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U P C T

# **Research on problems of cross- border e-commerce in China. The Xiaohongshu case**

**Master Thesis**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Nowadays, the impact of cross-border e-commerce of electronic information is growing rapidly, but the current logistics bottleneck leads to cross-border e-commerce operation. Overseas warehouse can solve many traditional cross-border logistics problems that could not solve the pain points, such as time, cost, customs clearance. The localization problem of cross-border eBusiness developed rapidly, and the market size is more and more big. This project first introduces the research background and research purpose and meaning, and then summarizes the relevant concepts and research review of the theoretical foundation for the below, and then the Xiaohongshu, for example analysis of the cross-border eBusiness platform and its overseas warehouse business development present situation, analyzed the current situation of the development of the Xiaohongshu cross-border eBusiness platform, the Xiaohongshu overseas warehouse business development present situation and existing problems, and the main problems include different national laws and tax system, warehouse management, the cost is high, the defect of credit evaluation mechanism, the choice of suppliers is not accurate, and put forward the Xiaohongshu overseas warehouse advice business model development, It mainly includes the improvement of laws and regulations, dynamic cost management, expansion of logistics business of Xiaohongshu, reasonable selection of suppliers, and cooperation with local agent operation companies.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Overseas warehouse mode is to send the goods to the foreign warehouse in batches, to achieve local sales, local distribution of such transnational logistics form. The Internet economy is about commerce, advertising, ordering, buying and paying. Therefore, as an integral part of e-commerce logistics has become a key factor to determine the effectiveness of e-commerce. In e-commerce, if the logistics lag, low efficiency, poor quality, fast advantage will no longer exist. So perfect logistics system is the lifeblood of e-commerce survival and development. Analysis of the reasons for the failure of many e-commerce enterprises, largely due to the failure of logistics.

China's cross-border e-commerce has a broad prospect and huge development potential, but the slow development of cross-border logistics seriously restricts the further development of cross-border e-commerce. As a new logistics model, overseas warehouse emerges as The Times require. It can solve many difficulties that traditional cross-border logistics cannot solve at the same time, such as long time, high cost and complicated customs clearance procedures. It plays a pivotal role in promoting the development of Cross-border e-commerce in China. However, cross-border e-commerce enterprises also face some problems in the process of using overseas warehouses. For example, cross-border e-commerce enterprises have improper construction of overseas warehouses and improper choice of business model, which brings many obstacles to the later operation.

During the two sessions in 2016, the plan of establishing overseas warehouses was written into the government work report, with the purpose of promoting the healthy development of cross-border e-commerce and making up for the defects of cross-border logistics. However, there are also some difficulties in the development of overseas warehouse, which require careful consideration from mode selection, warehouse scale determination, and distribution of countries and regions to warehouse management.

This project mainly studies the mode selection of overseas warehouse. The macro and micro factors that influence the selection of overseas warehouses are explored, and detailed through empirical research, in order to provide reference advice for Chinese cross-border e-commerce enterprises in the selection of overseas warehouses and, in particular to Xiaohongshu, a community e-commerce platform.

## **1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

In recent years, China's traditional foreign trade has slowed down, while cross-border e-commerce has maintained a rapid growth. According to data from the Ministry of Commerce, in 2014, China's total foreign trade surpassed that of the United States and became the world's largest import and export country. Meanwhile, cross-border e-commerce trade also grew simultaneously. In 2015, China's cross-border e-commerce transactions reached 3.1 trillion yuan, a year-on-year growth of 31.3%, accounting for 11.90% of the total import and export volume. In 2016, the scale of cross-border e-commerce transactions in China was 4.0 trillion yuan, with a year-on-year growth of 35.48%, accounting for 14.80% of the total import and export trade. There were more than 5,000 cross-border e-commerce platform enterprises and over 200,000 domestic enterprises conducting cross-border e-commerce through B2B, B2C and C2C platforms. In 2017, cross-border e-commerce transactions reached 5.2 trillion yuan, accounting for 17.6 percent of total import and export trade. Experts expect cross-border e-commerce transactions to reach 8.0 trillion yuan in 2019.

At present, there are about 200,000 enterprises engaged in online export business in China. For cross-border e-commerce sellers, the problems of traditional logistics have been an important obstacle in the process of obtaining higher profits. Therefore, cross-border e-commerce enterprises need to seek new solutions. It is against this background that the overseas position appears. Many cross-border e-commerce companies have chosen to build warehouses overseas to circumvent trade barriers and

shorten transaction times. In recent years, the government has repeatedly stated that it will strongly support the development of cross-border e-commerce. Therefore, cross-border e-commerce enterprises contain huge development opportunities. Under such circumstances, the choice of logistics mode becomes more and more important. Cross-border e-commerce has huge market potential and unlimited development possibilities. However, logistics is always a weak link, and overseas warehouse, as an emerging logistics management model, is of great significance to the development of cross-border e-commerce.

In the 21st century, under the background of information revolution, with the rapid development of computer and network technology and the demand of enterprises to enter into global economic competition, many scholars are studying cross-border e-commerce, and the development of cross-border e-commerce warehouses has a very broad prospect. Domestic and foreign experts and scholars study the overseas warehouse, focusing on the relationship between overseas warehouse and cross-border logistics, reasonable coordination of overseas warehouse operation, overseas warehouse logistics channels and other aspects, so as to strengthen the discussion of cross-border logistics and overseas warehouse. (Liu Min , 2016) believes that at present, the main problems in the development of cross-border e-commerce logistics in China are high logistics cost, long logistics time, difficulty to realize commodity return and exchange, difficulty to compensate for loss or damage of goods, etc. According to the actual situation, China should streamline the customs clearance procedures of cross-border e-commerce and reduce logistics taxes and set up overseas warehouses to reduce logistics costs of cross-border e-commerce. ( Duan Biao , 2019) believes that with the rapid development of China's cross-border e-commerce industry, the traditional international import and export logistics and transportation mode has gradually revealed its shortcomings, and has been unable to meet the new demands of the booming cross-border e-commerce business. Therefore, China's cross-border e-

commerce logistics is pursuing new methods that are safer, faster and more

convenient to meet the demands of the rapidly developing cross-border e-commerce industry. (Yan Rongjiao , 2019) starts from the analysis of the current situation of cross-border e-commerce and cross-border logistics, and shows the development situation of cross-border e-commerce and logistics and their close relationship through data and charts. Due to the symbiosis between cross-border e-commerce and logistics, the speed of cross-border logistics lags behind that of cross-border e-commerce, leading to some problems. The limitations of cross-border logistics on the categories of goods, the immaturity of the logistics system affecting customer experience, and the low level of informatization leading to uncoordinated cooperation with cross-border e-commerce restrict the further development of cross-border logistics.

