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WORLDEF E-Commerce

“Founders Who *Stay Win.*”

Fadi Ghandour

Founder & Executive Chairman, Wamda Capital

ON RESILIENCE, $23 BILLION IN MENA CAPITAL, AND WHY THE TURKIYE-MENA BRIDGE IS CLOSER THAN YOU THINK.

MENA’S TOP 30 VENTURE CAPITAL FIRMS: $23 BILLION AND COUNTING

The AI Revolution in E-Commerce Logistics

From Istanbul to the World: Turkish Brands Go Global

The Cross-Border Commerce Playbook


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Editorial

Burak Yalım
Editor-in-Chief

The world is not waiting.

There is a moment in every market's maturity when the domestic opportunity stops being enough. Not because it has been exhausted, Turkiye's e-commerce and retail market is still growing at double digits and will not be exhausted for years, but because the founders and operators who have spent a decade building within its borders start looking up and realizing that everything they have learned, every system they have built, every inefficiency they have solved, travels.

That moment, for Turkiye's e-commerce and retail ecosystem, is now.
This issue of WORLDEF E-Commerce Magazine was assembled in that spirit. It lands in your hands at WORLDEF Istanbul 2026, and if you read it cover to cover, you will notice that almost every piece points in the same direction: outward. Aras Global is scaling logistics operations through Central Asia and the CIS, building cross-border infrastructure that most regional players have only described on slides. Widect is mapping the MENA opportunity with genuine commercial specificity, not tourist curiosity. ShipEntegra and Ship to More are building the operational rails that Turkish brands need to reach global markets without reinventing fulfillment from scratch in every new geography. Sandoog is inside Iraq's e-commerce transformation from the ground up. Styli is scaling fashion retail across the Gulf with a data discipline that most Western platforms would envy. Beatriz Nahuz scaled MenFirst to eight figures on Amazon, Walmart, and TikTok Shop simultaneously, and her account of how she did it is one of the most practically useful pieces in these pages.

The picture that emerges is not of a Turkish e-commerce and retail ecosystem preparing to go global. It is of one that already has.

The bridge between Turkiye and the Arab world is starting to thicken. The headwinds that historically made cross-border capital cautious are easing.

WORLDEF E-Commerce

Editorial

And yet the capital relationship between Turkiye and the region to its south and east remains underdeveloped. That is the uncomfortable truth this issue also carries. We mapped MENA's 30 most significant venture capital firms, $23 billion in identifiable assets under management, spanning sovereign wealth vehicles in Riyadh, seed accelerators in Cairo, and growth funds in Abu Dhabi. We asked Fadi Ghandour, who co-founded Aramex, built Wamda Capital, and backed Souq and Careem before either became a household name, to put that capital landscape in context. His answer was instructive. The bridge between Turkiye and the Arab world, he said, is starting to thicken. But the relationship is still thinner than the geography and the mutual opportunity demand.

WORLDEF's own globalisation journey reflects exactly this conviction. This issue goes to print as we welcome Melih Tekin, Founder and CEO of WABEL, to the WORLDEF family as Chief Commercial Officer and Board Member. Tekin has spent years helping brands scale across borders, understanding firsthand the operational complexity and commercial opportunity that sit at the intersection of Turkiye and global markets. His arrival is not a footnote. It is part of a larger institutional momentum that culminates in December, when WORLDEF Prime will bring e-commerce and retail leaders to Antalya on 8-10 December 2026 for a format unlike anything the ecosystem has seen before. At its core is milimetric matchmaking: a precision model that connects service providers with hosted retailers based on genuine commercial fit rather than who happened to be in the same room. The goal is not networking. It is the meeting that actually leads somewhere.

The technology pieces in this issue tell a related story. Beempa, Supsis AI, Podbul, DigiFist, each of them is building something that either travels by design or could travel with the right distribution. The artificial intelligence thread runs through all of it: AI in logistics routing at Surat Lojistik, AI in customer acquisition at MenFirst, AI in payment behaviour at Checkout.com, AI in e-commerce operations at Beempa. The 2026 MENA Digital Commerce report from Checkout.com finds that 50 percent of consumers in the region are already ready for AI agents to shop on their behalf, while trust in payment security remains the critical barrier. That gap between readiness and trust is exactly where Turkish fintech and logistics infrastructure can add value, because Turkiye has spent years solving versions of the same problem in a market that did not always make it easy.

The financial and accounting piece from TAM Accounting on the US market architecture, and the ELC GLOBAL launch that brought e-commerce and retail leaders together at Mandarin Oriental Bosphorus, round out a picture of an ecosystem that is thinking seriously about structure, not just growth.

Twenty-five pieces. Six sections. One direction of travel.

The world is not waiting for Turkish e-commerce and retail to arrive. In many places, it already has. We will see you in Antalya in December. This issue would not exist without the trust of every partner, contributor, and collaborator who gave their time, their thinking, and their voice to these pages. The team behind this issue knows who they are. So do we. Thank you.

Executive Commentary

BY UGUR GURBES

Sürat Kargo’s Customer Experience-Focused Digital Transformation

Cem Oğuz | General Manager, Sürat Kargo

Sürat Kargo, which has structured its operational processes end to end through digital transformation investments, increased its transaction volume by 20 percent in the relevant period. Sürat Kargo General Manager Cem Oğuz said, “The fact that we established the infrastructure capable of meeting the increase in e-commerce volume in a timely manner has made the financial impact of our digital transformation investments more visible.”

Sürat Kargo, which addresses digitalization as a holistic transformation by redefining its ways of doing business end to end, continues to make a difference in many areas, from operational efficiency and transaction volume to delivery times and customer experience, through the steps it has taken in this direction. Stating that Sürat Kargo achieved a 20 percent increase in transaction volume with the measurable and flexible structure it established, Sürat Kargo General Manager Cem Oğuz said, “The fact that we established the infrastructure capable of meeting the increase in e-commerce volume in a timely manner has made the financial impact of our digital transformation investments more visible.”

“We Are Building An Integrated Cross-Border Operation”

Sharing that they plan to establish a compact structure that combines customs clearance and operational processes on the international shipments side on a single platform, Oğuz provided the following information: “In this way, by simplifying processes dispersed across different systems, we aim to offer a more transparent, faster, and error-free experience for both our operational teams and our business partners. In particular, we are building an end-to-end digital and integrated cross-border operational infrastructure in a way that will support the increase in cross-border e-commerce volume. In addition, by continuously improving our integration capabilities, we are creating an ecosystem that enables faster and more flexible data exchange with our business partners. On the customer side, we focus on offering more transparent tracking, more accurate delivery forecasts, and personalized services. In the coming period, we aim to take our digital transformation journey further with applications such as AI-supported demand forecasting, dynamic pricing, and proactive customer notification.”

süratlojistik

Executive Commentary

BY UGUR GURBES

Sürat Lojistik Builds the Future with Smart Routing and Automated Warehousing Systems

Tarkan Türkel | General Manager, Sürat Lojistik

Sürat Lojistik is restructuring all its logistics processes, from warehouse management to distribution networks, with smart routing and automated warehousing systems. Sürat Lojistik General Manager Tarkan Türkel, who stated that they actively implement the systems they manage with algorithms in the field, said that a period has begun in which hours, not days, are being discussed in deliveries. Bringing Türkiye's logistics potential together with high technology, Sürat Lojistik is restructuring its operations with automated warehousing and smart routing systems across the process extending from warehouse operations to distribution networks. The company aims to increase operational efficiency and shorten delivery times with AI-supported algorithms and a data-driven management model.

Stating that the logistics sector is being shaped by two main trends in 2026, Sürat Lojistik General Manager Tarkan Türkel listed them as data/artificial intelligence and sustainability. Noting that the sector is still in the awareness phase of this transformation, Türkel said, "We are in a period in which hours, not days, are being discussed in deliveries. As Sürat Lojistik, we are already on the side that actively implements these systems, through which we manage routes and capacity with algorithms, in the field. We are not waiting for the future; we are building it."

"We Act With Numbers, Not Intuition"

Türkel summarized the benefits they provide through smart routing and automated warehouses as follows: "We see the total benefit under three headings: cost discipline, visibility in customer experience, and manageability of the operation. On the customer side, real-time tracking and transparency increase trust. Internally, managing processes from a single platform means faster and more accurate decisions. While we use technologies with international standards on the hardware side, we benefit from our own engineering infrastructure on the software and integration side. Systems that enable critical decisions such as capacity planning, pricing, and route management to be made with algorithms are developed in-house."

Tarkan Türkel also noted that automation does not mean removing people from the process, but rather moving people away from physical and repetitive tasks into value-added positions that analyze data. He said they are strengthening their teams' competencies in data management and system control. Türkel said, "In short, we have efficiently combined human intuition with the data-processing power of artificial intelligence. We have started to act with numbers, not intuition. Since our decision-making processes have become data-based, we have minimized our error rates."

SHIP TO MORE

Executive Commentary

Digital Transformation in E-Export: The Perfect Harmony of Marketing, Technology, and Logistics

Aytaç Akıncı | Founder & CEO, Ship to More

We are all experiencing, with great excitement, the new golden age of global trade that removes borders. Thanks to the tremendous opportunities brought by digitalization, today, a unique product coming out of a local producer's workshop can appear on the screen of a consumer overseas within seconds. The e-export ecosystem offers our brands the opportunity to discover new markets all around the world, bring cultures together, and tell their unique stories on the global stage. The most fundamental element that makes success sustainable in this exciting journey is the ability to carry the value produced with the same quality and care until the final moment it reaches the consumer.

In the modern e-commerce world, logistics has gone far beyond the process of simply moving a package from point A to point B. Logistics is the most valuable stage where the brand fulfills its promise, physically comes into contact with the customer, and builds brand trust. For e-exporters to gain a permanent, respected, and growing position in global markets, they must position logistics not as an operational step, but as the driving force at the very center of their marketing, technology, and customer experience strategies.

The Inseparable Integrity of Marketing and Logistics

Today, our e-export brands make very large and valuable investments in digital marketing processes. Flawless social media campaigns are designed, search engine optimizations are carried out, and millions of potential customers are reached through influencer collaborations. This process, which starts from the very top of the purchase funnel and continues all the way to the payment screen, is shaped by the unique power of digital marketing. However, the moment that valuable customer, acquired with a tremendous marketing budget, confirms the order is not the moment when marketing's job ends; on the contrary, it is the moment when its most critical stage begins.

The real moment that determines customer loyalty is how quickly, transparently, and flawlessly that package reaches the consumer's door. When a consumer whose expectations have been elevated to the highest level through a great marketing campaign receives the product within the promised time, in elegant packaging, and through a transparent process they can track from beginning to end, that consumer turns into an eternal brand ambassador for that brand. This is why, as Ship to More, we see logistics infrastructure as the strongest complement to the marketing strategy. Thanks to the flawless delivery infrastructure we offer to our businesses, we ensure that our brands receive the highest possible return on their marketing investments and reinforce global customer loyalty.

Digital Transformation in E-Export and the Rise of Agile Infrastructures

The key to success in e-export is being able to read data instantly, analyze it quickly, and make the right decision within seconds. This is only possible with an end-to-end digitalized, smart, and agile infrastructure. The logistics of the future is a system where there are no paper documents, long phone traffic, or uncertain waiting periods, and where everything flows autonomously through digital screens.

As a Technopark-approved logistics technology platform within Istanbul University Entertech, we use all our R&D power to create this agility. The high-speed panel we have developed for our e-exporters brings together all processes of cross-border operations on a single smart screen. Our businesses can integrate their orders into the system with just a few clicks, manage customs processes digitally, and track their shipments going to any point in the world instantly on a map. This powerful and modern infrastructure gives our brands tremendous time savings in operational processes, opening up a wide space for them to focus on their true passions: “developing new products and global marketing.”

Operations Liberated with the Multi-Main Carrier Model

Every market, every product, and even every customer has different expectations. In the dynamic world of e-export, where sometimes speed and sometimes cost optimization come to the forefront, having rich alternatives instead of depending on a single carrier provides brands with a unique range of movement. One of the greatest privileges offered by the Ship to More panel is that it blends this freedom with technology.

Our system instantly and transparently presents users with all price and transit time alternatives of the world’s most established and reliable logistics giants such as UPS, as well as strong partners such as Widect, a subsidiary of Turkish Airlines, which we most recently integrated into our expanding network. The moment an e-exporter enters the panel, they can freely choose the most cost-effective, fastest, or strategically most suitable route for the target country. In line with our principle of transparency, after dimensional weight and volume are determined with state-of-the-art laser measuring devices at our operation center, these alternatives are completely surprise-free and clear prices. For 1 shipment, 1 invoice is always issued.

From Express Speed to Heavy-Tonnage Solutions: Borderless Capacity

Digitalization and speed are indispensable not only for small-volume B2C packages, but also for B2B operations, which are the backbone of the global supply chain. As our businesses grow on the global stage, their logistics needs also reach different dimensions. With this awareness, we do not limit our service vision only to express e-export packages.

For your heavy-tonnage and high-volume B2B shipments, we provide uninterrupted, end-to-end service to all main ports of the world in air, sea, and road transportation. With our operational strength, we manage all kinds of cargo models with the same confidence by integrating different modes of transport (FCL/LCL sea freight, charter aircraft rental, full or partial road transportation). In short, whether your product is an elegant gift box or an industrial load weighing tons, we remove borders, volumes, and weights for you.

A Vision That Brings Technology and People Together: VIP Logistics Experience

Digital transformation and automation add tremendous speed to e-export; however, we know very well that at the heart of international trade, there is always “people, sincerity, and trust.” Even if you use the world’s most advanced artificial intelligence tools, when you make an intercontinental shipment on behalf of your brand, you want to find a real expert in front of you who values your business as much as you do.

By taking a pioneering step in the sector that blends technology with a human-centric approach, we have completely personalized the logistics experience. With our shipment-specific "Chat Box" feature, a first in Türkiye, we assign a dedicated VIP Logistics Consultant to each e-exporter who becomes a member of our panel. When you want to get information about the status of your shipment, request strategic advice about the customs regulations of the target country, or make a cost projection for a new market, you can correspond within seconds with your consultant who knows your business by heart, without wasting time with robots. This "Boutique & Premium" service approach, which combines the speed of technology with the problem-solving ability of people, ensures that our brands feel safe at every moment in global markets.

The e-commerce brands of the future will emerge from businesses that support their marketing vision with technology, value their customers, and use logistics as a competitive advantage. Our goal is not only to transport products, but to bring Türkiye's unique entrepreneurial spirit, quality production, and visionary brands together with the world in the most elegant, fastest, and safest way.

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Interview

BY BURAK YALIM

Barbara Hagen: "We Are Redefining the Delivery Process Through Technology and Customer Experience"

Barbara Hagen | Aras Kargo CEO

As the e-commerce ecosystem in Türkiye continues to grow, the logistics sector is becoming one of the most critical areas at the center of this transformation. Success is no longer measured only by selling products, but by the ability to manage the entire process from order to delivery, from returns to customer experience, in a fast, flexible, and uninterrupted manner. As digitalization, artificial intelligence, sustainability, and customer-oriented service models reshape the competitive dynamics of the logistics sector, companies are preparing for the new era by supporting their operational strength with technology.

As one of the pioneering companies of this transformation, Aras Kargo aims to shape the future of the logistics sector by combining its strong operational infrastructure with digital technologies and sustainability-focused investments. Carrying out a broad transformation program ranging from artificial intelligence-supported routing systems to next-generation delivery management platforms, from electric vehicle investments to environmentally friendly logistics practices, the company stands out with its new-generation logistics approach that places customer experience at the center.

We spoke with Aras Kargo CEO Barbara Hagen about the effects of the growth of e-commerce in Türkiye on the logistics sector, the company's artificial intelligence and digitalization strategies, its sustainability investments, and its vision for the logistics ecosystem of the future. Hagen says, "We are redefining the delivery process not only as a transportation operation, but as a holistic service model that is supported by technology, optimized, and centered on user experience."

E-commerce in Türkiye is recording very rapid growth. How does this affect the logistics sector? How are you responding to this growth as Aras Kargo?

E-commerce in Türkiye continues to grow without slowing down. The "Overview of E-Commerce in Türkiye 2025" report also clearly demonstrates that the sector has gained strong momentum in terms of both transaction volume and diversity.

This rapid transformation in e-commerce is also reshaping consumer expectations. Customers now expect not only fast delivery, but also flexible delivery options, effortless return processes, and the experience of receiving their orders whenever and wherever they want. In addition, customer satisfaction expectations have reached 98% across the sector.

This picture is transforming the logistics sector not only operationally, but also strategically. Today, the differentiating factor is the ability to offer a fast, flexible, and uninterrupted customer experience by integrating strong operational infrastructure with advanced technology solutions. We also produce end-to-end solutions for changing customer expectations by strengthening our operational competence with digitalization, data-driven systems, and smart logistics applications.

We successfully manage the pressure created by the intense competitive environment and rising service expectations thanks to the right balance we establish between our pricing policy and service quality, our agile operational structure, and our adaptation approach that is open to continuous improvement. Thus, we redefine the delivery process not only as a transportation operation, but as a holistic service model that is supported by technology, optimized, and centered on user experience. With our Aras Burası and Dolap models, we offer our customers the option to receive their parcels. With our Aras Burası kiosks, we offer the opportunity to easily create shipments and carry out return transactions 24/7. In this way, we transform the cargo experience into a flexible and accessible structure.

Could you provide information about the digitalization and artificial intelligence-supported operations you have implemented at Aras Kargo?

While restructuring our business model end-to-end with a focus on digitalization and sustainability, we are implementing artificial intelligence-supported delivery models that increase operational efficiency and strengthen data-driven decision-making mechanisms through our subsidiary Aras Digital. Thanks to this transformation, we not only optimize our processes, but also build a more agile, sustainable, and customer-oriented logistics infrastructure.

One of the most important examples of this approach, the artificial intelligence-based Aras Routing Platform developed by Aras Digital, optimizes our couriers’ routes in real time, providing time and fuel savings, reducing unnecessary vehicle movements, and directly contributing to the reduction of carbon emissions. Thus, we bring operational efficiency and sustainability goals together in the same framework.

On the other hand, the next-generation delivery management system NESY, also developed by Aras Digital, brings distribution operations in different countries together under a single platform, while ensuring that operations are managed in a smarter, more predictable, and more efficient way through common data models and artificial intelligence-supported decision-making mechanisms. With its modular and scalable structure, the platform, which enables the end-to-end digitalization of operational processes, is actively used in 6 countries today. As of 2026, with Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Bulgaria also being included in the system, NESY is aimed to transform into a stronger digital logistics ecosystem on a regional scale.

How much of a priority are sustainability and environmentally friendly logistics solutions in Aras Kargo’s strategy?

As Aras Kargo, we place sustainability at the center of our corporate strategy; we carry our operations into the future through our investments in people, technology, and efficiency. For us, sustainability is not merely a communication approach or a reporting heading, but a long-term transformation vision that forms the foundation of our business model. In line with this understanding, while we demonstrated our commitment on a global scale by becoming a signatory of the United Nations Global Compact in 2021, we assumed a pioneering role in the sector as the company that published the first sustainability report in the Turkish cargo sector.

We support this vision with concrete and measurable steps. Today, as the cargo company with the highest number of electric vehicles in Türkiye, we carry out our deliveries in 10 districts entirely with electric vehicles through our Green District project. Thanks to the artificial intelligence-based Aras Routing Platform, we optimize delivery processes in real time, significantly reducing fuel consumption, operational losses, and carbon emissions.

We do not limit our sustainability approach only to operational processes, but also strengthen it through social benefit-oriented collaborations. As part of our work with TURMEPA, we collected 4 tons of waste on 20 different coasts, while through our collaboration with the TEMA Foundation, we brought more than 200 thousand saplings together with the soil.

We act with the same sensitivity in our international operations as well. By measuring in detail the emissions arising from our operations and cargo flights in Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan, we analyzed a total of 109,500 tons of carbon emissions and 16.8 million kWh of energy consumption. We offset all of these emissions with renewable energy sources and certified them with GOLD and I-REC certificates. In addition, we aim to expand our environmentally friendly locker project powered by solar energy to 9 countries by the end of the year.

For us, growth means not only increasing operational capacity, but being able to achieve this together with environmental responsibility and sustainable value creation. As Aras Kargo, we believe that sustainability and operational strength are possible at the same time, and we shape all our investments in line with this understanding.

Interview

BY BURAK YALIM

Aras Global Connects 4,000 SMEs to More Than 120 Countries Through Its Digital Logistics Ecosystem

Ramazan Altınay | Aras Kargo Vice President of Sales, Strategy and International Affairs and Aras Global General Manager

As Türkiye's e-export targets grow, the logistics sector is also moving beyond being a structure that only provides transportation services and is becoming one of the strategic enablers of global trade. Especially in a period when cross-border e-commerce is developing rapidly, logistics models that facilitate businesses' access to new markets, digitalize operations, and integrate international networks are gaining great importance. In this transformation, technology, data, and regional structures are among the key elements that determine the competitiveness of logistics companies.

Aras Global stands out with its vision of turning Türkiye into a regional e-export and logistics center. Strengthening its regional network with its operational structures in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan, the company aims to facilitate SMEs' access to global markets through the digital platforms it has developed and artificial intelligence-supported infrastructures. Today, with its ecosystem providing access to more than 120 countries, Aras Global positions logistics not only as an operational process, but also as a strategic platform that supports export growth.

