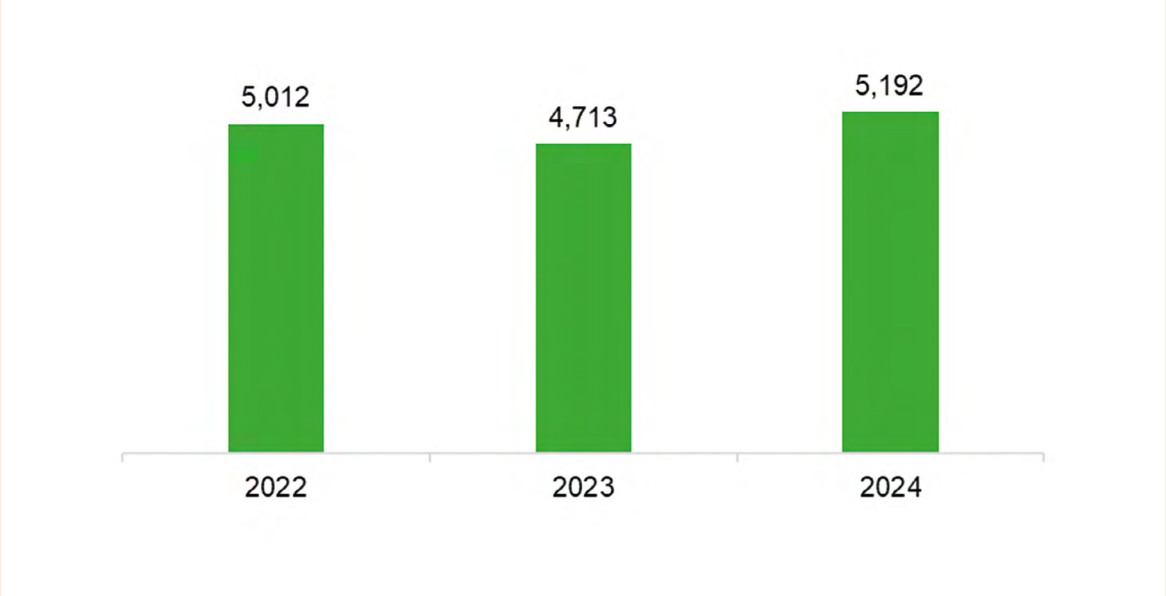
Table 30 – Aggregate picture (2022 – 2024, values in 2024 prices)				
Metric	**Taobao + Tmall**	**Lazada**	**Fliggy**	**Total**
GDP contribution	€10 248.6 m	€18.3 m	€151.5 m	**€10 418.4 m**
Tax revenues	€4 390.9 m	€7.8 m	€64.9 m	**€4 463.6 m**
Jobs supported in 2024	42,273	70	930	**43,274**

Between 2022 and 2024, activities related to Italian products sold in China and SEA, as well as Chinese tourist spending in Italy via Alibaba's platforms, contributed approximately €10.42 billion to Italian GDP, generated €4.46 billion in tax receipts, and supported around 43,274 Italian jobs (Table 30).

2.5.2. TAOBAO AND TMALL

In 2024, Italian companies sold 5,192.3 million euros worth of products – the Gross Merchandise Value (GMV)[20] - to consumers in China on Taobao and Tmall (Figure 15).

Figure 15 - Gross Merchandise Value (million EUR)



Source: Alibaba Group

In 2024, 67% of total sales were for products belonging to the category "Textiles, wearing apparel, leather and related products", and 10% to the category "Chemicals and chemical products", such as perfumes, beauty, personal care, and make-up products (Table 31).

Table 31 – Sales by product category (2024)	
Textiles, wearing apparel, leather and related products	67%
Chemicals and chemical products	10%
Furniture and other manufactured goods	7%
Food, beverages and tobacco products	4%
Others	12%

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

20 See footnote 10.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

For the 2022–2024 period, we estimate the impact on Italy's output from the sale of products and services by Italian companies to Chinese consumers, based on the most recent available Input-Output table. The latest Input-Output table published by Eurostat refers to the year 2021.
In this calculation, we subtract the retail margins paid abroad from the GMV, disaggregated by platform, business unit, store type, and product category. According to our estimates, in 2024, the average margin on GMV is 26.1%, a figure that is in line with Damodaran's estimates for operating and net margins in the retail sector[21].

Italian companies generated a total output of 8,531.3 million euros from selling their products and services to Chinese consumers across Taobao and Tmall platforms in 2024 (Table 32). The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects[22].

Table 32 – Total impact on output in Italy (million EUR)

2022	2023	2024
8,104.7	7,710.4	8,531.3

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and Eurostat

To estimate the impact on Italy's gross domestic product (GDP), we use the gross value added (GVA) of each product category. GVA measures the value of goods and services produced minus the cost of intermediate inputs used in production. The GVA of individual products and services contributes directly to a country's GDP. For example, in Italy, the GVA for the category "Textiles, wearing apparel, leather and related products" is 23% of output.
In 2024, sales of products by Italian companies on Taobao and Tmall contributed 3,501.3 million euros to Italy's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 10,248.6 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to Italy's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 1,500.1 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 4,390.9 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in Italy as a result of these sales is estimated at 42,273 in 2024 (Table 33).

Table 33 – Impact on Italy's economy

	2022	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	3,264.6	3,150.0	3,501.3
Tax revenues (million EUR)	1,398.4	1,349.6	1,500.1
Persons employed	41,746	38,483	42,273

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, and OECD

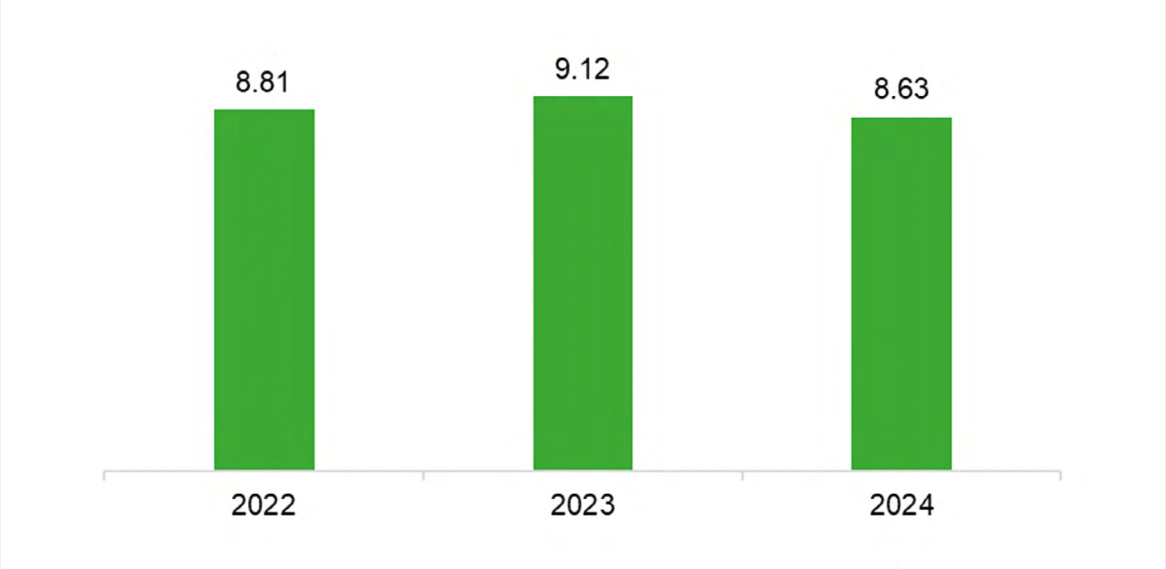
21 *See methodology.*
22 *See methodology.*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

2.5.3. LAZADA

Based on approximately 50 sample Italian brands, in 2024, Italian companies sold at least 8.63 million euros worth of products – the GMV - to consumers in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam on Lazada (Figure 16).

Figure 16 - Gross Merchandise Value (million EUR)



Source: Alibaba Group

For the 2022–2024 period, we estimate the impact on Italy's output from the sale of products and services by Italian companies to SEA consumers, using the 2021 Input-Output table. In this calculation, we deduct from the GMV the retail margins paid abroad, based on Damodaran's estimates of operating and net margins for the retail sector[23].
Italian companies generated at least a total output of 14.2 million euros from selling their products to consumers on Lazada in 2024 (Table 34) with the contribution of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 34 – Total impact on Italy's output (million EUR)

2022	2023	2024
14.2	14.9	14.2

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and Eurostat

To estimate the impact on Italy's GDP, we use the GVA of each product category. In 2024, sales of products by Italian companies on Lazada contributed at least 5.82 million euros to Italy's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to at least 18.25 million euros in 2024 prices.

Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to Italy's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 2.49 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 7.82 million euros in 2024 prices.

23 *See methodology.*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in Italy as a result of these sales is estimated at 70 in 2024 (Table 35).

Table 35 – Impact on Italy's economy

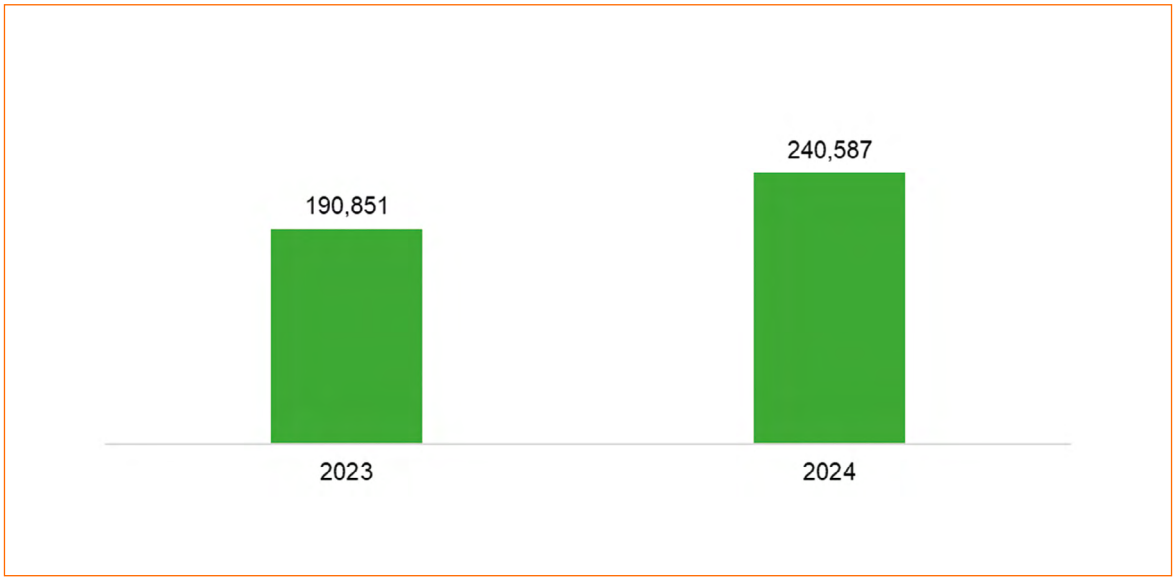
	2022	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	5.74	6.10	5.82
Tax revenues (million EUR)	2.46	2.61	2.49
Persons employed	73	74	70

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, and OECD

2.5.4. FLIGGY

In 2024, tourists using Fliggy to visit Italy spent 240,587 days in Italy, up by 26% from the previous year (Figure 17).

Figure 17 - Number of days spent by tourists in Italy



Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

In the absence of data on expenditure by product and service category by tourist nationality, we derived the breakdown using estimated total expenditure data from the European Travel Commission (ETC), overnight stay data from the Agenzia Nazionale del Turismo (ENIT), and expenditure type information from the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) provided by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT).
In 2024, the average daily expenditure of tourists from China is 151 euros, of which 33% spent on accommodation and 20% on food and beverages.
For the 2023–2024 period, we estimate the impact on Italy's output from the sale of products and services by Italian companies to Chinese tourists, using the 2021 Input-Output table.
Italian companies generated a total output of 87.3 million euros from selling their products and services to tourists who used Fliggy to visit Italy in 2024 (Table 36).The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 36 – Total impact on Italy's output (million EUR)

2023	2024
82.7	87.3

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, ETC, ENIT, and ISTAT

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

To estimate the impact on Italy's GDP, we use the GVA of each product and service category. For example, for the category "Accommodation", the gross value added as a percentage of the output is 49%.
In 2024, sales of products and services by Italian companies to tourists who used Fliggy to visit Italy contributed 77.0 million euros to Italy's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2023-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 151.5 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to Italy's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 33.0 million euros in 2024. Over the 2023-2024 period, this totals 64.9 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in Italy as a result of these sales is estimated at 930 in 2024 (Table 37).

Table 37 – Impact on Italy's economy

	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	73.0	77.0
Tax revenues (million EUR)	31.3	33.0
Persons employed	891	930

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, ETC, ENIT, ISTAT, and OECD

From a labour-economics perspective, the 2024 figures indicate that platform-enabled value chains can now rival - and even exceed - the domestic employment footprint of Italy's largest industrial incumbents. Our estimate of ≈43,274 "jobs supported" in Italy via Alibaba-mediated exports and tourism demand surpasses the direct headcount of the largest Italian manufacturing corporations). Two clarifications are essential for proper interpretation. First, "jobs supported" derive from input-output modelling and capture direct, indirect, and induced labour associated with platform-enabled activity; they are not payroll employees of Alibaba and should not be conflated with an employer-of-record headcount. Second, the metric is flow-contingent (it scales with trade volumes and multipliers) and gross rather than net of any displacement effects.
Within those bounds, the comparison is analytically meaningful and policy-relevant. It shows that digital export platforms operate as employment multipliers for SME-intensive sectors (notably beauty/chemicals and apparel) by converting fixed market-entry costs into shared, variable costs (logistics, marketing, AI-assisted localization and customer service). For industrial policy, the implication is clear: alongside traditional strategies focused on "national champions", supporting the reliability and accessibility of platform rails can yield an employment footprint comparable to that of the country's top private manufacturers - without the fiscal and concentration risks of direct payroll expansion.

2.6. THE NETHERLANDS

2.6.1. MAIN FINDINGS

From 2022 to 2024, Dutch products sold on Taobao and Tmall in China contributed 2,823.6 million euros to the Netherlands' GDP and 1,082.7 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 7,751.
Based on approximately 50 sample Dutch brands, from 2022 to 2024, products sold on Lazada in Southeast Asia (SEA) at least contributed 130.1 million euros to the Netherlands' GDP and 49.9 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to at least 338.

From 2023 to 2024, products and services sold to Chinese tourists who used Fliggy to visit the Netherlands contributed 10.73 million euros to the Netherlands' GDP and 4.14 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 63.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

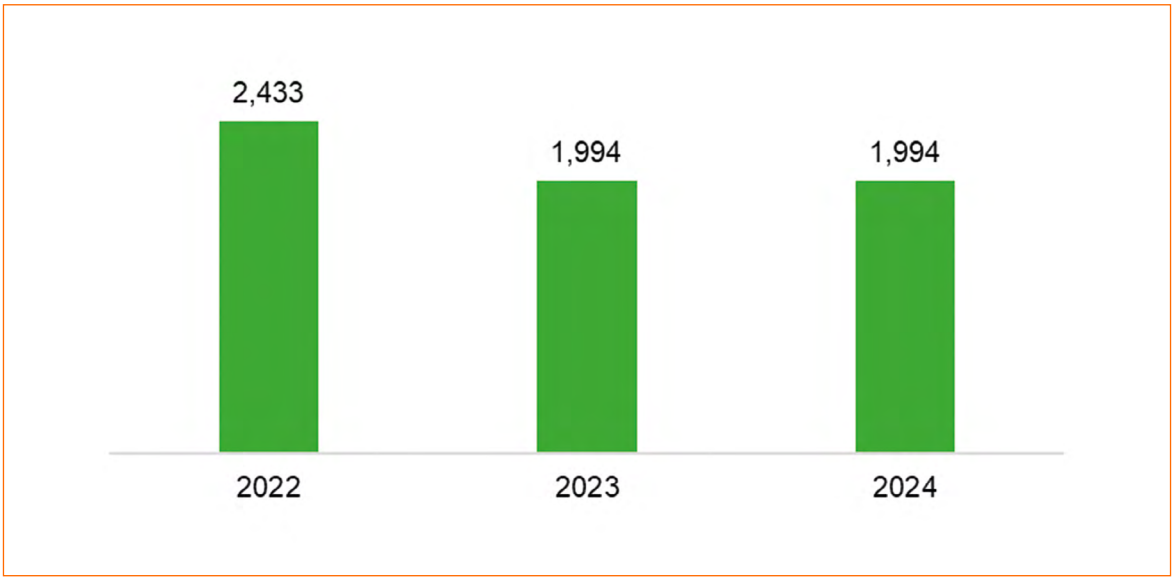
Table 38 – Aggregate picture (2022 – 2024, values in 2024 prices)				
Metric	**Taobao + Tmall**	**Lazada**	**Fliggy**	**Total**
GDP contribution	€2 823.6 m	€130.1 m	€10.73 m	**€2 964.4 m**
Tax revenues	€1 082.7 m	€49.9 m	€4.14 m	**€1 136.7 m**
Jobs supported in 2024	7,751	338	63	**8,153**

Between 2022 and 2024, activities related to Dutch products sold in China and SEA, as well as Chinese tourist spending in the Netherlands via Alibaba's platforms, contributed approximately €2.96 billion to Dutch GDP, generated €1.14 billion in tax receipts, and supported around 8,153 Dutch jobs (Table 38).