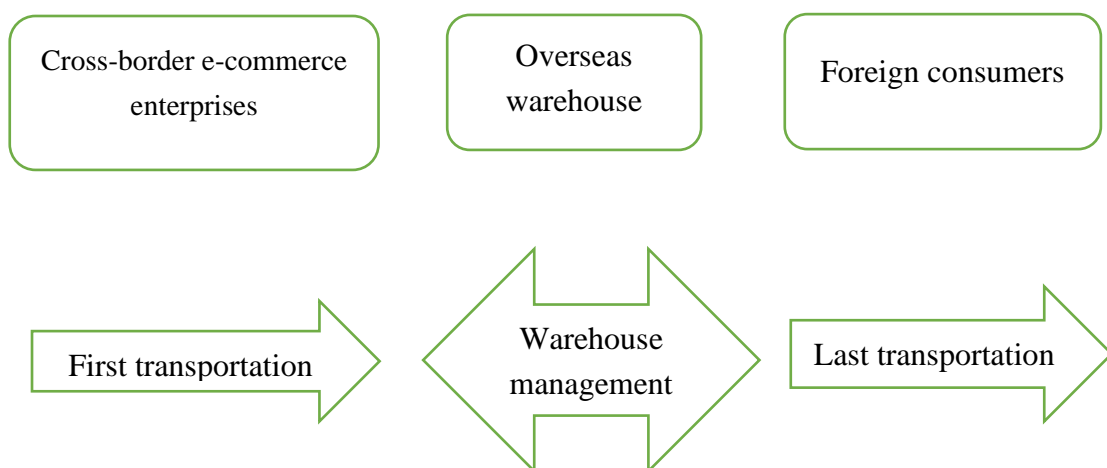
(Yang Yiqian , Zhang Kailin and Gao Yida, 2019) analyzed the current situation of cross-border e-commerce transaction mode and found out the problems. Taking the transactions between China and European countries under the belt and Road Initiative as an example, they proposed the idea of establishing new overseas storehouses in each country: setting up service points in central cities of each country based on the good credit mechanism of European countries; On the basis of service point setting, the ecosystem of overseas warehouse is established, and the new borrowing mode of overseas warehouse is implemented by the membership mechanism. Through the new overseas warehouse, cross-border e-commerce transaction reform will be led to eventually improve the efficiency of cross-border e-commerce transaction, reduce transaction costs, and realize the rapid development of cross-border e-commerce.

(Wang and Sang , 2005) believed that the application of cross-border third-party logistics could contribute to the development of cross-border e-commerce and solve the problems of traditional cross-border e-commerce logistics. ( Ruan Xiaodong , 2017) pointed out that cross-border e-commerce has been developing very fast in recent years, but its development is still hindered by such pain points as slow delivery, difficult

to track, slow customs clearance, easy to break, easy to lose bags, and difficult to return and replace. The only solution to this problem is to build an "overseas warehouse." "Overseas warehouse" can not only strengthen the overseas market ability, sales ability and service ability of Chinese enterprises, but also greatly improve the profitability of sellers through cost reduction. As national supportive policies begin to focus on "overseas warehouse", they have also become the "standard allocation" of cross-border e-commerce platforms. Of course, building an "overseas warehouse" is more than just an offshore warehouse. The use of overseas warehouses provides new technical support and growth model for the further development of cross-border e-commerce.

An overseas warehouse is a storage facility established overseas by an enterprise. In cross-border trade and cross-border e-commerce sales, the role of overseas warehouses is for domestic enterprises to ship goods to the target market countries through international transportation, and to set up warehouses locally through leasing or self-construction. It is used to store the goods, and then responds to the local sales orders in a timely manner, and carries out sorting, packaging and distribution directly from the local warehouse. Reduced repetitive and complex customs clearance procedures.

**Figure 1: Overseas warehouse operation flow chart**



Source: Own elaboration



The mode of overseas warehouse is to send the goods to the foreign warehouse in batches to realize local sales and local distribution. Network economy virtualizes business, advertisement, order, purchase, payment, authentication and so on. Logistics is the location transfer of entities. Therefore, as a component of e-commerce, logistics has become the key factor to determine the efficiency of e-commerce. In e-commerce, if the logistics lags behind, the efficiency is low and the quality is poor, the advantages of e-commerce in economy, convenience and quickness will no longer exist.

Cross-border e-commerce, as the main trend of the future development of modern e-commerce, has a great space for expansion and has brought more abundant returns to enterprises. It has become a new way of competition and a "new way" for many enterprises to survive (Xiaodong, 2017).

(Cui Caizhou , 2018) pointed out in his research that with the development of China's cross-border e-commerce, overseas warehousing is becoming more and more important. The strategic value of overseas warehouse construction of third-party logistics companies is also increasingly prominent. At present, third-party logistics companies' overseas warehouses have many deficiencies in supply chain extension services, information communication with cross-border e-commerce, integrated logistics solutions and other aspects. Therefore, dynamic industry standards should be set to promote the construction of overseas warehouses.

(Zhang Junling , 2019) proposed that overseas warehouses are new forms of shared logistics after integration and innovation, and the development of shared logistics has brought new opportunities for the development of China's overseas warehouses.

Despite the advantages associated to overseas warehouses, (Liu Cuiping , 2018) found that the development of overseas warehouses in China has encountered many difficulties, such as high construction and operation costs, low technical level, and imperfect cross-border logistics policies, which hinder the further development of

overseas warehouses.