Aras Kargo Vice President of Sales, Strategy and International Affairs and Aras Global General Manager Ramazan Altınay told WORLDEF E-COMMERCE about the contribution of operations in Central Asia and the CIS region to Türkiye's e-export ecosystem, the role of artificial intelligence and digitalization in logistics, regional growth strategies, and Aras Global's international vision.

How do Aras Global's operations in Central Asia and the CIS region contribute to your integrated logistics network extending from Türkiye to the world?

As Aras Global, our main goal is to become a strong local player that ensures sustainable growth in every market where we operate, while transforming Türkiye into a regional e-export and logistics hub. Türkiye's position as a strategic bridge between Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia offers significant opportunities in terms of production, e-export, and logistics. We transform this geographical advantage into concrete value through strong operational infrastructure and local structures.

Today, by completing our trademark registrations in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan, we have established a reliable and permanent brand structure in these markets. In Georgia, with 17 branches and 1 main warehouse, we manage approximately 10,000 shipments per day with a 97 percent home delivery rate. Our Starex brand, operating in Azerbaijan, provides service with 22 branches and 84 tradesperson delivery points. By acquiring all of Starex, we further strengthened our presence in the country, while doubling our operational capacity with the sorter investment we made. In Uzbekistan, we continue our investments to bring our structure to full-capacity operation level.

These structures not only support our regional growth, but also create a strong and integrated international access network for exporters in Türkiye. The Aras Global Platform, which we launched in line with this vision, brings logistics partners, e-commerce companies, and operational processes together under a single digital roof, offering end-to-end integrated shipment management.

Today, approximately 4,000 SMEs on our platform can manage all stages, from customs processes to delivery operations, from a single center, while thanks to our infrastructure, they can send shipments to 120 countries quickly and reliably. Thus, while facilitating the access of businesses in Türkiye to global markets, we also contribute to the sustainable growth of e-export.

How do artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure increase Aras Global's operational efficiency?

One of Aras Global's most important competitive advantages is that it approaches technology not only as a supporting element, but as a strategic force at the center of our business model. Instead of procuring our technology infrastructure from external sources, we develop it in-house; we manage our IT processes in all countries in an integrated way through our central technology infrastructure in Azerbaijan. Thanks to this structure, we can manage our operations in different geographies within a single digital ecosystem by providing operational standardization, speed, scalability, and cost advantage at the same time.

We integrate artificial intelligence technologies into every layer of the operation, from route optimization to customs processes, from operational planning to delivery management. One of the most concrete examples of this in the field is the high-volume operations we carry out with global e-commerce players in Georgia. Our ability to manage approximately 10,000 shipments per day with 97 percent delivery success is a result of artificial intelligence-supported dynamic planning, real-time data analysis, and our strong operational infrastructure.

On the other hand, thanks to the digital platforms developed by Aras Digital, we also make SMEs' e-export processes more accessible and manageable. Sellers can manage many processes, from the customs requirements of target countries to the most efficient delivery routes, from cost optimization to operational tracking, through a single platform. Thus, technology goes beyond being a tool that only provides operational efficiency; it transforms into a strategic growth infrastructure that facilitates SMEs' access to global markets.

Could you provide information about your operations in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan?

Georgia is positioned as one of Aras Global's strongest operational centers in the region. With our operational network consisting of 17 branches and 1 main warehouse, we manage approximately 10,000 shipments per day with 97 percent home delivery success. The operational collaborations we have developed with global e-commerce platforms demonstrate the scalability, speed, and service quality of the infrastructure we have.

In Azerbaijan, we shape our growth strategy through strong local structures. With the 100 percent acquisition of the Starex brand, we further strengthened the existing operational structure and made our presence in the country permanent. Today, with 22 branches and 84 tradesperson delivery points, we have one of Azerbaijan's widespread logistics networks. Thanks to the sorter investment we implemented, while doubling our operational capacity, we also achieved significant gains in speed, accuracy, and service efficiency.

In Uzbekistan, we continue our structuring and operational scaling process with a strategic perspective. In line with the growing middle class in the region, the rapidly developing e-commerce ecosystem, and increasing logistics needs, we believe that Uzbekistan will become a critical center for our regional operations in the coming period. We foresee that the infrastructure and technology investment-focused steps we are taking today will carry us to a stronger and more sustainable position in the market in the future.

What are Aras Global's regional growth targets and international market expansion strategy in the coming years?

As Aras Global, we build our growth strategy on two main axes: increasing operational depth in existing markets and entering new markets with strategic investments. We see that the need of Turkish exporters for reliable, fast, and integrated logistics solutions is gradually increasing, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. In this direction, while strengthening our operational presence and infrastructure investments in the region, we also closely monitor Middle Eastern markets in line with changing regional dynamics.

SMEs are at the center of our growth vision. We aim to further grow our digital logistics ecosystem, which connects approximately 4,000 SMEs on our platform to more than 120 countries today. Because we believe that facilitating the access of small and medium-sized enterprises to global markets is critical for Türkiye's e-export potential to develop sustainably.

For us, growth does not only mean opening up to new markets or increasing operational capacity; it means being able to create long-term value on the basis of technology, efficiency, and sustainability. As Aras Global, by combining our regional strength with our digital infrastructure, we aim to create a permanent growth ecosystem for both our customers and business partners.

HepsiJET General Manager Atilla Alver: "Logistics Is No Longer Just Delivery, but End-to-End Experience Management"

The scale that e-commerce has reached in Türkiye is transforming the logistics sector from merely a transportation operation into a strategic structure reshaped around technology, data analytics, and customer experience. In this new era, where consumers' expectations for speed, transparency, and flexibility are increasing day by day, logistics companies are now positioned not only as companies that deliver, but also as technology companies that manage digital transformation, increase operational efficiency, and build customer loyalty.

Operation networks spread across all corners of Türkiye, artificial intelligence-supported route optimization systems, real-time tracking technologies, and sustainability-focused investments are determining the sector's new competitive dynamics. In particular, applications such as same-day delivery, scheduled delivery, and personalized delivery experiences play a critical role in the customer satisfaction strategies of e-commerce brands. In addition, technologies that reduce carbon emissions, electric vehicle investments, and data-driven operation management are among the key topics shaping the future of the logistics world.

As one of the notable players in this transformation, HepsiJET is creating a different positioning in the Türkiye logistics ecosystem with its technology-centered approach. With its operation network spanning 81 provinces, advanced automation infrastructure, artificial intelligence-supported systems, and service model focused on customer experience, the company aims to build the future of logistics today. At the same time, it is becoming one of the important actors of operational transformation not only with its own ecosystem, but also with the integrated logistics solutions it offers to brands from different sectors.

HepsiJET General Manager Atilla Alver spoke to WORLDEF E-COMMERCE about the company's technology vision, the impact of artificial intelligence and data analytics on operations, the innovations that HepsiJET XL and PRO services bring to the sector, the prominent trends in e-commerce logistics, and the company's future growth strategies.

How do you define your vision as a company? How do you see your role in Türkiye's logistics and e-commerce sectors?

As e-commerce grows in Türkiye, consumers' expectations are also changing to the same extent. Türkiye's strategic location, developing digital trade volume, and young technology ecosystem present us with an important opportunity in the logistics sector. Based on this transformation, we define our vision as being a technology-focused player that places data at the center and redefines customer expectations. Today, our strong operational infrastructure, which extends to all 81 provinces, is based on a widespread organizational structure consisting of more than 5,000 carriers, more than 50 owned vehicles, 24 transfer centers, and 250 branches. We stand out with the solutions we offer, from same-day and scheduled delivery to return processes, from cash-on-delivery shipments to XL transportation.

In addition, we also respond to the necessary needs in the sector with our activities focused on B2B transportation. At this point, we are the solution partner of both Hepsiburada and many brands from different sectors outside Hepsiburada. Especially in recent years, the increase in the share of our customers outside Hepsiburada within our total transportation volume shows that our service model has found a response.

How would you define your technological capabilities as HepsiJET? How do you evaluate the effects of technology on both customer experience and operational efficiency?

Logistics has evolved from static operation processes into a dynamic ecosystem that works with real-time data. We view technology not merely as an element that supports logistics, but as the fundamental building block at the center of our business model. We use data analytics, artificial intelligence-supported optimization systems, and real-time tracking technologies at every stage of our business processes. For example, thanks to our TÜRKPATENT-approved Multi-Vehicle Route Optimization application, we develop artificial intelligence-supported smart logistics solutions and systematically reduce the carbon footprint in our operations.
Thanks to our systems that analyze customer feedback end to end, we transform large data sets into meaningful insights and continuously improve our service quality with real-time feedback. We implement a similar approach in address management as well. Thanks to our artificial intelligence-supported address classification technologies, we achieve significant gains by increasing delivery accuracy.

When we look at the customer experience side, applications such as live tracking systems, scheduled delivery, Sunday delivery, address change, date postponement, and return at the door enable users to manage the delivery process in a more controlled and predictable way. Because today's consumer expects to have control over the entire process and for this process to be completed transparently. We use technology precisely to respond to these expectations.

At the same time, thanks to the automation systems we use in our transfer centers, we increase our daily capacity while minimizing error rates. One of the most concrete examples of this is our Kıraç Transfer Center.

Our facility, which operates in a closed area of 4,500 square meters, is our first operation center that uses Singulator and Cross-Belt Sorter technologies together. Thanks to its daily processing capacity of 500,000 packages, we can manage processes much faster and with a lower error rate.

Atilla Alver | HepsiJET General Manager

Could you tell us a little about the advantages offered by HepsiJET XL and PRO services? What makes these services different from other logistics solutions in the sector?

HepsiJET XL and HepsiJET PRO are among the most innovative examples showing that logistics has now gone beyond standard transportation organization. When we look at the HepsiJET XL side, in white goods, furniture, or large electronic products, consumers expect the process to be completed smoothly, in a planned manner, and reliably. Here, we differentiate ourselves with our operational planning capability. When necessary, we activate delivery processes supported by elevators or cranes, offering customers a safer and more controlled experience, especially at points that are difficult to access. In addition, our XL shipments reach our customers in a much shorter time, below the sector’s average delivery times.

When we detail HepsiJET PRO, today, as HepsiJET, we have gone far beyond being a structure that only serves our own ecosystem. Thanks to our capabilities, we now have the capacity to manage the logistics processes of retail brands from different sectors end to end. HepsiJET PRO, positioned within this scope, also stands out as a comprehensive logistics model for brands and businesses. We provide an integrated structure extending from transfers between warehouses to store replenishment, from return management to full supply chain management. This model, which can be scaled according to companies’ own operational needs, reduces brands’ own fleet and operation burden. In this way, all delivery processes in the B2B world can be met within an integrated structure, regardless of whether they are internal or intercompany. At the point we have reached today, HepsiJET PRO has become a strategic business partner model that adapts to the growth pace of companies.

Considering the current developments in the sector, what do you think are the most important trends in logistics and e-commerce?

According to the latest Türkiye E-Commerce Outlook Report announced by the Ministry of Trade, the e-commerce volume in our country increased by 52.2 percent in 2025 compared to the previous year, exceeding 4.57 trillion Turkish liras. The number of transactions was realized as 5 billion 940 million. This picture clearly reveals the scale that digital trade has reached in Türkiye and the pace of transformation in the sector. This strong momentum in the field of e-commerce is moving logistics toward a more technology-focused structure. Today, systems that can quickly adapt to customer expectations are setting the new standards of the sector. For example, innovations that will keep up with trends such as same-day delivery, delivery within a specific time window, or weekend delivery can only be implemented by strongly digitalizing and reading data correctly.

Another critical topic is sustainability. The logistics processes that grow with the rise of e-commerce create a serious environmental burden in terms of carbon emissions, energy consumption, and waste production. In this sense, electric vehicle investments, route optimization, and technologies that reduce carbon emissions will be key elements in the future of the sector.

In addition, forecasting systems supported by artificial intelligence and data analytics are becoming increasingly important. As in every field, artificial intelligence provides great benefits in logistics as well, if used properly. Structures that can predict demand intensity during campaign periods and optimize operation capacity in real time will create a significant competitive advantage. In summary, we foresee that logistics companies will transform into structures that develop technology, manage customer experience, and offer end-to-end solutions in the coming period.

What are HepsiJET’s short- and long-term goals? What kind of strategies do you plan to follow while achieving these goals?

Among our priorities are further improving our service quality, growing our operational capacity, and increasing our business partnerships in different sectors. Expanding the innovations we provide to our customers outside Hepsiburada is an important growth area for us.

In the long term, we aim to make HepsiJET one of Türkiye’s strongest technology-based logistics platforms. In line with this, we will continue to increase our automation investments, data-driven management, and sustainable logistics practices. We also continue to develop new delivery models that place customer experience at the center. Because in the future, the factor that will make a difference in logistics will be the ability to offer a personalized and uninterrupted experience.

With our Data Kokpit project, whose development processes are currently ongoing, we will be able to monitor field operations much more closely with real-time data flow. Thus, we will have the opportunity to make faster decisions, intervene instantly, and achieve higher efficiency. In addition, we see environmental sustainability as an inseparable part of our transformation. While we plan to grow our existing electric vehicle fleet, which exceeds 125 vehicles, we resolutely continue our efforts to reduce the distance traveled and the related carbon emissions through technology-supported management.

ShipEntegra

Executive Commentary

From Türkiye to the World: Paving the Way for Operations

Ali Ceylan | Founder, CEO | ShipEntegra

For brands selling from Türkiye to the world, the real challenge is often not making sales, but managing the growing operation in a sustainable way.

Imagine an entrepreneur. He produces handwoven rugs in Gaziantep. His products are good, his designs are unique. He opens his store on Etsy and receives his first order. Then the second, the third, the tenth order follows... Just as everything is progressing exactly as he dreamed, at some point he realizes this: He is now spending most of his time not on production or growing his brand, but on tracking orders, managing shipping processes, and controlling operations across different platforms.

In fact, today, the stories of thousands of businesses engaged in e-export in Türkiye are very similar to one another. The problem is often not the product. The problem is being able to manage the growing operation.

Especially in recent years, with the growth of global marketplaces such as Amazon, Etsy, eBay, and Shopify, selling from Türkiye to the world has become more accessible than ever. However, as sales volume grows, operational processes become complex at the same pace. Orders coming from different platforms, changing logistics processes, shipping operations, integration management, and customer experience turn into a serious operational burden for entrepreneurs.

For many businesses, making sales is no longer the hardest part. The real challenge is being able to manage the growing operation in a sustainable way. This problem was exactly the starting point of ShipEntegra.

Shipping Was Only One Part of This

ShipEntegra's starting point was realizing that the real problem in e-export was not only logistics, but operational management. According to the company, shipping was only one part of this process. The real need was to make sales operations growing across different platforms centralized, manageable, and sustainable.

Today, competition in global marketplaces is not won only by producing good products. A brand that cannot manage its operation begins to struggle as it makes sales. Especially for businesses selling through multiple channels, integration capability is now becoming a critical need.

ShipEntegra steps in exactly at this point, bringing operations carried out across different platforms together within a centralized structure. Users can manage their orders from Amazon, Etsy, eBay, Shopify, and other sales channels through a single panel; while simplifying their logistics processes, they can significantly reduce their operational burden. However, what differentiates ShipEntegra is not only its technical integration infrastructure. The company's approach is based on having learned the real problems of operations from the field.

Making Technology Invisible

Entrepreneurs should not have to spend time on API connections, integration problems, or the technical details of logistics processes. ShipEntegra's approach is built on making technical complexity invisible for the user and enabling businesses to focus not on operations, but on growth.

This approach creates an important transformation especially for small and medium-sized businesses. Because although there is a very large ecosystem in Türkiye that carries out strong production, many businesses struggle to open up to global markets due to operational barriers.

ShipEntegra's focus begins exactly here. Today, this software works integrated with many global platforms, especially Amazon, Etsy, eBay, and Shopify. At the same time, thanks to the infrastructure it has established with UPS, FedEx, DHL, and different logistics partners, it makes businesses' shipment processes faster and more manageable.

ShipEntegra's growth story has become one of the notable examples of the transformation of the e-export ecosystem in Türkiye. Founded by Ali Ceylan in 2019, the company quickly stood out with the strategic partnerships it developed with global platforms such as Amazon, Etsy, Walmart, eBay, and AliExpress. Today, while ShipEntegra is positioned as Etsy's first official logistics partner in Türkiye and its official Turkish partner globally, it also operates as one of the first Turkish technology and logistics companies recognized by Amazon.

Making E-Export More Accessible

One of Türkiye's greatest advantages is its strong production capacity. There are highly valuable producers, designers, and entrepreneurs all across the country. Today, even a small producer in Anatolia has the potential to sell in global markets when they gain access to the right technology and the right operational infrastructure. However, for many businesses, operational processes still remain one of the biggest obstacles to growth. Especially lack of technical knowledge, logistics complexity, and multi-platform management can make the globalization process difficult for small businesses.
ShipEntegra's approach is to make e-export accessible not only for large brands, but for everyone. By simplifying operational processes, the company aims to enable entrepreneurs to focus not on technical details, but on their products, brands, and growth strategies.

The Future of E-Export: Artificial Intelligence and Automation

According to ShipEntegra, the biggest transformation in the sector in the coming period will take place in operational technologies. As e-export grows, the sustainability of manual processes decreases; while AI-supported operational management, automation systems, and smart integration technologies are becoming one of the most critical areas of the sector.

ShipEntegra continues to invest in technologies that will make operational processes smarter in line with this transformation. Smart order management, automatic process optimization, and next-generation infrastructures that simplify the user experience are at the center of the company's future vision.

In ShipEntegra's approach, the purpose of technology is not to increase complexity, but to make it invisible. The company aims to enable entrepreneurs to focus not on operational burden, but on growth, brand management, and opening up to new markets.

A Global Operational Power Emerging from Türkiye

Today, the e-export ecosystem is entering a new era in which not only large brands, but also small producers, independent designers, and next-generation entrepreneurs can reach global markets. In this transformation, operational technologies are becoming one of the invisible yet most critical building blocks.

In the past, selling globally was seen more as an area accessible to large companies. However, today, thanks to technology, a small producer in Anatolia as well as a young entrepreneur who has built their own brand can sell to different countries around the world. This transformation creates an important opportunity in terms of carrying Türkiye's production power to global markets.

In the coming period, one of the main determinants of competition in e-export will be operational capability. Producing good products alone is no longer enough; it is necessary to be able to move quickly, manage operations correctly, and grow sustainably. In this transformation, technology plays a decisive role.

ShipEntegra is positioned exactly at the center of this transformation. While developing technologies that simplify operational processes and enable entrepreneurs to access global markets more easily, the company also aims to build a strong infrastructure for brands emerging from Türkiye to compete with the world.

Today, for many entrepreneurs, e-export means not only a sales model, but also an opportunity for globalization. ShipEntegra's vision is to make this opportunity accessible to more businesses.

In the new era in which brands emerging from Türkiye are becoming more visible in global markets, operational technologies will continue to be the invisible yet most critical power of e-export. ShipEntegra, with its approach that brings technology, logistics, and operations together, aims to be at the center of this transformation.

packmore™

Executive Commentary

Packmore's Packaging Philosophy: Every Package is a Brand Representative!

Mustafa Öner | Founder, CEO - Packmore

With the rapid acceleration of digitalization processes in recent years, the e-commerce sector has not only transformed our shopping habits but has also spearheaded fundamental changes across a wide range of areas, from production and supply chains to logistics operations and consumer behavior. Today, simply being visible on digital platforms is not enough for brands; they also need to succeed in strategic factors such as managing order processes flawlessly and seamlessly, and optimizing the customer experience at every step. Meeting the modern consumer's demand for speed, convenience, and security is vital for companies, and those wishing to stand out from their competitors in this new competitive environment must meticulously plan every move. At the heart of this transformation process are sustainability, logistics, and especially packaging.

Key Challenges in E-Commerce Logistics and the Strategic Importance of Packaging

The rapid growth of the e-commerce sector has made logistics processes complex, necessitating much more detailed planning of product delivery processes. Especially with the rapid increase in small-scale and individual deliveries, this change has brought fundamental elements such as inventory management, return processes, delivery times, and cost balance to the forefront. However, there is another element at the heart of this process that is often overlooked: packaging. Packaging not only ensures that products are transported safely and reach the customer, but also directly affects a brand's prestige, environmental impact, and customer satisfaction. Incorrect packaging choices can lead to both financial losses and damage to customer relationships. Bulky, excessively material-based, or non-recyclable packaging options contradict companies' sustainability strategies. Considering all these reasons, offering the right and effective packaging solutions is no longer a choice, but a commercial necessity.

The Key to Safe Delivery: Protective Packaging

The most basic function of protective packaging is to protect products from physical damage that may occur during the transportation and delivery process. Especially in deliveries made through cargo companies, packages go through many transfer and transportation processes. Situations such as impacts, falls, and compression that may occur during this process can cause damage to the product. Properly designed protective packaging minimizes such risks and ensures that the product reaches the customer in its original condition.