2.6.2. TAOBAO AND TMALL

In 2024, Dutch companies sold 1,994 million euros worth of products – the Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) - to consumers in China on Taobao and Tmall (Figure 18).

Figure 18 - Gross Merchandise Value (million EUR)



Source: Alibaba Group

In 2024, 26% of total sales were for products belonging to the category "Chemicals and chemical products" such as perfumes, beauty, personal care, and make-up products, and 23% to the category "Food products" (Table 39).

Table 39 – Sales by product category (2024)	
Chemicals and chemical products	26%
Food products	23%
Paper and paper products	17%
Electrical equipment	14%
Textiles, wearing apparel and leather	4%
Others	16%

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

For the 2022-2024 period, we estimate the impact on the Netherlands' output from the sale of products and services by Dutch companies to Chinese consumers, based on the most recent available Input-Output table. The latest Input-Output table published by Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS) refers to the year 2022.

In this calculation, we subtract the retail margins paid abroad from the GMV, disaggregated by platform, business unit, store type, and product category. According to our estimates, in 2024, the average margin on GMV is 28.2%, a figure that is in line with Damodaran's estimates for operating and net margins in the retail sector[24].

Dutch companies generated a total output of 2,263 million euros from selling their products and services to Chinese consumers across Taobao and Tmall platforms in 2024 (Table 40). The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects[25].

Table 40 – Total impact on output in the Netherlands (million EUR)

2022	2023	2024
2,709	2,239	2,263

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and CBS

To estimate the impact on the Netherlands' gross domestic product (GDP), we use the gross value added (GVA) of each product category. GVA measures the value of goods and services produced minus the cost of intermediate inputs used in production. The GVA of individual products and services contributes directly to a country's GDP. For example, in the Netherlands, the GVA for the category "textiles, wearing apparel and leather" is 32% of output.

In 2024, sales of products and services by Dutch companies on Taobao and Tmall contributed 850.3 million euros to the Netherlands' GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 2,823.6 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to the Netherlands' tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 327.6 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 1,082.7 million euros in 2024 prices.

Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in the Netherlands as a result of these sales is estimated at 7,751 in 2024 (Table 41).

Table 41 – Impact on the Netherlands' economy

	2022	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	976.9	827.1	850.3
Tax revenues (million EUR)	371.9	318.6	327.6
Persons employed	9,898	7,928	7,751

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, CBS, and OECD

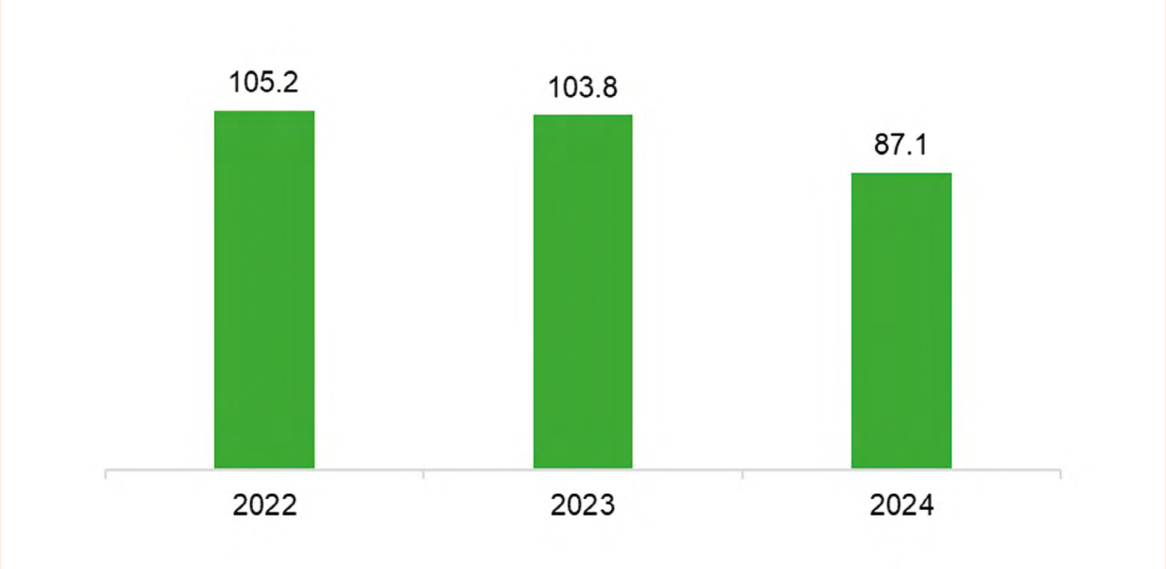
24 See methodology.
25 See methodology.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

2.6.3. LAZADA

Based on approximately 50 sample Dutch brands, in 2024, Dutch companies sold at least 87.1 million euros worth of products – the GMV - to consumers in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam on Lazada (Figure 19).

Figure 19 - Gross Merchandise Value (million EUR)



Source: Alibaba Group

For the 2022–2024 period, we estimate the impact on the Netherlands' output from the sale of products and services by Dutch companies to Chinese consumers, using the 2022 Input-Output table. In this calculation, we deduct from the GMV the retail margins paid abroad, based on Damodaran's estimates of operating and net margins for the retail sector[26].

Dutch companies generated at least a total output of 98.8 million euros from selling their products and services to consumers on Lazada in 2024 (Table 42) with the contribution of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 42 – Total impact on the Netherlands' output (million EUR)

2022	2023	2024
117.2	116.6	98.8

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and CBS

To estimate the impact on the Netherlands' GDP, we use the GVA of each product category. In 2024, sales of products by Dutch companies on Lazada contributed at least 37.1 million euros to the Netherlands' GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to at least 130.1 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to the Netherlands' tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 14.3 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 49.9 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in the Netherlands as a result of these sales is estimated at 338 in 2024 (Table 43).

26 *See methodology.*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

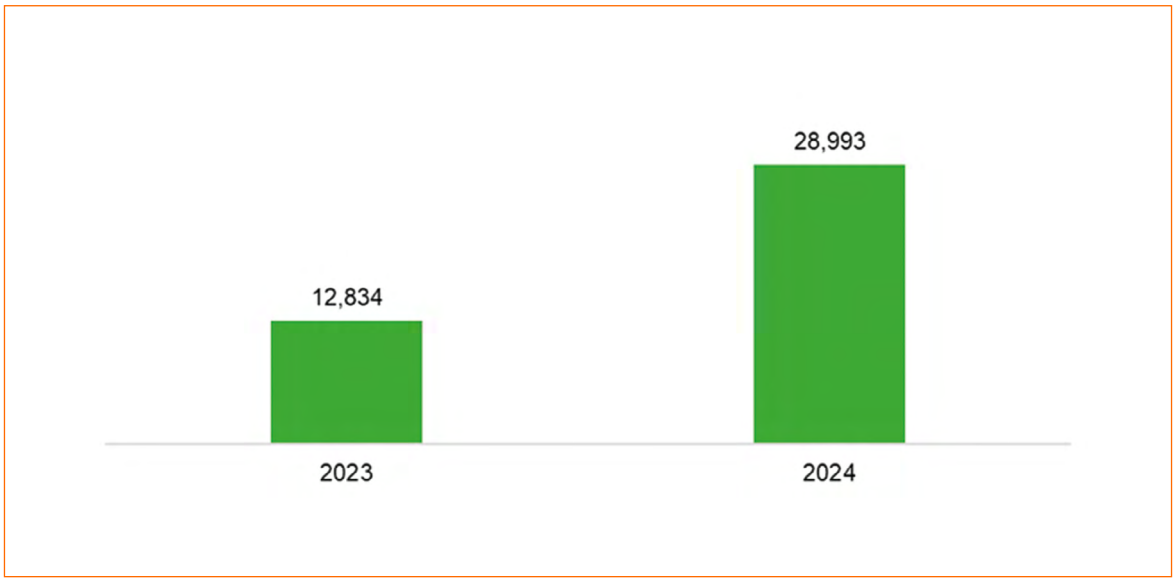
Table 43 – Impact on the Netherlands' economy			
	2022	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	42.3	43.1	37.1
Tax revenues (million EUR)	16.1	16.6	14.3
Persons employed	428	413	338

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, CBS, and OECD

2.6.4. FLIGGY

In 2024, tourists using Fliggy to visit the Netherlands spent 28,993 days in the Netherlands, up by 126% from the previous year (Figure 20).

Figure 20 - Number of days spent by tourists in the Netherlands



Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

In the absence of data on expenditure by product and service category by tourist nationality, we derived the breakdown using estimated total expenditure data from the European Travel Commission (ETC), overnight stay data from Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), and expenditure type information from an estimated Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) compiled by the other countries considered (percentage breakdown of various spending categories weighted according to Chinese total expenditure in each destination).
In 2024, the average daily expenditure of tourists from China is 151 euros, of which 31% spent on accommodation and 13% on food and beverages.
For the 2023-2024 period, we estimate the impact on the Netherlands' output from the sale of products and services by Dutch companies to Chinese tourists, using the 2021 Input-Output table.
Dutch companies generated a total output of 7.73 million euros from selling their products and services to tourists who used Fliggy to visit the Netherlands in 2024 (Table 44).The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 44 – Total impact on the Netherlands' output (million EUR)	
2023	2024
4.09	7.73

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, ETC, TSA, and CBS

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

To estimate the impact on the Netherlands' GDP, we use the GVA of each product and service category. For example, for the category "Accommodation", the GVA as a percentage of the output is 43%.
In 2024, sales of products and services by Dutch companies to tourists who used Fliggy to visit the Netherlands contributed 6.89 million euros to the Netherlands' GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2023-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 10.73 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to the Netherlands' tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 2.65 million euros in 2024. Over the 2023-2024 period, this totals 10.73 million euros in 2024 prices.

Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in the Netherlands as a result of these sales is estimated at 63 in 2024 (Table 45).

Table 45 – Impact on the Netherlands' economy

	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	3.64	6.89
Tax revenues (million EUR)	1.40	2.65
Persons employed	35	63

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, ETC, TSA, CBS, and OECD

2.7. SPAIN

2.7.1. MAIN FINDINGS

From 2022 to 2024, Spanish products sold on **Taobao and Tmall** in China contributed 1,124.9 million euros to Spain's GDP and 421.0 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 5,190.
Based on approximately 50 sample Spanish brands, from 2022 to 2024, products sold on **Lazada** in Southeast Asia (SEA) at least contributed 4.74 million euros to Spain's GDP and 1.77 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to at least 21.
From 2023 to 2024, products and services sold to Chinese tourists who used **Fliggy** to visit Spain contributed 283.3 million euros to Spain's GDP and 105.7 million euros to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 2,138.

Table 46 – Aggregate picture (2022-2024, values in 2024 prices)

Metric	Taobao + Tmall	Lazada	Fliggy	Total
GDP contribution	€1,124.9 m	€4.74 m	€283.3 m	**€1,412.9 m**
Tax revenues	€421.0 m	€1.77 m	€105.7 m	**€528.5 m**
Jobs supported in 2024	5,190	21	2,138	**7,349**

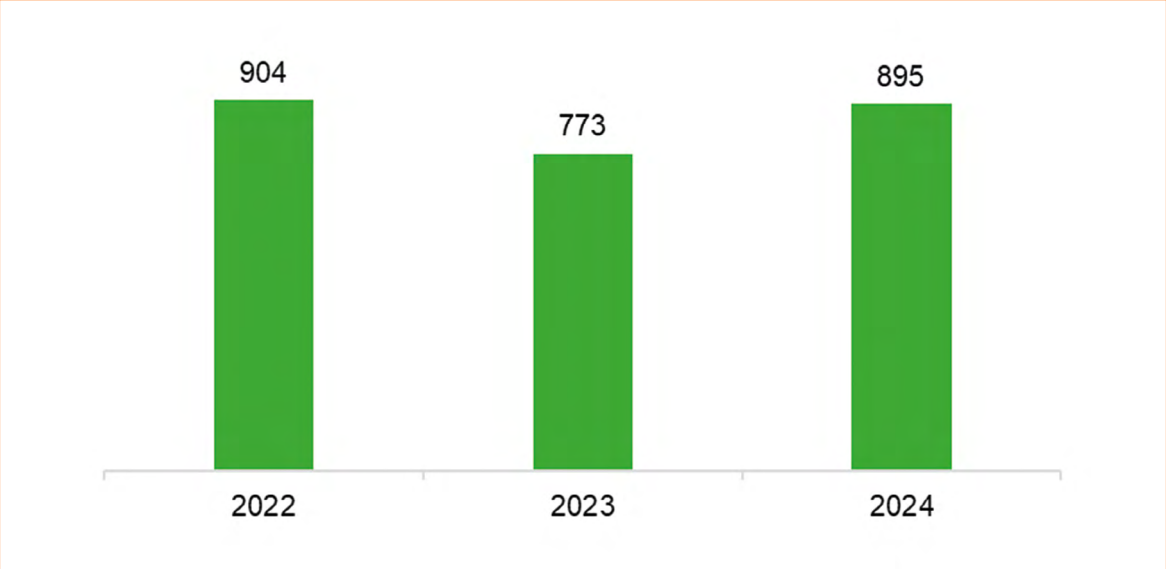
Between 2022 and 2024, activities related to Spanish products sold in China and SEA, as well as Chinese tourist spending in Spain via Alibaba's platforms, contributed approximately €1,412.9 million to Spanish GDP, generated €529 million in tax receipts, and supported around 7,349 Spanish jobs (Table 46).

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

2.7.2. TAOBAO AND TMALL

In 2024, Spanish companies sold 895.4 million euros worth of products – the Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) - to consumers in China on Taobao and Tmall (Figure 21).

Figure 21 - Gross Merchandise Value (million EUR)



Source: Alibaba Group

In 2024, 69% of total sales were for products belonging to the category "Textiles, wearing apparel, leather and related products", and 9% to the category "Chemicals and chemical products", such as perfumes, beauty, personal care, and make-up products (Table 47).

Table 47 – Sales by product category (2024)	
Textiles, wearing apparel, leather and related products	69%
Chemicals and chemical products	9%
Basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations	8%
Food, beverages and tobacco products	4%
Furniture and other manufactured goods	4%
Others	6%

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

For the 2022–2024 period, we estimate the impact on Spain's output from the sale of products and services by Spanish companies to Chinese consumers, based on the most recent available Input-Output table. The latest Input-Output table published by Eurostat refers to the year 2021.
In this calculation, we subtract the retail margins paid abroad from the GMV, disaggregated by platform, business unit, store type, and product category. According to our estimates, in 2024, the average margin on GMV is 26.1%, a figure that is in line with Damodaran's estimates for operating and net margins in the retail sector[27].
Spanish companies generated a total output of 1,095.8 million euros from selling their products and services to Chinese consumers across Taobao and Tmall platforms in 2024 (Table 48). The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects[28].

27 *See methodology.*
28 *See methodology.*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Table 48 – Total impact on output in Spain (million EUR)		
2022	**2023**	**2024**
1,122	949	1,096

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and Eurostat

To estimate the impact on Spain's gross domestic product (GDP), we use the gross value added (GVA) of each product category. GVA measures the value of goods and services produced minus the cost of intermediate inputs used in production. The GVA of individual products and services contributes directly to a country's GDP. For example, in Spain, the GVA for the category "Textiles, wearing apparel, leather and related products" is 19% of output.
In 2024, sales of products by Spanish companies on Taobao and Tmall contributed 377.6 million euros to Spain's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 1,124.9 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to Spain's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 141.0 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 421.0 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in Spain as a result of these sales is estimated at 5,190 in 2024 (Table 49).