(Zhang Junling , 2019), from the perspective of shared logistics, analyzed and pointed out the differences in national conditions, localization, cost control and logistics production in the current construction and operation of overseas warehouses in China. According to the different operators, overseas warehouses can be divided into self-operated overseas warehouses and third-party public service overseas warehouses.

(Yuan Xuening and Wang Qifeng , 2018) pointed out that public overseas warehouses are an important mode to solve the pain points of cross-border e-commerce logistics, which can effectively improve customer service experience and reduce logistics operation costs. Although overseas warehouses can reduce logistics costs and customs clearance fees, sellers cannot manage overseas warehouses as well as their own.

(Xiao Jianhui , 2018) pointed out in his research that China's cross-border e-commerce industry has witnessed explosive development in recent years, and efficient and smooth cross-border logistics services are needed. International parcel, international express, overseas special line, overseas warehouse, cross-border e-commerce platform logistics, warehousing goods flow and other channels have their own advantages and disadvantages. Cross-border e-commerce logistics has many problems, such as long delivery period, long channels, "black box" logistics process, difficult customs clearance, uneven service level and insufficient awareness of practitioners. In this context, it is very important to strengthen the construction of cross-border logistics network information technology and information technology.

(Li Xiaogang and Wang Qifeng , 2018) also pointed out that under the public overseas warehouse mode, cross-border e-commerce logistics industry chain environment is complex, service demand is uncertain, process complexity, dynamic stability and dual-agent collaborative management characteristics. In order to build an efficient and stable cross-border e-commerce logistics industry chain, a dual-subject cooperative management model based on international freight forwarder enterprises

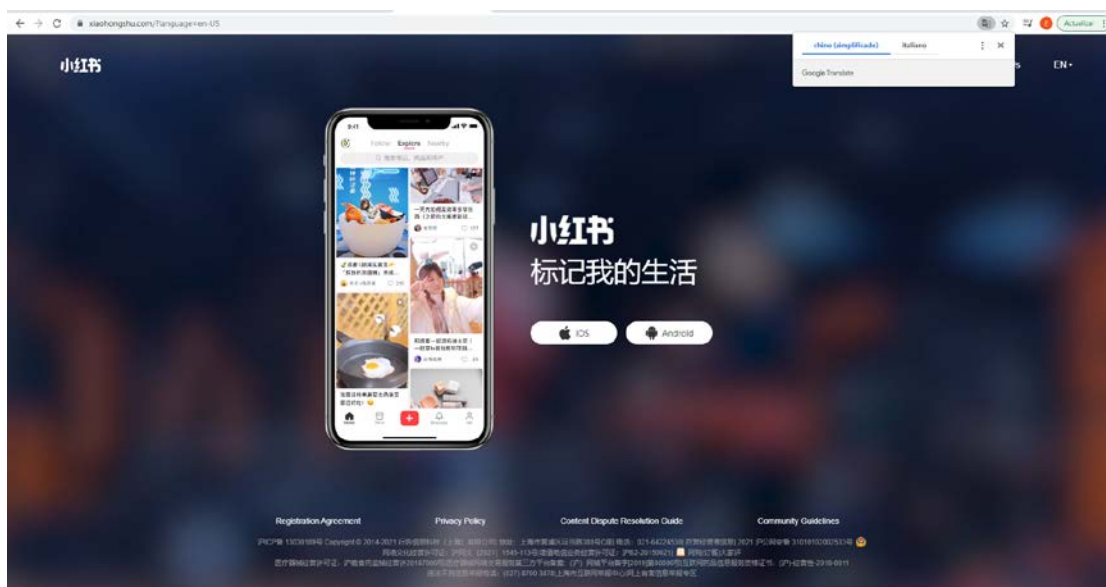
and overseas warehousing enterprises, as well as the corresponding information interaction mechanism, symbiotic enterprise selection mechanism and industrial chain coordination mechanism, can be designed.

(Fei Yang , 2018) proposed that with the intensification of economic globalization, cross-border e-commerce develops rapidly, and more and more attention is focused on cross-border e-commerce industry. As a new cross-border logistics model, overseas warehouse brings new opportunities and challenges to the development of cross-border e-commerce. However, Ningbo's overseas warehouse construction is still limited by such factors as region, culture, cost capital, payment channel, logistics mode and management means.

(Zhang Siqi and Cui Jun , 2019) propose that at present, some cross-border e-commerce platforms are exploring and studying the logistics mode of "overseas warehouse", hoping to reduce the logistics cost of cross-border e-commerce through the construction of overseas warehouse.

## **2. XIAOHONGSHU CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE OVERSEAS WAREHOUSE MODEL**

Xiaohongshu is a community e-commerce platform founded in June 2013, which mainly includes two parts: overseas shopping sharing community in the mode of UGC (user-generated content), and cross-border e-commerce "welfare society". Xiaohongshu welfare society adopts the B2C self-operated mode, directly cooperates with overseas brand merchants or large traders, and delivers goods to users through bonded warehouse and overseas direct mail. In half a year since the welfare society was launched, its sales exceeded 700 million (see picture 1 and 2).



**Picture 1: The Xiaohongshu Web**

More unique than other platforms, Xiaohongshu has an overseas shopping sharing community, among which Xiaohongshu shopping notes was launched in 2013. In essence, it is a mobile vertical community for overseas shoppers to encourage users to share their shopping experiences accumulated by CNY (Shorthand for currency in circulation in China) . In contrast, the welfare society adopts the B2C self-management mode, and directly cooperates with overseas brands or large traders, and delivers goods to users by storing them in the bonded area and sending direct mail overseas, so as to meet the needs of different users. With the active community reputation and the self-operation mode to guarantee authentic products, the sales volume of the welfare agency exceeded 700 million within half a year after it was launched. From 2014 to now, the domestic overseas online shopping population has reached 25 million, while the

number of users of Xiaohongshu has reached 55 million in 2019. After completing the upgrading and transformation from community to e-commerce, it has also become a new generation of force in the field of cross-border e-commerce.

Xiaohongshu has grown into the world's largest consumer reputation database and community e-commerce platform in just four years through deep cultivation of UGC (User-Generated Content) shopping sharing community, and has become a must-have "shopping tool" for more than 50 million young consumers in more than 200 countries and regions.