Physical Protection: The Foundation of Safely Transporting Your Product

No matter how valuable a product is, if it is damaged during transport, customer satisfaction is impossible. Therefore, in-box protective packaging solutions are not just an additional product; they become a guarantee of your brand's trust. The most basic function of protective packaging is to protect the product from external factors it may be exposed to during the transportation and delivery process. Throughout the shipping process, products go through many stages such as taping, transfer, transportation, storage, and delivery. Impacts, falls, compression, or moisture that may occur during these processes can cause damage to the product. Durable, shock-absorbing, and product-specific packaging significantly reduces these risks.

First Point of Contact: Creating Brand Perception Through Packaging

Packaging is the customer's first physical contact with a brand. When the product arrives at their door, the customer sees the packaging first. This moment plays a major role in shaping the impression the brand leaves on the customer. High-quality, stylish, and brand-specific packaging creates a sense of professionalism and trust in the customer. Conversely, careless, worn, or dysfunctional packaging can lead to a negative perception, no matter how high the product quality.

Reducing Return Processes: Managing Costs and Time

In this era of rapidly growing e-commerce, return processes have become one of the most critical operations for brands, straining both their reputation and budgets. Researches show that a significant portion of returned products are damaged during transport. This not only causes customer disappointment but also increases brands' logistics costs, creates operational burdens, and reduces resale opportunities. This is exactly where in-box protective packaging solutions make a big difference. Thanks to packaging systems specially developed according to the size, fragility, and transport conditions of the product, products are under maximum protection against external factors such as impact, compression, and moisture. Reducing return rates is among the factors that directly affect customer loyalty. Because customers care not only about a good product but also about it arriving in perfect condition. Protective packaging ensures that the product arrives in its original condition, while also reinforcing trust in your brand.

Improving Customer Experience: The Surprise and Satisfaction Effect

Protective packaging can not only provide external protection but also enrich the customer experience. Thank you notes, promotional items, or brand-specific touches placed inside the packaging create a "feeling special" effect on the customer. Furthermore, easily accessible and neatly arranged products allow the customer to start using the product quickly and smoothly. This increases customer satisfaction and the likelihood of repeat purchases.

Long-Term Brand Loyalty and Competitive Advantage

Properly designed protective packaging strengthens the bond with the customer. If a customer can access their product safely with each purchase, this trust eventually transforms into brand loyalty. In addition, well-packaged products are advantageous in terms of social media shareability; this allows the brand to reach a wider audience organically. In the highly competitive world of e-commerce, small details make a big difference. Protective packaging is one of these details and, when used correctly, offers a long-term advantage to the brand.

Why Choose Sustainable Packaging?

With environmental awareness rapidly increasing today, consumers are paying attention not only to the contents of the products they buy, but also to the packaging processes. Reducing carbon footprint, limiting plastic consumption, and contributing to recycling are no longer just a choice, but a social responsibility. Therefore, the use of sustainable packaging has become critical for brands, both environmentally and commercially. Sustainability is no longer just a trend; it is an unavoidable necessity of our time. Given evolving regulations, increasing consumer awareness, and the needs of the planet, it has become almost impossible for companies to remain reckless to this transformation. Every sustainable decision made today is a conscious step towards the future. At Packmore, we act with this awareness; we offer carefully selected, environmentally friendly, high-quality packaging products from all over the world to the Turkish market. Our product range includes solutions for the needs of different sectors, from water-based tapes to recycled boxes and biodegradable packaging. Moreover, we don't just supply products; we also educate our business partners on their sustainability journey and provide consultancy support to guide them towards more environmentally friendly choices. In all our work, we prioritize environmental awareness and play an active role in helping brands achieve their sustainability goals.

From Waste to Value: Aiming for Zero Waste with Cardboard Shredding Machines

Thanks to cardboard shredding machines, corrugated cardboard waste can be transformed into effective box filler and protective packaging materials. This allows companies to eliminate the need to purchase new filler materials and adapt to the zero-waste principle more quickly. With their compact designs and high processing capacities, these machines can be easily integrated into production areas, making them indispensable, especially for brands embracing a sustainable packaging vision. Shred, use, earn. Sustainable savings are possible with Cardflow. Protect the environment and add an economic dimension to your packaging process with cardboard shredding machines.

Strong, Safe, Sustainable: Water-Activated Tape Technology

Water-activated paper tape machines combine security, aesthetics, and an environmentally friendly approach to carton sealing. These machines activate paper tapes made from natural materials with just water, firmly adhering them to surfaces. These tear-resistant and tamper-proof tapes are completely recyclable as they contain no plastic. Furthermore, their printability enhances brand visibility. Water-based tape machines are ideal systems that can be integrated into production processes at high speed, applying this environmentally friendly solution quickly, regularly, and efficiently.

Fast and Secure Packaging Solutions: Airbag Inflation Machines

In today's rapidly growing e-commerce and global logistics networks, ensuring the safe protection of products during shipping has become a critical priority for businesses. Protective packaging systems, especially those used for transporting delicate, fragile, or high-value goods, are crucial elements that directly impact customer satisfaction and operational efficiency. Air-filled protective cushions, when needed, secure products within the box, significantly reducing the risk of damage from impacts, vibrations, and compression during transport. Requiring significantly less storage space than traditional padding materials, these systems offer businesses significant logistical advantages. Film materials, stored in rolls, are inflated at the time of use to create protective packaging. This allows for efficient use of warehouse space and makes packaging operations more organized and faster.

Air cushion technology not only enhances product safety but also contributes to cost optimization for businesses. Its lightweight structure provides effective protection without increasing cargo weight, thus helping to keep transportation costs under control. For businesses with high-volume shipments, this advantage creates significant long-term savings opportunities.

Packmore offers high-performance air cushion inflation systems that adapt to the changing needs of various sectors. With their rapid production capacity, user-friendly design, and superior protection performance, these technologies make packaging processes safer, more economical, and more sustainable for businesses.

Less space, more protection, more efficient operation.

Strong Protection, Solution from Nature: HEXA-FLOW 3D Honeycomb Paper Pad Machine

The HEXAFLOW 3D Honeycomb Paper Pad Machine is a new generation packaging solution that transforms paper into a three-dimensional honeycomb structure during use, providing highly impact-absorbing protection. Thanks to its special honeycomb texture, the system creates a flexible yet strong protective layer around the product, minimizing the risks of impact, friction, and crushing that may occur during shipping and storage.

The power of protection meets the naturalness of paper.
HEXAFLOW's three-dimensional honeycomb structure not only provides strong protection but also offers an aesthetic and premium unboxing experience. Today, every stage of the customer experience is becoming increasingly important for brands, and sustainable and stylish packaging solutions add value to brand perception. Preferred in many different fields, from e-commerce to electronics, from the glass and ceramics sector to industrial production, the HEXAFLOW 3D Honeycomb Paper Pad Machine offers businesses less waste, higher protection, and a more sustainable future.

Why Do Brands Choose Packmore?

Leading companies in Türkiye choose Packmore not only because of our high-quality products, but also because of our visionary approach, environmental responsibility, and expert consulting services. Packmore is a packaging solution provider that places sustainability at the heart of its business model, considering not only today's needs but also tomorrow's. With its eco-friendly products, expert staff, and solution-oriented approach, it continues to be a value-adding partner for its business partners.

Editor's Commentary

A completely different universe.

Burak Yalim
Editor in Chief, WORLDEF E-Commerce Magazine

That is how Fadi Ghandour describes the MENA venture landscape today compared to when he started. And he is not speaking loosely. The man who founded Aramex in Amman before the internet was a business category, who co-built Souq.com before e-commerce was taken seriously in the Arab world, and who has spent the last decade backing the founders of Careem, Mumzworld, and over a hundred other companies from Wamda Capital, has perhaps more earned right to use that phrase than anyone alive. I have been thinking about this issue for some time. Not just about the list you are about to read, but about what it means that we are presenting it here, in Istanbul, to a room of Turkish founders and investors who are increasingly turning their attention south and east.

Fadi said something else that I found important: Turkiye is not behind MENA. In his view, it is ahead. A more advanced market, a few years further along in terms of homegrown tech talent, market depth, and meaningful exits. Trendyol, Hepsiburada, Marti. He named them. The implication is not that Turkish founders should look to MENA as a larger, wealthier market to conquer. It is that two ecosystems at different stages of the same maturity curve have exactly what the other needs.

Do not think of MENA as one market. Choose specific countries. The UAE and Saudi are the most attractive, the most business-friendly, and the easiest to enter.

The bridge between Turkiye and the Arab world is real, and it is getting stronger. The political headwinds that historically made cross-border capital cautious are easing. Gulf investors are increasingly active in Istanbul. Turkish operators are eyeing the Gulf's digitization curve with genuine commercial intent. What remains is the friction: the cross-border barriers, the lack of interoperability, the thin personal networks that have not yet had enough time and enough shared rooms to thicken.

That is precisely what the most important answer in Fadi's interview points to. When I asked him what the MENA venture ecosystem still needs most, he did not say more capital. He said frictionless cross-border business. Open markets. Interoperability. The ability to build once and operate everywhere. That is a thesis that applies equally to the relationship between Turkiye and the Arab world. And it is the reason this issue matters.

The 31 firms on the pages that follow are not just a directory. They are the institutional infrastructure of a region that has spent ten years building the foundations for exactly the kind of cross-border commerce that Fadi is describing. They are the people you should know if you are serious about that opportunity. Read Fadi's answers first. Then read the list differently.

In the Middle East, founders who stay win

Fadi Ghandour | Co-Founder, Aramex. Founder and Executive Chairman, Wamda Capital

Few people have more firsthand experience building through Middle Eastern instability than Fadi Ghandour. The Aramex co-founder and longtime regional investor has watched the MENA venture landscape transform from near-zero into a $23 billion ecosystem. He tells WORLDEF that complexity is not a liability for Arab entrepreneurs, but a competitive advantage that outside capital consistently underestimates.

How does the MENA VC landscape today compare to when you started?

The MENA region today is unrecognizable compared to the late 1990s. Back then, when Maktoob was founded, there were no real funds, no sovereign wealth participation, limited talent, and almost no infrastructure. Today, the region has dozens of active funds, sovereign wealth funds seeding managers, engaged family offices, strong UAE-Saudi infrastructure, and global talent choosing to build here. It is a completely different universe.

Today, global talent is choosing to build in this region. That would have been unthinkable when I started.

How do you think about Turkiye in the context of MENA?

Turkiye is a more advanced market, a few years ahead of MENA in terms of homegrown tech talent, market depth, and scale. It has a large domestic market and produced major exits earlier than the Arab world: Peak Games, Trendyol, Hepsiburada, Marti, and my personal favorite, InsiderOne.

Why is the Turkiye-MENA capital bridge thinner than it should be?

It is improving now, especially with growing interest from the UAE and Saudi. Historically, politics played a role, and the period of economic turmoil and sharp currency depreciation made investors cautious. Those headwinds are easing, and the bridge is starting to thicken.

What would you advise a Turkish founder considering MENA expansion?

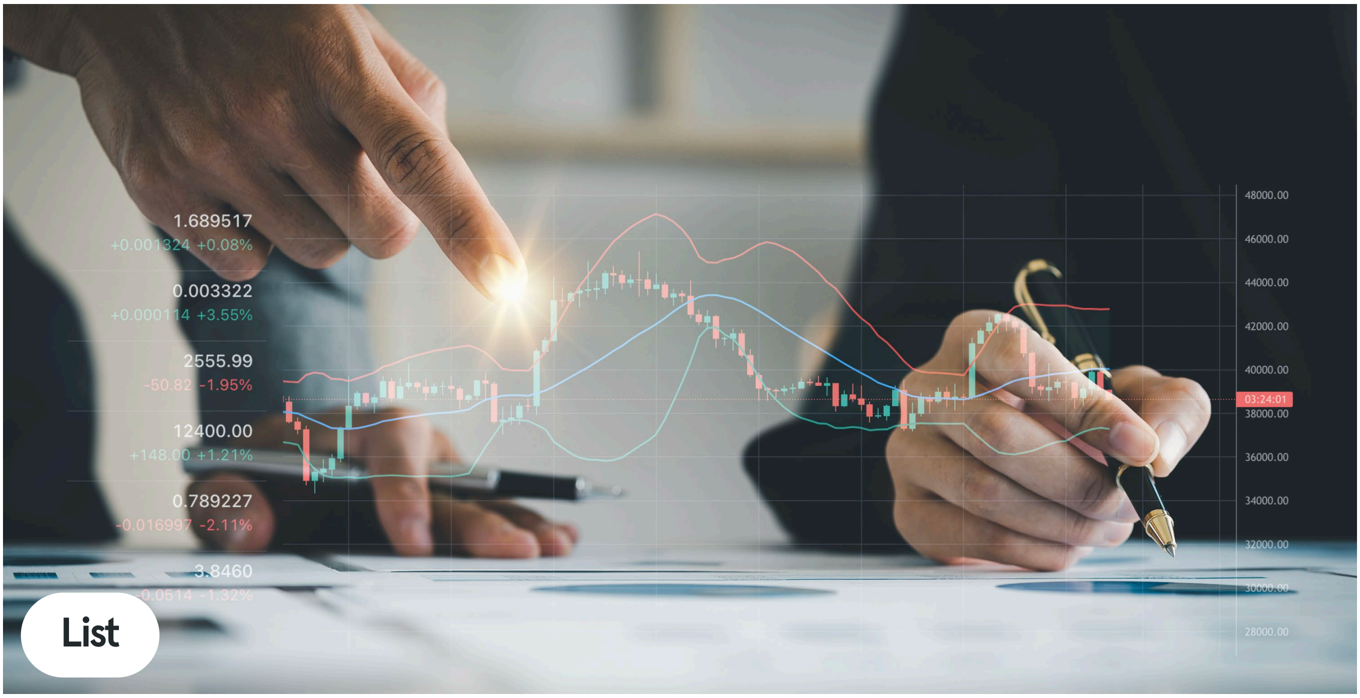
Do not think of MENA as one market. Choose specific countries. The UAE and Saudi are the most attractive, the most business-friendly, and the easiest to enter. Focus your energy there rather than trying to expand everywhere at once.

Beyond political stability, the region needs far more frictionless cross-border business. Reducing cross-border barriers would unlock enormous regional scale.

What is the single most important thing the MENA venture ecosystem still needs?

Beyond political stability, the region needs far more frictionless cross-border business. We need markets that are open, interoperable, and easy to operate across. Reducing cross-border barriers would unlock enormous regional scale.

MENA Top 30 *Venture Capital Firms (A–Z 2026)*



As the global entrepreneurship ecosystem has undergone a major transformation over the last decade, the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region is no longer merely an emerging market; it is becoming one of the strategic centers of technology, e-commerce, fintech, and digital retail investments. Across a wide geography extending from Riyadh to Dubai, from Abu Dhabi to Cairo, from Amman to Doha, venture capital funds are moving beyond being structures that only provide capital and are rising to the position of key actors in regional transformation. In particular, the young population, the speed of digital adaptation, the rise of mobile commerce, and state-backed technology visions are making MENA increasingly more visible on the global investment map.

Today, the venture capital ecosystem in the MENA region has transformed into a multi-layered structure, ranging from early-stage startup accelerators to sovereign-backed growth funds, from venture builder structures to corporate venture capital platforms. Investors in the region are no longer only funding ideas; they are also building next-generation commerce infrastructures, AI-powered logistics models, fintech solutions, creator economy ventures, and cross-border e-commerce networks. This shows that venture capital structures in MENA have become the architects of digital transformation beyond economic growth.

In particular, Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 program, the technology- and finance-focused growth strategies of the United Arab Emirates, and the investments of Gulf countries, especially Qatar, in the digital economy are directly accelerating the growth of the venture capital ecosystem. In addition, the developing early-stage entrepreneurship culture in countries such as Egypt and Jordan reveals that the region is evolving into a structure that not only consumes capital but also produces new technology companies. MENA is now seen by global investors not only as a promising region, but also as a center where scalable technology companies are born and where global expansion stories begin.

One of the most striking effects of this transformation is being experienced in the e-commerce and retail sectors. Venture capital funds in the region support next-generation commerce models across a wide area ranging from logistics to payment systems, from rapid delivery technologies to social commerce platforms. In particular, digital consumption habits that accelerated after the pandemic, the placement of online shopping at the center of daily life, and mobile-focused user behaviors have further increased investors' interest in the e-commerce ecosystem. The "MENA's Top 30 Venture Capital Firms" list prepared by WORLDEF E-COMMERCE reveals exactly the map of this transformation. The list covers a broad investment network extending from early-stage accelerators in Cairo and Amman to growth funds based in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi.

Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. It also brings together venture capital funds, venture builder structures, fund-of-funds models, and corporate venture capital platforms that form the capital infrastructure of the region's technology economy.

This prepared list does not only serve as a reference for the investment world; it also functions as a strategic guide for the e-commerce and retail ecosystems. Because today, the growth of a successful e-commerce venture is not possible only with a good product or a strong operation. Access to the right investor network, strategic mentorship, regional connections, and scaling support are now among the fundamental elements that determine the fate of ventures. For this reason, the list serves as an important resource both for ventures seeking investment and for brands following next-generation commerce opportunities in the region.

At the same time, the list also provides critical data in terms of understanding which areas investors in the MENA region are turning to. AI-powered commerce solutions, fintech infrastructures, logistics technologies, sustainable retail models, and data-driven customer experience platforms stand out among the most important investment topics of the coming period. This also shows that the venture capital ecosystem in the region is shaping not only today but also the digital commerce infrastructure of the future.also the digital commerce infrastructure of the future.

In the coming years, MENA's influence on the global entrepreneurship scene is expected to grow even further. The increasing number of unicorns, accelerating exit processes, the interest of global funds in the region, and state-backed innovation policies are among the most important factors supporting this growth. The venture capital ecosystem is at the center of this transformation. Because capital is no longer only a financial instrument; it has become the fundamental building block of technology production, digital transformation, and regional competitiveness. For exactly this reason, the "MENA's Top 30 Venture Capital Firms" list is not merely a ranking; it serves as a comprehensive ecosystem panorama that reveals the region's digital economy vision, investment power, and future-oriented potential.

Editorial Note

"This list spans 30 venture capital firms shaping the MENA startup ecosystem, from pre-seed accelerators in Cairo and Amman to sovereign-backed growth vehicles in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. Entries are alphabetical, not ranked. The list covers dedicated VC funds, venture builders, fund-of-funds, and CVC platforms that together constitute the capital infrastructure of the region's technology economy."

500 GLOBAL

#1

Website: 500.co

Headquarters: Riyadh / Dubai

Focus: Pre-Seed / Seed / Accelerator

Key Partner(s): Amal Dokhan (Managing Partner, MENA)

Notable Portfolio: Careem, Fetchr, Mumzworld, Taager, Sarwa

About: The MENA arm of Silicon Valley's most prolific early-stage fund has become one of the most deal-active investors in the region. 500 Global's Sanabil 500 MENA Seed Accelerator, co-anchored by Saudi's Sanabil Investments, has made it the most accessible first institutional check for founders across the Kingdom and beyond. With over 250 startups backed across Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, Jordan, and Pakistan, its volume and network give it a reach that no single country-focused fund can replicate.

ARZAN VENTURE CAPITAL

#3

Website: arzanvc.com

Headquarters: Kuwait City

Focus: Early Stage

Key Partner(s): Hasan Zainal (CEO – VP)

Notable Portfolio: Careem, Swvl, Yamm, and 47 portfolio companies across MENA

About: Founded in 2013, Arzan is one of the earliest institutional VC firms in the region, predating the current wave of Gulf VC by several years. Kuwait-born but regionally active, the firm has executed 47 investments and 10 exits, with checks typically ranging from $250,000 to $2 million into fintech, e-commerce, and enterprise software teams. Its early backing of Careem and Swvl established its track record before either company became a household name.

algebra ventures

#2

Website: algebraventures.com

Headquarters: Cairo

Focus: Early to Growth Stage

Key Partner(s): Tarek Assaad and Karim Hussein (Managing Partners)

Notable Portfolio: MNT-Halan, Trella, Khazna, Mozare3, Sylndr

About: Egypt's most consequential homegrown VC firm, Algebra was founded in 2016 by former EFG Hermes private equity investors who understood that Egypt's startup generation needed institutional backing, not just angel money. Its second fund, closed at $100M in 2022, made it the largest Egypt-focused fund on record. The thesis is precise: back founders in fintech, logistics, health, and agritech who are building for Egypt's 100 million-person market with the ambition to export their model regionally.

BY

#4

Website: byvp.com

Headquarters: Beirut / Dubai

Focus: Seed to Series A

Key Partner(s): Ghaith Yafi and Abdalla Yafi (Co-Founders)

Notable Portfolio: Regional seed and Series A portfolio bridging Levant and GCC

About: B&Y bridges the Levant and GCC in a way that few funds attempt deliberately. Founded by Ghaith Yafi and Abdulla Al-Rashid, the firm invests at seed and Series A with a focus on founders who are building for regional scale rather than a single country. In a funding environment that increasingly gravitates toward Saudi Arabia and the UAE, B&Y's Levant roots give it access to a founder pool, particularly in Lebanon and Jordan, that Gulf-centric funds routinely underestimate.