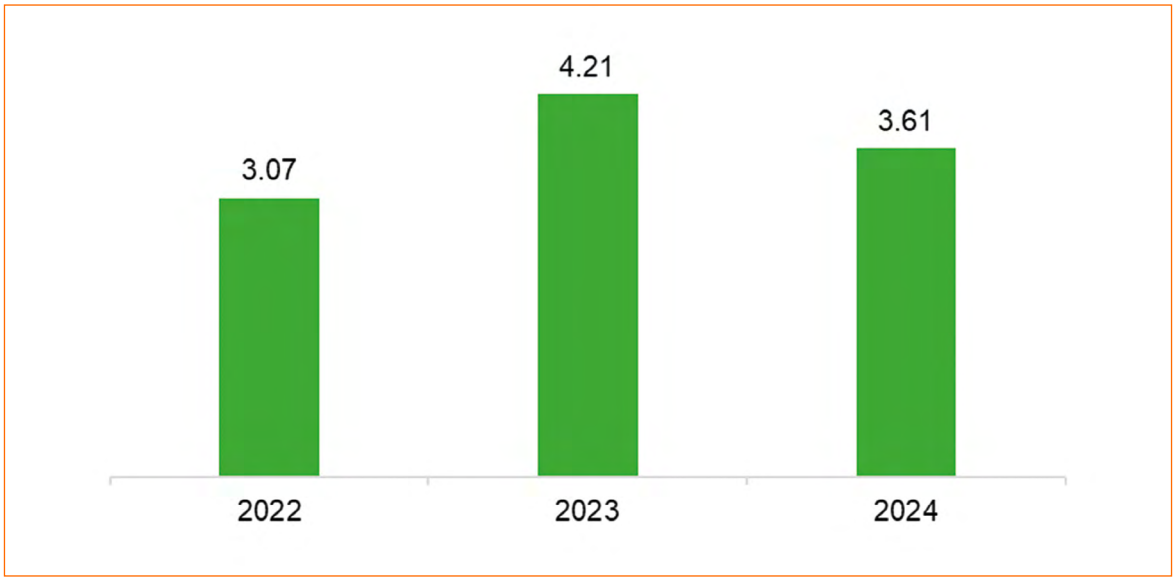
Table 49 – Impact on Spain's economy			
	2022	**2023**	**2024**
GDP (million EUR)	378.4	323.7	377.6
Tax revenues (million EUR)	142.2	120.8	141.0
Persons employed	5,722	4,623	5,190

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, and OECD

2.7.3. LAZADA

Based on approximately 50 sample Spanish brands, in 2024, Spanish companies sold 3.61 million euros worth of products – the GMV - to consumers in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam on Lazada (Figure 22).

Figure 22 - Gross Merchandise Value (million EUR)



Source: Alibaba Group

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

For the 2022–2024 period, we estimate the impact on Spain's output from the sale of products and services by Spanish companies to SEA consumers, using the 2021 Input-Output table. In this calculation, we deduct from the GMV the retail margins paid abroad, based on Damodaran's estimates of operating and net margins for the retail sector.
Spanish companies generated at least a total output of 4.42 million euros from selling their products to consumers on Lazada in 2024 (Table 50) with the contribution of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 50 – Total impact on Spain's output (million EUR)

2022	2023	2024
3.81	5.17	4.42

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and Eurostat

To estimate the impact on Spain's GDP, we use the GVA of each product category. In 2024, sales of products by Spanish companies on Lazada contributed at least 1.52 million euros to Spain's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to at least 4.74 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to Spain's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 0.57 million euros in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 1.77 million euros in 2024 prices(Table 51).
The figures for South East Asia, compared to those corresponding to China, are more modest but reflect the unexplored growth potential that exists in this market.

Table 51 – Impact on Spain's economy

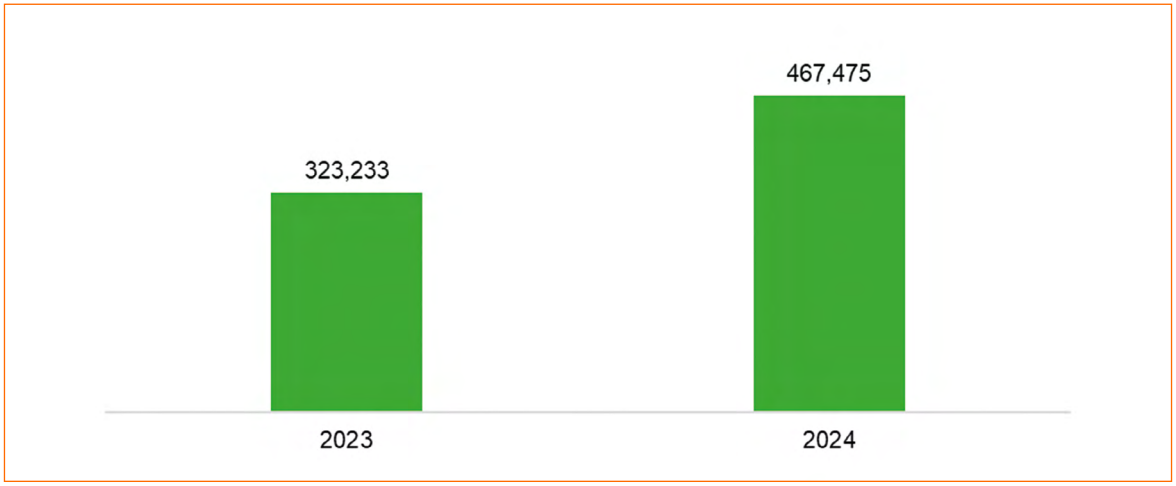
	2022	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	1.28	1.76	1.52
Tax revenues (million EUR)	0.48	0.66	0.57
Persons employed	19	25	21

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, and OECD

2.7.4. FLIGGY

In 2024, tourists using Fliggy to visit Spain spent 467,475 days in Spain, up by 45% from the previous year (Figure 23).

Figure 23 - Number of days spent by tourists in Spain



Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

In the absence of data on expenditure by product and service category by tourist nationality, we derived the breakdown using estimated total expenditure data from Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), overnight stay from European Travel Commission (ETC) through TourMIS, and expenditure type information from the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) provided by INE.
In 2024, the average daily expenditure of tourists from China is 143 euros, of which 28% spent on accommodation and 13% on food and beverages.
For the 2023–2024 period, we estimate the impact on Spain's output from the sale of products and services by Spanish companies to Chinese tourists, using the 2021 Input-Output table.
Spanish companies generated a total output of 155.9 million euros from selling their products and services to tourists who used Fliggy to visit Spain in 2024 (Table 52). The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 52 – Total impact on Spain's output (million EUR)

2023	2024
124.3	155.9

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, ETC, and INE

To estimate the impact on Spain's GDP, we use the GVA of each product and service category. For example, for the category "Accommodation", the gross value added as a percentage of the output is 54%.
In 2024, sales of products and services by Spanish companies to tourists who used Fliggy to visit Spain contributed 155.6 million euros to Spain's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2023-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 283.3 million euros in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to Spain's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 58.1 million euros in 2024. Over the 2023-2024 period, this totals 105.7 million euros in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in Spain as a result of these sales is estimated at 2,138 in 2024 (Table 53).

Table 53 – Impact on Spain's economy

	2023	2024
GDP (million EUR)	124.0	155.6
Tax revenues (million EUR)	46.3	58.1
Persons employed	1,771	2,138

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, Eurostat, ETC, INA, and OECD

2.8. UNITED KINGDOM

2.8.1. MAIN FINDINGS

From 2022 to 2024, British products sold on **Taobao and Tmall** in China contributed 14,031.3 million pounds to the GDP of the United Kingdom (UK) and 4,962.4 million pounds to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 53,723.
Based on approximately 50 sample British brands, from 2022 to 2024, products sold on **Lazada** in Southeast Asia (SEA) at least contributed 175.9 million pounds to the UK's GDP and 62.2 million pounds to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to at least 605.
From 2023 to 2024, products and services sold to Chinese tourists who used **Fliggy** to visit the UK contributed 3,068.0 million pounds to the UK's GDP and 1,084.1 million pounds to the country's tax revenues (in 2024 prices). In 2024, the total number of persons employed amounted to 20,050.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

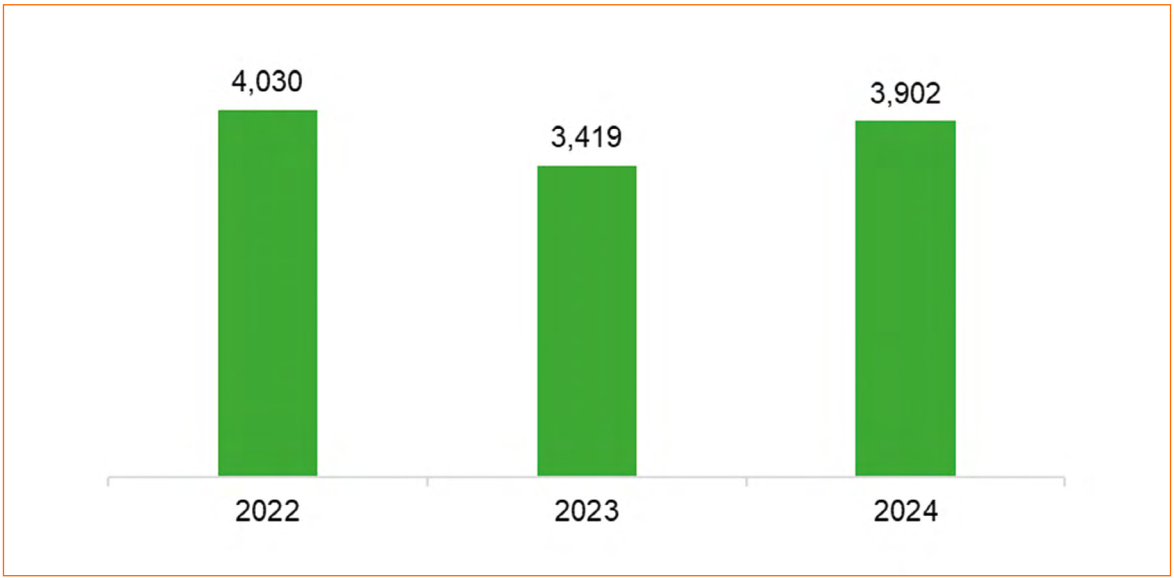
Table 54 – Aggregate picture (2022-2024, values in 2024 prices)				
Metric	**Taobao + Tmall**	**Lazada**	**Fliggy**	**Total**
GDP contribution	£14 031.3 m	£175.9 m	£3 068.0 m	**£17 275.1 m**
Tax revenues	£4 962.4 m	£62.2 m	£1 084.1 m	**£6 108.7 m**
Jobs supported in 2024	53,723	605	20,050	**74,379**

Between 2022 and 2024, activities related to British products sold in China and SEA, as well as Chinese tourist spending in the UK via Alibaba's platforms, contributed approximately £17.3 billion to British GDP, generated £6.1 billion in tax receipts, and supported around 74,379 British jobs (Table 54).

2.8.2. TAOBAO AND TMALL

In 2024, British companies sold 3,902 million pounds worth of products – the Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) - to consumers in China on Taobao and Tmall (Figure 24).

Figure 24 - Gross Merchandise Value (million GBP)



Source: Alibaba Group

In 2024, 69% of total sales were for products belonging to the category "Other manufactured goods" such as sport goods, games, toys, musical instruments and 13% to "Wearing apparel" (Table 55).

Table 55 – Sales by product category (2024)	
Other manufactured goods	13%
Wearing apparel	13%
Other chemical products	12%
Leather and related products	12%
Electrical equipment	11%
Soap and detergents, cleaning and polishing preparations, perfumes and toilet preparations	8%
Basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations	7%
Other food products	7%
Others	18%

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

For the 2022-2024 period, we estimate the impact on the UK's output from the sale of products and services by British companies to Chinese consumers, based on the most recent available Input-Output table. The latest Input-Output table published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) refers to the year 2022.

In this calculation, we subtract the retail margins paid abroad from the GMV, disaggregated by platform, business unit, store type, and product category. According to our estimates, in 2024, the average margin on GMV is 27.0%, a figure that is in line with Damodaran's estimates for operating and net margins in the retail sector[29].
British companies generated a total output of 6,102.0 million pounds from selling their products and services to Chinese consumers across Taobao and Tmall platforms in 2024 (Table 56). The total impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects[30].

Table 56 – Total impact on output in the UK (million GBP)

2022	2023	2024
6,236.4	5,353.9	6,102.0

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and ONS

To estimate the impact on the UK's gross domestic product (GDP), we use the gross value added (GVA) of each product category. GVA measures the value of goods and services produced minus the cost of intermediate inputs used in production. The GVA of individual products and services contributes directly to a country's GDP. For example, in the UK, the GVA for the category "Leather and related products" is 39% of output.

In 2024, sales of products by British companies on Taobao and Tmall contributed 4,556.8 million pounds to the British GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 14,031.3 million pounds in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to the UK's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 1,610.1 million pounds in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 4,962.4 million pounds in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in the UK as a result of these sales is estimated at 53,723 in 2024 (Table 57).

Table 57 – Impact on the UK's economy

	2022	2023	2024
GDP (million GBP)	4,717	4,067	4,557
Tax revenues (million GBP)	1,671	1,437	1,610
Persons employed	61,530	50,028	53,723

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, ONS, and OECD

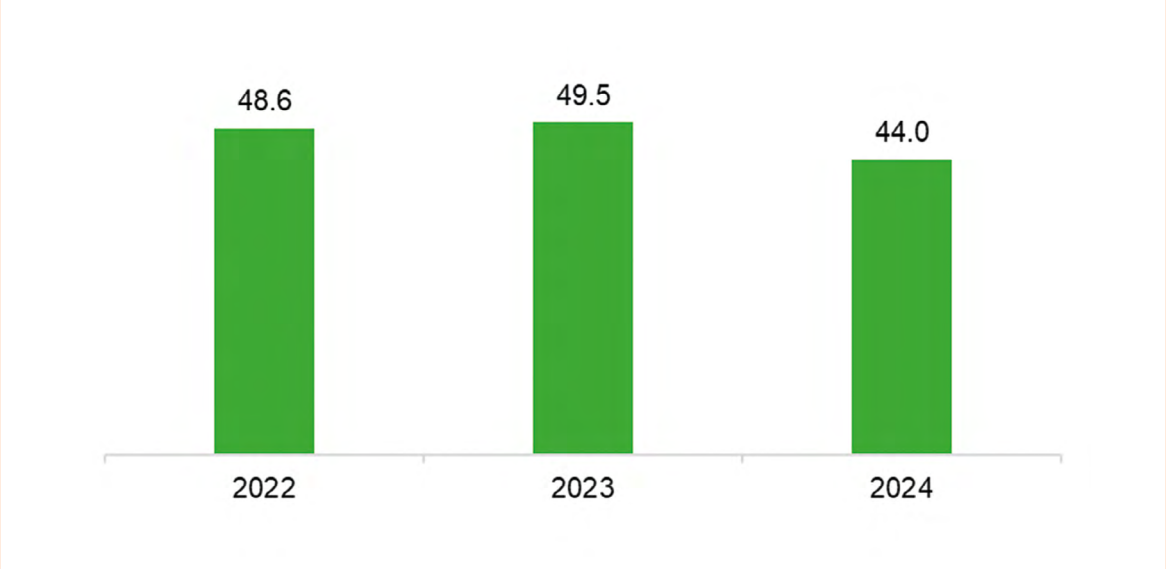
29 *See methodology.*
30 *See methodology.*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

2.8.3. LAZADA

Based on approximately 50 sample British brands, in 2024, British companies sold at least 44.0 million pounds worth of products – the GMV - to consumers in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam on Lazada (Figure 25).

Figure 25 - Gross Merchandise Value (million GBP)



Source: Alibaba Group

For the 2022-2024 period, we estimate the impact on the UK's output from the sale of products and services by British companies to SEA consumers, using the 2022 Input-Output table. In this calculation, we deduct from the GMV the retail margins paid abroad, based on Damodaran's estimates of operating and net margins for the retail sector.
British companies generated at least a total output of 68.7 million pounds from selling their products to consumers on Lazada in 2024 (Table 58) with the contribution of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 58 – Total impact on the UK's output (million GBP)

2022	2023	2024
75.3	77.5	68.7

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group and ONS

To estimate the impact on the UK's GDP, we use the GVA of each product category. In 2024, sales of products by British companies on Lazada contributed at least 51.3 million pounds to the UK's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2022-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to at least 175.9 million pounds in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to the UK's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 18.1 million pounds in 2024. Over the 2022-2024 period, this totals 62.2 million pounds in 2024 prices.
Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in the UK as a result of these sales is estimated at 605 in 2024 (Table 59).

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

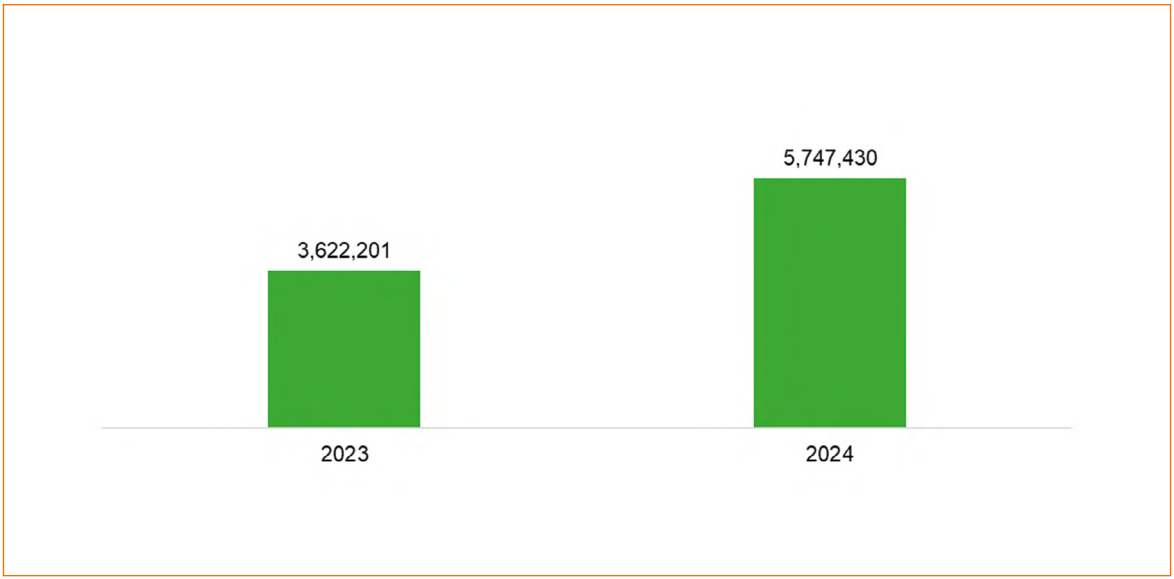
Table 59 – Impact on the UK's economy			
	2022	2023	2024
GDP (million GBP)	56.9	58.9	51.3
Tax revenues (million GBP)	20.2	20.8	18.1
Persons employed	743	725	605

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, ONS, and OECD

2.8.4. FLIGGY

In 2024, tourists using Fliggy to visit the UK spent 5,747,430 days in the UK, up by 59% from the previous year (Figure 26).