When you open the Xiaohongshu app, there will be no promotion or promotion from merchants, but only "consumption notes" written by users' word-of-mouth, which will not only introduce the products more truly and credibly, but also deliver a better lifestyle.

By May 2017, Xiaohongshu had more than 50 million users, adding about 200,000 users every day, growing into the world's largest community e-commerce platform. Its e-commerce sales volume has been close to ten billion yuan.

On June 6, 2017, the day of the anniversary of Xiaohongshu, 100 million copies were sold within two hours, ranking first in the category of shopping downloads in Apple's App Store.

Xiaohongshu has established strategic cooperation with the Australian health care brands Blackmores, Swisse, European Cosmetics list @Cosme Beauty Award, European cosmeceutical group Kirin, Panasonic, Tiger, Casio and other brands, and more and more brand merchants sell in Xiaohongshu through third-party platforms. Brand authorization and brand direct marketing mode go hand in hand to ensure that what users buy in Xiaohongshu is genuine.

Currently, Xiaohongshu has established specialized overseas warehouses in 29 countries, with bonded warehouses in Zhengzhou and Shenzhen covering more than

50,000 square meters, and has set up product testing laboratories in the warehouses. If users have any questions, Xiaohongshu will directly send the product to a third-party scientific research institution for spectral detection, to minimize the potential risk from the source.

In 2018, Xiaohongshu established the REDelivery International logistics system, which ensures that every step of international logistics can be traced. Users can find out which flight the goods came to China in the logistics information.

There is a big difference between cross-border e-commerce retail business and domestic e-commerce retail business. In terms of categories, in addition to traditional categories such as clothing and apparel, outdoor goods, home gardening and auto parts also account for a certain proportion of hot sales category, and the market demand shows a trend of rapid growth (See Figure 2). These goods are not suitable for traditional cross-border logistics due to their large size and difficult transportation. And breakthrough of the whole container transport modes adopted by overseas storehouse for goods of these limitations, therefore, the application development of overseas warehouse can effectively broaden the cross-border electronic sales of product categories, among them, greatly promote the represented by household gardening classes and auto parts have a certain weight, large size or shape of specific goods are exported to overseas markets, and achieved sales rose sharply in recent years.



Figure 2. Distribution diagram of China's export of eBusiness commodities in 2019

Source: EnfoDesk Analysys ~.Enfodesk.com

According to the traditional way of logistics, the goods are shipped abroad after pack the goods in the domestic, because has experienced a long time of flow, and even damage to the goods itself. The loss of goods in traditional logistics is also common, which will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the reputation of cross-border e-commerce enterprises. If cross-border e-commerce companies use overseas warehousing, shipping goods abroad before consumers place orders, they can ship them directly from local warehouses. In this way, it is not only possible to find the damaged products in transit and remove them in advance, so as to ensure that the goods are packed in good condition and quality. In addition, overseas storage companies can also carry out secondary packaging of goods according to the consumption characteristics of local consumers, cater to the habits and preferences of local consumers, and enrich the form and content of products.

At the same time, the response time of orders is a factor that consumers attach great importance to when shopping online. According to the data provided by China E-commerce Research Center (as shown in Figure 3), the number of users who hope to get the website's response immediately is as high as 90%, while no user is willing to

wait for the website's response indefinitely. By using overseas warehouse service, cross-border e-commerce enterprises can connect the warehouse with the website system. After consumers place an order, the warehouse can prepare goods immediately and reflect them on the platform, so as to realize rapid response to orders.

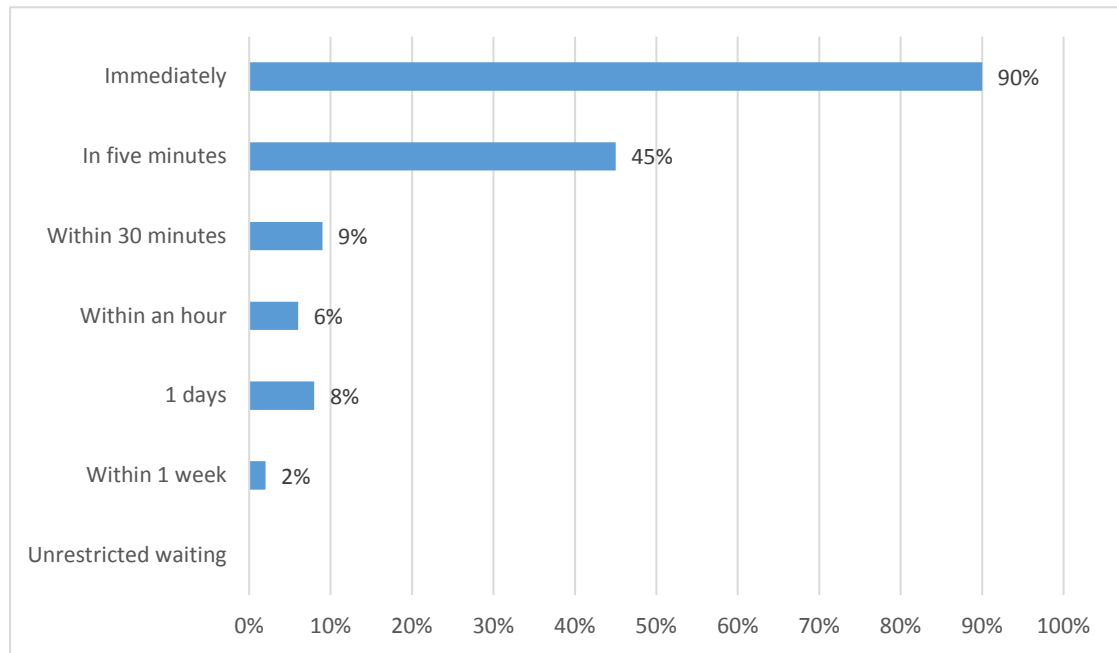


Figure 3. User requirements for the response time of the shopping website

Data source: China E-commerce Research Center

In today's marketing era where word of mouth is king, Xiaohongshu, as the largest global shopping community, makes use of its natural advantages to perfectly combine shopping sharing community and cross-border e-commerce platform. Xiaohongshu Welfare Club opening a new C2B consumption mode for users. Xiaohongshu welfare is designed to help users find the shortest path to buy foreign goods, so that Chinese consumers can enjoy a high-quality life more quickly and no longer worry about buying fake goods.