#5

Website: becocapital.com

Headquarters: Dubai

Focus: Pre-Seed to IPO

Key Partner(s): Dany Farha (Co-Founder and Managing Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Careem, Property Finder, Kitopi, Bayzat, SellAnyCar

About: One of MENA's original institutional VCs, founded in 2012 by Dany Farha, a former Lehman Brothers executive who had already co-founded and exited Bayt.com before turning to investing. BECO's multi-unicorn portfolio, anchored by Careem's $3.1B exit to Uber, Property Finder's dominance in UAE real estate, and Kitopi's cloud kitchen scale, represents the most credible track record from a single Gulf VC fund. Its 2025 $370M dual-fund raise signals an ambition to back founders from first check to IPO.

#6

Website: cotu.vc

Headquarters: Dubai

Focus: Pre-Seed / Seed

Key Partner(s): Amir Farha (Founder and General Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Huspy, MoneyHash, Sirdab, Mayple

About: COTU stands for Champions Of The Underdog, and the name is a deliberate statement of purpose. Founded in 2020 by Amir Farha, who previously co-founded BECO Capital and helped build a $200M+ AUM fund before leaving to go earlier-stage, COTU backs founders at inception before most institutional investors show interest. Its $54M debut fund, with checks from $500,000 to $2 million, targets fintech and B2B software with a hands-on, operationally-involved style that Farha built from years of watching what founders actually need at the loneliest stage.

#7

Website: dashventures.com

Headquarters: Amman

Focus: Early Stage / Mentorship-Led

Key Partner(s): Omar J. Sati (Founder and Managing Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Levant-focused early-stage technology portfolio

About: Founded in 2013, Arzan is one of the earliest institutional VC firms in the region, predating the current wave of Gulf VC by several years. Kuwait-born but regionally active, the firm has executed 47 investments and 10 exits, with checks typically ranging from $250,000 to $2 million into fintech, e-commerce, and enterprise software teams. Its early backing of Careem and Swvl established its track record before either company became a household name.

#8

Website: disruptechventures.com

Headquarters: Cairo

Focus: Seed / Early Stage / Fintech-Focused

Key Partner(s): Omar J. Sati (Founder and Managing Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Egypt fintech and digital services portfolio

About: Founded by Mohamed Okasha, the former Managing Director of Fawry, Egypt's largest fintech platform, DisrupTech brings an operator's lens to early-stage investing that most financial-background VCs cannot replicate. Having built Fawry into a publicly listed company with over 40 million users, Okasha understands the regulatory, infrastructure, and behavioral challenges of scaling fintech in Egypt from the inside. DisrupTech backs founders who are solving the same problems he spent a decade navigating.

#9

Website: flat6labs.com

Headquarters: Cairo / Dubai

Focus: Seed / Accelerator

Key Partner(s): Ahmed El Alfi (Co-Founder)

Notable Portfolio: PayMob, Brimore, Instabug, Harmonica (Match Group exit)

About: MENA's most geographically distributed seed accelerator, operating across Cairo, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Tunis, Jeddah, and Bahrain. Co-founded by Ahmed El Alfi, who also co-founded Sawari Ventures and The GrEEK Campus, Flat6Labs has invested in over 400 startups and is the first institutional check for more Egyptian founders than any other single entity. Its alumni network has become the connective tissue of Egypt's startup generation, producing founders who have gone on to raise from Sequoia, SoftBank, and beyond.

#10

Website: global.vc

Headquarters: Dubai

Focus: Series A / Growth

Key Partner(s): Noor Sweid (Founder and Managing Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Paymob, Trella, Tamara, YallaMarket, Tarjama

About: Founded by Noor Sweid, former CIO of Dubai Future Foundation and Chairwoman of MEVCA, Global Ventures backs growth-stage companies with global ambitions from an emerging markets base. With $400M under management, the firm has become the go-to Series A partner for founders scaling across MENA and Africa. Sweid's conviction runs through every deal: the best companies in this region will be mission-driven and globally competitive, not merely regional plays. General Partner Basil Moftah brings deep operational experience in tech infrastructure and media across the Arab world.

#11

Website: halavc.com

Headquarters: Al Khobar

Focus: Seed to Series A

Key Partner(s): Ali Abussaud (Founding Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Post-revenue tech startups in fintech, logistics, and e-commerce in KSA

About: One of Saudi Arabia's newer early-stage funds, Hala Ventures focuses specifically on post-revenue tech startups, investing when a company has proven that someone will pay for its product but before it has found the formula for scale. Based in Al Khobar rather than Riyadh, it represents the broader ambition of Vision 2030 to distribute entrepreneurial capital across Saudi cities, not just concentrate it in the capital. Its focus on fintech, logistics, and e-commerce reflects the three sectors where Saudi digital adoption has accelerated fastest.

#12

Website: iliad-partners.com

Headquarters: Dubai

Focus: Early Stage / B2B and Logistics

Key Partner(s): Christos Mastoras and Omar Al Madhi (Founding Partner)

Notable Portfolio: B2B and logistics technology portfolio across MENA

About: Iliad Partners brings deep operational expertise to early-stage B2B investing, backing founders building the digital infrastructure that enables commerce, logistics, and enterprise software across the region. Founded by Christos Mastoras, the firm takes a hands-on approach that goes beyond capital, offering founders the kind of strategic and product guidance that bridges the gap between a working product and a scalable company. Its focus on B2B and logistics reflects where the region's structural digitization opportunity is largest and least served.

#13

Website: impact46.sa

Headquarters: Riyadh

Focus: Growth Stage

Key Partner(s): Abdulaziz Alomran (Co-Founder and Managing Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Holo, Lean Technologies, Tamara, Foodics, Salla

About: One of the first CMA-authorized VC entities in Saudi Arabia and a pioneer of the Kingdom's institutional venture ecosystem, Impact46 positions itself at the Series B inflection point where Saudi startups are proving their model but need patient capital to scale. Named after the year of Saudi independence, the firm invests with the conviction that Saudi companies can compete globally, not just regionally. Its portfolio reads like a map of the Kingdom's digital transformation: payments infrastructure, restaurant tech, merchant enablement, compliance tools.

#14

Website: khwarizmivc.com

Headquarters: Riyadh

Focus: Seed to Series A

Key Partner(s): Abdulaziz AlTurki (Founding Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Tweeq, Foodics, Tamara, Sary, Lean Technologies

About: Named after the 9th-century mathematician who gave algebra and algorithms to the world, Khwarizmi Ventures applies systematic thinking to early-stage Saudi investing. Founded to back founders building the digital infrastructure of Saudi Arabia and the GCC, the firm has a particular strength in fintech and B2B SaaS, sectors where Saudi corporate digitization is creating enormous demand that local founders are uniquely positioned to serve. Often the first institutional capital in the room alongside Raed Ventures.

#15

Website: mevp.com

Headquarters: Dubai

Focus: Early to Growth Stage

Key Partner(s): Walid Hanna (Founder and Managing Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Anghami, Property Finder, Wamda Media, iyzico

About: One of the oldest independent venture firms in the Arab world, founded in 2010 by serial entrepreneur Walid Hanna. MEVP manages multiple funds across early and growth stages and brings deep Levant roots, particularly in Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt, that give it access to a founder pool that more Gulf-centric funds miss. It backed Anghami, the region's streaming pioneer, before the category existed in Arabic, and has since grown into one of the region's largest independent managers with $450M+ under management.

#16

Website: modus.vc

Headquarters: Cairo / Dubai

Focus: Venture Builder and VC

Key Partner(s): Kareem Elsirafy (Founder and Managing Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Venture studio portfolio across MENA

About: Modus operates at the intersection of venture capital and venture building, providing founders with hands-on product and design support through its integrated studio model rather than deploying capital and stepping back. Founded by Kareem Elsirafy, the firm addresses a specific failure mode of early-stage startups in the region: founders who understand the market problem but need structured support to build the right product around it. In a region where many promising ideas stall at the product-market fit stage, Modus's studio approach is a deliberate structural response.

#17

Website: namaventures.com

Headquarters: Riyadh

Focus: Seed / Early Stage

Key Partner(s): Mohammed Alzubi (Founder and Managing Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Technology-first startups in KSA and MENA

About: A seed-stage specialist with a Silicon Valley mentality applied to the Saudi market, Nama Ventures was founded by Mohammed Alzubi with a strict technology-first thesis: if the competitive advantage is not rooted in software or technical differentiation, it is not a Nama company. This selectivity is deliberate. In a market where many so-called tech startups are primarily operations businesses with a digital layer, Nama's discipline helps founders clarify what they are actually building and position it accordingly for global investors at later stages.

#18

Website: nuwacapital.io

Headquarters: Dubai / Riyadh

Focus: Early to Growth Stage

Key Partner(s): Khaled Talhouni (Managing Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Sylndr, Sary, Thndr, Cura, Tabby (follow-on)

About: Founded by Khaled Talhouni, formerly of Wamda Capital, Nuwa was built as a deliberate alternative to the institutional VC model: a platform that treats portfolio support as an operating function, not an afterthought. With $300M under management and offices in Dubai and Riyadh, it has become one of the most founder-referenced funds for mid-stage companies that want an investor who shows up between board meetings. Its name, from the Arabic for intention or will, reflects the conviction that the best founders are distinguished less by resources than by clarity of purpose.

#19

Website: outliers.vc

Headquarters: Riyadh

Focus: Early Stage / High-Conviction

Key Partner(s): Mohammed Almeshekah (Founder and Managing Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Complex technical solutions and deep tech in MENA

About: Outliers is built around a single editorial principle: back founders who are solving problems that require genuine technical depth, not just market execution. Founded by Mohammed Almeshekah, who has a computer science background and a track record in cybersecurity and deep tech, the firm backs a small number of companies per year with high conviction rather than running a diversified portfolio strategy. In a Saudi market that increasingly rewards technical differentiation, Outliers has positioned itself as the fund for founders building things that are genuinely hard to replicate.

#20

Website: oraseyacapital.com

Headquarters: Dubai

Focus: Pre-Seed to Series B / CVC

Key Partner(s): Dr. Mohammed Al Zarooni (Executive Chairman, DIEZ); Ms. Amna Lootah (Director General DAFZ&DCC)

Notable Portfolio: Calo, Camb.ai, Qureos, NymCard, Valeo Health, Ogram, Paymennt.com (exit)

About: The venture capital arm of Dubai Integrated Economic Zones Authority (DIEZ), Oraseya is the most deal-active institutional investor in the UAE by number of transactions, ranked number one in 2024 by MAGNiTT and named Entrepreneur Middle East's Venture Capital Firm of the Year. With $136M (AED 500M) under management and a portfolio of over 60 companies, it invests from pre-seed to Series B with a deliberate focus on founders who have an existing connection to Dubai. Its SANDBOX accelerator program, now in its fourth cohort, gives it a proprietary pipeline that most funds have to build through relationships alone. The DIEZ institutional backing also gives portfolio companies direct access to Dubai Silicon Oasis, Dubai Airport Freezone, and Dubai CommerCity infrastructure: a value-add that no purely financial fund can replicate.

PLUS.VC

#21

Website: plus.vc

Headquarters: Abu Dhabi / Bahrain

Focus: Early Stage

Key Partner(s): Hasan Haider (Founder and Managing Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Halan, Paymob, Mozare3, Dsquares, MENA seed portfolio

About: Founded by Hasan Haider, the former head of 500 Global MENA, Plus VC brings an unusual combination of global network and hyper-local deal conviction to early-stage investing across the region. With over 100 startups backed and a 2026 Forbes Middle East Top VC recognition, the firm has established itself as one of the most trusted first checks in the ecosystem. Haider's previous role at 500 Global gave him direct relationships with over 250 regional founders before launching Plus, an institutional memory that most new fund managers spend years trying to build.

#22

Website: propellerinc.me

Headquarters: Amman

Focus: Early Stage / Product-Led

Key Partner(s): Zaid Al-Farekh (Co-Founders and Managing Partners)

Notable Portfolio: Product-driven tech teams in Jordan and the Levant

About: Propeller combines capital with a software-centric incubator environment designed for product-driven founders who need more than money at the early stage. Based in Amman and deeply embedded in Jordan's developer and design community, the firm backs technical teams who have strong product instincts but need the structural support to build a company around their idea. In a Levant market that produces disproportionate technical talent relative to available venture capital, Propeller functions as a quality filter and builder, not just a check writer.

#23

Website: raed.vc

Headquarters: Riyadh

Focus: Early to Series B

Key Partner(s): Omar Almajdouie (Founding Partner, Almajdouie Holding); Talal Alasmari (Managing Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Mrsool, Wafeq, Rabbit, e-commerce and logistics in GCC

About: Backed by Almajdouie Holding and led by a team with deep Saudi operational roots, Raed Ventures has built a reputation as one of the most founder-aligned early-stage funds in the Kingdom. It backed Mrsool before anyone took the hyperlocal delivery category seriously in Saudi Arabia, and its portfolio spans the e-commerce, logistics, and fintech categories where Saudi digital adoption is moving fastest. The Almajdouie family's industrial and commercial relationships across the GCC give portfolio companies access to distribution and corporate partnerships that capital alone cannot buy.

sawari ventures

#24

Website: sawariventures.com

Headquarters: Cairo

Focus: Growth Stage

Key Partner(s): Ahmed El Alfi (Founder and Chairman); Hany Al-Sonbaty (Co-Founder and Managing Partner)

Notable Portfolio: Swvl, MoneyFellows, Instabug, Si-Ware, Elves

About: One of the first VC firms established in Egypt, founded in 2010 by Ahmed El Alfi and Hany Al-Sonbaty, two investors who had spent two decades in Egyptian technology and private equity before deciding the ecosystem needed dedicated growth-stage capital. With $70M AUM and a portfolio of over 30 companies, Sawari focuses on knowledge and innovation-driven businesses in North Africa. It also co-founded Flat6Labs, giving it an unusual dual presence across both acceleration and growth-stage investing. Its Africa Fund, currently fundraising, signals ambition beyond MENA.

SHOROOQ

#25

Website: shorooq.com

Headquarters: Abu Dhabi

Focus: Seed to Series A and Venture Debt

Key Partner(s): Mahmoud Adi and Shane Shin (Co-Founding Partners)

Notable Portfolio: Tamara, Pure Harvest, Sarwa, Lean Technologies, TruKKer, Mozn

About: The only fund in the region to have pioneered both venture equity and venture debt at scale, Shorooq's structural differentiation gives it flexibility no single-product fund can match. Founded in Abu Dhabi by a Stanford-trained Emirati engineer and a Korean-American Wharton graduate, the firm brings a cross-cultural perspective to a market that often invests parochially. Its Nahda Fund, MENA's first tech-focused venture debt vehicle, and a newly announced late-stage Qatalyst Fund backed by Qatar Investment Authority signal a multi-strategy ambition that is reshaping what it means to be a MENA VC.

Silicon Badia

#26

Website: siliconbadia.com

Headquarters: Amman / New York

Focus: Early Stage / Cross-Border

Key Partner(s): Fawaz Zu'bi and Namek Zu'bi (Co-Founders)

Notable Portfolio: MENA founders scaling to Western markets

About: Silicon Badia is deliberately dual-headquartered: Amman and New York. That is not a coincidence of where the partners happen to live, it is the core of the investment thesis. Founded by Fawaz Zu'bi, the firm specializes in connecting MENA founders with Western markets, expertise, and capital networks that a purely regional fund cannot access. In a region where many founders aspire to global scale but lack the relationships to achieve it, Silicon Badia functions as the bridge, backing technical and software founders whose products can travel far beyond their home market.

STV

#27

Website: stv.vc

Headquarters: Riyadh

Focus: Series A to Growth

Key Partner(s): Abdulrahman Tarabzouni (Founder and CEO)

Notable Portfolio: Careem (pre-Uber), Tabby, Tamara, Salla, Unifonic

About: The largest independent technology VC fund in the Middle East, founded in 2017 with backing from Saudi Telecom Group and PIF. STV's track record, Careem before its $3.1B Uber acquisition, Tabby at $3.3B, has made it the benchmark against which every other MENA fund is measured. Its newly launched $100M AI Fund, backed by Google, signals that STV intends to own the next phase of regional tech investment as forcefully as it owned the last. Founded by Abdulrahman Tarabzouni, a former Google executive who returned to Saudi Arabia with a conviction that the region could produce global technology champions, STV has become the embodiment of that thesis.

VSQ

#28

Website: venturesouq.com

Headquarters: Dubai

Focus: Seed / Fintech and Impact

Key Partner(s): Suneel Gokhale and Sonia Gokhale (Founding Partners)

Notable Portfolio: Sarwa, Finalrentals, Spotii, fintech and conscious investing portfolio

About: VentureSouq operates two dedicated thematic funds, FinTech and Conscious Capital, in a region where most funds remain sector-agnostic. Founded in Abu Dhabi in 2013 by Suneel and Sonia Gokhale, the firm has built a specialist reputation that generalist funds cannot replicate: founders in fintech and impact investing know that VentureSouq brings not just capital but a network, a thesis, and a co-investment community built specifically around their sector. Its conscious capital focus is ahead of where most regional LPs currently sit, a contrarian bet that ESG and impact will increasingly define where institutional money flows.

#29 Vision Ventures

Website: visionventures.vc

Headquarters: Riyadh

Focus: Early Stage to Growth

Key Partner(s): Kais Al-Essa (Founding Partner and CEO)

Notable Portfolio: Hala, Foodics, Chari, Yamm, GCC portfolio

About: Built by entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs, as Kais Al-Essa describes it, Vision Ventures combines early-stage check writing with hands-on operational growth support that reflects the founding team's own experience scaling companies in the region. It has backed some of the Kingdom's most interesting sector stories, from Foodics in restaurant technology to Hala in mobility, and its geographic ambition extends into North Africa, making it one of the few Saudi funds with serious conviction in Morocco and Tunisia. The firm operates at the intersection of Saudi Arabia's growth moment and the broader MENA digitization curve.

#30 wamda capital

Website: wamdacapital.com

Headquarters: Dubai

Focus: Early to Growth Stage (Evergreen)

Key Partner(s): Fadi Ghandour (Founder, Managing Partner and Executive Chairman)

Notable Portfolio: Souq.com (Amazon exit), Careem, Mumzworld, Maktoob, Yemeksepeti

About: Wamda Capital is as much a piece of the region's history as it is an investment firm. Founded by Fadi Ghandour, co-founder of Aramex and the first Arab company listed on NASDAQ, Wamda is the institutional expression of a four-decade belief that the Arab world can produce world-class companies from within. Its portfolio produced two of the most consequential exits in MENA's technology history: Souq.com, acquired by Amazon, and Careem, acquired by Uber. Its evergreen structure reflects a long-horizon patience that few funds in any market can sustain, and Ghandour's network across the Arab world, Turkey, and East Africa gives it relationship access that no younger fund can replicate.

MENA TOP 30 *Venture Capital Firms (A–Z 2026)*

500 GLOBAL

algebra ventures

ARZAN VENTURE CAPITAL

BY

BECO CAPITAL

DASH VENTURES

COTU VENTURES

DISRUPTECH

global ventures

HALA ventures

ILIAD PARTNERS

i46

MODUS CAPITAL

MEVP

nama VENTURES

outliers

nuwa CAPITAL

ORASEYA CAPITAL

PLUS.VC

sawari ventures

SHOROOQ

STV

Silicon Badia

VSQ

VISION VENTURES

wamda capital

Research

BY LEILA GADIRLI PIRGULIEVA

From Invisible Payments to AI Agents: Why Trust is the New Currency for Digital Commerce in MENA

Remo Giovanni Abbondandolo | General Manager, MENA at Checkout.com

New research from Checkout.com reveals that the acceleration of digital commerce across MENA is being driven by consumer demand for frictionless experiences. 97% of consumers want invisible payments, but security remains the deciding factor at checkout. 50% are ready for AI assistants to shop on their behalf, but 55% cite privacy as the primary barrier to adoption.

As the MENA region transitions from simple digital adoption to a complex, AI-driven ecosystem, the definition of a successful payment journey has changed. Checkout.com's 2026 report, MENA Digital Commerce 2026: The New Era of AI in Payments, released today, indicates that while the region is agentic ready, the future of ecommerce depends largely on consumer trust in payments and payment security.

As digital commerce adoption accelerates across MENA, consumers are sending a clear signal: they expect payments to be simple, invisible, and embedded, but never at the expense of payment security. Our recent research shows that 97% of consumers now value 'invisible' payments–a transaction that occurs without the need for manual entry of credentials or page redirections.

This demand for frictionless experiences is matched by an equally strong expectation for security. This reinforces trust as the true foundation of digital commerce, and the prerequisite for the region's transition into agentic commerce.

"In this new era of ecommerce in MENA, trust isn't just a preference, it's the ultimate currency," said Remo Giovanni Abbondandolo, General Manager, MENA at Checkout.com. "Consumers want payments to be fast and invisible, however our data shows that 62% believe that a safe and secure payment process is the most important factor of online shopping. Merchants that succeed will be those who strike the right balance between simple experiences and strong protection."

Trust is The Foundation of Digital Commerce in MENA

Delivering both simple experiences and strong protection is becoming increasingly critical as online shopping scales across the region, with 45% of consumers now shopping online at least weekly and 63% expecting to increase the frequency of their online shopping over the next 12 months. Digital wallets are now deeply embedded in daily life with 64% of consumers using them at least monthly to buy, budget, and manage finances, and 74% doing so for money transfers. This momentum is reflected in Checkout.com's regional performance, where total processing volume in MENA increased by 62% year-on-year.