Figure 26 - Number of days spent by tourists in the UK



Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group

In the absence of data on expenditure by product and service category by tourist nationality, we derived the breakdown using estimated total expenditure data from total expenditure data from the European Travel Commission (ETC), overnight stay data from the ONS, and expenditure type information from the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) provided by ONS.

In 2024, the average daily expenditure of tourists from China was 128 pounds, of which 18% spent on accommodation and 11% on food and beverages.
For the 2023-2024 period, we estimate the impact on the UK's output from the sale of products and services by British companies to Chinese tourists, using the 2021 Input-Output table.

British companies generated a total output of 1,612.3 million pounds from selling their products and services to tourists who used Fliggy to visit the UK in 2024 (Table 60). The total economic impact on output is the sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.

Table 60 – Total impact on the UK's output (million GBP)	
2023	2024
1,246	1,612

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, ETC, and ONS

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

To estimate the impact on the UK's GDP, we use the GVA of each product and service category. For example, for the category "Accommodation", the gross value added as a percentage of the output is 58%.

In 2024, sales of products and services by British companies to tourists who used Fliggy to visit the UK contributed 1,700.6 million pounds to the UK's GDP. The total contribution to the GDP over the 2023-2024 period, using the GDP deflator, amounted to 3,068.0 million pounds in 2024 prices.
Using the OECD's ratio of total tax revenue to GDP, the contribution to the UK's tax revenue from these sales is estimated at 600.9 million pounds in 2024. Over the 2023-2024 period, this totals 1,084.1 million pounds in 2024 prices.

Based on OECD data on GDP per person employed, the total number of jobs supported in the UK as a result of these sales is estimated at 20,050 in 2024 (Table 61).

Table 61 – Impact on the UK's economy

	2023	2024
GDP (million GBP)	1,315	1,701
Tax revenues (million GBP)	465	601
Persons employed	16,170	20,050

Source: Research authors' elaboration on data provided by Alibaba Group, ETC, ONS, and OECD

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

3. THE CONTRIBUTION OF ALIBABA'S PLATFORMS TO SMES BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

This section focuses on the actual microeconomic and social impacts of digital platforms on SMEs. The aim of this section is to analyse the impact of digital platforms on the entire value chain of companies. The microeconomic impacts examined include, among others, the following elements:

1) Innovation in platform tools or features (e.g., live streaming, AI recommendations)
2) Customer profiling and market segmentation
3) Logistics and supply chain management
4) Pricing strategy and product adaptation
5) Marketing campaigns and communication tools
6) International branding and storytelling
7) Dissemination of your country's cultural identity

The microeconomic and social impacts are analysed through empirical evidence provided by Alibaba Group and direct interviews with Alibaba customer companies for the construction of a) practical business cases (Pharmanutra, Italy; Plameca, Spain; WHC Labs, Belgium; Pip Studio, the Netherlands; Biocyte, France)[31] and b) fact sheets aimed at exploring specific organizational aspects related to companies and their collaboration with Alibaba (logistics, CRM, AI, permanent training). Fact sheets, in particular, serve to deepen and generalize the insights presented in the business cases.

3.1 THE BUSINESS CASE: PHARMANUTRA - NUTRACEUTICAL SCIENCE FROM ITALY

"This is a data-driven business. It's not just about personal taste, creativity. Those elements may be useful, but they come second here. What matters is performance. The real opportunity lies in having access to detailed analytics. Strategically, the most important KPIs are key to guide our decisions", Carlo Volpi

Pharmanutra, founded in 2003, specializes in the development of nutritional supplements and medical devices, with a strong emphasis on internal research and development. A key strength lies in its proprietary R&D laboratory, where raw materials are developed and used as the foundation for finished products. The company places significant importance on intellectual property.

Since its foundation, it has followed a structured path of development mainly based on organic growth. The company began its internationalization journey over ten years ago. Today, it operates in over 85 countries through exclusive distribution agreements. These relationships rely on trusted distributors who manage the exclusive distribution of products within specific territories.

In late 2022, the company entered the Chinese market starting its collaboration with Alibaba. This initiative was supported by the strategic partner Adiacent. This approach led to the success of the flagship product, SiderAL, which was introduced to the Chinese market, through Tmall Global, and has since become a widely used iron supplement globally, thanks to its Sucrosomial® Technology, which enhances absorption and reduces gastrointestinal side effects[32].

31 *Companies selected by Alibaba Group*
32 *https://www.pharmanutra.it/it/azienda/*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

The strategic importance of the collaboration with Alibaba lies in its ability to open new perspectives. It introduced an alternative - yet complementary - approach to promoting products, expanding beyond traditional methods and allowing the company to better understand the dynamics of the Direct-to-Consumer channel (DtoC). It is increasingly evident that the future of health-related companies lie in adopting a true omnichannel strategy - one that integrates both consumer communication and communication with healthcare professionals across all global markets. Continuous learning is a fundamental component of this initiative. The Chinese market should not be viewed solely as a destination for commercial expansion, but rather as a strategic laboratory.

Consumer access is an important advantage in the collaboration with Alibaba. Tmall Global provides a powerful channel to engage with the vast potential market for products such as SiderAL. The widespread use of Alipay ensures that nearly all potential consumers are already integrated into the digital ecosystem, offering a substantial strategic advantage.

Tmall Global offers, also, significant simplification in logistics, from fulfillment to customs-related processes. This results in a highly efficient and cost-effective supply chain, with advanced digital infrastructure, robust reporting systems, and rapid, reliable delivery. This integrated model eliminates the need for a large internal team.

Another strategic pillar is the platform's advanced consumer targeting capabilities. Tmall Global enables highly refined marketing strategies through its ecosystem and, in particular, through its influencers - commonly referred to as Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) within the Tmall and Taobao networks. These actors play a crucial role in promoting products and engaging directly with consumers, enhancing visibility and driving sales. One of the most compelling advantages of the platform lies in its seamless consumer access model. What makes this particularly effective is that the entire process is managed within the platform itself. Unlike traditional models - where each influencer or Key Opinion Leader (KOL) requires a separate agreement, commission structure, and operational coordination - Tmall Global enables all these activities to be executed internally. The ability to build a trusted business ecosystem within the platform is a critical strategic asset.

This integrated approach significantly reduces operational effort, simplifies the overall system, and, most importantly, fosters trust. Moreover, transactions are processed through Alipay, ensuring transparency and efficiency.

Advertising and media tools represent one of the most compelling aspects of the platform. Ultimately, the objective is to implement a variety of solutions that, on one hand, enable precise consumer targeting and, on the other, allow for accurate monitoring of revenue generation by each channel. This dual capability is particularly valuable in the current landscape. A noteworthy trend within the Tmall ecosystem is the gradual flattening of promotional peaks. Traditional high-impact events - such as Singles' Day or "618" - are no longer the sole focal points for consumer engagement. Instead, there is a growing emphasis on continuity and sustained interaction with consumers through daily, always-on tools. The move away from reliance on singular promotional events toward a more balanced, year-round marketing approach is seen as a significant improvement.

One of the most critical success factors in the collaboration with Alibaba, has been the establishment of a shared strategic alignment with the local partner. This partnership is based on a collaborative approach where both parties contribute to long-term value creation.

Another key insight emerging from the experience with Alibaba is the data-driven nature of the business. Unlike traditional marketing environments, where creativity and branding may dominate, success in this context is determined by measurable performance. Every activity is evaluated based on its return on investment (ROI) and specific data. This analytical approach enables precise strategic planning.

The partnership with Alibaba also contributes to the promotion of Italian and European culture. The Italian dimension - medical, scientific, and technological - is undoubtedly an asset. Italian technology

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

is generally well-regarded, and this contributes positively to the perception of product quality. While the Italian origin of the company is acknowledged, the core of the communication strategy focuses on technological innovation. The emphasis is placed on the advanced nature of technology, its scientific validation, and the high standards usually associated with European manufacturing and standards. These are the attributes that resonate most with Chinese consumers, who increasingly value demonstrable technological sophistication over geographic origin alone.

Pharmanutra is a medium-sized enterprise (SME), and the advantages of the current model are particularly significant for companies of this scale. The presence of strategic partners enables SMEs to engage in initiatives that would otherwise be inaccessible due to limited internal expertise and the high investment typically required to build such capabilities. One of the key advantages for SMEs is the ability to integrate into an existing ecosystem - complete, for example, with logistics, payment systems, marketing - rather than having to build one independently. This makes the market, and in particular the Chinese market, not only a commercial destination but also a source of operational support and a big opportunity.

Authors are grateful to Claudio Volpi, Executive Director Pharmanutra and Lapo Tanzj, CEO Adiacent for the interview, for authorizing the business case and providing “quoted comments”.

Sources

Interview with Carlo Volpi, Executive Director Pharmanutra and Lapo Tanzj, CEO Adiacent
https://www.pharmanutra.it/it/
https://www.sideral.it/

3.2 THE BUSINESS CASE: PLAMECA - NATURAL HEALTH FROM SPAIN

“By operating in international markets like China, we have learned some valuable business lessons that have benefited the entire company, and we have adjusted our strategic decisions accordingly. For example, we have realized that doing business online is no longer just an option - it’s a necessity."
Oscar Fernandez

Plameca is a Spanish company specializing in natural health products. Founded in 1984 in Barcelona, it started with a focus on phytotherapy, providing medicinal herbs and plants. Over time, it expanded to manufacture its own food supplements. Nowadays, Plameca offers a wide range of natural food supplements designed to support various aspects of health and wellness. Recently, Plameca has relocated its corporate headquarter to its new production facility in Sant Joan Despí, near Barcelona. The new building, which has five floors and 5,000 square meters, includes advanced production zones, storage areas, and office spaces. The project represents a strategic investment, reinforcing Plameca’s commitment to innovation and growth in the natural supplements sector[33].

Plameca has undertaken a strong internationalization process as a component of its strategic growth. After more than two decades as part of the Suanfarma Group, in 2022 the company’s management acquired full ownership to pursue independent development. Since then, Plameca has expanded its presence to over 40 countries and has started a path of digital transformation.

The company’s strategic entry into the Chinese market began around eight years ago, further reinforcing its global footprint. The company initially collaborated with different local distributors, but over time, this evolved into a solid strategic partnership with an exclusive distributor. This partnership has enabled a more integrated and strategic approach to the Chinese market. In the context of its operations in China, the company has relied heavily on Alibaba’s ecosystem - particularly through the Tmall Global platform

33 https://www.plameca.com/en/

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

- as a central pillar of its market strategy. The partner, closely aligned with Plameca, maintains strong relationships with TPs (Tmall Partners), which has proven instrumental in optimizing the company's performance on the platform.
The advantages of working with a major platform like Tmall Global are considerable. It enables the company to reach consumers across the entire country through a single, centralized channel, rather than relying on a fragmented network of smaller platforms. By leveraging Alibaba's infrastructure, the company accelerates time-to-market, ensuring that product launches quickly connect with target audiences. Alibaba provides support across several key stages of the value chain, including logistics, data analytics and marketing.

The logistics infrastructure reduces delivery lead times. This high level of fulfillment efficiency enhances the overall customer experience, particularly in terms of speed and reliability.
The sophisticated analytics infrastructure provided by Tmall, for example, enables the collection and interpretation of granular consumer behavior data including, for instance, region-specific preferences for natural supplements. It facilitates the swift and highly targeted localization of product offerings. Tmall Global serves as a data-driven platform where sales data and performance indicators are systematically collected and shared. The continuous monitoring and analysis of these metrics support strategic decision-making processes that are firmly anchored in empirical evidence and responsive to evolving market conditions.
Live streaming initiatives, such as those conducted during Tmall Super Brand Day, and regular promotional events play a critical role in stimulating sales performance. These sessions effectively strengthen consumer trust and purchase intent. In parallel, the deployment of AI-powered recommendation systems enables the personalization of customer journeys, contributing to increase the repeat purchase rates by tailoring content and product suggestions to individual consumer preferences and behaviors.

Another major advantage of the collaboration with Alibaba is the opportunity to understand and align with the specific preferences of Chinese consumers, which represents a fundamental element of the company's strategic localization efforts. Through Alibaba's ecosystem - particularly its data-rich infrastructure and continuous feedback mechanisms - targeted adaptations have been introduced across product design, packaging, pricing, and presentation. These adjustments are guided by real-time insights into local market expectations and consumer behavior, allowing the company to make evidence-based decisions that enhance market fit without compromising product integrity. This responsiveness underscores a broader commitment to cultural adaptation and positions the brand more competitively within the rapidly evolving health and wellness sector in China.
Equally important has been the realization that participation in the online marketplace is not merely an option, but a strategic imperative. The Chinese market, with its advanced e-commerce infrastructure and digitally native consumer base, has demonstrated the critical role of online channels in driving growth. This understanding has prompted the company, for example, to invest in the online also in Spain and in other markets. The continuous learning, drawn from the company's operations in China, has proven essential to shape a more dynamic, digitally driven, and culturally responsive approach to international business.

Alibaba's platforms, particularly Tmall Global, have demonstrated to be especially valuable for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). For SMEs, entering a complex and highly competitive market like China would be difficult. Establishing a physical presence - such as renting warehouse space, opening offices, or building a local distribution network - requires significant capital investment and operational expertise that many SMEs simply do not possess.
The digital infrastructure provided by Alibaba offers a viable and scalable alternative. Through its platforms, SMEs can access a comprehensive suite of tools that support every stage of the value chain - from logistics and marketing to customer engagement and data analytics. This integrated ecosystem simplifies market entry and allows companies to reach a vast consumer base.
Moreover, the platform's built-in support systems - such as promotional tools and performance analytics - enable SMEs to operate with a level of professionalism and efficiency that rivals much larger competitors. In this sense, Alibaba not only facilitates market access but also empowers SMEs to compete effectively on a global scale.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Authors are grateful to Oscar Fernandez, CEO Plameca and Harvey Qiu, Co-founder and Chief Operating Officer (COO), Yuan Mei Tec for the interview, for authorizing the business case and providing “quoted comments”.

Sources

Interview with Oscar Fernandez, CEO, Plameca and Harvey Qiu, Co-founder and Chief Operating Officer (COO), Yuan Mei Tec
https://www.plameca.com/en/about-plameca/

3.3 THE BUSINESS CASE: WHC LABS - HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY FROM BELGIUM

"I believe the greatest opportunity lies in the support we receive from Alibaba, particularly in setting up storefronts and launching the business. They provide significant assistance in generating traffic and increasing awareness, which is especially valuable for a product like ours." Bart van Zwol

WHC Labs is a Belgian company, based in Kontich, Antwerp, specializing in the production of omega-3 supplements. Founded by Jo Wyckmans, WHC focuses on environmentally friendly processes to create omega-3 oils. The company collaborates with KD Pharma and the University of Antwerp, to create marine-derived and fully vegan omega-3 formulations. Their products undergo an extraction process (supercritical fluid chromatography (SFC) extraction), which ensures high purity and environmental sustainability. WHC's supplements, including UnoCardio 1000, are recognized and distributed internationally[34].

WHC started its internationalization journey with a business model centered on direct-to-consumer sales, prioritizing major e-commerce platforms over traditional retail, distributors, or resellers. The first major market expansion occurred in the U.S. in 2015.
Shortly after, the company entered the Chinese market. Over time, WHC established a strong presence on Alibaba’s Tmall Global. WHC’s success in China is driven by the increasing awareness of holistic health and the demand for high-quality dietary supplements.

The collaboration with Alibaba has played a key role for the company in generating traffic and increasing awareness, which was particularly important when introducing a high-concentration omega-3 product. Alibaba provided a valuable opportunity to explore new markets as one of the first pioneers in this space. While many businesses are now entering the Chinese market with their products, the situation was quite different some years ago. Ensuring direct access to consumers was a major advantage internationally. The cooperation with Alibaba proved to be an effective way to enter the market.