The advantages of Xiaohongshu in the sharing community are reflected in its market positioning, structured data content and diversified application platform:

- Positioning and focus. Chief executive MAO Wenchao said that at present, users of Xiaohongshu are mostly aged between 18 and 30, mostly students and white-collar workers, and women account for 70 to 80 percent of users. Such data analysis makes Xiaohongshu more clear about its product positioning and user positioning. Of course, Xiaohongshu's focus positioning is constantly updated with the expansion of its user group. Initial positioning is a shopping experience sharing. With the prevalence of Internet shopping and younger generation of overseas products, domestic also appeared a Xiaohongshu of loyal fans, maybe they do not intend to leave the country, but want to learn more about the overseas product information.

- Content structuring. User can not only long code word, also upload high-resolution photos, edit the commodity name, picture, price and shopping sites, pictures below and the label for the goods. The most important thing is that the user may interact with publishers by comments. Enter the name of a product in the search bar and you will get three types of information: related notes, products and users. The primary success of Xiaohongshu in the sharing community is to make the shopping notes into a vertical community.

- Platform diversification. At present, Xiaohongshu has joined nine shopping destinations in Hong Kong, the United States, South Korea, Europe, France, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore and Germany. Users can download a destination of the client for information sharing and commodity procurement. In addition to the PC, xiaohongshu has developed an APP for both apple and android mobile terminals, and has carried out word-of-mouth communication on the most popular social networking platform, Weibo, WeChat, so as to meet users' needs for

sharing and seeking knowledge. Compared with some professional shopping platforms such as Jingdong, Dangdang, Amazon, Taobao and Vipshop, Xiaohongbook makes use of the Internet to connect the community users through sharing their experiences.

- Unconscious information sharing determines community marketing. Xiaohongshu has upgraded from a communicative community to a community-based e-commerce business. By relying on users' own preferences, Xiaohongshu can say what it wants to say and establish a relationship with another user who also likes on a certain product. This is the commodity benefits brought by Xiaohongshu's word-of mouth communication. At present, the community marketing model of Xiaohongshu welfare society is still in the initial stage of exploration. With the data mining of users, Xiaohongshu can not only structure commodity information, but also recommend personalized commodities for users to choose according to word-of-mouth marketing.

- Develop community e-commerce in response to the needs of users. Users can share what they want to say on the Xiaohongshu as long as they have needs, and get the information they care about. On the other hand, Xiaohongshu fully complies with the needs of users from the sharing community to the community e-commerce, to achieve the ultimate user experience. At present, Xiaohongshu combines sharing community with cross-border e-commerce, which can also ensure that users can enjoy the ultimate quality experience of cross-border e-commerce.

The establishment of Xiaohongshu overseas warehouse is the embodiment of eBay's customized demand. First of all, the overseas warehouse of Little Hongshutong gives priority to the layout and construction of warehouse in the traditional developed buyer market in Europe and America. Then, consider Russia, South America and other

emerging cross-border buyer market layout. Among them, the four overseas warehouses that have been established at present are all built according to the comprehensive characteristics of eBay in the local market, no matter in terms of the size, time and order of warehouse construction.

Location considerations, for example, are all set up in the traffic. Xiaohongshu's overseas warehouse in Australia is located in Sydney, in the West Coast of the United States, in Leicestershire in the United Kingdom, and in Bremer in Germany, the largest port city in Europe.

In cross-border electronic commerce between dealers and consumers, Xiaohongshu, with the entire logistics integration, through independent research and development of the Xiaohongshu (global trade management) management system, has provide more professional logistics management services, at the same time also helps sellers to optimize supply chain, to provide business consulting and services such as financial management, transform the cross-border logistics for localization, simplify the cross-border logistics links and shorten the time needed for consumer goods arrive.

The overseas warehouse business of Xiaohongshu platform adopts the mode of cooperation with the third party. The cooperation mode with the third party refers to the construction mode in which cross-border e-commerce enterprises cooperate with the third party and external companies provide overseas storage services. This mode can provide professional and efficient services for e-commerce enterprises. This type of overseas warehouse is usually designed at a high level and can meet the high standard and professional delivery requirements for some special goods. Xiaohongshu platform prior contact with overseas warehousing services outside of the company. When consumers order, local warehouse will quickly get instructions, from warehouse goods and sent to the hands of consumers. There are mainly the following two types of overseas warehouse construction modes:

- Rent. Directly rent the existing overseas warehouse of the third

party company and manage the warehouse with the information system and management technology owned by the third party overseas warehouse. Xiaohongshu platform needs to pay the operation cost, logistics cost and storage cost to the third party company.

- Cooperative construction. Refers to the cooperation between e-commerce enterprises and third-party companies in the construction of overseas warehouses and the self-investment of equipment and systems. In this way, e-commerce companies only need to pay logistics fees, but it requires Xiaohongshu platform and third-party companies to jointly invest more energy in the management and system improvement of overseas warehouses. Compared with e-commerce self-established logistics, third-party overseas warehousing is more experienced, more professional and more powerful, which can provide lower costs and better services. The managers employed tend to have more innovative management and distribution concepts, which can help e-commerce enterprises establish more efficient logistics systems. In addition, the location of third-party overseas storage is strategic, which can help Xiaohongshu platform to better expand the overseas market.

A cooperative company through a third-party service provider has been home to many overseas warehouses, such as export trade, Amazon, agribusiness, etc., and some cooperation has been successful or failed. We can draw a conclusion and evaluate the following aspects:

1. Cost of warehouse management. Of course, the first factor to be considered is cost, but this is not the most important, cost competitiveness only needs to choose a sufficient condition of the service provider, because cost is relatively easy to quantify contrast, we can easily choose the number of low-cost suppliers, and then proceed to the next evaluation.