The need for simplicity is not unconditional, while 97% of consumers want payments to be invisible and disappear into the background, this demand depends on trust. When trust is broken, the consequences are immediate: 62% of consumers abandon the purchase following a false decline, and 35% would switch directly to a competitor.

Security concerns continue to interrupt the checkout journey, with 28% of consumers abandoning carts due to security concerns. In fact, 62% of consumers prioritize a safe and secure payment process over speedy delivery, highlighting that while fast experiences are valued, they cannot come at the expense of confidence.

Furthermore, 50% of consumers say they are willing to save their card details to simplify the payment process, signaling a strong appetite for convenience. This willingness is also conditional, driven by the expectation of robust fraud protection. For merchants, success requires a delicate balancing act: creating an experience that is frictionless enough to convert, yet secure enough to ensure loyalty.

Agentic Commerce Readiness

The report highlights AI and agentic commerce as the next frontier for regional retail. While 50% of consumers are ready to let AI agents shop for on their behalf, widespread adoption depends on trust, with 55% citing privacy as a primary barrier. Despite these concerns, the appeal of agentic commerce is rooted in efficiency; in a region where 56% of shoppers already compare prices on mobile while in-store, AI agents are emerging as 'super shoppers' capable of scanning and recommending the best options in real-time.

Consumers are most willing to delegate tasks such as finding the best price (50%), comparing products and reviews (41%), and creating shopping lists (30%), with growing openness to AI handling groceries (27%), travel bookings (25%), and subscriptions (24%).

Adoption is not uniform though with men (54%) and high-income earners (67%) showing significantly higher levels of comfort with AI than women (44%) and lower-income groups (38%). This indicates that agentic commerce will initially be driven by digitally confident and wealthier segments before broadening across the wider population.

Where Are Consumers Spending Their Money Online

Across MENA, broader spending trends point to a rapidly evolving digital economy. Social commerce is gaining momentum, with 25% of consumers now shopping through platforms such as social media. Meanwhile, mobile-first financial behavior continues to expand, as digital wallets become central to both payments and money management.

The report identifies a significant diversification in digital spending across the region, with food delivery emerging as the most frequent category for online purchases at 59% of respondents. This is followed by clothing and accessories at 54%, and travel at 40%, reflecting a consumer base that is increasingly utilizing digital platforms for a broad spectrum of daily needs.Taken together, these trends point to a broader behavioural shift: consumers in MENA are moving beyond using digital channels purely for convenience purchases and are increasingly relying on them for essential, high-value, and recurring transactions, reflecting both evolving lifestyles and the growing normalisation of online purchasing in everyday life.

Furthermore remittances continue to see exceptional growth in the region, highlighting the shift toward faster, digital-first money movement. Checkout.com MENA's remittance volumes increased by 169% YoY (2024–2025), underscoring the accelerating role of digital payments in enabling financial flows.

The report concludes that trust is no longer a differentiator in digital commerce, but a baseline. As payments become faster and more invisible, success in MENA will belong to brands that deliver intuitive experiences without compromising security. In a region defined by rapid growth, digital ambition, and rising consumers payment expectations, trust has become the ultimate currency.

"What we are seeing in MENA is a clear redefinition of what a good payment experience looks like. It is no longer about speed alone, it is about confidence at every step. Consumers are telling us they want payments to disappear into the background, but only if they can trust what is happening behind the scenes. That is why security, intelligence, and reliability are now inseparable from growth in digital commerce," concluded Remo Abbondandolo.

menfirst

Interview

BY LEILA GADIRLI PIRGULIEVA

Beatriz Nahuz Explains: Winning Strategies in Multi-Channel E-Commerce

Beatriz Nahuz, CEO of MenFirst

Beatriz Nahuz, CEO of MenFirst and one of the notable figures in the United States (U.S.) e-commerce ecosystem in the fields of brand scaling, multi-channel sales strategies, and AI-powered customer acquisition, was featured on WORLDEF E-COMMERCE. Nahuz, who scaled the MenFirst brand to eight figures, shared her experiences on platforms such as Amazon, Shopify, Walmart, and TikTok Shop, the critical mistakes brands make in their multi-channel growth processes, and her predictions regarding the future of e-commerce.

In the interview, the rise of AI-powered search engines, Reddit's transformation into a new SEO field, creator management strategies, and the importance of building a personal brand on LinkedIn particularly stand out. According to Nahuz, brands can no longer grow solely through advertising budgets; gaining consumer trust, building a community, and creating true fans have become more critical than ever.

Nahuz also offers noteworthy advice on the processes of international brands entering the U.S. market, touching on many important points from compliance processes to channel strategies.

Could you tell us the story of MenFirst?

MenFirst started with a clear market gap. At the time, men who wanted to address gray hair had very few good options. Most products were harsh dyes made for women or complicated systems that men did not want to use. I saw a real business opportunity to build something made specifically for men; something simple, gradual, and easy to use every day. My mission with MenFirst is to help men age on their own terms, without stigma and without the need for complicated routines. I built a system of grooming products that gradually darkens gray hair over time; this way, the change looks natural and is not obvious. I scaled MenFirst to eight figures. Then I faced serious manufacturing challenges that slowed growth. Today, I am repositioning the brand from "gray coverage" into a broader Age Reversal platform with new peptide-based products.

You built and scaled MenFirst across Amazon, Shopify, Walmart, and TikTok. What were the most critical decisions behind this multi-channel success?

Every channel is different. Amazon customers are not Shopify customers. TikTok Shop, on the other hand, is an entirely different world. Using the same strategy everywhere is the fastest way to fail on every platform. I focused on Amazon first. Amazon is not forgiving. If your listings, reviews, inventory, and ads are not strong, no other marketing activity will save you. I invested deeply in listing optimization, A+ content, and now in AEO (Answer Engine Optimization) for Rufus and AI search. This is the new battleground, and most brands are not paying attention to it yet. I used Shopify and DTC (Direct-to-Consumer) to tell the brand story and build a direct relationship with the customer. Marketplaces bring you sales. DTC, on the other hand, gives you a long-term business. Finally, Reddit and creator management have become two of the most important parts of my strategy.

As a founder who has built ventures and exited them, how has your approach to e-commerce evolved? What would you do differently today?

I have built multiple businesses. I founded Blue Fish Sport, a women's activewear brand with four retail stores in South Florida and distribution through Nordstrom, and exited after 14 years. I built a real estate brokerage company with a sales volume of more than $50 million. And I scaled MenFirst to eight figures. Each business taught me something important. In my early years, I focused only on growth. High revenue, aggressive ad spending, rapid expansion. Today, I prefer steady, healthy growth with strong margins and cash in the bank.

If I were starting MenFirst today, I would do a few things differently: I would build supply chain backup plans from day one. Manufacturing problems cost me real growth, and much of that could have been prevented with better supplier relationships at an earlier stage. I would build content and AEO infrastructure before scaling paid ads. Artificial intelligence is changing the way people discover brands. Brands that invest now will benefit for many years. I would have started on Reddit much earlier. Reddit is the most honest place on the internet, and AI engines such as ChatGPT and Google AI Overviews now pull product recommendations directly from Reddit threads. Brands that appear there with real, helpful voices win the AI recommendation game. And I would build my personal brand on LinkedIn from day one. LinkedIn will change the rules of the game for founders in the next few years.

How do you see the balance between marketplaces and DTC brands evolving?

Marketplaces are not disappearing. For most categories, Amazon is now the main search engine for shopping. With Rufus and AI assistants giving direct product answers, this will grow even more. TikTok Shop combines content, discovery, and the checkout process into a single experience, and other platforms will follow this. However, DTC is not dying. It is becoming more specialized. The best brands use their own websites for things marketplaces cannot do well: storytelling, community, subscription, first-party data, and long-term customer value. The hybrid model wins. Marketplaces for reach and new customers. DTC for retention and margin. Brands that see this as either/or will struggle. Brands that use both together will grow.

What are the biggest mistakes brands make when expanding across multiple platforms?

Expanding before the first channel becomes profitable. If Amazon is not working, Walmart will not fix it. The same operational problems will follow you. Treating every channel the same. The same listings, the same creatives, the same pricing. Every platform has its own algorithm and its own customer. Ignoring the cash math. Multi-channel means more inventory, longer lead times, and more tied-up cash. Many brands run out of cash before they run out of demand. Underestimating the work. Every marketplace has its own rules for compliance, content, and ads. Without dedicated people focused on each channel, things break down. Not measuring profitability correctly. Many brands cannot say which channel is actually profitable at the margin level; therefore, they continue investing in the wrong channels.

Beatriz Nahuz, CEO of MenFirst

How do you personally define a strong customer experience in today's e-commerce environment?

The best customer experience is the experience the customer does not notice. The page loads quickly. The product description is honest. The checkout process is simple. The shipment arrives on time. The product matches the ad. And if something goes wrong, a real person helps quickly. There are a few principles I follow: Be clear before the sale instead of apologizing after the sale. If your product page and reviews tell the truth, you prevent most customer service problems before they begin. Speed of resolution matters more than the script. Customers forgive mistakes. They do not forgive being ignored. And the most powerful thing a brand can build today is true fans; not followers or customers, but fans! Fans are the people who defend your brand in a Reddit thread when you are not in the room. They share about your product without being asked. They reorder without a discount code. Building true fans is the most underrated growth strategy in e-commerce, and it starts with how you treat people after the sale.

What key advice would you give to international brands looking to expand into the U.S.?

This is my favorite question. I am Brazilian, I live in the U.S., and I have helped many international brands enter the U.S. market. I have seen both success and failure; therefore, I know where most brands get stuck. There are a few things that are not optional: Get compliance right before spending money on marketing. FDA, FTC, state-level rules, labeling, product claims; the U.S. is flexible when it comes to creativity but very strict when it comes to compliance. This is where most international brands make expensive mistakes.

Set up the right legal and banking structure. A U.S. LLC, an EIN, a U.S. bank account, and a registered agent. Without these, you cannot sell on Amazon U.S., you cannot run ads properly, and you cannot receive payments efficiently. Do not assume that your positioning in your own market will work in the U.S. Things that work in Brazil, Türkiye, or Spain often need to be adapted; pricing, claims, packaging, and even the founder's story.

Choose one channel and win it before opening the others. I usually recommend Amazon U.S. as the first step. It provides you with discovery, reviews, and revenue while you build everything else. Find a U.S.-based partner who has done this before. Brands that try to do this alone almost always waste time and money.

Looking ahead, which trends will redefine how e-commerce brands grow over the next 3–5 years?

There are a few trends I follow closely: AI-driven search and discovery. Rufus, ChatGPT shopping, Perplexity, and Google AI Overviews are replacing traditional search results. Brands that optimize for AI answers will lead the next decade. This is a major focus area for me right now. Reddit as the new SEO. AI engines pull recommendations directly from Reddit. Brands that build an authentic presence in the right subreddits based not on ads, but on real and helpful voices, appear in AI-generated answers. This is one of the most important strategies I am using right now, and most brands still ignore it.

Creator management is the new growth team. Brands that win on TikTok Shop and Instagram are not paying only for a single post. They build real relationships with creators; they coach them, motivate them, and turn them into true fans of the brand. If a creator believes in your product, they produce 10 videos instead of one. This is the difference between a campaign and a movement.

The unification of content and commerce. TikTok Shop is the early version of this. Every platform will eventually combine content, community, and the checkout process into a single experience. Personal branding on LinkedIn will change the rules of the game. LinkedIn is where founders, operators, and decision-makers now truly spend time. Founders who show up consistently—sharing what they are building, what they are learning, and what is working—will own the next decade of B2B and DTC trust.

First-party data as the real line of defense. Privacy changes and rising advertising costs make email, SMS, and community more valuable every year. The world is getting smaller. U.S. brands are going global, and global brands are coming to the U.S. Cross-border infrastructure has finally matured enough to support this.

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styli

Interview

BY BURAK YALIM

The Digital Fashion Ecosystem Rising with the Power of Landmark Group: Styli

Abhinav Nair | Chief Growth Officer

Styli, the digital fashion platform backed by Landmark Group, is becoming one of the most remarkable players in the rising e-commerce ecosystem of the Gulf Region. Bringing together more than 600 brands and over 200,000 products under one roof, the platform is showing rapid growth in the GCC fashion market with its mobile-focused structure, AI-powered operations, and social commerce strategies. In our exclusive interview with Styli Chief Growth Officer Abhinav Nair for WORLDEF E-COMMERCE Magazine, we discussed many important topics, from the company's growth strategy to its data-driven customer experience, from its logistics infrastructure to its loyalty programs.

Abhinav Nair emphasizes that Styli is not only a fashion platform, but also a technology-driven ecosystem designed according to the new-generation digital shopping habits of the Gulf Region. Abhinav Nair gave the following advice to entrepreneurs: "Be obsessed with the customer, not the competition. If you deeply understand how a 22-year-old discovers and buys fashion, you will be one step ahead of your competitors. Move fast and learn faster!"

In the interview, Gen Z consumer behaviors, AI-powered personalization systems, the 24–48-hour delivery model, and social media-centered growth strategies especially stand out. The interview also features striking details about Styli's expansion plans into beauty, life, and lifestyle categories, as well as its future goals in the GCC market.

Styli was launched in 2019 as Landmark Group's first digital-only fashion venture and has since scaled rapidly across the GCC. How would you describe Styli's growth journey, and how has being backed by Landmark Group shaped that trajectory?

Styli was born in 2019 with a clear conviction: GCC consumers, especially Gen Z and Millennials, deserved a fashion e-commerce platform built specifically for them - not a bolt-on to a physical retail operation. In just over six years, we have scaled to 200,000+ styles across 600+ brands, built a rapidly growing customer base, and established a strong presence across Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, and most recently Oman.

Being part of Landmark Group – a conglomerate with 50+ years of regional retail expertise, 2,200+ stores, and presence across 17 countries – gave us an unmatched advantage. We inherited deep supply chain infrastructure, established vendor relationships, and access to the region's largest retail loyalty ecosystem. But we operate with the speed and agility of a startup: lean teams, rapid inventory cycles, and continuous technology releases that keep our platform evolving daily. That combination of heritage and agility is what defines our growth story.

How does Styli leverage Landmark Group's diverse ecosystem – spanning retail, hospitality, and loyalty programs – to create a strategic advantage in the e-commerce space?

As a digital-first brand within one of the region's largest conglomerates, Styli benefits from cross-ecosystem synergies that a standalone e-commerce player simply cannot replicate. Landmark Group's portfolio spans fashion retail (Max, Centrepoint, Splash), electronics (Emax), hospitality (Citymax Hotels, Fitness First), and Shukran – the region's largest retail loyalty program.

For Styli, this means access to a massive, pre-existing customer base that we can engage through co-branded campaigns, cross-sell initiatives, and shared loyalty infrastructure. A Shukran member shopping at Centrepoint offline can earn and redeem points on Styli online, creating a seamless omnichannel value loop. We also tap into shared sourcing capabilities, logistics networks, and strategic partnerships with banks and payment providers that the Group has cultivated over decades. This ecosystem advantage allows us to acquire customers more efficiently, retain them longer, and deliver value that competitors operating in isolation struggle to match.

Styli has evolved from a direct-to-consumer brand into a marketplace with 600+ brands. How do you manage the balance between your owned labels and third-party brand portfolio?

Styli's evolution from a curated direct-to-consumer platform to a marketplace with 600+ brands has been deliberate and strategic. Our owned and exclusive labels give us margin control, trend agility, and differentiation – we design specifically for GCC tastes, including modest fashion, regional sizing, and locally relevant aesthetics. These in-house brands allow us to respond to micro-trends within weeks, not months.

At the same time, our third-party brand portfolio gives customers the breadth and brand recognition they expect. We curate carefully – every brand on Styli must resonate with our core demographic of 18-to-35-year-olds. The synergy between owned and third-party works because both serve the same consumer promise: on-trend, affordable, and regionally relevant fashion. We use data-driven demand forecasting and AI-powered merchandising to ensure the right mix appears for the right customer, whether they are discovering a new Styli exclusive or shopping for a globally recognized label.

How do Styli's loyalty mechanisms – including Shukran integration and Styli Cash – drive customer retention and lifetime value in the competitive GCC fashion market?

Loyalty in fashion e-commerce is not just about points and discounts – it is about making customers feel understood and valued. At Styli, we operate a layered loyalty architecture. First, we are integrated with Shukran, Landmark Group's flagship loyalty program with millions of active members across the GCC. This gives Styli customers instant access to earn and redeem points across 55+ brands and 2,200+ touchpoints, creating a value ecosystem far beyond what any standalone fashion app can offer.

Second, we run Styli Cash – an in-app credit and cashback system that rewards engagement, not just transactions. This drives repeat purchase behavior and increases visit frequency. We also leverage strategic partnerships with banks across the GCC for exclusive offers, cashback programs, and BNPL (Buy Now, Pay Later) integrations that reduce purchase friction. The result is a customer retention flywheel: Shukran provides the breadth, Styli Cash provides the immediacy, and our financial partnerships provide the incentive. Together, they help us build relationships that go beyond a single purchase.

As a digital-native platform within a traditional retail conglomerate, how does Styli approach innovation and what role does technology play in your growth strategy?

Styli was conceived as a digital-native brand from day one - not a digitized version of a physical store. That distinction matters. Our entire infrastructure is built on a leading cloud platform running a microservices architecture that allows us to deploy updates continuously. This gives us the agility to experiment, iterate, and scale at a pace that traditional retail technology stacks cannot support.

We leverage AI and machine learning across the customer journey: personalized product recommendations that increase average order value, demand forecasting models that keep our inventory lean and responsive, and dynamic pricing algorithms that respond to real-time demand signals. Our customer support stack is powered by AI-driven automation and WhatsApp-first communication, enabling real-time resolution and contextual engagement with a predominantly mobile-first, Gen Z audience. Our app - where the vast majority of our transactions happen - is built for cross-platform consistency, with features designed for how our customers actually shop: vertical video content, social commerce integration, and one-tap checkout with biometric authentication. Innovation at Styli is not a department; it is how we operate.

How has Styli built its logistics and fulfillment capabilities to deliver on the promise of 24–48 hour delivery across the GCC?

Speed is the currency of e-commerce, and in the GCC, customer expectations are among the highest globally. Styli operates with a warehouse-first model out of Riyadh, which serves as our primary fulfillment hub. We offer same-day delivery in Riyadh and 24–48 hour delivery across major cities in Saudi Arabia, with reliable coverage extending to the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman.

To achieve this, we have invested in warehouse management systems for route optimization, real-time inventory visibility, and automated order processing. We leverage Landmark Group's established logistics infrastructure - one of the most extensive in the region - while layering on e-commerce-specific capabilities like last-mile tracking, automated returns processing, and localized delivery partner networks. What makes our model distinctive is that we export from Saudi Arabia to the rest of the GCC - a testament to our KSA-first strategy and the depth of our operations in the Kingdom. We are continuously investing in reducing delivery timelines and expanding our fulfillment footprint as we scale across all six GCC markets.

How does Styli think about sustainability and responsible growth, particularly given its appeal to a Gen Z audience that increasingly values purpose-driven brands?

Our core audience - Gen Z and young Millennials - are vocal about sustainability, and we recognize the responsibility that comes with building a fast-fashion brand for this generation. At Styli, we are focused on embedding responsible practices into our operations as we scale.

On the operational side, our lean inventory model significantly reduces overproduction and waste compared to traditional fashion retail cycles. We are exploring eco-conscious collections and sustainable packaging alternatives as part of our product roadmap. On the community engagement front, we are proud of initiatives like our customer service model in Saudi Arabia, which creates flexible employment opportunities for Saudi women. As we continue to grow, we see sustainability not as a marketing lever but as a business imperative - something that must evolve alongside the expectations of the consumers we serve and the communities we operate in.

How has the rapid evolution of GCC consumer behavior - particularly among Gen Z shoppers - shaped Styli's business model and go-to-market approach?

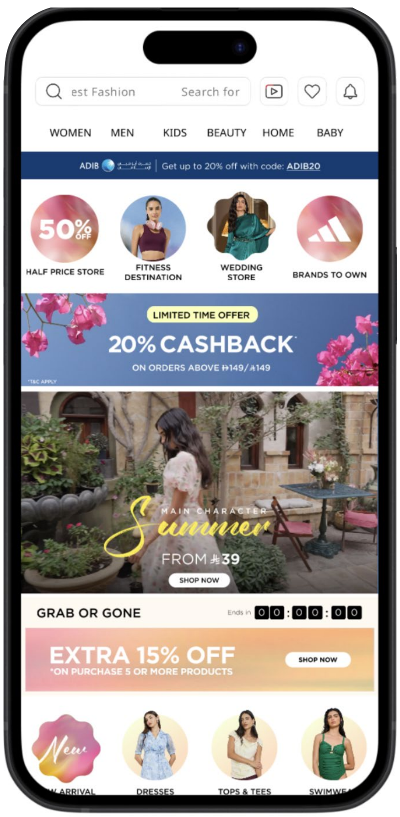
The GCC consumer is arguably the most digitally sophisticated in the emerging markets world. With smartphone penetration exceeding 99% in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, and mobile commerce growing at double-digit rates annually, the consumer we serve lives on their phone. At Styli, the majority of our customer base falls in the 18–35 age bracket, and they discover fashion through TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat before they ever visit a product page.