Other major advantages of the collaboration with Alibaba include international logistics and digital marketing tools. From a logistics point of view, Alibaba offers a comprehensive, one-stop logistics and fulfillment service that effectively addresses the needs of SMEs operating in the Chinese market. The logistics process is structured into several integrated phases.
The first phase involves the collection of goods from the supplier’s warehouse and their shipment to China, typically via air freight. Upon arrival at the Chinese airport, a second phase begins in which goods are transferred to regional warehouses. Following arrival at the local warehouse, Alibaba provides inventory management services. Products are counted, shelved, and their availability is updated on the relevant e-commerce platform. Once the inventory is confirmed and visible on the platform, marketing and sales activities can begin. When customers place orders, the logistics team handles the picking, packaging, and handover to courier services for final delivery. All these operations are managed through Alibaba’s centralized logistics platform.

34 *https://nutrogenics.be/who-is-whc/?lang=en*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

From the perspective of a European SME, this system presents a significant advantage. Once the goods are prepared and made available at the supplier's warehouse, Alibaba takes over the entire process. This includes, for example, the handling of export documentation and paperwork. Such services are particularly valuable given the complexity arising from differences between Chinese and European tariff codes.

The collaboration with Alibaba offers also many useful digital marketing tools. To make an example, on the Tmall platform, precise keywords can be selected for branding and promotional campaigns. For different campaigns with specific themes, various keywords can be set accordingly. Tmall offers a comprehensive system to manage these keywords, ensuring that products appear at the top of search results to maximize exposure. This system is considered a highly effective tool for improving conversion rates. Another important tool is related to customer service. Given the company's large customer service team, responses to customer inquiries can be provided within just a few seconds. This efficient support system enhances customer engagement by promptly addressing questions, offering product knowledge, and solving issues, ultimately improving conversions.

Search ads and influencer marketing are other valuable resources. Regarding search ads, dedicated tools are useful for continuously optimizing search rankings and ensuring consistent product visibility. In terms of influencer marketing, Alibaba offers a powerful live-streaming function. Collaborations have been established with top influencers and live streamers in China. Moreover, the membership program is particularly important. The company uses it to help members accumulate points and reward them. It has an immediate impact on customer loyalty.

The entire process is supported by payment systems, particularly Alipay. Alipay provides a convenient way to receive payments from customers and convert them into euros or other currencies, facilitating transactions across Regions such as Europe and other international markets.

There is significant potential for European SMEs to enter the Chinese market and Alibaba offers a valuable contribution. When entering the market, among others, two important factors should be considered. First, a reliable supply chain is crucial, as companies must ensure they can meet demand and support the purchasing power of Chinese consumers. Successful inventory and supply chain management have proven essential in keeping pace with the unexpected speed of market development in China. Second, partnering with a local team is highly recommended.

Localized service and on-the-ground expertise help manage daily operations effectively, as many European SMEs lack sufficient understanding of Chinese culture and consumer behavior. China stands out as a unique country with a specific currency, language, and regulatory framework. Local partners provide the necessary cultural knowledge, language skills, and marketing strategies to successfully engage Chinese customers. Alibaba plays a key role in supporting companies in both areas, helping them strengthen their supply chains and connect with the right local partners to navigate the market more effectively. A deep understanding of the market is crucial for SMEs to succeed.

Authors are grateful to Bart van Zwol, CEO WHC Labs and InReady Team for the interview, for authorizing the business case and providing "quoted comments".

Sources

Interview with Bart van Zwol, CEO, WHC Labs, Dylan Zhang CEO InReady, Patrick Zhao COO InReady and Melon Long InReady
https://nutrogenics.be/who-is-whc/?lang=en
https://www.alizila.com/how-belgium-fish-oil-brand-whc-discovered-a-blue-ocean-in-china-with-Tmall-global/

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

3.4 THE BUSINESS CASE: PIP STUDIO - CREATIVITY AND DESIGN FROM THE NETHERLANDS

"The first major advantage of operating in the Chinese market with Alibaba is brand building and awareness - establishing visibility while gaining insights into customer preferences, purchasing behavior, and search intent", Niels Seuren

New Edition is a Dutch company, specializing in home and lifestyle products, including tableware, kitchen and table textiles, home textiles, and home accessories. Founded in 2014, the company currently manages a portfolio comprising two Dutch brands: Pip Studio and vtwonen.

Pip Studio, in particular, with its motto "Happy products for happy people", gained recognition for its design philosophy. The company distributes its products in over 40 countries. Recognizing the brand's international resonance, the company identified China as a promising market for further expansion. In pursuit of a trustworthy and capable partner within the Chinese market, the company conducted numerous interviews with potential collaborators. Ultimately, it chose to establish a partnership with Connected Creatives International Holdings Limited. A significant milestone in this process was the launch of operations with Alibaba in 2024, marking a strategic entry into the Chinese e-commerce landscape.

A key strategic objective for the company was to build brand awareness within the Chinese market. Given the limitations of relying solely on physical retail channels, the company recognized that establishing a presence on a major digital platform was essential. Consequently, joining the Alibaba platform became a pivotal step in its market entry strategy. This move enabled Chinese consumers to discover the brand, to engage with its product offerings, and to develop familiarity with its identity. The primary motivation behind the collaboration with Alibaba was, therefore, to enhance visibility and recognition of the brand among Chinese consumers.

The company views brand building, image development, and product visibility as central to its strategy in China. Beyond visibility, the platform serves as a valuable tool for market learning - enabling the company to gain insights into Chinese consumer preferences, purchasing behaviors, and expectations. Given the significant differences between the Chinese and European markets, this learning process is considered essential for long-term success and adaptation.

A crucial aspect of the company's strategy in China involves gaining a deep understanding of the market in order to identify which products are needed or require specific adaptation for local consumers. The focus extends beyond sales volumes and revenue generation to include market intelligence, segmentation, and consumer profiling. Product selection and adaptation become two key strengths.

The collaboration with Alibaba, in fact, enables rapid testing of brand acceptance in the Chinese market, supporting data-driven decisions on product selection and combinations.
Feedback is fast, accurate, and closely aligned with the platform's (Tmall Global) traffic logic, making it possible to scale successful results efficiently.

The platform also provides immediate insights when testing strategies and products. To make an example, Pip Studio's dinnerware was originally designed for Western table settings, where usually each person has an individual set of plates and food is served separately. In contrast, Chinese households typically share dishes placed in the center, served in larger, deeper plates, with each person using a smaller bowl. To address this cultural difference, more localized product combinations were introduced and tested. Market reaction was immediate and feedback very fast.

Data analysis tools play a key role in daily operations. Key indicators such as add-to-cart ratios and conversion rates are monitored to evaluate advertising performance, forecast sales, and manage inventory. Additionally, changes in search indicators are used to track brand recognition.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Internally, the company continuously compares and evaluates the data received from its local partner to inform strategic decisions and define next steps. These data-driven insights - such as which colors and products resonate with Chinese consumers - are instrumental in guiding product introductions and ensuring alignment with local preferences.

Another advantage is represented by customer acquisition tools tailored to product category. The platform offers two main types of customer acquisition tools. The first is based on keyword searching. This helps seize market opportunities when customers have specific needs - such as a mug for office use, a cup-and-saucer set as a birthday gift, or a dinnerware set for newlyweds. The second relies on content feeds, using mood-driven images to capture attention through the aesthetic appeal and emotional resonance of the products.

For Pip Studio, the second approach proved significantly more effective. In this case, the brand's core competence - its design power - was best expressed, and therefore yielded better results. In addition, Alibaba's platform tools have continued to evolve. Some years ago, identifying the most effective image required testing each option individually. Today, the system allows advertising plans to be set based on specific goals - such as prioritizing exposure, maximizing conversion, or achieving a targeted return on investment. Once these plans are defined and creative assets uploaded, the tools autonomously optimize campaigns to meet those goals.

The company's approach in China involves a combination of logistics management, return handling, and data-driven decision-making. The company has accumulated valuable learning experiences. The collaboration with Alibaba has demonstrated that international expansion is not merely a matter of exporting goods; it is a process of learning, adapting, and gaining contextual understanding.

In summary, three key areas of competitive advantage have been identified: brand, processes, and products. Improvements have been achieved across all three dimensions. Notably, brand image extends beyond mere visibility; it encompasses the brand's identity as perceived by the consumer.

From the perspective of the Chinese market, consumer preferences appear to be shaped by a strong emphasis on quality, authenticity, and the perceived European origin of the brand. While products may be manufactured locally, it is essential that they convey a clear connection to European design and identity - particularly highlighting elements such as "Amsterdam" or "Holland" in branding. Flexibility and specialization are also recognized as distinctive strengths of European businesses, enabling them to deliver tailored, high-quality offerings rather than competing on volume.

Ultimately, the brand's success in China hinges on its ability to deliver not just tangible goods, but an immersive lifestyle proposition - one that aligns with consumer aspirations and reinforces a sense of belonging to a distinctive cultural and aesthetic universe.

Authors are grateful to Niels Seuren, Managing Director New Edition and Qiufan (Daisy) Chen, Deputy General Manager of Connected Creatives International Holdings Limited for the interview, for authorizing the business case and providing "quoted comments".

Sources

Interview with Niels Seuren, Managing Director New Edition and Qiufan (Daisy) Chen, Deputy General Manager of Connected Creatives International Holdings Limited.
https://www.pipstudio.com
https://www.newedition.nl/en/

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

3.5 THE BUSINESS CASE: BIOCYTE – BEAUTY AND NUTRICOSMETICS FROM FRANCE

"Through collaboration with Alibaba - particularly via cross-border e-commerce platforms such as Tmall Global - companies benefit from a simplified approach that facilitates market entry into China", Marie de Montagu

Biocyte is a French nutricosmetics company, offering health & beauty solutions to consumers. Established in 2006, the brand offers a range of products targeting health, skin, hair & nails, and weight management. Its formulations include ingredients supported by clinical research. The brand is distributed primarily through pharmacies in France and has expanded its presence online and abroad. Biocyte is part of Havea Group.

Biocyte began its collaboration with the Chinese market in 2015. The company made a strategic decision to expand into the Chinese market by partnering with a distributor specializing in e-commerce. This distributor currently manages cross-border e-commerce channels for the business, facilitating its entry and operations within China. A strong partnership has been established, ensuring complete alignment between the parties.

Under this operating model, day-to-day activities with Alibaba are coordinated through the local partner. This approach reflects a key insight gained by the Group regarding the Chinese market: success requires a strong local presence and cannot be achieved by applying a purely French perspective. Market-specific expertise is essential, and partnering with local professionals is viewed as the most effective strategy for entering and growing within China.

One of the main advantages of collaborating with Alibaba is the simplification of procedures and logistics. Operating through cross-border e-commerce platforms like Tmall Global simplifies and accelerates the process of entering the Chinese market, making it more accessible for international companies. This model offers a streamlined pathway for international brands - particularly in sectors like food supplements, where regulatory framework is especially complex.
Brand visibility and the effectiveness of marketing tools are additional advantages that can be identified in the collaboration with Alibaba. This approach is an effective way to enhance the visibility of European and French-origin brands, ensuring a well-executed marketing strategy. The content is professionally curated and distributed, allowing the brand to maintain consistency over its messaging and image. This model reinforces brand coherence across platforms.

The collaboration with Alibaba is useful to have continuous insights, including emerging trends, product performance, customer feedback, and return rates. This data-driven approach enables the brand to remain responsive to market dynamics. This approach is crucial to define some adjustments - such as packaging changes or modifications to product formats - based on consumer reactions and platform metrics, including shop scores and reviews.

Additionally, the brand gains access to real-time customer feedback. Once products are delivered, consumers often leave comments and reviews, which serve as valuable input for product refinement. This feedback loop allows for agile adaptation and ensures that offerings remain aligned with consumer expectations in the Chinese market.

To make some examples, adjustments were made when it turned out that certain packaging elements were unclear to Chinese consumers. For example, products designed for both day and night use - such as capsules intended for morning and evening intake - sometimes caused confusion due to labelling in French or visual cues that were not immediately intuitive for the local market. This highlights the importance of adapting packaging and communication to ensure clarity and usability for the target audience.
Collaboration with Alibaba is particularly beneficial for small and medium-sized European enterprises (SMEs) for several reasons. One of the most valuable aspects of the collaboration with Alibaba has been the initial engagement with its business development. It plays a key role in identifying brands with

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

potential and supporting their launch in the Chinese market. In the case of Biocyte, the Alibaba team provided significant value by offering insights into the existing brand performance in China, helping the company better understand the market context, category dynamics, consumer trends, and competitive landscape. For European SMEs, this touchpoint with Alibaba is particularly beneficial, as it allows for an informed assessment of market potential and guidance on how to approach it effectively.

In addition to strategic support, the Alibaba system offers relatively fast and accessible entry into a vast market, equipped with the necessary tools for performance - ranging from data analytics to marketing investment solutions. This integrated support system enhances the ability of international brands to navigate the complexities of the Chinese market with greater agility and precision.
One of the key lessons learned is that China should be approached as a strategic market rather than merely an opportunistic one. This requires the development of China-specific strategies across various operational areas. For instance, the scale of demand in China far exceeds that of France, necessitating significant adaptations in production capacity and speed. The company has progressively built the infrastructure to meet these requirements, recognizing, for example, that long lead times are not acceptable in the Chinese context.

The collaboration with Alibaba has proven to be a genuine learning experience, through which it was possible to adapt and rethink certain processes more effectively in alignment with the overall corporate strategy.

Authors are grateful to Marie de Montagu, China Cross-border E-commerce Director and Jie Yang, China Marketing & Business Development Manager, Havea Group for the interview, for authorizing the business case and providing “quoted comments”.

Sources

Interview with Marie de Montagu, China Cross-border E-commerce Director and Jie Yang, China Marketing & Business Development Manager, Havea Group.
https://www.havea.com/en/
https://www.biocyte.com

3.6 ALIBABA’S END-TO-END LOGISTICS SPINE: A CATALYST FOR EUROPEAN SME INTERNATIONALISATION

Alibaba’s logistics architecture offers European small and medium-sized enterprises a turnkey “export escalator” into China and the wider Far-East. Spanning five tightly interlocked stages - from domestic pre-export preparation to last-mile delivery in tier-1 to tier-3 Chinese cities - the system collapses distance, paperwork and uncertainty that traditionally deter smaller firms from venturing beyond Europe. By embedding digital marketplaces, bonded e-hubs and smart customs in a single data layer, Alibaba turns cross-border fulfilment into an extension of the seller’s own ERP rather than a costly, opaque black box.

STAGE 1–2 | from factory floor to digital shelf.

European manufacturers begin by loading export-compliant stock - often in small batches - into Alibaba storefronts such as Tmall Global, Taobao Global or Lazada. Third-party operators (TPs) and live-streaming channels embedded in these marketplaces create instant demand signals; SKU-level analytics feed directly back to the brand, guiding pricing, bundle design and promotional cadence. For many SMEs this removes the need for in-country distributors or large marketing budgets, shifting fixed expansion costs into variable, transaction-based fees.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

STAGE 3 | Cainiao EU warehouses or Direct-Air "Priority Parcel"

Rather than a one-size-fits-all model, Alibaba now offers two complementary front-end pathways.

Consolidation route – bulk or steady-volume SKUs are pre-positioned in warehouses such as Liège, Frankfurt where real-time dashboards track stock levels and CO_2 footprints, and export paperwork is auto-generated.

Priority-parcel route – time-sensitive or low-volume goods can skip the EU hub and move straight from the supplier's dock to a Chinese airport via dedicated air-freight lanes, with Cainiao taking over inventory count and platform listing on arrival.

European SMEs can switch between the two according to seasonality and cash-flow needs: WHC Labs uses the direct lane to keep nutraceuticals "airport-to-door in < 72 h" for first launches, while Plameca reports a 30-40 % cut in lead-time after shifting repeat sellers into the hub network. This dual architecture compresses the cash-conversion cycle without locking working capital in a single model.

STAGE 4 | Cross-border transport, e-Customs & carbon-smart routing

Once inventory is released, Cainiao's data pipe pre-clears shipments with a single electronic window; sellers can choose the < 5-day air corridor for speed or the rail service (~ 30 % cheaper, lower emissions) for bulk restocks. The platform's carbon-optimisation algorithm scores each leg and flags greener options, aligning with EU ESG disclosure rules while preserving delivery KPIs. Pharmanutra highlights that the system "handles customs seamlessly" and delivers a fully cost-tracked supply chain visible in a powerful dashboard.

STAGE 5 | bonded warehouses and last-mile in China/ASEAN.

On arrival, stock lands in bonded zones near Hangzhou, Shanghai or Kuala Lumpur; once an order drops, parcels leave the zone duty-paid and move through a web of courier partners that deliver to 98% of Chinese postcodes within 72 hours. A built-in reverse-logistics loop handles returns, protecting brand reputation and meeting local consumer-rights laws. Every scan in this leg feeds back into the marketplace dashboard, enriching the data lake that fuels the seller's next decision.

SME business-process impact and competitive edge.