2. Warehouse order timely processing. This is an important measure of warehouse size. The warehouse, manpower, equipment and systems will be better in phase space areas where orders are larger on average per day. Because every shipping company should choose the third party service provider, can't satisfy orders growth in Europe and the United States, lead to order a large backlog, cause a large number of customer complaints, so we choose the third party warehousing services, when the supplier can confirm in the future, not only to satisfy the current order size, but also predict in advance orders growth, growth before cooperation, make sure vendor can meet the orders.

3. Degree of difficulty in system docking. Due to the frequent changes of overseas positions of third-party service providers, each enterprise cannot often devote a large amount of resources to the enterprise resource planning system. Only those open, powerful, high-affinity service provider systems are good choices for us to be efficient and low cost.

4. The land effect of goods. Before selecting a supplier, we need to basically confirm what logistics business we need for our product features and interest rates. When the logistics provider's warehouse service provider has recognized the need to work with us, we can compare their agreement rates.

5. Error rate (shipping and inventory errors). Although we do not want to make mistakes, but inevitably, all the warehouses in the face of so much inventory quantity, a large number of orders shipped every day, there is a mistake. We can get more information from the information of other companies or individuals using the warehouse. The Internet search can also give us some useful information. In summary, the error rate of the target overseas warehouse service provider is obtained by every possible means.

6. Warehouse location. The location of the warehouse can determine two costs : (1) the first shipment cost, which we transport from China to the warehouse of destination, to the port of destination, at the airport, but also depends on whether to transport, which requires additional transportation costs for the location of large quantities of goods. (2) Local distribution cost to determine when customers place an order, the product warehousing and logistics service provider passes the product to customers, and then the distance between the location and address within this time will also affect the warehouse distribution cost. Here, it is often used historical simulation methods to find a distribution warehouse location where the first travel distance is shorter and the local transportation distance is shorter.

The authenticity of products is a long-standing problem associated with e-commerce, which not only troubles consumers, but also troubles e-commerce enterprises. Well-known e-commerce platforms such as Jumei Youpin and Netease Koala are also inevitably suspected by users. In order to ensure that all products sold online are authentic products, Xiaohongshu chose self-operation.

Xiaohongshu's CEO said, "I chose the self-operation mode because in the process of cross-border shopping, the authenticity of products is the most important issue for users, and the current cross-border logistics supply chain is not mature enough. Only the self-operation mode can guarantee the quality of products to the greatest extent."



Figure 4. Xiaohongshu Demand map Baidu Index

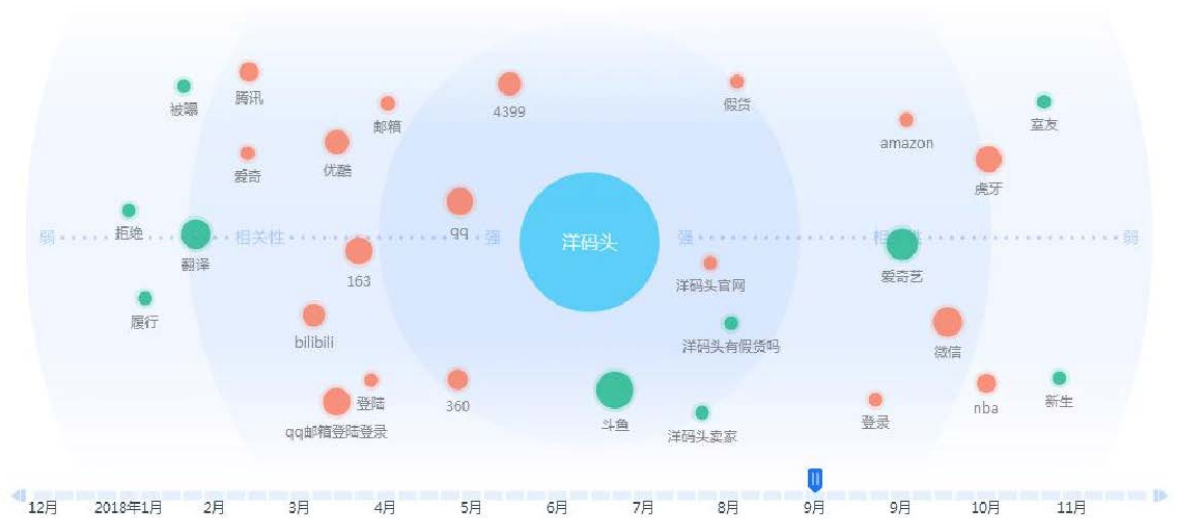


Figure 5. Demand map of Ocean terminals Baidu Index

From the demand distribution of Xiaohongshu in Figure 4, we can see that the search demand of "authentic" and "Is the stuff of Xiaohongshu authentic" is on the rise, while "fake" and "is there fake" are high in the demand distribution of Yang Dock in Figure 5, which also shows the difference between self-run and non-self-run e-

commerce platforms.

In terms of supply chain, Xiaohongshu chooses to cooperate directly with overseas brand suppliers or dealers and provide services to customers through overseas direct mail and bonded warehouses. Bonded warehouse is established mainly for three reasons. First, users can receive goods quickly. The bonded warehouse is directly delivered, and users can receive the goods two or three days after placing an order. However, in the mode of Daigou and overseas online shopping, users can generally receive the goods within a month or so. Second, transportation from bonded warehouse makes users trust more. In order to ensure the authenticity of the commodity source, Xiaohongshu publicized the operation process of the bonded warehouse through real-time video to realize the transparency of the supply chain, and passed the strict examination of the customs. Every product entering Xiaohongshu Bonded warehouse is issued by the national inspection institution to ensure its authenticity and quality. Third, large-scale simultaneous shipments can also save cross-border costs, which reduces the actual price consumers pay for products and gives them a price advantage over competitors.

In the selection of supplier resources, Xiaohongshu has established a cooperative relationship with brand owners in order to obtain a long-term and stable source of authentic goods. For example, EUBC in Europe has the right to operate over a dozen famous brands. Through cooperation with EUBC, Xiaohongshu can obtain the resource supply of all brands under the group at the same time. In the face of EUBC, Xiaohongshu also provides a platform for it to enter the Chinese market, which achieves a win to win situation for both brand owners and Xiaohongshu.