This has fundamentally shaped our model. We invest heavily in social commerce - deep links from social platforms directly into our app, influencer collaborations with regional creators, and vertical video content that mirrors how our audience consumes media. We have shifted from a traditional funnel to a discovery-led model: hundreds of new styles added daily keeps the experience fresh and creates habitual engagement. The GCC consumer also expects localized payment options (cash on delivery remains significant), Arabic-first customer service, and culturally relevant curation - from Ramadan capsule collections to National Day exclusives. Our model is designed around these behaviors, not retrofitted to accommodate them.

As a purely digital brand, how does Styli create a seamless customer experience without physical stores, and how does the Landmark Group ecosystem enable an omnichannel-like advantage?

Styli is 100% digital by design, which gives us the advantage of focusing every resource on the online experience without the complexity of store operations. However, being part of Landmark Group means we are never truly without physical touchpoints. Shukran loyalty integration means a customer who shops at Centrepoint, Max, or Home Centre offline can carry their loyalty benefits directly to Styli online. This creates an organic omnichannel bridge without us needing to operate stores.

We also explore strategic physical activations - pop-up experiences, event marketing, and partnerships - that create brand awareness and experiential moments without the overhead of permanent retail spaces. Internally, we benefit from Landmark Group's shared customer data ecosystem, which gives us visibility into offline purchase patterns that inform our online merchandising and targeting. The result is an omnichannel advantage without omnichannel cost. We believe the future of fashion retail in the GCC is not about choosing between online and offline, but about creating ecosystems where the customer moves seamlessly between both. Styli is the digital gateway to that ecosystem.



How does Styli use data analytics, AI, and personalization to drive key e-commerce metrics like conversion rate, average order value, and customer lifetime value?

Data is the backbone of everything we do at Styli. Our cloud-based analytics infrastructure gives us real-time visibility into customer behavior, product performance, and marketing ROI at a granular level.

On the personalization front, our AI-driven recommendation engine analyzes browsing patterns, purchase history, and style preferences to surface products that are individually relevant - not just popular. This directly impacts conversion rates and average order value. Our demand forecasting models use machine learning to predict which styles will resonate, allowing us to optimize inventory allocation and reduce markdowns.
For customer lifetime value, we use advanced segmentation to identify high-value cohorts and tailor engagement strategies accordingly - from personalized push notifications and app-exclusive drops to early access for loyal customers. We also run continuous A/B testing across the entire funnel, from homepage layouts to checkout flows, ensuring every interaction is optimized. The ambition is clear: use data not just to sell, but to understand, anticipate, and delight.

What are Styli's growth ambitions and strategic priorities for the next three to five years across the GCC and beyond?

Our ambition is to become the definitive fashion destination for Gen Z and Millennials across the GCC. Over the next three to five years, our strategic priorities are organized around three pillars:

Category Expansion: We are actively growing beyond fashion into beauty, home, and baby - categories where our existing customer base has clear, demonstrated demand. Beauty, in particular, is a natural extension of our fashion proposition and is already showing strong traction.

Brand Portfolio Expansion: We are investing in our marketplace model and infrastructure to onboard more brands and deepen our assortment. Moving from 600+ brands today toward a broader, curated marketplace that gives customers more choice while maintaining the quality and relevance they expect from Styli.

Geographic Expansion: With our recent launch in Oman, Styli now has a presence across all six GCC markets - Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman. Our focus is on deepening penetration in each market with localized strategies, while evaluating expansion into adjacent regions.

We believe the GCC e-commerce opportunity is still in its early innings. With a young, digitally native population, high internet penetration, and supportive government initiatives like Vision 2030, the fundamentals for sustained growth are firmly in place. Styli intends to be at the center of that growth.

What advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs and young professionals looking to build in the e-commerce and fashion technology space, particularly in the GCC?

Three things I have learned across my career journey to building Styli:

First, obsess over the customer, not the competition. In the GCC, the consumer is evolving faster than most businesses can keep up. If you deeply understand how a 22-year-old in Riyadh discovers, evaluates, and purchases fashion, you will always be one step ahead of competitors who are just benchmarking each other.

Second, move fast and learn faster. Styli's culture is built on rapid experimentation. We test, measure, and iterate continuously. In e-commerce, the cost of inaction is far greater than the cost of a failed experiment. Launch, learn, and refine.

Third, leverage the GCC's unique advantages. This region has extraordinary fundamentals for e-commerce: young demographics, world-class digital infrastructure, high smartphone penetration, and government visions that actively encourage digital economy growth. The opportunity here is generational - and it is far from saturated.

My advice to young entrepreneurs is simple: build for the region, not just in the region. Understand the cultural nuances, respect the local consumer, and create something that could not have been built anywhere else. That is what we are doing at Styli, and it is what excites me most about the years ahead.

BY UGUR GURBES

Interview

Sandoog's Fulfillment and Last-Mile Success in Iraq's E-Commerce Transformation

Iraq is becoming one of the most remarkable e-commerce markets in the Middle East with its rapidly growing young population, increasing internet penetration, and social commerce-driven consumer habits. However, for years, the inadequacy of the country's logistics and fulfillment infrastructure has been seen as one of the biggest obstacles preventing brands from fully benefiting from this potential. Iraq-based fulfillment and logistics company Sandoog aims to close this gap with its technology-based operational model.

The company manages operations such as warehousing, order management, last-mile delivery, return processes, and cash on delivery (COD) collection under one roof, enabling local and international brands to enter the Iraqi market without making a physical investment. Thanks especially to its open API system, which integrates with platforms such as Shopify and WooCommerce, brands can start selling across Iraq within a few days.

According to Sandoog's co-founders Ahmed Malik and Mustafa Al Obaidi, the Iraqi market is no longer only an area where social commerce is growing; it is also a candidate to become one of the new centers of regional e-commerce operations. With its developed fulfillment infrastructure and real-time operations management, the company aims to grow both in Iraq and in the broader Middle Eastern market.

Sandoog was featured on WORLDEF E-COMMERCE. We spoke with Sandoog Co-Founder and CMO Mustafa Al Obaidi about many topics, from Iraq's e-commerce transformation to the company's regional goals.

How do you position Sandoog's fulfillment services in the Iraqi and Middle Eastern market?

Iraq is one of the last large untapped e-commerce frontiers in the Middle East a country of 46 million people with rising internet penetration, a young population, and a deeply social-commerce-driven buying culture. Yet for years, the logistics infrastructure to serve that demand simply didn't exist in a reliable and scalable way. My partner, Ahmed Malik and I, Mustafa Al Obaidi, saw an opportunity to develop Sandoog as a solution to close that gap. We position ourselves as the bridge that enables brands from around the world - whether based in Beirut, Dubai, Istanbul, or London - to enter Iraq and start selling directly to consumers nationwide, without requiring physical presence in the country. Storage, fulfilment, last-mile delivery, COD collection: we handle all of it.

The biggest advantage we offer is speed to market. A brand can connect its store to our system via our open API, ship us its inventory, and start delivering to customers across Iraq within days.

How do you optimise warehousing given Iraq's infrastructure challenges?

We focus on the realities on the ground, not the ideal. We've responded by investing strategically in our internal systems: barcode scanning, real-time inventory tracking, and a fulfilment centre model that minimises human error. We also keep our processes lean and our teams well-trained to global standards, because technology can only take you so far when the local market has yet to fully adopt modern solutions. Local knowledge and culture are part of the logistics infrastructure in Iraq, and incorporating that into our Sandoog DNA over the years has helped differentiate us in the market.

What are the biggest fulfilment challenges specific to Iraq?

There are a few that define the market. Firstly, Banking infrastructure is limited, which is why COD dominates and why cash flow management is a constant operational concern to merchants. Secondly, the security and regulatory environment has historically been volatile, though it's significantly more stable now than even five years ago. Thirdly, customer expectations around communication are based around social-selling - The average customer wants human contact to place an order or to confirm delivery and transact the order. We tackled these challenges by combining technology with a human-first delivery experience: We offer a local call centre service for before and during delivery, we onboard local delivery partners who know their streets, and we handle the full cash collection and reconciliation cycle on behalf of our merchants in a highly transparent way. Fully tracked in real-time and visible through our client platform and open API.

How do you evaluate COD in Middle Eastern e-commerce, and how do you manage it operationally?

COD isn't a workaround - it's the dominant payment model in Iraq and across much of the region. Any fulfilment provider that treats it as a legacy problem to be eliminated is misreading the market. The trust deficit with online payments is still real and legitimate, but has improved slightly over the last 2 years. Until that changes at a structural level, through better banking access, digital payment adoption, and consumer confidence -COD will remain king. For us, managing COD well is a competitive advantage. We collect cash on delivery, reconcile it, and pay it out to merchants through their preferred method. The operational complexity of tracking which orders were paid, managing failed deliveries, preventing cash leakage - is where many operators struggle. We've built our systems specifically around this, and it's one of the core reasons brands trust us with their Iraq operations.

How does technology differentiate Sandoog's operations?

We built Sandoog Centre, our merchant dashboard, to give brands full real-time visibility: inventory levels, order status, delivery tracking, return management, live reports.

And if a client is integrated through our open API, they can integrate directly from Shopify, WooCommerce, or custom stores without manual order entry. This matters enormously because manual processes at scale are where errors compound. Beyond the merchant-facing tools, we use a custom proprietary WMS system internally to our warehousing and fulfilment activities. For a market like Iraq, where data has historically been scarce, giving merchants analytics on their inventory and delivery performance, return rates, and regional demand patterns is something genuinely new and valuable.

How does Sandoog ease cross-border e-commerce entry for brands?

A good use-case to answer this question is of our client Salviv, a health category e-commerce brand from Jordan. They needed to enter Iraq but had no local entity, operations, delivery network and COD collection that they can rely on. With Sandoog, they successfully transfered their inventory to us, and we handled everything from storage, to call confirmation to delivering their products to their customer's doorstep. This reliability allowed them to scale their Iraq operations remotely from Amman. For any international brand, we provide an alternative to setting up a local entity, hire local logistics staff, or navigating the banking system to repatriate revenue. We essentially act as their Iraqi operations partner. That dramatically lowers the risk and cost of entry.

What strategies do you use to improve last-mile delivery experience?

Generally, In Iraq, a delivery that arrives without prior notice will have a higher risk of failing - Customers want to know that it's coming and when. And sometimes they may redirect to a different address or person. This is why we have processes in place to support the merchant in contacting and gathering accurate information such as customer location to improve their delivery rate.

We also focus on delivery speed; our target is nationwide delivery within 48 hours as standard. This sets a clear expectation for both merchants and customers. Beyond that, we work on driver accountability and tracking so merchants can see exactly where their shipments are. We believe every successful, on-time delivery is a trust-building event for both our client's brand and their customer.

What does Sandoog offer for returns and reverse logistics?

Returns are included in our standard delivery service we don't charge extra for processing them, which removes a major pain point for merchants who would otherwise face unpredictable reverse logistics costs. When a returned order comes back to our fulfilment centre, it's checked, logged, and added back to available inventory if it's in resaleable condition. Merchants can see this in real-time through their dashboard. We treat returns as part of the last-mile cycle, not an exception to it.

What growth do you foresee in the Middle Eastern fulfillment market, and what role will Sandoog play?

The trajectory is clear Iraq's e-commerce market is in early but accelerating growth. Social commerce is already massive and is becoming scalable, brand-operated e-commerce. Additionally, Cross-Border selling is growing and allowing Sandoog to coordinate with other logistics service providers in the region more effectively.
The entry of regional aggregators and platforms is legitimising online shopping behaviour and raising customer expectations. This increases the need for fulfilment backends to grow substantially. Sandoog aims to be the operational backbone for that growth - to become the prime solution that both local and international brands choose when they want to reach both Iraqi and broader Middle Eastern consumers.

What is Sandoog's long-term vision and which countries are you targeting?

Iraq is our home market and where we've built our expertise, but the same fulfilment gaps exist in neighbouring markets. We want to enable local brands to operate cross-border and international brands to enter and scale. We currently have an office in UAE, and that has a lot of potential both commercially and logistics-wise. We envision similar plans internationally to take our unique experience to clients who need it. The transformation we want to drive is simple: make it as easy to sell into Baghdad as it is to sell into Berlin. That's still a long way off, but every brand we onboard, every successful delivery we make, and every data point we capture moves us closer to that.

Ticimax Founder & CEO Cenk Çiğdemli

BY UGUR GURBES

Interview

Ticimax's 21-Year Journey: From a Software Venture to a Global E-Commerce Technology Platform

E-commerce is no longer merely a sales channel where products are listed digitally; it is transforming into a multi-layered technology field at the center of brands' growth, export, customer experience, and competitive strategies. While the access power offered by marketplaces maintains its importance, it is becoming more critical than ever for brands to strengthen their own digital assets, establish direct customer relationships, and develop data-driven decision-making mechanisms. In this new era, e-commerce infrastructures are also moving beyond "site-building software" in the classical sense and transforming into strategic platforms that form the digital commerce backbone of businesses. Ticimax, one of the pioneering players of this transformation in Türkiye, has evolved over its 21-year journey from a software-focused venture into a comprehensive technology platform that provides cloud-based e-commerce and e-export infrastructure to more than 30,000 brands. Today, the company accompanies brands in their end-to-end digitalization processes with digital sales, operation, marketing, integration, mobile application, artificial intelligence-supported content production, and e-export solutions.

Artificial intelligence, multichannel commerce, and globalization are among the leading topics that determine the future of e-commerce. Ticimax also addresses this transformation not merely as a product feature, but as a strategic transformation area at the center of its business model. The company's investments in artificial intelligence technologies aim to increase brands' digital competitiveness across a wide range of areas, from content production to data analytics, from visibility solutions to automation. In particular, solutions such as the TiciAI Growth Assistant contribute to brands being better understood by large language models and artificial intelligence-supported search systems within the new visibility dynamics that go beyond SEO.

We spoke with Ticimax Founder and CEO Cenk Çiğdemli about the company's transformation from its founding story to the present, the impact of artificial intelligence on e-commerce infrastructures, why the D2C strategy has now become a necessity for brands, the opportunities offered by e-export, and the strategic advantages that technology platforms provide to businesses.

Could you tell us about the evolution Ticimax has undergone from the day it was founded to today?

The story of Ticimax is based on a curiosity for software that began at a very early age. My interest in technology goes back to my childhood years; I also stepped into working life at the age of 16, while I was still in high school. I founded Ticimax while I was studying in high school. I wrote my first software for our neighborhood water seller to help him track his customers more easily. In the second year of high school, I developed a tool that allowed everyone to build their own website in simple steps; over time, this project turned into an e-commerce infrastructure.

At the point we have reached today, Ticimax is no longer merely a software company that "builds e-commerce sites"; it is a technology platform through which businesses can manage their digital sales, operation, marketing, integration, mobile application, and e-export processes end to end. In our 21st year, we provide cloud-based e-commerce and e-export infrastructure, native mobile applications, and custom solutions to more than 30,000 brands.

Our mission is to facilitate brands in Türkiye's access to digital commerce. Our vision is to grow regionally and globally as a strong e-commerce technology brand that emerged from Türkiye. In the future of e-commerce, there is no longer only "building a site"; there are scalable platforms that work with data, are powered by artificial intelligence, can sell across multiple channels, and are ready for e-export. We position Ticimax precisely as one of the infrastructure brands of this new era.

The impact of artificial intelligence on e-commerce infrastructures is increasing. How do you integrate this technology as Ticimax?

Artificial intelligence is not a "feature" for us; it is a transformation area that we have placed at the center of our products and way of doing business. Because in e-commerce, it is no longer enough to simply list products, run campaigns, or receive payments. Brands need to understand their customers better, show the right product to the right person at the right time, produce content, and be visible both in search engines and in artificial intelligence-supported search systems. Above all, they need to accelerate their operations and make a real contribution to their profitability. For this reason, we announced that we will invest 450 million TL in artificial intelligence technologies by the end of 2026. At the center of the investment are our own artificial intelligence technologies, e-export intelligence, visual and content production, data analytics, and automation-focused R&D efforts.

What do you think about the future of e-commerce infrastructures?

Three topics will stand out in the future of e-commerce infrastructures: artificial intelligence, multichannel commerce, and globalization. The most critical issue is this: it is no longer enough for a brand to sell only through a single platform. Having its own e-commerce site is essential. Because marketplace platforms can be shut down in one day due to regulatory issues; geopolitical risks in the period we are going through can also create serious pressure on platforms.

In times of crisis, e-commerce companies that operate dependent on platforms become much more fragile. Because in a crisis, platforms manage their own risks, not yours: algorithms change, your visibility drops, and logistics and payment infrastructures may be disrupted. While you think you are making sales, you actually become dependent on an intermediary layer that controls your access to the customer. Therefore, companies building their own websites and managing direct customer relationships (D2C) is no longer a preference, but a strategic necessity!

In the coming period, infrastructures will become more modular, smarter, and more integrated. Brands will want to manage their stocks, orders, customer data, campaigns, marketplace sales, overseas operations, and content from a single panel. For this reason, what we call e-commerce infrastructure is moving beyond being a "site software" in the classical sense and turning into the digital commerce backbone of the business.

What are Ticimax's regional goals?

The partnership we established with Europe's technology giant team.blue means a two-way acceleration for us. On the one hand, we planned new investments to multiply our growth in Türkiye; on the other hand, we entered an intensive process to expand Ticimax in target markets, especially European countries. I can summarize our growth strategy as follows: producing solutions suitable for the needs of each country and expanding with the combination of strong product and strong technology.

What strategic advice would you give to e-commerce companies?

The first thing I would say for success in e-commerce is this: e-commerce cannot be done just by opening a store. E-commerce is a business model in which product, brand, technology, operation, data, marketing, and customer experience are managed together. Therefore, small and medium-sized enterprises first need to build a solid foundation.
The first critical point is choosing the right infrastructure. The business may be small today; but tomorrow, it may receive serious traffic during campaign periods, enter new marketplaces, or want to sell abroad. The selected infrastructure must be able to carry this growth.

The second issue is product and category strategy. Instead of trying to sell every product to everyone, it is necessary to define the target audience well, establish a simple category structure, prepare strong product descriptions, and invest in visual quality. Since the customer cannot touch the product, visuals, descriptions, reviews, and elements of trust directly determine the purchasing decision in e-commerce.

The third issue is acting with data. Which product is viewed more? Why is it added to the cart but not purchased? Which campaign is profitable? Which customer shops again? The biggest advantage of e-commerce is that it is measurable. When SMEs regularly track this data, they grow much more healthily.

The fourth issue is customer experience. A fast-opening site, easy payment, a clear return policy, trustworthy communication, fast shipping, and after-sales support are no longer luxuries, but standard expectations. Once a customer has a bad experience, it is extremely easy for them to switch to an alternative.

The fifth issue is focus. Especially in e-export, focusing on a few target markets instead of entering many countries at once is a much more accurate approach. For brands that will start e-export for the first time, choosing a maximum of 3–4 target countries at the beginning enables them to manage their advertising budget, regulatory knowledge, and localization efforts much more efficiently.

Artificial intelligence can be an important tool in improving customer experience. What kind of features does Ticimax offer its customers in this area?

On the Ticimax side, artificial intelligence-supported content and visibility solutions come to the fore. Users now do not only click on links in search engines; they receive answers directly from artificial intelligence-supported search results. Therefore, the product descriptions, category content, blog posts, and guide content of e-commerce sites must be enriched in a way that artificial intelligence systems can understand. We are also developing artificial intelligence-supported content systems to prepare brands for this transformation.

Before Google's AI solution came to Türkiye, as Ticimax, we developed an artificial intelligence assistant so that e-commerce sites could attract the attention of large language models (LLM): TiciAI Growth Assistant. This tool analyzes brands' websites, produces site-specific content topics and blog posts, and publishes them. It produces content by determining LLM-focused titles. In this way, after Google's AI solution came to Türkiye, the organic traffic of the e-commerce companies to which we provide infrastructure services increased up to 50 times. SEO alone is no longer enough; brands that have something to say, an intelligence to put forward, and a philosophy will survive. That is exactly why TiciAI exists.

How can e-commerce companies use the advantages offered by technology platforms for success?

For e-commerce companies to truly benefit from technology platforms, they first need to stop seeing technology merely as a "site-building tool." The right technology platform directly affects the company's sales strategy, customer experience, operational efficiency, and growth capacity. When a business uses an infrastructure such as Ticimax, it should not think of it only as a showcase where it uploads products. It should actively use its integrations, campaign modules, marketplace connections, reporting tools, SEO and GEO features, mobile application opportunities, e-export modules, and automations. The advantage of technology emerges only when the business truly integrates it into its processes. My recommendation to companies that want to be successful is this: choose your infrastructure correctly, read your data regularly, know your customer well, invest in content and experience, think mobile-first, put e-export on your agenda, and do not be late in integrating artificial intelligence into your processes. E-commerce is no longer just a sales channel; it is an area at the center of brands' growth, export, and competitive strategy. As Ticimax, we will continue to stand by businesses in this transformation.

widect
TURKISH AIRLINES

Interview

BY LEILA GADIRLI PIRGULIEVA

The Transformation of Global Logistics with Widect at the Center of New Trade Corridors

Enes Yılmaz | Widect CEO

In the new era of global trade, logistics is no longer merely an operational field that moves products from one point to another; it has become one of the key determinants of growth, customer experience, and international competitiveness. In particular, the rapid growth of cross-border e-commerce is transforming the logistics sector into a more integrated, more technology-driven, and more flexible structure. Geopolitical developments, changing trade corridors, new customs regulations, and rising customer expectations are forcing companies to move beyond traditional operational models.