Taken together, the five stages shift the export equation from inventory-heavy guesswork to data-driven, just-in-time responsiveness. Firms report lower working-capital locks, faster iterations on product-market fit, and a measurable uptick in managerial digital skills as staff engage with integrated dashboards rather than fragmented freight and customs portals. Crucially, the platform model spreads fixed costs - regulatory compliance, analytics, marketing tech - across thousands of sellers, enabling even micro-brands to contest market niches once reserved for multinationals. For European policy makers, this underscores the leverage of harmonising e-customs and supporting SME data capabilities: when logistics frictions shrink, innovation and export-led growth scale exponentially.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

The table below summarizes the impacts of Alibaba's logistic platform on SME's business processes:

Table 62 – Impacts of Alibaba's logistic platform on SME's business processes

Stage	What happens	Key Points
1. European SMEs	Manufacturer or brand prepares export inventory (often bulk-shipped to an EU fulfilment hub).	• Quality-control, CE-conformity checks (for medical devices or 3C products) • EU-origin or GI labelling on packs • ESG-compliance badges (carbon, traceability)
2. Alibaba Digital Marketplaces	Orders are generated on Tmall Global / Taobao Global (China retail), Lazada (ASEAN retail), or Fliggy (tourism bookings).	• GMV split by platform (Tmall G, Taobao G, Lazada, Fliggy) • Third-party operator (TP) enablement & KOL live-streaming funnels
3. Cainiao EU warehouses & Fulfilment Centres	Two interchangeable front-end options: • **Consolidation route** – bulk or steady-volume SKUs move into warehouses (Liège, Frankfurt, etc.), where inventory, export docs and CO_2 metrics are handled in one dashboard. • **Priority-parcel route** – time-sensitive or pilot lots ship straight from the supplier's dock to China via dedicated air lanes; Cainiao completes listing and inventory on • SMEs toggle between the two according to seasonality and cash-flow - e.g., WHC's nutraceutical launches use the direct lane for < 72 h delivery, while Plameca parks repeat sellers in e-Hubs to cut lead-time 30–40 %.	• Real-time inventory & carbon dashboards • "Airport-to-door in < 72 h" KPI (direct lane) • 30–40 % lead-time cut (e-Hub route) • EU customs bonded-zone compliance
4. Cross-border Transport & e-Customs	• Pre-filed electronic manifests clear customs before wheels-up; sellers choose: • **< 5-day air corridor** for speed, or • **Rail service (~ 30 % cheaper, lower emissions)** for bulk restocks. An algorithm scores each leg's CO_2 profile, surfacing greener options without sacrificing delivery KPIs. • Pharmanutra notes a fully cost-tracked chain visible in the same dashboard that powers marketing ROI.	• Single-window e-customs • Air vs. rail modal choice (speed vs. –30 % cost / lower CO_2) • Carbon-optimised routing flags • Seamless cost & compliance tracking
5. Cainiao CN/ASEAN Warehouses & Last-mile	Parcels clear bonded zones (Hangzhou, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur, etc.) and move through Cainiao + partner couriers (ZTO, YTO, STO) for customer delivery or retail shop pickup.	• 72-hour avg. delivery to Tier-1 cities • < 1 % damage / return rate • Reverse-logistics loop (pickup points & easy returns)

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

3.7 FROM ANALYTICS TO ADVOCACY: BUILDING BRAND -CONSUMER DIGITAL RELATIONSHIPS FOR EU SMES

European SMEs that plug into Alibaba's ecosystem gain far more than a virtual storefront: they inherit a full-stack customer-relationship and go-to-market apparatus that compresses the distance between a first click in Amsterdam and a repeat purchase in Hangzhou. At the core are data-rich dashboards (Business Advisor, Data Cube), AI-assisted marketing engines (Alimama), live-commerce pipes (Taobao Live, LazLive) and loyalty loops (88 VIP). Together these tools let small brands see who their Chinese customers are, speak to them in real time and shape offers that travel across retail and tourism channels - without building a multimillion-euro tech stack of their own.

1. Data & insight as the new freight-forwarder

Taobao and Tmall's Business Advisor surfaces SKU-level traffic, competitor benchmarks and consumer-interest heat maps directly inside the seller centre, turning what used to be export "black boxes" into live market-research panels. Brands can drill down into demand clusters, gender splits and price-elasticity curves via the Data Cube interface, then adjust titles, images or keyword bids on the fly.

2. Live commerce & community selling

On-platform livestreaming has become Alibaba's signature CRM weapon: Taobao Live posts higher conversion rates with respect to legacy e-commerce averages. European niche labels - from Italian nutraceuticals to Belgian vegan supplements - use professional Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) or in-house presenters to demo products, answer questions and issue flash coupons in real time. The result is a double win: instant trust for first-time buyers and first-party behavioural data that feeds back into the Business Advisor loop.

3. Loyalty programmes that travel with the customer

Repeat purchase is stitched together by 88 VIP, Alibaba's cross-platform membership tier that bundles free shipping, streaming subscriptions and early-access deals. The cohort grew 65 % during the 2024 6.18 festival, underscoring its pull on high-spending consumers. Because perks extend across Taobao, Tmall, Fliggy and even ele.me, SMEs benefit from enterprise-grade loyalty mechanics that would be impossible to fund alone. The programme's engagement-based scoring also lets small sellers earn the same wallet share as larger peers so long as they maintain service quality.

4. Lazada and the multilingual funnel

In South-East Asia, Lazada Business Advisor mirrors its Tmall cousin, giving Dutch or Spanish exporters visibility on real-time sales swings from Jakarta to Manila and advice on keyword bids or assortment gaps. These capabilities collapse lead times, localise customer support and feed the same CRM data lake that informs retail decision-making.

5. Fliggy's tourism-retail bridge

Travel platform Fliggy has rolled out dashboards and AI assistants that let European hotels, museums and duty-free stores pinpoint Chinese traveller segments, automate chat-based service and push geo-located coupons. Once visitors return home, the data trail funnels them back to the seller's Tmall flagship, creating a closed CRM circuit that marries experience purchases with cross-border goods sales.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

6. Partner networks & capability building

Entrants need not master Chinese consumer culture alone: Alibaba licences a network of certified Tmall Partners (TPs) that run 24/7 customer service, creative localisation and CRM campaigns for Western brands. Complementing this is the Netpreneur Masterclass, an Alibaba Business School programme that trains European entrepreneurs in digital marketing, data analytics and cross-border logistics. The up-skilling dimension answers a frequent policy bottleneck - digital skills - by embedding know-how directly inside SME management teams.

7. Impacts on SME business processes

These CRM and go-to-market rails reshape three core processes:

- **Product development** – real-time analytics reveal flavour, size or bundle preferences, letting SMEs iterate faster than quarterly trade-fair cycles.
- **Marketing allocation** – ROI dashboards merge paid search, livestream and membership promotions, allowing dynamic re-budgeting within hours, not months.
- **Customer support** – built-in chat translation and loyalty profiling cut response times and raise satisfaction scores without hiring multilingual staff.

8. Strategic takeaways

What emerges is a platform-as-function model: instead of adding fragmented CRM apps, European SMEs rent Alibaba's integrated stack, paying variable fees that scale with success. The approach levels the digital playing field, converts soft data into hard cash-flow advantages and de-risks expansion into China and ASEAN. For policy makers intent on boosting SME competitiveness, these findings argue for support measures - data-skills vouchers, TP incubators, streamlined e-customs - that amplify the CRM gains unlocked inside Alibaba's ecosystem.

Table 63 – Key CRM drivers and process impacts

CRM Driver	Functionality snapshot	Impact on SME business processes
Business Advisor / Data Cube	Traffic, competitor & consumer-insight dashboards (real-time).	Faster product tweaks; evidence-based pricing; reduced market-research spend.
Alimama ad & DMP suite	Keyword bidding, DMP segmentation, creative auto-generation.	Lower customer-acquisition cost (CAC); granular ROI tracking.
Taobao Live / LazLive	Integrated livestream studio, KOL booking, real-time couponing.	+Conversion & basket size; builds brand trust; creates first-party engagement data.
88 VIP & cross-platform loyalty	Unified membership perks across shopping, travel & entertainment.	Higher repeat purchase; predictable lifetime value; joint retention budget.
Lazada Business Advisor	ASEAN-wide analytics, assortment gap alerts, ad recommendations.	Seamless multi-country scaling; demand forecasting per city.
Fliggy Partner Tools	Traveller profiling, geo-push coupons, AI chatbots.	Offline-to-online sales loop; upsell of tourist traffic to e-shop.
Tmall Partner network & Netpreneur training	Outsourced store ops + executive training on data & digital.	Rapid capability build-up; reduced organisational complexity in early stage.

These drivers, taken together, embed customer intimacy and export agility at the heart of European SME strategies for China and the Far East.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

3.8 HOW ALIBABA APPLIES AI TO HELP EUROPEAN SMES ACCESS ASIAN MARKETS

For a European SME, “using Alibaba” isn’t only opening a storefront: it is plugging into a stack of AI systems that compress the cost of learning a new market, surface demand you would struggle to see from Europe, and industrialize day-to-day operations.
The stack spans language and creative tooling, demand generation, decision support, service automation and cross-border logistics - running on models and services Alibaba has built for Taobao/Tmall in China and for Lazada in Southeast Asia. In practice, this means a small team can translate and list products in Chinese with one click, generate localized imagery and copy in minutes, target the right shoppers with recommender-driven media, answer customers 24/7 with an LLM-powered assistant, and ship with predictable SLAs through AI-orchestrated logistics.

1. From “can we be understood?” to “we look native”: language + creative AI

Market entry starts with being findable and credible in Chinese and other Asian languages. Alibaba’s machine translation layer is integrated directly into the seller publication flow and common ERP connectors, so titles, descriptions and chat can be localized in one step rather than rebuilt by hand. That is a practical time-saver for first listings and for ongoing catalogue refreshes.
On visuals, Taobao/Tmall now embed visual generative tools that let merchants swap models, place products in different scenes, and standardize catalog shots without re-shooting - a real benefit in fashion, furniture and beauty, where local “look & feel” matters. Alibaba’s design stack goes deeper still: Luban, an AI design system in large-scale use since 2017, mass-produces banners/posters for seasonal campaigns; Alimama’s AI copywriter can instantly draft multiple product- or campaign-specific variants, enabling A/B tests at a speed that small teams alone cannot match. Independent and official coverage consistently points to very high throughput - Luban generating “tens of thousands of images per second” and the copywriter producing “up to 20,000 lines of copy a second” - illustrating the order-of-magnitude reduction in creative lead times available to SMEs.
Discovery also benefits from image-to-product search. Taobao’s built-in “Pailitao” visual search allows consumers to upload a photo and find similar products directly within the app—helping overseas brands with non-standard keywords reach relevant shoppers.

2. Finding demand you can actually sell to: recommenders, media and data spine.

Once listed, SMEs still confront the hardest problem: finding the right Chinese or Southeast Asian consumers. Here the heavy lifting is done by Alibaba’s production recommender family - Deep Interest Network (DIN) and Deep Interest Evolution Network (DIEN) - models published in top venues and deployed in Taobao/Tmall’s ad systems. Alibaba’s advertising and recommendation systems analyse users’ browsing and purchase patterns to match products and creatives dynamically, continuously refining audience targeting for higher relevance. For a small advertiser, the point is simple: better audience fit per euro spent.

Those predictions flow into a broader Uni Marketing / Brand Databank layer that lets brands treat consumer data as a managed asset, unifying traffic, media and CRM to plan and evaluate campaigns across Alibaba’s surfaces. Think of it as a data backbone for on-platform marketing, designed so even modest teams can run always-on programs without bespoke MarTech stacks.

3. Converting interest and serving at scale: Qwen-powered assistants + analytics

At the store level, two tools now anchor “operate and serve” work. Business Advisor gives merchants

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

a plain-English (and Chinese) view of what to change - assortment, pricing, content - based on live signals. Ali Xiaomi (Ali Assistant), powered by Alibaba Cloud's Qwen LLM family, handles routine customer queries with greater context and consistency than first-generation bots, keeping response times low even during surges.
Taobao/Tmall made these tools widely accessible for major shopping festivals (e.g., free access in the run-up to 6.18), and media coverage notes that ten+ AI tools - from analytics to generative content and chat - were used over 1.5 billion times during a single "11.11" season, which hints at real-world merchant adoption rather than pilots. Alibaba's customer-service systems have been publicly reported to handle high daily interaction volumes, with automation covering the majority of routine queries. These AI tools are now standard components of the Taobao and Tmall merchant ecosystems, rather than experimental pilots.

4. Fulfilment you can promise: AI-orchestrated logistics

Selling cross-border only works if delivery is predictable. Cainiao, Alibaba's logistics arm, applies AI and big-data optimization from routing and ETA prediction to warehouse operations and bonded-zone orchestration. Alibaba Cloud's case materials describe best-route algorithms and AI-enabled supply-demand tracking across Cainiao's five-network architecture, while earlier reporting highlighted the use of AI to shorten delivery routes at national scale. For SMEs, this infrastructure shows up as more reliable SLAs and cost visibility - even with low, volatile volumes typical of first-year exporting.

5. Beyond China retail: Southeast Asia retail and global B2B sourcing

For Southeast Asia, Lazada (Alibaba International) has introduced LazzieChat, an Azure OpenAI–powered assistant that acts as a personal shopper and support channel in multiple markets. The same generative pattern - AI helping users navigate large catalogs and helping merchants support them - lowers the bar to operating in ASEAN for European exporters.
In 2025, Alibaba International released Accio Agent, described as an AI agent trained on a very large corpus of listings and supplier profiles to automate supplier discovery, vetting and even negotiation steps. For EU firms that both buy components in Asia and sell to Asian consumers, these AI agents compress weeks of scouting into guided sessions inside the platform.

6. Under the hood: why this "AI backbone" matters for smaller firms

Technically, the stack combines industrial-scale recommenders (DIN/DIEN), LLMs (the Qwen family, with frequent updates and open-source releases), neural MT tuned on commerce data, and vision systems for search and AIGC. The point isn't to turn SMEs into AI labs; it is to expose these capabilities at the point of work inside consoles and toolbars - so a merchandiser, media buyer or service rep can act on them in minutes. In 2024–2025, Alibaba Cloud has iterated Qwen quickly (e.g., Qwen 2.0 evolved to 3.0; multilingual and multimodal variants), which explains the visible step-ups in merchant assistants and creative tooling over the last two shopping cycles.

7. Why it's relevant to European policy and to the SME P&L

For policymakers, these systems address the specific bottlenecks that keep small exporters out of fast-growing Asian demand: language and creative costs, demand discovery, 24/7 service in distant time zones, and the operational risks of cross-border delivery. For the P&L owner, the benefits are concrete: faster time-to-first-sale; higher media efficiency per euro through better matching; lower service overheads; and fewer "unknowns" in fulfilment costs and timings. And because much of the capability is embedded in default tools (rather than sold as expensive add-ons), SMEs can phase adoption as they grow.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

The following table synthesizes how Alibaba's AI-enabled tools translate into specific changes in SME processes - from faster assortment and pricing cycles to lower customer-service overhead and more predictable cross-border fulfilment. Read it as the "operations view" that this training infrastructure is designed to activate and sustain over time.

Table 64 - Impacts of Alibaba's AI platform on SME business processes

AI Driver	Functionality snapshot	Impact on SME business processes
Business Advisor / Data Cube (Taobao/ Tmall; Lazada BA)	AI-driven dashboards on traffic, demand, competitors; real-time assortment/pricing insights; Lazada's BA provides ASEAN analytics in Seller Center.	Faster product/price iteration; evidence-based budgeting; quicker entry sequencing across China/SEA without local research teams.
Alimama Ads & DMP	AI-enabled media buying and audience segmentation tools that continuously optimise creatives and ad placements based on consumer behaviour. (AI ad tech stack incl. TMOP/XDL).	Lower CAC via better targeting; measurable ROAS; unified view from impression to conversion inside merchant consoles.
AIGC for listings & storefronts (Luban, text generation)	Auto-generate banners, posters, product descriptions/titles from trending keywords and consumer insights.	Compress creative lead-times; scale A/B tests; align tone/visuals to Chinese consumer preferences without large in-country teams.
Machine translation & multilingual ops	Alibaba Translate integrated across titles, descriptions, chat, reviews; reduces language frictions in cross-border transactions.	Faster listing and CS setup; fewer errors in buyer–seller communication and RFQs; earlier market entry.
Visual discovery (Pailitao / Image Search)	Camera-to-product matching at billion-image scale; improves findability of SKUs via image, not keywords.	Higher exposure for EU designs with non-standard keywords; more accurate catalog mapping and cross-sells.
Livestream commerce (Taobao Live / LazLive)	Native live video selling with real-time coupons, Q&A and KOL integration; a mainstream path to demand generation in China.	Trust-building for unknown brands; uplift in conversion and basket size; first-party engagement data for retargeting.
Membership & loyalty (88VIP)	Cross-ecosystem super-membership across shopping, dining, entertainment, travel; unified perks and retention rails.	Higher repeat purchase/LTV; loyalty mechanics SMEs cannot fund alone; cradle-to-cradle remarketing (retail $_2$ travel).
Merchant & customer service copilots (Ali Xiaomi / AliMe)	Qwen-powered merchant chatbot and large-scale CS automation (AliMe) handling the majority of routine queries.	24/7 support without multilingual headcount; shorter response times; consistent CX during peaks (e.g., "11.11").
Logistics & fulfillment intelligence (Cainiao)	AI-enabled routing/ETA, bonded-zone orchestration, smart warehousing; smart customs clearance; global e-hub network.	Predictable SLAs and cost visibility at SME scale; option to toggle between direct-air lanes and hub consolidation; lower working-capital lock.
Tourism–retail bridge (Fliggy merchant tools)	AI tools for merchants (catalog standardization, CS automation, translation; "AskMe" travel assistant).	O2O loop from traveler acquisition to e-shop repurchase; automated content ops for hotels/ attractions targeting Chinese visitors.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

3.9 ALIBABA'S PERMANENT TRAINING & EDUCATION FOR SMES

European SMEs that choose Alibaba's platforms don't just get a storefront and a toolset; they step into a continuous-learning system that runs from first exploration to scale-up.
The training offer is deliberately "always-on" and modular: short, practical lessons for day-to-day operations sit alongside multi-week masterclasses, university-level curricula, and partner certifications. In practice, that means a lean team in, say, Vicenza or Lille can learn how to structure a Tmall Global listing on Monday, attend a webinar on cross-border pricing on Wednesday, and join a cohort program that sharpens leadership and growth strategy over the following month - without leaving their office. The common goal across these formats is to shorten time-to-first-sale, reduce trial-and-error, and codify what works in China and Southeast Asia for smaller firms with limited bandwidth.