The supply chain of Xiaohongshu is not finished. Currently, most e-commerce platforms offer a return policy of "7-day return without any reason". Most overseas shopping platforms do not provide return service, while Xiaohongshu offers a return policy of "30-day return without any reason". After receiving the goods, if the user feels that the product price is too high, the quality is not good, the date of the food is not fresh and other circumstances do not meet the psychological expectations, he can return



or exchange the goods within 30 days without any reason and without bearing the freight. The reason why Xiaohongshu provides such a long-term return policy is based on its confidence in its products, which can not only give users a better shopping experience, but also make users feel more assured.

### **3. PROBLEMS EXISTING IN OVERSEAS WAREHOUSE BUSINESS OF XIAOHONGSHU CROSS-BORDER E- COMMERCE PLATFORM**

#### **3.1. Laws and tax systems of different countries**

The American tax system is one of the most representative systems in the world. It has five main features. First, the federal, state and local governments have independent taxes, especially the main taxes that constitute the main source of the budget revenue of the government at that level. Governments at all levels shall have collection agencies subordinate to the governments at the corresponding levels, which shall be responsible for collecting taxes at the corresponding levels; Second, taxation is established on the basis of the national legal system, and in line with this, legislation, law enforcement and judicature are separated from each other, with respective functions and mutual constraints in management. Third, it emphasizes that the tax system should not interfere too much in economic activities and limit the tax preferences to a minimum. Fourth, pay attention to income tax and take it as the main type of tax, and rely on the implementation of "withholding" and "self-declaration" to combine to protect; Fifth, the functions of tax collection and administration are separated. The most important tasks in tax collection and administration, such as the functions of tax collection, inspection and audit, are set up separately with their respective functions.

Overseas warehouse is a kind of logistics mode for cross-border trade, so it is

difficult to avoid dealing with the legal and tax systems between different countries and regions. Legal issues are an insuperable pain point for Xiaohongshu's overseas warehouse. A team without years of accumulation in the local market cannot fundamentally solve the legal and tax issues arising from the distribution of multiple categories of goods in cross-border trade through local warehouses. In addition, the warehouses established by Xiaohongshu in the overseas target market are essentially storage services for cross-border trade, and it is difficult to avoid being restricted by laws and tax systems of different countries, which is undoubtedly a problem for the overseas warehouses built by Xiaohongshu.

### **3.2. High cost of warehouse management**

Cross-border eBusiness need large amounts of capital, technology, personnel, energy after still have little effect, but also adds a lot of additional costs, do more harm than good.

At the same time, overseas warehouse requires high warehousing operation and labor cost, and requires a fast turnover rate. In other words, the seller who establishes overseas warehouse must maintain good and stable business flow to maintain operation. Although reducing logistics cost is the most basic function of overseas warehouse, it also needs to be driven by the fast turnover rate symbolizing stable business flow. Therefore, without the support of a professional warehouse management team and the guarantee of stable business flow, the seller's self-established overseas warehouse may not reduce the logistics cost of the enterprise, but will definitely increase the warehousing management cost.

If you are a seller of Xiaohongshu in the United States and want to establish an overseas warehouse in the United States, not counting the first step, the basic cost includes: order processing fee: \$1 per order; Package fee: \$1 / item; Weighing fee: US \$0.84 / kg; Storage fee: USD 15.94 / m<sup>3</sup> from January to September, 20% increase in the sales season from October to December; There are also label printing fees,

distribution within the United States and other costs. In addition, it is difficult to control the inventory level of overseas warehouses, and even through fine data management, it is sometimes difficult to catch up with the changes of market supply and demand. Therefore, there will inevitably be a backlog of unsold goods and goods returned by consumers that cannot be re-sold, which will increase the cost of warehousing management in overseas locations. Those goods whose inventory is easy to control are also easy to be copied and eventually lead to homogenized competition, which is not good for Xiaohongshu.

Not only are storage costs high, but labor costs are high in developed countries, where wages are 3-4 times higher than in China. In addition, the profit funds of the overseas warehouse are mostly collected in CNY ( Shorthand for currency in circulation in China) , but the operating expenses of the overseas warehouse of Xiaohongshu are USD and EURO, during which there are various exchange rate conversion risks, and various problems caused by this are bound to affect the development of the overseas warehouse.

### **3.3. Defects in the credit evaluation mechanism**

Problems in some links of the overseas warehouse service providers may lead to delayed delivery of goods, warehouse inspection, confiscation of goods and other situations. No matter what kind of situation occurs, the loss caused to the seller is irreparable. The seller needs to monitor the detailed data of goods entering and leaving the warehouse and dismounting in real time, otherwise the goods will be easily lost or the goods data will not match. According to the response of Amazon seller, the quantity of FBA(Fulfillment By Amazon) goods in stock does not match the actual quantity of goods on the shelves, so the goods are lost. Amazon, which has a complete system of warehouse management and delivery, will have such a situation, which can be imagined by the third-party overseas warehouse. Although Xiaohongshu cross-border e-commerce offshore warehouse has gained a firm foothold in the market in just a few

years, its operation mode still has big problems. If the buyer is not satisfied with the product, he/she can go to the platform to make a complaint, but in the later stage, he/she will assign the merchants to go back through the platform and a series of procedures. For example, if the final complaint is not resolved, it will be difficult for the buyer to maintain personal interests and consumer rights and interests

#### **3.4. Inaccurate supplier selection**

The evaluation criteria of suppliers in overseas warehouses are not comprehensive enough, and they tend to focus on price, quality, delivery time and other aspects. There is no appropriate supplier evaluation and evaluation form. These evaluation factors cannot form a comprehensive, scientific and effective supplier evaluation system, so it is impossible to make an objective and comprehensive evaluation of suppliers with these limited factors. The evaluation of overseas warehouse suppliers should be based on various data. Since the current management mode does not have clear evaluation criteria for supplier operation, production status and basic data, the evaluation of suppliers should be comprehensive. Xiaohongshu evaluates suppliers mainly talking about the past problems in the process of cooperation with suppliers. Therefore, suppliers should establish a comprehensive unified evaluation standard, and improve the core part of supplier evaluation of the company as soon as possible.