One of the companies at the center of this transformation is Widect. Powered by Turkish Airlines' global flight network, the company brings air cargo, e-commerce logistics, and door-to-door delivery solutions together under a single structure, standing out with its goal of turning Istanbul into a global e-commerce logistics hub. Widect aims to respond to the new needs of cross-border trade by bringing together technology, operational flexibility, and international network management, beyond being merely a logistics player that provides transportation services.

We spoke with Widect CEO Enes Yılmaz about Widect's growth strategy, its plans for the MENA region, its artificial intelligence investments, changing supply chain dynamics, and the transformation the air cargo sector will undergo over the next five years. We also listened to the details of the vision that will strengthen Istanbul's role on the global logistics map and Türkiye's e-export potential!

What positioning strategy do you pursue as Widect in the global air cargo and logistics ecosystem? What are the key competitive advantages that differentiate you?

As Widect, we build our positioning on three core concepts that are also included in our brand name: Wide, Direct, and Connect. Turkish Airlines' extensive flight network spanning 140 countries gives us the "Wide" vision. Our ability to offer direct door-to-door transportation solutions, combined with Widect's logistics expertise and operational capabilities, forms our "Direct" approach. Our goal of connecting sellers, buyers, cultures, and markets in different parts of the world represents our "Connect" philosophy.

Within this framework, our strategy is to combine Turkish Airlines' global network strength and Türkiye's strategic location with door-to-door solutions tailored to the needs of e-commerce and cross-border logistics. The most important competitive advantage that differentiates us is our strong brand reliability, extensive global network, air cargo expertise, and our ability to transform this structure into end-to-end logistics solutions.

How have the recent increasing geopolitical crises and changing trade corridors in the Middle East affected your operational processes? What kind of strategic structure have you built for such risks?

Recent geopolitical developments have directly affected global logistics supply chains through factors such as airspace closures, capacity constraints, route changes, and rising operational costs. From time to time, we faced processes that required rapid action, similar to the pandemic period. As Widect, our most important advantage during these periods was our ability to act flexibly and adapt quickly to changing conditions. We focused on maintaining our operations in the most efficient way possible through both air transport and integrated air-road solutions. Our strategic approach to such risks is shaped around building a flexible structure that continuously monitors open corridors, changing trade routes, and operational dynamics, can make quick decisions, and can activate different transportation models.

The air cargo sector has become more critical than ever with the rise of e-commerce. What structural transformations do you expect in the sector over the next 5 years?

In the coming period, we believe the air cargo sector will evolve into a more integrated, more technology-driven, and more customer experience-centered structure, especially with the growth of cross-border e-commerce. In e-commerce, speed, visibility, cost optimization, and regulatory compliance have become elements that can no longer be evaluated separately. In this context, we expect models in which fulfillment centers are more closely integrated with air cargo and distribution networks to come to the forefront. In cross-border shipments, not only the transportation of products, but also their storage, sorting, labeling, management of customs processes, and traceable delivery all the way to the end user will become critical. In addition, the differentiation of tax, customs, and legal regulations between countries will require logistics players to develop more flexible and compliant solutions. Therefore, value-added services, smart customs solutions, data analytics, automation, and artificial intelligence-supported operational management will be among the main transformation areas of the next five years.

The Gulf and the broader MENA region hold great potential in terms of logistics. What is your growth strategy in this region as Widect?

Although the Gulf and the broader MENA region have been affected by war, they are among the strategically important markets for Widect in terms of both the size of consumer demand and cross-border e-commerce potential. Our efforts to consolidate and develop our services in this region through different sub-models continue. In the short and medium term, our goal is to strengthen the quality of the services we provide to almost all MENA countries and to offer more integrated solutions for the region. In addition, we are not limiting ourselves only to Türkiye-origin operations; we are also working on third-country transit models. In other words, we aim to create a broader regional network by activating Widect capabilities in operations directed toward the MENA region from markets outside Türkiye.

In which areas do you use AI technologies at Widect, and what has been the contribution of these investments to operational efficiency?

As Widect, we evaluate artificial intelligence and data-driven technologies to increase efficiency both in our parcel delivery operations and in our internal processes. Operational planning, shipment tracking, process optimization, capacity management, and more accurate analysis of customer needs are among the leading areas. Through our software development efforts, we aim to make our operations faster, more visible, and more scalable. Artificial intelligence-supported solutions provide significant contributions, especially in terms of accelerating decision-making processes, identifying operational bottlenecks in advance, and responding more flexibly to the needs of different markets.

What solutions have you developed to optimize air cargo operations within the triangle of speed, cost, and reliability?

In order to ensure the balance of speed, cost, and reliability in air cargo operations, it is first necessary to have a flexible and adaptable operational structure. As Widect, we can quickly adapt our systems and operations according to the regulations, customs, and distribution practices of different countries. In this context, we differentiate our operational flows according to the destination country and shipment type; we design the most suitable solution according to demand, capacity, and legal regulations. Thanks to the software infrastructures we have developed with Turkish Technology and our own teams, we focus on making our processes more efficient, measurable, and optimizable. Our aim is not only to provide fast transportation, but to offer end-to-end solutions that together ensure the right route, the right cost, the right operational model, and reliable delivery.

Considering changing customer expectations in cross-border e-commerce, what digital or operational innovations do you have to improve customer experience?

Customer expectations in cross-border e-commerce are no longer limited only to delivery speed. Shipment visibility, predictability of the delivery process, ease of returns, proper management of customs processes, and end-user experience have become just as important as speed. As Widect, we develop flexible solutions according to different demands and needs in destination countries. Thanks to our extensive flight network, we separate shipments at our operations center based on destination country, city, and distribution model, creating more efficient flight and distribution services. This approach contributes to improving transit time efficiency and enhancing the customer experience. In addition, we continue to respond to the changing needs of the sector by using our know-how and integrated service capabilities not only in Türkiye-origin operations, but also in operations centered in different countries.

Disruptions in global supply chains are directing companies toward more flexible models. What role does Widect play in this transformation?

Disruptions in global supply chains have shown companies that uniform and fixed logistics models are no longer sufficient. Today, having a flexible, scalable, and integrated infrastructure suited to the needs of both customers and logistics stakeholders has become the most critical element. In this transformation, Widect assumes the role of a platform that combines air cargo strength with door-to-door logistics solutions. While developing end-to-end solutions according to the needs of our customers in different markets, we also focus on establishing integrated and sustainable business models with our logistics stakeholders. Thanks to this approach, we offer a structure that is more resilient against supply chain disruptions, capable of creating alternative corridors, and able to adapt quickly to changing conditions.

How would you define Widect's long-term vision? What will be the most critical steps that will make you a strong player not only regionally but also globally?

At the center of our long-term vision is turning Istanbul into a global e-commerce logistics hub. Turkish Airlines' global flight network, Türkiye's strategic location, and our country's e-export potential form the strongest building blocks of this vision. Our investments in the Widect Operations Center at Istanbul Airport are also one of the most important steps we have taken in line with this goal.

Since our Widect operations began in 2023, we have defined our goal not only as growing regionally, but as becoming one of the world's leading e-commerce logistics brands. In this direction, we continue our efforts to transform the global network strength of Turkish Airlines into a strong logistics brand that provides door-to-door, end-to-end services.

In the coming period, establishing similar operational structures in different countries, connecting these centers with integrated services, developing fulfillment capabilities, and strengthening technological infrastructure will be among our critical steps. Our aim is to make Istanbul not only a transfer point, but a center that exports services on a global scale in terms of e-export logistics, fulfillment, and

Beempa

Executive Commentary

The New Era in E-Commerce Operations: Beempa and the Technology of the Future

Emre Hızlı | CTO, Beempa.com

The pace of digitalization in global trade is forcing the retail sector into one of the greatest transformations in history. While the boundaries of traditional trade are completely disappearing, e-commerce is no longer an "alternative channel" for brands, but has become the main center of growth and sustainability. However, this massive growth has also brought with it a multilayered, dynamic, and error-intolerant operational burden that must be managed. Being present in multiple marketplaces at the same time requires keeping stocks synchronized instantly, managing invoicing processes flawlessly, optimizing shipping logistics, and preserving financial balances while doing all of this.

Right in the middle of this complexity, there is a new-generation technology partner that set out to make the lives of e-commerce sellers easier, minimize operational burdens, and manage all sales channels flawlessly from a single center: Beempa Technology Services. As Beempa, founded with a young, dynamic, and visionary team, we have focused on the "real" field problems of sellers from the very first moment we stepped into the e-commerce ecosystem.

The Hidden Hero of Multichannel Commerce: Seamless Integration and Fulfillment

Success in e-commerce is not limited only to having a good product or applying the right marketing strategies. How smoothly the operational wheels running in the background turn determines the lifespan and profitability of the business. One of the biggest risks faced during the day by a store selling simultaneously on giant platforms such as Trendyol, Hepsiburada, n11, and Amazon is the error of "stock synchronization." A product that is sold out on one platform remaining open on another platform drags the seller into order cancellations due to "out of stock," marketplace penalties, and serious loss of prestige.

Beempa completely eliminates this problem thanks to the powerful API integration infrastructure it has developed. With our advanced automatic stock synchronization capability, an order coming from any channel is detected instantly and the stock quantities in all your stores are updated within seconds. By automating manual tracking and processes dependent on Excel tables, we maximize the operational speed of sellers.

Moreover, Beempa is not limited to simple stock tracking; it brings together order management, product transfer, shipping processes, and complex fulfillment operations on a single platform. Businesses can easily manage marketplaces, e-commerce sites, ERP systems, shipping companies, and warehouse operations through a centralized structure. By offering an end-to-end digital assistant experience, from order data entry to creating shipping barcodes with a single click and automatic invoicing processes, we prevent sellers from getting lost in their operation rooms and enable them to focus on their real job, "strategic growth."

A First in the Sector: Financial Transformation with the Data-Driven "Sell for Cash" Model

The most radical and innovative feature that distinguishes Beempa from traditional integration software in the market is the financial leverage mechanism we offer to our sellers. One of the biggest obstacles to growth in the e-commerce world is undoubtedly "insufficient working capital" and long-term cash flow statements. Especially producers and sellers with high inventory turnover rates or those who want to scale are stuck between long-term receivables and instant raw material/product supply.

The Sell for Cash service we have developed as Beempa produces a solution exactly for this financial bottleneck. We analyze the store performances, order continuity, and product cycles of our sellers who are included in our system and complete their integration connections up to 5,000 free orders with our artificial intelligence-supported algorithms. After identifying locomotive products that have continuous, regular, and high sales volume in marketplaces, we automatically offer cash purchase proposals to our sellers through the system.

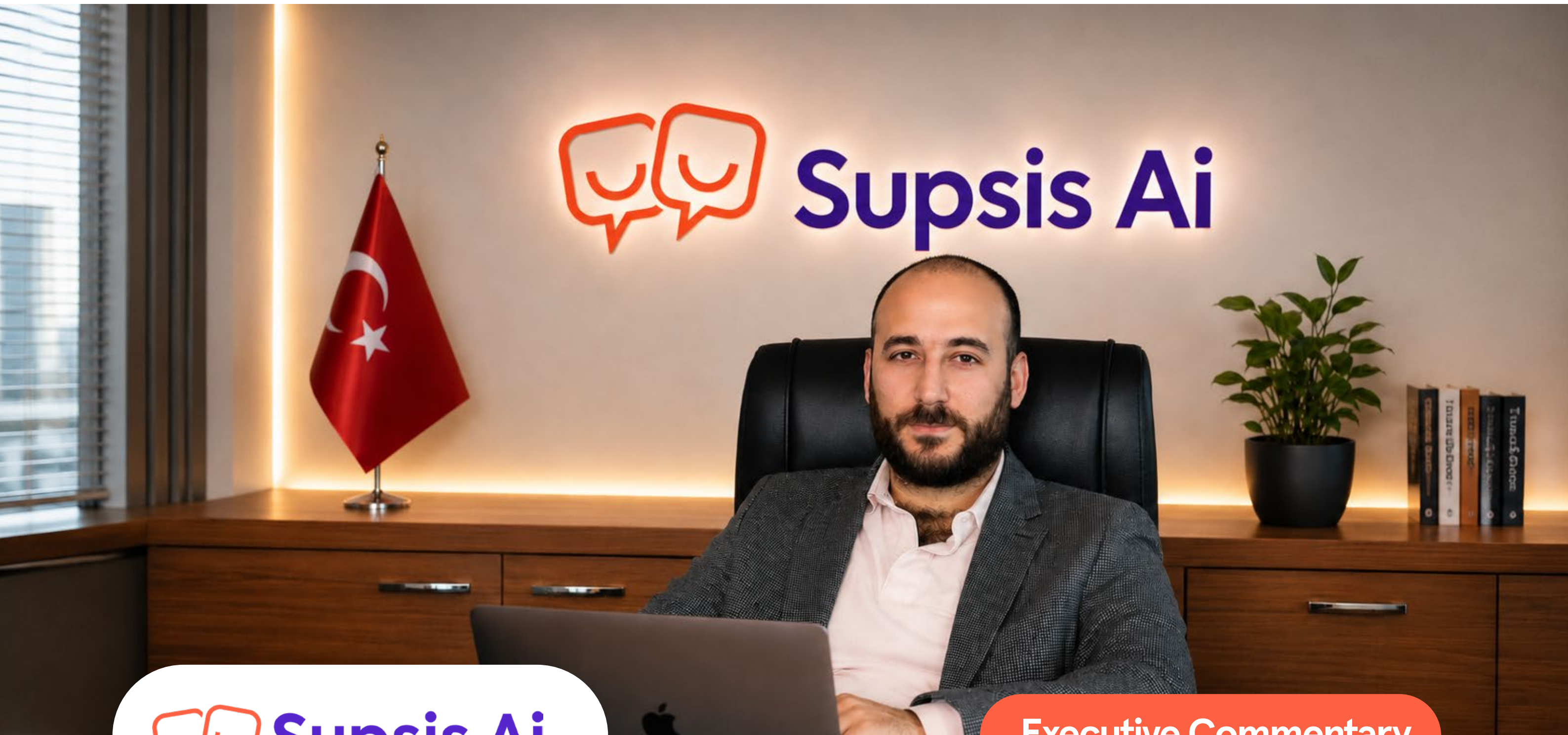
In this model, which is shaped based on at least 1 month of sales data and performance criteria, we detail quantity and price offers through online meetings, and then provide a warm cash flow into the seller's cash register by making the purchase directly. In this way, SMEs and large-scale producers can secure their production and sales continuity without falling into a capital bottleneck and without struggling with long-term check processes. We build a sustainable commercial ecosystem with our partners, who do not have to resort to loss-making sales methods that disrupt market balances, such as "liquidating goods."

Emre Hızlı
CTO, Beempa.com

Cost Optimization and Smart Logistics

One of the most serious cost items of an e-commerce operation is shipping processes. Beempa analyzes the shipped order volumes of its users instantly and automatically prepares cost-optimized and competitive shipping offers that are most suitable for each seller's own business volume. The right pricing policy and logistics advantage pave the way for our sellers to position themselves more aggressively and profitably in the market.

The promises of a technology company are only as real as the strength of the engineering infrastructure behind them. The architecture of this uninterrupted, high-performance, and secure ecosystem we offer as Beempa is being built under leadership with more than 15 years of experience in the field of software technologies.



Supsis Ai

Executive Commentary

E-Commerce's New DNA: The Human-Centric Artificial Intelligence Revolution with Supsis AI

Enes Dur | CEO/Founder, Supsis AI

In 2026, as digitalization continues without slowing down, the e-commerce sector has now moved beyond being merely a showcase where products are displayed and has transformed into a complex "experience ecosystem." Consumers no longer expect only a quality product or fast shipping; they also want to feel understood, receive instant answers to their questions, and be part of a personalized journey. As Supsis AI, we are building a bridge at the very center of this major transformation, blending technology with the human touch.

Making Technology Invisible

In the early years of e-commerce, customer support meant long phone queues or emails that required days of waiting for a response. The traditional chatbots that followed, with their limited vocabularies, often had a structure that pushed users into an even greater dead end. However, today, with Supsis AI, this picture has completely changed.Thanks to our Natural Language Processing (NLP) and advanced machine learning algorithms, we can analyze not only what the customer is asking, but also the emotion and real need behind that question.

Supsis AI is not a static answer engine; it is the brand's living, learning digital representative that adapts to the brand's corporate language. With its ability to provide instant translation in more than 70 languages, we eliminate the "language barrier" standing in the way of a local business becoming a global giant.

Omnichannel: Holistic Power in Communication

Today's consumer has a multichannel structure. A customer can like a product on Instagram in the morning, ask about stock via WhatsApp in the afternoon, and complete the purchase on the website in the evening. In a world where communication is this fragmented, the biggest mistake brands make is managing these channels disconnected from one another. With the omnichannel management system we have developed as Supsis AI, we gather all channels such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, Facebook, and Web Live Chat in a single control panel. This is not only an operational convenience, but also means the centralization of data. Your customer representatives can see all of the customer's past interactions on a single screen, address them by name, and produce solutions by knowing their previous requests. This is the shortest path to creating customer loyalty.

Sales-Focused Artificial Intelligence and Conversion Rates

Although there is generally a tendency to see artificial intelligence as a "support unit," Supsis AI is also the most hardworking sales representative of brands. "Cart abandonment" rates on e-commerce sites are one of the biggest bleeding wounds of the sector. Supsis AI's behavioral analysis capabilities can identify an undecided customer at the right time and offer them a special discount coupon, or trigger the purchase decision by explaining a technical detail they are curious about regarding the product within seconds. By using the power of data, we are building a structure that not only solves problems but also actively increases sales. Our artificial intelligence-supported recommendation systems take the logic of "selected for you" far beyond the user's past preferences, to the point of "this is exactly what you need right now."

The Supsis AI Vision and the Future of E-Commerce

Our vision is to enable businesses of every scale to activate the most complex artificial intelligence technologies within seconds, whether with our expert support in the comfort of a turnkey solution or through their own teams using our rich documentation and file library. This flexibility we offer to businesses reduces brands' external dependency while allowing them to personally build their own artificial intelligence processes. The future of e-commerce lies in the perfect harmony of technology and empathy, professional support and free setup. As the Supsis AI team, we will continue preparing brands for these new standards of the future and transforming customer experience from a burden into a pleasure and growth engine for your brand.

Operational Efficiency and Cost Management

For e-commerce businesses, profitability is not only about increasing revenue, but also about optimizing operational expenses. Human-powered customer service is one of the most difficult and costly areas to scale. Supsis AI answers more than 80% of repetitive questions (shipment tracking, return conditions, payment methods, etc.) completely autonomously, paving the way for human resources to be used on much more strategic and complex issues. This both reduces employee burnout and offers brands the luxury of providing uninterrupted 24/7 service without increasing costs. It should not be forgotten that in the digital world, you do not have the luxury of saying "we are closed!"

Executive Commentary

Print on Demand: The E-Commerce Model Where AI Directly Drives Revenue

Muhammet Emin Kantarci | CEO, Podbul Inc.

Imagine an e-commerce business model where you don't need to hold inventory, you don't deal with 3PL warehousing, shipping, or logistics, and international tariff wars keep raising prices, but you are not directly affected because your products are produced domestically. You can expand to global markets faster because you don't tie your capital to inventory and can allocate most of it to marketing and growth. Sounds too good to be true? Well, it is not, and I am not talking about dropshipping. The Print on Demand (POD) business model, where products are manufactured only after a sale is made, is exactly that.

In simple terms, Print on Demand is an e-commerce fulfillment model where a product is produced only after a customer places an order, allowing sellers to test designs, various products, enter new markets, and scale without carrying inventory upfront. You don't need inventory because your product is produced after you have already made a sale. You don't need warehousing because you don't hold inventory. You are also not immediately affected by unexpected import tariffs, like the ones we have witnessed frequently in the U.S. over the past year, because you work with a local U.S. print provider like Podbul, which handles production, shipping, and fulfillment directly within the U.S. and delivers the products to your customers.

Not every product category is suitable for the POD business model, but it does cover a wide range of categories. From a personalized first Father's Day shirt for a new dad, to wall art featuring a French bulldog reading a newspaper, or a Christmas ornament for a newlywed couple, the possibilities are endless. One out of every three products sold on Etsy marketplace, which is one of the leading marketplaces for this business model, is a personalized product. As such, the sky is the limit.