HOW THE TRAINING LAYERS FIT TOGETHER

1. Self-paced "how-to" academies embedded in the consoles.

For day-one onboarding and everyday execution, Alibaba's seller portals double as learning hubs. The Learning Center / Courses catalogue walks suppliers through keyword selection, search-optimized titles, better RFQ responses, and effective product imagery - exactly the operational tasks that determine whether a listing is discoverable and credible to buyers. These lessons live inside Seller Central, so teams can watch a short module and immediately apply it to live offers.

On the retail side in Southeast Asia, Lazada University is positioned as a "one-stop cross-border merchant learning platform," with policy updates, logistics rules, marketing and operations curricula, plus guided seller journeys and a free onboarding video course for cross-border merchants. The point is continuity: as rules or campaign mechanics change, course content is refreshed where sellers already work.

For brands targeting China specifically, Taobao University content is accessible via Alibaba Cloud Academy, including an "e-Commerce Fast Track" (a five-day, 35-hour programme) that covers store set-up, operations, promotion, page "decoration" and CRM - useful for non-Chinese teams who need a structured introduction to Tmall/Taobao storecraft rather than ad-hoc tips.

2. Cohort-based masterclasses that build leadership and a peer network.

Beyond "how-to" execution, Alibaba Global Initiatives runs the Netpreneur Masterclass, a 4–6 week learning experience piloted in Europe, designed to help entrepreneurs internalize digital-economy playbooks and apply them to their own ventures. The first EU edition wrapped with strong demand and was followed by roll-outs in France, Germany and the UK, creating a European alumni base that SMEs can tap for peer support and collaboration. The curriculum increasingly emphasizes the role of AI in day-to-day operations, which aligns with the broader platform shift toward AI-assisted commerce.
A complementary, EU-specific track, launched by Alibaba.com for the B2B market, is AWE – Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (Europe), a ten-week, free programme for female founders. It blends advanced training, mentoring and networking to help participants refine growth plans, strengthen leadership skills and expand their support circles - practical levers for SMEs moving from experimentation to scale. Independent trade press and EU-facing programme pages document its launch and scope.

3. University pipelines and certified expert support.

Training is not just for existing teams; it also builds a talent bench. The Global Digital Talent (GDT/GET) programme invites universities to adopt Alibaba's digital-economy curricula and simulations, producing graduates who are "platform-literate" on day one. European SMEs can hire these interns and juniors to

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

strengthen their in-house capability for marketplace operations, analytics and cross-border workflows. University partners describe formal “Certified GDT Practitioner” pathways co-assessed with Alibaba and industry practitioners - a signal of structured, transferable skill standards.

When SMEs prefer to outsource specialist tasks, the Alibaba Europe Partner Program – offered by Alibaba.com for the B2B market - maintains an education hub, training materials and an exam leading to certification for agencies that support exporters. Official pages outline a clear path (sign-up, requirements, private training area, exam, certification), and European trade media detail how agencies can join the Partner Education Hub and then help local SMEs execute. The practical implication is a vetted bench of service providers - useful when a small team must scale campaigns or re-platform rapidly.

4. Vertical academies for travel and cross-border tourism.

For hospitality, attractions and retailers who sell to travelers, Fliggy complements platform tools with training and consulting for overseas merchants: how to open and operate a store, run campaigns, and manage orders. Coverage of Fliggy’s post-pandemic revitalization notes that these services are part of a broader push to help international partners reach Chinese customers more effectively; the merchant portal provides the operational entry point.
European brands - such as Disneyland Paris - have used Fliggy’s ecosystem to activate Chinese demand, underscoring the retail-tourism bridge MSMEs can plug into.

5. Open webinars and European co-programming.

Training also meets SMEs where they are. The EU SME Centre runs joint webinars with Alibaba on selling and buying for SMEs, giving European management teams case-led, platform-specific advice. National and local industry bodies replicate the pattern: for example, Confindustria Vicenza hosted an open, free webinar with Alibaba speakers on e-commerce and digital export - evidence that the training offer is being localized into EU ecosystems.
These touchpoints reduce discovery costs and keep busy teams current on platform updates and policy changes.

6. What changes for an EU SME in practice

A typical journey starts with orientation: a founder or export manager works through short modules on listing quality, keywords and RFQs in Alibaba’s Learning Center, then moves to marketplace-specific operations in Lazada University or Taobao University depending on target markets.

This phase builds platform literacy and reduces costly missteps (e.g., non-compliant imagery, weak titles, uncompetitive shipping settings). As the store goes live, teams lean on webinars and office-hour style sessions to stay abreast of policy changes, promotions calendars and analytics dashboards. Once momentum builds, owners graduate into cohort programmes like Netpreneur or AWE to sharpen leadership, finance and go-to-market strategy - while selectively bringing in certified partners to execute advanced media buying or localization spikes.

Over time, hiring interns or juniors from GDT/GET partner universities deepens the in-house bench, making the SME less dependent on external agencies for routine work. The through-line is continuity: learning at the point-of-work, reinforced by periodic intensives, plus a network (alumni, partners, universities) that outlives any one campaign.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

7. European footprint and accessibility

What makes this approach credible for European policy and ecosystem stakeholders is evidence of local delivery. The Netpreneur Masterclass was piloted in Europe and extended to major EU markets; AWE Europe is framed explicitly for EU founders; the EU SME Centre collaborates on skills webinars; national business associations promote open sessions with Alibaba experts. These signals matter: they show that continuous training is not an abstract global asset but a service with European cohorts, European calendars and European partners.

8. Why an "always-on" system is economically relevant

From a capability standpoint, permanent training reduces fixed entry costs (you don't need a full in-country team to learn platform norms), accelerates learning loops (teams can test, measure and adjust within days), and builds resilience (through alumni networks, certified partners and university programmes that refresh the talent pipeline).

For public policy, this is the connective tissue that lets SMEs actually use the marketplace infrastructure described in §§3.6–3.7 - not just access it. In a context where small firms face scarce time and skills, blended learning that is embedded in the tools they already use is a pragmatic lever for export growth to China and Southeast Asia.

Table 65 - Impacts of Alibaba's permanent training on SME resources and approaches

Training pillar	What it provides (examples)	Impact on SME resources & approaches
On-demand seller academies (Alibaba Learning Center; Lazada University; Taobao University online)	Product posting, SEO/keywords, RFQs; shipping rules, campaigns, ops; "Gateway to China" CBEC entry curriculum for overseas brands.	Human capital: upskills existing staff without hiring; Process: standardized listing/ops playbooks; Speed: shorter time-to-first-sale and fewer compliance errors.
Cohort masterclasses (Netpreneur; AWE Europe)	4–10-week programs on strategy, leadership, finance, marketing; mentoring + peer network; EU cohorts.	Strategic capacity: clearer market entry plans; Network effects: alumni access to mentors/partners; Governance: founder skills for scaling.
EU Partner Program & certification	Training hub, exams, and certification for agencies serving SMEs on Alibaba.	External resources: vetted service providers; Quality assurance: certified execution; Scalability: SMEs can outsource advanced ops when needed.
Vertical academies (Fliggy × Taobao University)	Online consulting + courses for travel merchants; store ops, campaign design, customer engagement.	O2O readiness: integrated tourism-retail funnels; Localization: content tuned to Chinese traveler demand; Resilience: skills to pivot with travel cycles.
Open webinars & EU roadshows (EU SME Centre; industry associations)	Joint sessions with platform leaders; local best practices and case studies; free access.	Awareness: lowers discovery costs; Policy fit: guidance aligned to EU context; Continuous improvement: cadence keeps teams up-to-date.
University & talent pipelines (GDT/GET)	Curricula, case packs, and simulation platforms for digital commerce adopted by partner universities.	Long-term supply of skills: interns/grads ready for CBEC roles; Ecosystem depth: easier hiring of platform-literate talent.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Why now is the time for policy: from evidence to action

Chapter 2 of this report shows that Alibaba's platforms (Tmall Global, AliExpress, Lazada, Fliggy and associated services) contributed €10.5 billion to EU6 GDP in 2024 and 172.5k jobs, with €2.2 billion in public revenues, and - critically - a +7.5% nominal growth of platform-enabled EU-to-Asia sales while overall EU extra-EU exports softened. These effects arise from demand-side access (new buyers and destinations), supply-side productivity (logistics, analytics, payments) and spillovers (skills, partner ecosystems).

The 2023 edition found similar channels of impact - though smaller in magnitude - using the same IO-based macro methodology and conservative attribution of platform-enabled sales; those methods and multipliers were reviewed and aligned to Eurostat tables and national accounts. A parallel NDP Analytics study for the US market (2022) corroborated that large e-commerce ecosystems can create sizeable GDP and employment contributions via export-enabling effects and supply-chain productivity. At EU level, the policy window is unusually favorable. The SME Relief Package (September 2023) promises "short-term relief, long-term competitiveness and fairness" and explicitly couples simplification with late-payment reform and skills finance. The Digital Decade Policy Programme sets 2030 targets of *90% of SMEs reaching at least basic digital intensity and 75% of enterprises using cloud/AI/big-data*, creating a natural yardstick for our proposals.

The AI Act is now in force (OJ 12 July 2024; entry into force 1 August 2024) with phased application through 2025–2026 and a requirement for national AI regulatory sandboxes by 2026 - a powerful lever to de-risk export-oriented AI adoption for SMEs.
The Data Act (in force; main obligations applicable from 12 September 2025) clarifies B2B data-sharing conditions and protects SMEs from unfair terms, enabling safer use of logistics/market data along digital trade corridors. The Digital Services Act (fully applicable from 17 February 2024) strengthens trust, transparency and redress on marketplaces - core to cross-border SME sales. On the movement of goods, Import Control System 2 (ICS2) Release 3 went live on 3 June 2024 across maritime/road/rail with full switchover by 1 September 2025, reshaping pre-arrival data and risk targeting for shipments. On payments, the Instant Payments Regulation (EU) 2024/886 (in force since 8 Apr 2024) compels euro-area PSPs to offer instant credit transfers with first obligations from 9 Jan 2025, cutting working-capital friction for SMEs.

Finally, Europe's stance is "de-risking, not decoupling" - which asks policy to reduce exposure while keeping diversified access to high-growth Asian demand. For tourism, Chinese outbound travel is recovering - still below 2019 volumes but gaining momentum through 2024/2025 - so European destinations and SME suppliers must be channel-ready. China's CBEC "positive list" (expanded in 2022) continues to underpin legal routes for EU consumer goods via platforms like Tmall Global - an enabling, not automatic, condition for SME success.
Against this backdrop, we propose a pragmatic-yet-visionary agenda organized into six pillars. Each recommendation is tied to goals aligned, where possible, with Digital Decade 2030, the AI Act and ICS2 timelines.

2. PILLAR A - Equip one million EU SMEs to sell to Asia through digital channels

A1 - Make EDIHs and EEN the "front line" for export-by-platform adoption.
The European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) and the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) already offer one-stop services on digitalization and internationalization; we recommend a dedicated *Export-by-Platform Track* in both networks, co-designed with marketplaces and logistics partners. Services: (i) product-market fit diagnostics for Asian demand; (ii) onboarding on CBEC routes (Tmall Global,

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Lazada, etc.); (iii) ICS2-ready shipping/data practices; (iv) "AI-for-export" use-cases (pricing, translation, content). Evidence: EDIH mandates include AI testing and collaborations with AI infrastructures; EEN explicitly supports internationalization and finance access.

A2 - Create "Digital Export Vouchers" focused on *first sale* to Asia.
National authorities should co-fund vouchers redeemable with accredited providers (including EEN/EDIH, chambers, platform partners) to cover catalog localization, compliance (labeling, IP), and campaign pilots on Asian marketplaces. Comparable programmes (Spain's Kit Digital, Germany's go-digital, France's Chèque France Num) demonstrate efficient uptake of SME digital tools when grants are simple and standardized.

A3 - Embed tourism SMEs in platform-enabled demand channels.
Through Fliggy-type marketplaces and OTA partnerships, destinations and local SMEs (accommodation, attractions, retail, transport, food) can package and sell to Chinese travelers as outbound demand returns. Align with visa digitalization and route recovery to capture pent-up demand.

OECD evidence ties SME competitiveness gains to digital adoption and access to international markets; structured support channels accelerate uptake, especially for AI and data-driven tools.

3. PILLAR B - Reduce transaction frictions: payments, customs data, and late payments

B1 - Make instant EUR payments usable for exporters' supply chains.
Member States, banks and PSPs should fast-track compliance with Regulation (EU) 2024/886 and promote SME adoption (account verification, fraud checks). Although most Asia sales settle in CNY/USD, instant euro helps the upstream *EU supply chain* (inputs, subcontractors), improving cash conversion cycles before export.

B2 - "ICS2-for-SMEs" playbook and grants.
As ICS2 Release 3 becomes universal by September 2025, SMEs need help producing granular ENS data (HS6, detailed descriptions, parties). Provide micro-grants for shipping software upgrades, and publish an EU playbook with sector templates and testing sandboxes via customs authorities.

B3 - Pass a strong Late Payment Regulation with enforceable 30-day standard, then *use it*.
Late payments choke SME liquidity needed to internationalize. Parliament supports a strict 30-day cap in B2B and B2G with automatic interest/compensation; the final regulation should retain teeth and avoid carve-outs. After adoption, require public buyer reporting, sector benchmarking and penalties.

The UK's 2025 overhaul (tougher disclosure, board oversight and penalties) illustrates how transparency plus sanctions can change behavior - Europe should go at least as far.

4. PILLAR C - Build trusted data and AI rails for SME cross-border commerce

C1 - National *AI-for-Export* regulatory sandboxes under the AI Act.
By 2026, Member States must run AI sandboxes; prioritize *export use-cases* (catalog translation, personalized marketing to Asian buyers, fraud/risk scoring, demand forecasting). Provide "safe harbor" supervision for SMEs co-developing with platforms and research labs.

C2 - A standard SCC + DPIA toolkit for EU–China data flows.
China is not an EU "adequate" jurisdiction, so SMEs need Standard Contractual Clauses and transfer impact assessments when using cross-border tools (marketing, customer service). The Commission should issue sector-specific SCC/configuration templates and DPIA checklists for e-commerce operations, coordinated with EEN/EDIH clinics.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

C3 - Use the Data Act to open *logistics & after-sales* data to SMEs under fair terms.
Define model B2B clauses for sharing IoT/parcel-status data and service logs from carriers/fulfilment to SME sellers, with guardrails on trade-secret protection and switching cloud providers.

C4 - Trust and safety alignment with the DSA for SME sellers.
Provide DSA compliance micro-modules (ad listings, product safety, traceability, notice-and-action) so SME sellers meet marketplace obligations and avoid delistings.

5. PILLAR D - De-risk market entry: IP, compliance and CBEC routes to China

D1 - Scale the EU SME Centre & China IP SME Helpdesk as the default coaching stack.
These long-standing EU-funded services offer free advice, training and case-specific guidance on market access, IP protection and enforcement in China. Integrate them into EEN/EDIH workflows and codify a "no wrong door" referral.

D2 - Publish an official CBEC (Tmall Global-type) route guide for EU consumer goods.
The Chinese CBEC positive list and preferential tax rules (within transaction and annual limits) are the legal backbone for cross-border retail imports. The EU should publish a clear *exporter-side* guide (in all EU languages) that maps product categories, labelling, return logistics and bonded warehouse options, and links to trustworthy Chinese and EU sources.

