



#AsiaeCommerceAwards 2021 spills: eWave finds success amidst transformation journey

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eWave, a Global Commerce Innovator, offers end-to-end digital commerce transformation solutions and specialises in simplifying complex business problems into seamless customer experiences. Among the list of clients it has worked with include Canon, Nestle, Nike, Accent Group, Sussan, Cochlear and L'oreal.

It bagged silver for Best in eCommerce (Brands) – B2B; bronze for Best in eCommerce (Brands) – Baby, Personal Care & Home Products, and Best in eCommerce (Brands) – Healthcare & Pharma; and was one of the finalists for Best in eCommerce (Brands) – Fashion & Apparel and Best eCommerce Campaign – B2B at *MARKETING-INTERACTIVE*'s Asia eCommerce Awards 2021.

Fatima Said, co-founder and MD, eWave shares how her team has evolved over the past two years and what makes for great marketing these days.

This interview is done as part of MARKETING-INTERACTIVE's winners and finalists' interview series for Asia eCommerce Awards 2021. To find out more about the awards, click here.

MARKETING-INTERACTIVE: What has the past two years been like for you given the sudden pivot to eCommerce?

Fatima: The sudden shift I've seen towards eCommerce has been phenomenal. In Southeast Asia, eCommerce grew by a mind-boggling 58.5% in 2021 and still grew a further 26.1% in 2022, as eMarketer reports. Globally, we're looking at an expected US\$5.5 trillion of eCommerce sales this year.

Needless to say, as a global eCommerce innovator, eWave has experienced incredible demand. Organisations have quickly realised that digital commerce capability is vital for future growth. For brands to gain (and maintain) a competitive advantage, they must have a digital transformation strategy in place. Unidatos Market Insights reveals that the Asia Pacific digital transformation market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 13.5% from 2021-2027 and reach US\$1.33 trillion by 2027.

eWave has been helping clients worldwide to understand and take advantage of their transformation opportunities. Even for brands with existing eCommerce tech stacks, we're now in an environment where businesses need to meet evolving consumer expectations consistently. Without the ability to adapt and respond quickly to emerging trends, online retailers simply won't capitalise on the remarkable commerce growth that's happening now.

Digital transformation isn't always straightforward, though. Experience and proficiency (from both technical and strategic perspectives) are needed to get it right.

I'm incredibly proud of the transformative results eWave has created for our clients over the last 13 years - and particularly during the eCommerce boom of the previous two years. Our commerce specialists have taken multi-country, and multi-brand rollouts live across the globe while ensuring clients see value-driven strategic improvements.

MARKETING-INTERACTIVE: What was one challenge that took you by surprise and how did you pivot?

Fatima: The humanitarian crisis in Ukraine posed a very personal challenge for us all at eWave. We have many brilliant people across the region who are part of our global eWave family.

Our leadership team has used their existing networks and built new networks across Europe to help our people. Many of them have crossed borders without possessions or places to go, so it's vital for us that we support them in every way possible. With eWave's relocation program sponsoring costs for our employees and their families' safety and stability, some of our teams have already moved to Georgia, Poland, and others will be on their way to Australia, Hong Kong, Montenegro and Philippines.

I'm also extremely proud of everyone at eWave for coming together to set up a GoFundMe campaign, which has raised over US\$47K. This initiative has helped secure safe shelter, supplies, transport, and accommodation for those directly affected by this crisis.

We've always put our people first and, especially in times like these, we wanted to ensure that everyone in our global eWave team continues to be supported.

MARKETING-INTERACTIVE: With markets opening up, what are some trends do you have your eyes on?

Fatima: B2B eCommerce is an emerging trend. Salesforce reports that in 2020, 65% of B2B companies were planning to invest more in eCommerce over the following two years, making it the highest of all investment priorities.

B2B companies are under immense pressure to remain competitive. Online competition is at an all-time high, and many established brands are now exploring new sales channels such as D2C. Increased shipping costs and lengthy supply chain delays have also impacted profitability for many B2B companies.