Entrepreneurs selling with the POD model solely focus on trend following and making designs that go on physical products like shirts, wall art, phone cases, and ornaments. If they make a sale, their POD provider, like Podbul, prints their design on the physical product and ships it locally and directly to their customer. The entrepreneur is happy because they do not deal with the biggest problem areas of e-commerce: sourcing, shipping, logistics, or international tariffs. The end consumer is happy because they get a familiar product with a local "ship from" address within a quick time frame compared to international shipping. But the design is the product itself that the POD seller sells. So, does one have to be a designer to run this model successfully?

Until recently, you had to be a graphic designer, or at least technical enough to use design software such as Adobe Photoshop or Adobe Illustrator. You had to manually vectorize artwork files and place them on realistic product mockups like T-shirts or posters. The rapid advancement in artificial intelligence image generation models in 2025 changed this completely. Advanced AI models like Nano Banana Pro, Flux 2.0, and more recently Image GPT 2.0, can now do much of the hard work and provide ready-to-print, ready-to-sell artwork for print on demand. Additionally, there are now AI models that can even vectorize a design for ease of customization.

As such, the Print on Demand business model is one of the few areas of commerce where AI directly drives revenue. I am not talking about increasing productivity, better SEO, automating tasks, etc. In POD, the design and artwork are the product itself. People don't go on Etsy because they want a nice red T-shirt that matches their white shorts. They go on Etsy to buy a red first Mother's Day gift for their best friend. Until the advancement of AI, a person who was not a designer or technical enough to use design tools could not easily make a customizable design that could be sold and bought. But designing alone is not enough. You must have a reliable print partner that will produce and send your finished products to your customer in a timely and efficient manner, with a price point where they are not the only one making a profit.

At Podbul, we fix a major problem. The barriers to enter the U.S. e-commerce space were too high. Entrepreneurs needed to tie a lot of capital to physical products, make their own shipping arrangements, secure storage, use 3PL warehousing, and deal with constantly changing tariff regulations. For an experienced seller, those are already difficult problems to overcome, but for someone just starting out, they could be the deal breaker. There were already internationally known major POD providers with billion-dollar valuations, but their pricing was just not right for the e-commerce seller. They also lacked a proper understanding of how e-commerce works at a marketplace level, like Etsy and Amazon, and left their sellers alone to figure out how to be successful.

Today, our software connects our high-volume New York-based production center to 1,000 entrepreneurs in Türkiye and around the world. It is our own production line; we don't do print brokerage or add commissions on someone else's production. Since we produce on our own, we also own any mistakes or responsibility and can take rapid action when manufacturing challenges arise.

On top of this, the advanced AI models that are already integrated with Podbul are fine-tuned for the perfect Print on Demand design. Our users do everything within the Podbul platform, from designing to mockup generation to listing on Etsy and Shopify. Finally, we provide educational content, courses, and in-person events so our sellers can go on to the next level. These courses cover a wide range of topics, from selling on Etsy to selling on Amazon, U.S. company formation, and more. Everything an entrepreneur would need to start their e-commerce journey is at Podbul.

The U.S. print-on-demand (POD) market is experiencing rapid expansion and is expected to reach $15.5 billion by 2033. Our mission is to have Podbul lead the way as a fully vertical solution, not just as a print provider, but as a full POD ecosystem that allows entrepreneurs from Türkiye and across the globe to take a piece of this tremendous market.

From Istanbul to Global Commerce: Why Turkish Brands Are Ready for the Next Chapter

For many years, Türkiye played an important role in global commerce, but often from behind the scenes. Turkish factories produced the T-shirts, processed the leather, manufactured the furniture and delivered the quality. In many cases, however, the brand on the label belonged to someone else.

That story is starting to change. A new generation of Turkish brands is no longer satisfied with being the production engine for international companies. They want to own the customer relationship, build their own brand equity and compete directly in Europe, the Gulf and beyond. From our position at DigiFist, with teams in Belgium, Istanbul and Dubai, we see that shift happening every day. And I believe the next decade of cross-border e-commerce will create a major opportunity for Turkish brands that are ready to move.

A View Across Three Markets

DigiFist was built with an international mindset from the beginning. Our headquarters are in Belgium, where we work with European direct-to-consumer brands in one of the most competitive e-commerce environments in the world. In Istanbul, our team works closely with Turkish brands preparing to expand beyond their home market. In Dubai, we see how consumers in the Gulf actually shop, communicate and make buying decisions.

That combination gives us a practical view of cross-border commerce. We are not looking at these markets from a distance. We work inside them. Our recognition as Türkiye's first and only Shopify Premier Partner did not come from having offices in different regions. It came from years of execution. DigiFist became an official Shopify partner in October 2016 and since then we have delivered complex migrations, enterprise builds and replatforming projects for brands where the platform could not fail.

The international footprint matters because it helps us apply that experience in the right way. A brand expanding from Istanbul to Germany has different challenges than a brand entering Dubai or Riyadh. The payment methods, logistics, customer expectations, language, returns process and customer support model all need to work together. That is where many brands underestimate the work. International growth is not only about translating a website or opening shipping to another country. It is about building a commerce operation that can support growth without breaking under pressure.

Why Turkish Brands Have a Real Advantage

Turkish brands already have several strengths that are difficult to copy. The first is speed. Turkish founders and operators can often move from idea to production much faster than brands in many Western markets. They can test products quickly, adjust collections quickly and respond to demand without long delays. In e-commerce, that speed is a serious advantage.

The second is product quality. Türkiye has deep manufacturing knowledge across fashion, textiles, leather, home, beauty and food. Many international brands already depend on that expertise. The difference now is that more Turkish companies are using that same capability to build brands of their own.

The third is taste. The strongest Turkish brands are not trying to copy Western brands and they are not relying only on a traditional identity either. They are building modern, confident brands with their own point of view. That matters because global consumers are tired of generic D2C brands that all look and sound the same.

The fourth is ambition. There is a hunger in the Turkish e-commerce market that is very powerful. Founders want to build serious companies. They are willing to take risks. They are not afraid of international scale. That mindset will create some of the most interesting commerce stories of the next decade.

Selo Aksapli | CEO & Founder, DigiFist

What Brands Need Before They Scale

When brands come to DigiFist, they are usually entering a critical stage in their commerce maturity. They are no longer experimenting with e-commerce. They are operating serious businesses, often across multiple channels, markets, teams or systems, and their commerce platform has become central to how the company grows.

For some brands, that moment is international expansion. For others, it is a platform migration, a move away from legacy systems, or the need to simplify a complex commerce architecture that has become difficult to scale. In both cases, the question is no longer whether the brand has potential. The question is whether its commerce operation is ready for the next level.

The challenge is not ambition. The challenge is structure. A brand may have a beautiful storefront, but if the back office is not ready, growth quickly becomes painful.

Orders need to move correctly between Shopify, ERP, finance systems, warehouses, shipping partners and customer service tools. Tax settings need to be right. Payment methods need to match local expectations. Product information needs to work across languages and markets. Returns need to be clear. Teams need visibility. This is why we do not see our work as simply building websites. A DigiFist project is a cross-border commerce build. The storefront is only one part of the system.

We build on Shopify because it gives brands a strong foundation for international growth. We also use our own Shopify-approved themes, developed entirely in-house and available on the Shopify Theme Store. These themes are designed for brands that need speed, flexibility, international readiness and long-term maintainability. Starting from a strong foundation matters. Too many brands invest in custom builds that look good in the beginning but become difficult to maintain after a year or two. We prefer to build in a way that stays clean, scalable and practical as the brand grows.

The Role of DigiFist

Our role is to help brands make the right technical and operational decisions before those decisions become expensive problems. Many companies can implement Shopify. The harder part is knowing what a brand will need when it enters its second, third or fourth market. It is knowing which shortcut might save time today but create technical debt later. It is knowing when to build custom, when to standardize and when to keep things simple.

That judgment comes from experience. Since 2016, we have worked on Shopify projects where mistakes were not an option. Over time, we have learned that the best commerce platforms are not always the most complicated ones. They are the ones that help teams move faster, operate clearly and scale without losing control.

Our offices in Belgium, Istanbul and Dubai also solve a real operational problem for the brands we work with. A merchandising update in Istanbul can be reflected quickly on a European storefront. A launch question from Dubai does not need to wait for another region to come online. A European brand entering the Gulf can get guidance from people who understand the market from inside the region. That continuity is important. Cross-border commerce moves quickly, and brands need partners who can move with them.

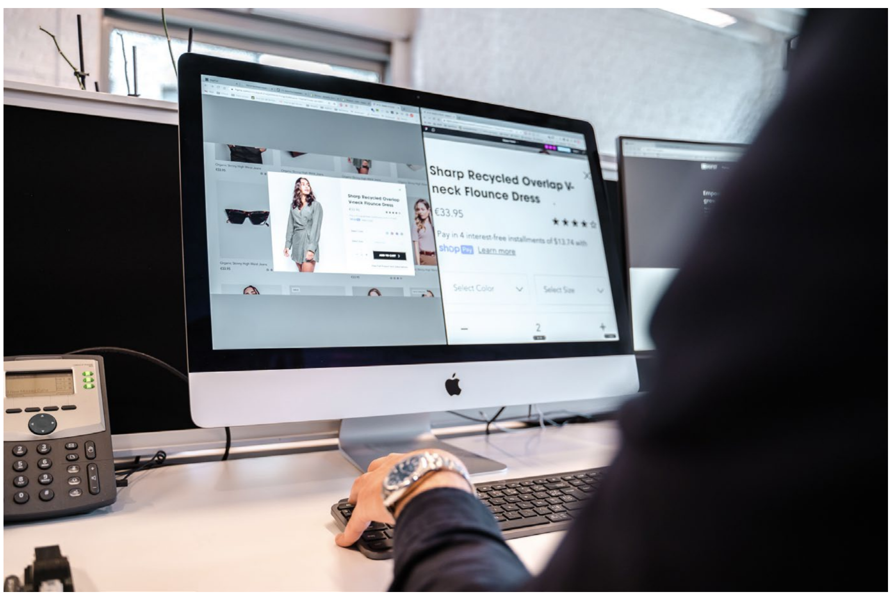
From Services to Technology

After almost a decade in the Shopify ecosystem, we began to see the same problems appear again and again. Brands struggled with integrations. Teams lost time because systems did not speak to each other. Customer communication was fragmented. Localization was treated as an afterthought. Operations became more complex every time a brand entered a new market.

For years, we solved these problems through client work. But when you solve the same problem many times, you eventually realize it should become a product. That thinking led DigiFist to evolve from a service company into a technology company. The first step was our theme business. Today, DigiFist has three themes live on the Shopify Theme Store, all built fully in-house and used by brands across Türkiye, Europe and the Gulf. These themes are part of our daily work, not a separate side project. We use them because they give serious brands a reliable foundation from day one.

The next step was Galantis, our second brand, launched in 2026. Galantis Connect is our enterprise integration platform for Shopify. It connects Shopify with the ERP systems, finance tools, shipping providers and marketplaces that cross-border brands depend on. We built it because too many brands still rely on fragile custom integrations that break when systems change. Galantis Connect turns integration into a product, instead of treating it as a one-off technical project every time.

Galantis WhatsApp is our WhatsApp marketing platform for Shopify, available on the Shopify App Store. It brings campaigns, triggered automations, AI flows, abandoned cart recovery, back-in-stock recovery and a shared team inbox into one platform that connects directly with Shopify.
We built it because conversational commerce is becoming essential, especially in Türkiye and the Gulf. In these markets, messaging is not a secondary channel. It is part of how people discover, ask, decide and buy. To do WhatsApp commerce well, you need to understand both the customer behavior and the commerce operation behind it. Galantis is the beginning of a broader product ecosystem. Our long-term vision is to build commerce technology for brands operating across Europe, Türkiye and MENA, based on the real problems we have seen since 2016.



The Opportunity Ahead

The next wave of commerce is already taking shape. AI-driven personalization is becoming part of daily operations. Headless and composable architectures are becoming more common for ambitious brands. B2B commerce is becoming digital at a much faster pace. The line between B2B and B2C is becoming less clear. Conversational commerce will become one of the most important channels of the next five years, especially in markets where customers already prefer messaging-first communication.

For Turkish brands, the opportunity is real. But it will not stay open forever.

Over the next eighteen to twenty-four months, more international brands will enter Türkiye and the Gulf with larger budgets, stronger local strategies and more sophisticated commerce operations. Turkish brands that move now have a chance to secure positions that will be much harder to win later.

TAM accounting

Executive Commentary

The U.S. Market: From E-Export to Global Trade Architecture

Yesim Deretam | EA, CTC, MBA | Founder & CEO, TAM Accounting

E-commerce and e-export are no longer alternative growth channels for brands; they are becoming the main backbone of global trade. Today, a brand does not only sell products; it builds a global trade architecture with the right company structure, the right tax strategy, the right logistics network, and the right customer experience in the right market. At the center of this architecture, the United States plays a powerful role. The United States opens an important gateway for companies that want to grow worldwide, not only with its large consumer market, but also with its financial system, brand credibility, investment ecosystem, digital marketplaces, distribution infrastructure, and strategic position in international trade.

For brands selling through marketplaces such as Amazon, Etsy, and Walmart, having a company structure in the United States offers not only access to the U.S. market, but also the opportunity to build a more reliable, scalable, and corporate trade model on a global scale. Selling through the brand's own website with infrastructures such as Shopify creates an important area of control in terms of customer data, brand experience, pricing strategy, and profitability management.

Moving production to the United States, distributing products from U.S. warehouses, working with fulfillment centers, and growing commercial volume based in the United States can provide operational efficiency and also create a strong commercial foundation for trade visa processes such as E-1. For this reason, opening a brand to global markets through a U.S. company has become a strategic growth option today for many entrepreneurs and companies that want to scale.

However, the U.S. market is not only about sales opportunities. This market is a multi-layered structure that must be managed together with the federal tax system, the different obligations of 50 states, sales tax nexus rules, customs processes, warehouse and distribution costs, product classifications, trademark registration, financial reporting, and investment planning. Therefore, accounting is not a simple bookkeeping activity; it is a strategic decision-making mechanism that manages the risk, profitability, and sustainable growth of trade.

In global competition, the advantage is no longer only in the product; it is hidden in data, speed, compliance, financial discipline, and market intelligence. TAM Accounting's role begins exactly at this point! We approach accounting not only as an operational process that records past transactions, but as a strategic financial infrastructure that manages a company's growth in the U.S. market, tax risks, cash flow, profitability, and sustainability.

TAM Accounting does not only provide company formation or bookkeeping services to companies that want to enter the U.S. market; it creates a holistic roadmap that evaluates the federal tax system, state-based obligations, sales tax nexus analyses, international tax compliance, financial reporting, operational cost structure, and growth strategy together. Just as we understand the excitement of an entrepreneur newly starting e-commerce and structure them correctly, we also have the experience to manage the tax, accounting, compliance, and financial management processes of companies that have reached million-dollar revenues and want to enter the U.S. market from different countries on a corporate scale.

Thanks to our IRS-licensed expertise, our command of different tax and compliance processes across 50 states, our strong knowledge in the field of international taxation, and our approach that understands the real dynamics of trade, we offer our clients not only accounting support, but also the vision of building a secure, scalable, and investor-ready business structure in the United States. Because succeeding in the United States is possible not only by establishing a company, but also by analyzing the market correctly, managing the tax system correctly, placing operations on solid foundations, transforming financial data into strategic decisions, and positioning the brand on a global scale.

TAM Accounting's greatest strength is speaking the same commercial language as its clients. We understand the business behind the numbers, the effort behind the product, the risk behind growth, and the vision behind the entrepreneur. Therefore, the service we offer is not only accounting; it is the financial architecture leading to commercial success in the U.S. market.

ELC GLOBAL Brings E-Commerce and Retail Leaders Together Under One Roof

BY UGUR GURBES

WORLDEF, the global platform leading the future of e-commerce and retail, brings together the leaders of the e-commerce and retail sectors under the "ELC GLOBAL" community. The launch of the community, which aims to build a corporate-based ecosystem, attracted great interest. WORLDEF CEO Ömer Nart said, "We are at the beginning of a structure where employers and leaders who speak the same language, carry similar responsibilities, and think at the same level come together."

WORLDEF-led ELC GLOBAL, which aims to create an exclusive community that will shape the future of the e-commerce and retail sectors, was introduced with an official launch event attended by special guests. Leading figures from the e-commerce and retail ecosystems attended the program held at Mandarin Oriental Bosphorus. At the beginning of the program, participants watched promotional videos of WORLDEF ISTANBUL and WORLDEF DUBAI events. In addition, a presentation was made covering the platform's structure, community model, and participation requirements.

Ömer Nart: True Power Is Being Able to Sit at the Same Table with the Right People

WORLDEF CEO Ömer Nart said in his speech at the program, "We are at the beginning of a structure where employers and leaders who speak the same language, carry similar responsibilities, and think at the same level come together." Noting that ELC GLOBAL is a closed-circuit network established in 2019, Nart said, "This structure is being revived today to bring together employers and leaders who truly have a say in the world of digital commerce and retail. It is necessary to be able to discuss the right topics with the right people on the right ground. Today, it is still very difficult to find a space in the business world where there is reliable, qualified, and open communication. ELC GLOBAL responds exactly to this need."

Emphasizing that ELC GLOBAL is built on a model beyond the classical understanding of networking, Ömer Nart stated: "It is a system where every contact is meaningful and every meeting produces a response. Through strategic roundtables, mastermind sessions, and carefully designed matches, we are building a structure where time is used in the most efficient way. From content production to stage positioning, we aim to increase the visibility and impact of our members in every area. Trust-based communication, mutual respect, and disciplined participation form the foundation of this structure. Because this place was established to create value rather than spend time."

Ömer Nart concluded his remarks as follows: "We believe this: True power is being able to sit at the same table with the right people. True impact is the realization of what is discussed at that table. ELC GLOBAL is exactly the meeting point for employers and decision-making leaders who want to create this impact."

Sezgin Şener: The Winners Will Be Those Who Manage Quality, Not Quantity

Sezgin Şener, Chairman of the ELC GLOBAL Advisory Board and CEO of ToptanTR, emphasized that e-commerce is in a very serious development process compared to traditional commerce and said, "Almost one out of every five trades is now driven by the internet. This attraction has naturally led to the emergence of many investments, many investors, many entrepreneurs, and more competition. Today, when we look at it, we are in a massive ecosystem with many players, including dozens of logistics companies, hundreds of software companies, and thousands of service providers. In other words, we are now in a period where quantity has peaked. This is exactly where ELC GLOBAL comes into play, and this is where a breaking point begins."

Şener stated: "We now say that the winners will be those who manage quality, not quantity. Because time is now very limited for all of us. The attention of our customers or target audience has become much more critical. In a world with a population of 8.1 billion, where everyone is speaking, we are together to create an ecosystem made up not of those who make noise by raising their voices, but of those who will truly make a difference by raising their value. We want to bring together the most qualified players in the sector."

Cem Oğuz: The Right Leaders Are Together

Cem Oğuz, General Manager of Sürat Kargo, stated that it is very important to come together with the right people and the right community to discuss the right topics, and noted: "The leaders of the e-commerce world here are truly leaders; the right leaders are together. How can we understand that this is the right time? We want to look only at the last five years of Sürat Kargo. I never forget our presence at WORLDEF; we started with a small booth in 2020. Today, we continue as the main sponsor. This shows our growth. I hope these opportunities provided to us will be provided for everyone."

Aytaç Akıncı: ELC GLOBAL Will Help Enable Successful Transitions to E-Export

Ship to More Founder Aytaç Akıncı said, "It is a great pride to see everyone who manages, grows, and shapes e-commerce in Türkiye here this evening. You are people who ship thousands of packages in Türkiye and have previously entered the homes of millions of people. I believe that ELC GLOBAL will increase the exports of those who export. It will also help those who do not export make successful transitions from export to e-export."

Sadem Pehlivan: It Became a Structure Where Very Positive Experiences Were Shared for the Development of the Ecosystem

Sadem Pehlivan, General Manager of eStar Global E-Commerce, said, “I was probably the most novice e-commerce professional in the closed-circuit ELC GLOBAL structure mentioned. Because I had no network at all. Therefore, at the beginning, it felt completely like a networking platform. At that time, it became a structure where we did business together and where very positive experiences were shared for the development of the ecosystem. There are dozens of people here who have dedicated themselves to the sector. In this sense, being together will be valuable in terms of productivity and efficiency.”

ECOM BRANDS 100 Award Ceremony Introduced

Meanwhile, during the launch, WORLDEF Vice President Orxan Isayev provided information about the “ECOM BRANDS 100” project, which awards the best of the e-commerce ecosystem. Isayev shared the methodology and vision of the award ceremony that will determine the giants of e-commerce. ECOM BRANDS 100 rewards the most innovative and successful internet brands shaping the future of the sector. The ECOM BRANDS 100 Award Ceremony will be held at WORLDEF ISTANBUL 2026, which will take place at Yenikapı Event Area between June 11–13, 2026, following the announcement of nominee lists, public voting, evaluation through the Power Index, and the announcement of winners.

About ELC GLOBAL

ELC GLOBAL aims to build strong ties among e-commerce and retail leaders, support strategic collaborations, and create an exclusive community that will shape the future of these sectors. The platform is open to company owners with a minimum annual e-commerce turnover of 5 million dollars, decision-making executives of brands with a minimum turnover of 25 million dollars, and high-growth entrepreneurs with a growth rate of 400 percent or above.

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