D3 - Create a *Platform-Based Export Insurance & Finance* window.
With EIF/InvestEU and national export credit agencies, pilot receivables-based working-capital lines for marketplace sales, using platform order/settlement data as primary evidence (with Data Act guardrails).

D4 - Tourism: align with Schengen e-visa digitalization and targeted promotion.
As EU institutions progress on visa digitalization and ETIAS timelines, national tourism boards should co-fund campaigns on Chinese platforms and train SMEs in Chinese-language service and digital wallets.

6. PILLAR E - Strengthen local capability: skills, management and continuous learning

E1 - Stand up a permanent "Digital Export Academy" across Member States.
A public-private academy (EEN/EDIH, chambers, platforms) should deliver tiered curricula: *foundation* (catalog, compliance, ICS2, payments), *growth* (campaigns, analytics, omnichannel), and *AI* (content co-pilots, pricing, translation, service bots). Learning should be modular, certified, and integrated with vouchers (Pillar A2). Build on what already works - Spain's Kit Digital, Germany's go-digital, France's Chèque France Num - and add the export lens.

E2 - Managers matter: fund SME leader programmes on AI and e-commerce.
OECD work shows managerial capabilities are decisive for digital competitiveness. Create executive-short courses (5–10 days) with case labs on Asia market entry, IP, data transfers and platform partnerships; tie participation to voucher eligibility.

E3 - Micro-credentials for *tourism SMEs* serving Chinese travelers.
Practical modules on Chinese platforms, service standards, QR payments, and social commerce, coordinated with destination management organizations and airlines.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

7. PILLAR F - Governance, measurement and international cooperation

F1 - An *EU–Asia Digital Trade Accelerator* (EADTA).
Create a Commission-led, Member-State-backed partnership that convenes platforms (including Alibaba), carriers, PSPs, standards bodies and SME networks to produce open playbooks, reference APIs (orders, logistics, identity), and model contracts (Data Act/SCC-ready). Link to the AI Act sandbox network and EDIHs; publish annual scorecards.

F2 - A *Digital Decade Export Dashboard* for *SMEs*.
Augment Digital Decade reporting with indicators on platform-based exports (value, buyers reached, markets entered), ICS2 compliance readiness, instant-payment adoption and AI use cases. Publish by Member State and sector, with quarterly updates from EEN/EDIH.

F3 - De-risking with partners, not isolation.
Operationalize "de-risking, not decoupling" via (i) dual-sourcing strategies, (ii) IP enforcement pathways, and (iii) reciprocal tourism promotion. The EU SME Centre and China IP SME Helpdesk should sit on an EADTA advisory board to ensure on-the-ground realism.

8. EU E-COMMERCE RULEBOOK: what changes for SMEs and platforms in 2025–2027

Over 2025–2027, a cluster of EU measures tightens product safety and liability, VAT and customs, consumer-facing fairness, and environmental responsibility. Below we decode what each file means -and, crucially, what sellers must do.

- **General Product Safety Regulation (GPSR, Regulation (EU) 2023/988)**

  What it is. The GPSR replaces the old 2001 product-safety directive and has applied since 13 December 2024. It modernizes safety duties for all consumer products and adds explicit obligations for online marketplaces (recall cooperation, display of minimum product information, speedy take-downs for unsafe listings).

  What sellers must do (2025–2027). Put in place a single source of truth for product safety data visible on listings (manufacturer/contact, traceability codes, warnings), set internal incident/recall playbooks aligned to Safety Gate notices, and ensure a responsible economic operator can be contacted swiftly; be prepared for marketplaces to suspend repeat non-compliance. (The Commission's GPSR Q&A details marketplace and trader duties).

- **Revised Product Liability Directive (PLD)**

  What it is. The new PLD entered into force 8 December 2024; Member States must transpose it by December 2026. It updates strict liability to the digital era: software, AI updates and digital services that affect product performance are within scope, and evidentiary presumptions can shift the burden of proof in complex cases. Potential defendants widen along the chain.

  What sellers must do (2025–2027). Map software/firmware dependencies that may change a product post-sale; keep update logs and quality files; tighten supplier contracts (evidence retention, defect notification) and review product liability insurance to reflect software/AI exposure ahead of application from late 2026.

- **ViDA (VAT in the Digital Age) & Customs reform**

  What it is. The Council and Commission adopted ViDA on 11 March 2025, launching a staged roll-out to 2030–2035: single VAT registration extensions (OSS/IOSS), deemed-supplier rules for certain platform services (notably short-term accommodation and ride-hailing from July 2028), and

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

digital reporting/e-invoicing for cross-border B2B from 2030. In parallel, EU customs reform moves to a data-driven model (EU Customs Data Hub), while ICS2 pre-arrival data becomes standard across modes by 2025; the Commission is also pushing to remove the €150 de-minimis for small consignments earlier, potentially Q1 2026, and has floated a handling fee per parcel to fund controls.

What sellers must do (2025–2027). Even before ViDA's major "go-lives," clean VAT master data (customer status, fixed establishment flags), align invoicing to real-time reporting norms, and prepare contracts for the platform deemed-supplier shift (allocation of VAT liabilities, customer location due diligence). On customs, upgrade shipping/ERP fields to meet ICS2 Entry Summary Declaration quality (accurate HS codes, plain-language descriptions, parties), and model the end of de-minimis on landed cost and returns.

- **Digital Fairness Act (DFA, forthcoming consumer-law update)**

  What it is. The Commission is drafting a Digital Fairness Act to update core consumer directives (UCPD, CRD, UCTD) for dark patterns, addictive design, influencer marketing, and unfair personalisation. The public consultation ran in mid-2025; the proposal is expected in 2026. Expect closer alignment with the Digital Services Act (DSA).

  What sellers must do (2025–2027). Pre-empt likely rules: audit UX flows (consent, unsubscribe, default settings), personalised pricing disclosures, influencer #ad compliance, and minors' protections. Keep evidence trails (consent logs, A/B copies) to demonstrate due care once the DFA lands.

- **EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) schemes for sellers (packaging, WEEE, batteries).**

  What it is. EPR shifts end-of-life costs to the producer (including distance sellers). Two big files shape 2025–2027: the new Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR, Regulation (EU) 2025/40) with obligations applying from August 2026, and the Batteries Regulation (EU) 2023/1542 phased through 2024–2032, including a digital battery passport (QR code) from 2027 for EV, industrial and LMT batteries. Several Member States already impose marketplace control obligations to check sellers' EPR status.

  What sellers must do (2025–2027). Register as producer (or appoint an Authorised Representative where required), join a Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO), display registration numbers on invoices/listings, and report placed-on-market volumes and pay eco-fees per country. If you sell batteries/incorporate them, prepare QR-linked battery passports and due-diligence files; if you ship packaged goods, adapt packaging specs and fee reporting ahead of August 2026. Marketplaces may block listings without proof of EPR compliance.

9. What success looks like by 2030

- **SME digital intensity:** on track to 90% basic digital intensity; 30–40% of exporting SMEs using AI for at least one export use-case (content, pricing, service).
- **Market access:** +250k EU SMEs have entered at least one Asian marketplace; export value uplift attributable to platforms continues to outpace aggregate extra-EU exports, as in our 2024 findings.
- **Frictionless operations:** ICS2 compliance and instant euro rails cut delays and cash gaps; *median B2B payment term* ≤30 days.
- **Tourism spillovers:** Chinese arrivals and spend back to - or above - 2019 levels, with long-tail SMEs connected to demand via platforms.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

10. Lessons from success - and failure - at home and abroad

Estonia's e-Residency shows that radical digital public services can lower barriers for micro-exporters, though success requires complementary banking and compliance pathways - not just an e-ID. Singapore's IMDA "SMEs Go Digital" and Enterprise Singapore's MRA grants demonstrate how productized, co-funded guidance plus simple grants can move thousands of SMEs quickly from "considering" to "doing" - especially for e-commerce and cross-border marketing. KOTRA (Korea) illustrates the benefits of state-backed expert networks that coach firms into Asian e-commerce channels - again, standardized playbooks and hands-on help are key.

Europe also has cautionary tales. Fragmented grant schemes without common curricula or shared vendor lists multiply administrative burden and confuse SMEs - even when budgets are large (early versions of several national digital bonus schemes faced such critiques). And in payments, where EU policy has now acted, the long phase where instant rails existed but were not broadly offered limited SME benefits; swift implementation of the 2024 regulation is essential. In customs, the ICS2 transition is a major security upgrade but imposes non-trivial data/reporting burdens: without templates and vendor-agnostic tools, smaller exporters and forwarders face avoidable friction.
Finally, tourism recovery shows how visa friction and air capacity steer Chinese travelers toward short-haul destinations; Europe must match competitors' convenience if it wants SMEs in hospitality, retail and culture to benefit from the rebound.

11. How Alibaba-type platforms fit into the public-interest strategy

Our micro evidence in Chapters 3.8–3.9 (AI tools, training and continuous learning) explains why the public sector does not need to build new retail channels: platforms already aggregate consumer demand, logistics and payments at scale; what governments should do is reduce frictions, raise trust and crowd in capability so SMEs can use those rails safely and productively. The DSA codifies marketplace accountability, Data Act and SCCs structure lawful data flows and switching, the AI Act sandboxes enable safe experimentation, ICS2 secures goods flows, and Instant Payments reduce cash-flow risk. Well-designed vouchers, coaching and finance complete the stack.

12. Implementation roadmap (2025–2030)

- **2025-2026 (set-up / scale-up years).**

  Adopt Late Payment Regulation; launch EU EADTA work programme; publish SCC + DPIA export toolkit drafts; align instant payments obligations with banking supervisors; run pilot AI sandboxes in at least 10 MS focused on export use-cases; publish ICS2-for-SMEs draft playbook.

  All MS operate export-oriented AI sandboxes; vouchers live in ≥15 MS; EEN/EDIH Export-by-Platform Track fully operational; ICS2 fully mandatory with SME templates; EU SME Centre/China IP SME Helpdesk integrated intake; first EADTA playbooks out.

- **2027–2028 (performance years).**

  300k SMEs served by EEN/EDIH track; 250k vouchers used; 500k DSA-compliance course completions; median B2B payment term ≤30 days; tourism back to (or above) 2019 Chinese volumes; Data Act-based logistics data sharing mainstream in exporters' toolchains.

- **2029–2030 (Digital Decade finish line).**

  90% of SMEs with basic digital intensity; 75% of firms using cloud/AI/big data; platform-enabled export growth systematically outpacing aggregate extra-EU exports; EADTA publishes stable reference APIs and contracts.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

13. Risks and mitigations

- **Geopolitical volatility** (tariffs/sanctions): diversify markets (ASEAN, Middle East) while keeping China channel-ready; embed clause libraries for sanctions screening in SCC templates and Data Act contracts.
- **Compliance fatigue** (DSA, AI Act, Data Act, ICS2): centralise guidance in EEN/EDIH, maintain one-page checklists and vendor-neutral tooling.
- **Skills bottlenecks**: scale micro-credentials; attach grant eligibility to training completion, as seen in effective national schemes.
- **Tourism sensitivity to visas/air capacity**: coordinate with Schengen visa digitalisation and carriers on route reinstatement; keep destination-level promotion agile on Chinese platforms.

14. Concluding note

The macro contribution quantified in Chapter 2 justifies policy urgency. The recommendations above do not ask the public sector to pick winners; they ask it to finish the plumbing - payments, customs data, lawful data flows, trust - and to fund capability at scale so that SMEs can plug into existing market rails with confidence. If Europe executes this agenda with discipline, the 2030 Digital Decade targets become not just *IT metrics but trade outcomes* - more European SMEs selling to Asian consumers and travellers, with higher productivity and resilience.

Table 66 - Summary of policy recommendations

Pillar & measure	What it does	2030 outcome
A1 EEN/EDIH Export-by-Platform Track	One-stop coaching for onboarding, ICS2, AI use-cases	Stable programme across EU27
A2 Digital Export Vouchers	Co-fund onboarding, localisation, campaigns	Embedded in national budgets
A3 Tourism China-ready programme	Train & certify tourism SMEs; platform campaigns	Chinese arrivals ≥2019 and higher spend
B1 Instant euro payments adoption	Cut cash-flow gaps in EU supply chains	Instant rails ubiquitous
B2 ICS2-for-SMEs	Templates, grants for ENS data	Frictionless security filings
B3 Late Payment Regulation	Enforce 30-day cap + penalties	Structural cash-flow improvement
C1 AI Act sandboxes (export use)	Safe trials for AI tools (pricing, content, risk)	AI woven into export routines
C2 SCC + DPIA toolkit	Lawful EU_2 China data flows for SMEs	Standard practice across sectors

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

C3 Data Act B2B logistics data	Fair access to shipment/service data	Predictable service & switching
C4 DSA seller compliance modules	Trust & safety competence for SMEs	Safer marketplaces, fewer delistings
D1 EU SME Centre + China IP Helpdesk scaling	Integrated advice on market, IP, contracts	Institutional backbone for EU-Asia
D2 CBEC route guides	Product-family guides for Tmall Global-type routes	Lower entry barriers & errors
D3 Export insurance/finance window	Receivables-based finance using platform data	Scaled trade-finance access
D4 Visa/air capacity alignment for tourism	Sync visa digitisation, routes, campaigns	Higher share and value of Chinese travel
F1 EU–Asia Digital Trade Accelerator	Playbooks, reference APIs, model contracts	Common rails for SME exports
F2 Digital Decade export dashboard	Track platform-export indicators	Accountability to 2030 targets
F3 De-risking cooperation charter	Operationalise de-risking via partners	Balanced exposure, wider access

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

5. METHODOLOGY

To estimate the economic impact of sales transacted on Alibaba platforms, this research adopts the input-output (I-O) model, originally developed by Wassily Leontief. An I-O matrix represents the interdependencies between sectors of a national economy, recording how industries purchase inputs from and sell outputs to one another. This framework enables the calculation of multipliers, which quantify the total output generated across the economy in response to a unit increase in final demand, such as consumer purchases made through Alibaba's platforms.

The economic impact extends beyond the revenues from purchased products. Increased production, business operations, and investment trigger a ripple effect throughout the supply chain, generating additional economic activity. This impact consists of three main components:

- Direct effect: The immediate increase in output resulting from the initial spending on goods and services.
- Indirect effect: The increase in output generated by upstream suppliers that provide inputs (i.e., goods and services) to the businesses benefiting from the direct effect.
- Induced effect: The additional output driven by increased household consumption, as employees (both direct and indirect) spend their earnings on goods and services.

These effects are estimated using input-output multipliers, specifically: Type I multipliers, which capture direct and indirect effects, and Type II multipliers, which include direct, indirect, and induced effects. Input-output multipliers can be assumed to be relatively stable over the short to medium term, unless the structure of the national economy undergoes significant changes. The impact on GDP is calculated as the gross value added (GVA) generated by the increase in total output, broken down by product category. The classification of products in this document is the NACE Rev. 2 from ESA 2010.

GVA measures the value of goods and services produced minus the cost of intermediate inputs used in production. The GVA of individual products and services contributes directly to a country's GDP. From the impact on GDP, it is then possible to estimate related effects on tax revenues and employment.
As the basis for estimating economic impact, this research utilizes sales data – the gross merchandise value (GMV) - provided by the Alibaba Group. GMV refers to the value of goods and services sold via e-commerce platforms, calculated before deducting any fees or expenses.
The retail margins deducted from the GMV are based on Damodaran's estimates of operating and net margins for the retail sector in China and other emerging markets[35].

The magnitude of the estimated economic effects varies significantly across countries due to two main factors: Differences in the product mix sold on the various Alibaba platforms[36] and store types, as well as differences in the structure and productivity of national supply chains.

Although supply chains for each product may be technologically similar across countries, the balance between domestic production and imports, as well as productivity levels, differs from one economy to another. As a result, the same level of sales can lead to different economic outcomes across countries. These estimates are conservative, as they exclude cross-border effects.
For instance, any output generated by Italian firms that supply German sellers on Alibaba platforms is not included in Italy's GDP impact. The analysis is limited to national-level effects and does not account for international spillovers.

Moreover, the results of this study are not directly comparable with those of the previous one: the

35 *Aswath Damodaran, Professor of Finance at the Stern School of Business, New York University, compiles and publishes annual datasets that include, among other metrics, operating and net margins by industry.*
36 *Regarding products sold on Lazada, we assumed they reflect the same basket of products as those sold on Taobao and Tmall.*

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

current estimates draw on Input-Output tables for 2022 (the Netherlands and the UK), 2021 (France, Germany, Italy, and Spain), and 2020 (Belgium), whereas the previous estimates relied primarily on 2019 tables.

To ensure comparability over time, GDP and tax revenue figures for 2022 and 2023 were converted into 2024 constant prices using the GDP deflator. The resulting series expresses all values in terms of 2024 purchasing power, allowing the three years to be summed without the influence of price changes.

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy

Copyright © 2025, SDA Bocconi, Milano, Italy
No part of this publication may be copied, stored, transmitted, reproduced or distributed in any form or medium whatsoever without the permission of the copyright owner.

SDA Bocconi
SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
Alibaba