Therefore, the opportunity for B2B leaders in 2022 involves the strengthening of their eCommerce offerings. As digital natives progressively move into decision-making roles, companies need to bring consumer-like digital experiences to the table. For example, a recent DigitalCommerce360 report shows that 51% of business buyers come to a B2B eCommerce site attracted by an excellent user experience.

By investing in their eCommerce platforms, enhancing product information (such as with Akeneo PIM), and personalising the buyer experience, B2B companies will increase their lead over competitors.

Subscription commerce is another accelerating trend. When the pandemic created a "new normal", many consumers began sourcing products in time-efficient, reliable, and safe ways. As a result, overall customer growth in subscription commerce grew 31% from 2020 to 2021, as reported by Recharge. Subscription merchants also saw significant increases in average order value, monthly recurring revenue, and customer lifetime value.

The same Recharge report shows that 54% of subscribers are in the Beauty & Personal Care and Food & Beverage categories. In Asia, Statista puts revenue growth of the beauty and personal care market at an expected US\$216 billion in 2022, with a 5.78% CAGR from 2022 to 2026.

BoxyCharm is one of our clients seeing outstanding success with its beauty products subscription model, tapping into this growing commerce trend.

MARKETING-INTERACTIVE: What do you think makes for great marketing these days?

Fatima: For me, everything comes back to having a customer-centric approach. I see this strategy used by many of our clients who are global leaders in their industries. By focusing on the end customer's wants and needs (and how their needs are evolving), you can connect with those customers in an authentic way.

By offering the right solutions to the right audience at the right time, brands can have genuine conversations with their target audience. Social selling is one-way brands are connecting with customers right now, and it's proving effective for B2C and B2C businesses. Newer platforms are also boosting the growth of social selling. For example, TikTok is one of the fastest-growing platforms in Asia, with a total reach of over 322 million users throughout Asia. Marketers are leveraging social channels to extend their reach and connect in ways that suit the customer's needs.

Another critical component of any effective marketing strategy is the on-site experience. Once you've attracted buyers to your site, you want to ensure they have memorable, frictionless experiences that drive loyalty and repeat purchases - regardless of which device they're using.

A mobile-first approach is vital to attract and retain visitors to your site effectively. There are over 887 million mobile connections in Southeast Asia, representing 132% of the total population. By tapping into this audience and offering mobile-first experiences consistent with desktop and tablet, brands can drive memorability and additional value out of their hard-earned website traffic.

Personalisation is another marketing-led tactic to attract and retain customers once they've reached your website. By working with marketing data to understand your audience, you can create personalised shopping experiences that offer customers what they need, when they need it - and boost conversion rates. It's this customer-centric approach that I see real value in right now.

MARKETING-INTERACTIVE: How do you feel about your win?

Fatima: I'm absolutely delighted to see the recognition for our exceptionally talented team and the results they've helped create for our globally-renowned clients. All our people work extremely hard to drive results for every client. This dedication is constantly acknowledged within eWave, and it's an honour for that dedication to be highlighted by three-time eCommerce industry award wins.

The whole team lives and breathes our core values of mastery, passion, action, growth and truth. And while these values have been consistently demonstrated, "mastery" resonates with me as the defining value throughout these awards. We're extremely fortunate to have world-class eCommerce specialists who are at the top of their game. From technical to strategic masters, our global team has broad expertise that's second-to-none.

I want to make particular mention of our incredible clients who have chosen to partner with us. Our award wins recognise the strong technology partnerships we've formed with Toys'R'Us Asia, Cochlear, and Living Edge. Needless to say, however, every one of our clients has an impressive story to tell.

I'd also like to thank our amazing technology partners - Salesforce, Adobe Commerce, Akeneo, Marketplacer, to name a few. I feel like we're all on a journey together - to make the eCommerce landscape one of which we can all be proud and continue to deliver impressive results for our clients.

It's an exciting time to be a leader in the eCommerce industry. I can't wait to celebrate the future innovations the eWave team will be responsible for driving, and the growth we help existing and new global clients achieve.

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