#### **3.5. Similar platforms are emerging**

Community e - commerce is a real sunrise industry. In the past two years, all links in the whole industrial chain, from manufacturers, physical distributors, traditional e-commerce, logistics enterprises to property companies, are targeted at this area. Traditional entity enterprises have limited understanding of the Internet. As a new business model, online and offline enterprises have not yet grasped the concept of win to win cooperation.

### **3.6. Backward logistics services**

Logistics cost operation is also one of the problems that lead to the development of e-commerce. At present, the leading cross-border e-commerce websites in China, such as Dunhuang, Wintop and Global Resources, mainly take EMS(Express Mail Service), the largest logistics and express enterprise in China, as the main partner to provide logistics support for foreign customers. DHL, UPS, FedEx and other international express companies are rarely used by overseas customers due to their fast transportation speed and high price. On this basis, it is urgent to solve the problems of how to help China's cross-border e-commerce improve the speed of logistics and transport while further reducing the operating cost and the problem of customs tax refund.

## **4. SUGGESTIONS ON PROMOTING OVERSEAS WAREHOUSE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OF XIAOHONGSHU**

Some suggestions for improving the overseas warehouse business model of Xiaohongshu are presented now with the intention on improving its efficiency.

### **4.1. Improvement of laws and regulations**

At present, China's cross-border e-commerce is developing rapidly. China has introduced some laws and regulations related to cross-border e-commerce, but there is still a lack of laws and regulations concerning overseas warehouses. Therefore, it is urgent to formulate relevant laws and regulations as soon as possible. Xiaohongshu should formulate laws related to overseas warehouses in accordance with existing laws on logistics and warehousing and in combination with the characteristics that overseas

warehouses are closely related to cross-border e-commerce, so as to better supervise the construction and operation of overseas warehouses. In the process of formulating laws and regulations related to overseas warehouses, credit and information security issues should be strictly regulated, and a relatively loose legal environment should be created for the mutual development of overseas warehouses and cross-border e-commerce. Moreover, laws and regulations concerning overseas warehouses should not only focus on domestic, but also attach importance to the adaptation and coordination of relevant international laws. Because overseas warehouses often involve local tax laws and bilateral and multilateral trade rules of different countries, new laws should be flexible to the extent that they cannot conflict with existing laws in terms of substance, and the laws and rules commonly used in international trade should also be strictly observed. At the same time, for different models of overseas warehouse, the emphasis of the legal content is also different.

#### **4.2. Dynamic cost management**

For an enterprise, the cost management of overseas suppliers is very important. Supplier performance includes a lot of content such as price, quality, delivery and service establishment.

Suppliers should have a clear business philosophy and method, not only be able to see the business objectives of the enterprise and implement effective management, but also be a positive, effective, specific improvement and innovation activities based on the adopted business policy, and the financial status of the enterprise.

Suppliers with outstanding technical capabilities can maintain a high level of delivery, but also participate in the enterprise with product development and design technology improvements with unique insights and solutions compared to other companies.

The supplier evaluates the production capacity and evaluates the effectiveness of the supplier, allocation planning, implementation, management and control, whether

there are corresponding improvement measures and means, and whether the abnormal direction in the event is clear and effective. The supplier's purchasing ability, quality management and control ability are also investigated.

#### **4.3. Increase the logistics business of Xiaohongshu overseas warehouse**

Strengthening logistics information infrastructure is conducive to enhancing the professionalism of overseas warehouse logistics. Xiaohongshu can build a perfect information management system, using big data technology, through the integration of domestic eBusiness platform, the cross-border eBusiness, customer orders, inventory information for centralized management, implement cross-border eBusiness and cross-border logistics coordination of efficient operations, and real-time control of overseas warehouse inventory goods, reduce logistics cost, quick response to orders, help for overseas warehouse companies to attract customers, and get the customer's recognition and customers to establish long-term relationship.

Also can establish logistics transport information open website, and convenient enterprises and customers at any time to inquire and monitor their cargo transport situation.

In addition, Xiaohongshu should also pay attention to the standardization of logistics services, improve logistics efficiency, build a more professional, intelligent and automated overseas warehousing logistics system, and improve the level of logistics services. Increase capital investment, make reasonable planning for the layout of overseas storage and distribution centers, use information technology to optimize the speed and accuracy of logistics information feedback, simplify the logistics transfer link, improve the logistics distribution system, and achieve efficient transportation; At the same time, strengthen the enterprise internal management, as far as possible to reduce mistakes, improve work efficiency, reduce operating costs.

#### **4.4. Reasonable selection of suppliers**

At present, the overseas warehouse market is mixed. If Xiaohongshu decides to use a third-party overseas warehouse supplier, it must be careful in the choice. Pay particular attention to the following points:

- Perfect internal control standard: Xiaohongshu can ask each other to show their internal management files, though the third party logistics company has passed ISO9001 certification, but the real file still exist a certain level, between businesses can ask each other to provide multiple levels of a particular file view, such as "work instruction", "standard operating manual", "business process design specification", etc. These documents can often reflect whether the overseas warehouse enterprise management standards, management standards are rigorous.

- Warehousing quotation and charging mode. The first is to charge according to the resources consumed, such as the cost of using the warehouse, personnel, equipment, consumables and so on. For sellers, they can calculate their own logistics costs in advance, and then make a decision by comparing the logistics quotations of overseas warehouses.

- Can make efficient and reasonable project operation plan: Xiaohongshu should have a clear understanding of its own needs and a clear grasp of its own goods and profit targets. According to the demand of sellers, excellent overseas warehouse enterprises can give a future operation plan on the whole. Xiaohongshu can judge whether the scheme is suitable for itself and whether it is feasible according to its own needs.

- Whether to have an independent tax and legal service team: it is inevitable to have to deal with local laws and tax laws when setting up a warehouse abroad. Only when taxes and laws are in place can Xiaohongshu feel at ease about using overseas warehouses for cross-border sales. And making sure that the overseas warehouse provides the



same tax and legal protection, and that its other customers are equally legal in a common warehouse system, is the real safeguard.

#### **4.5. Overseas positions for small language markets**

In the United Kingdom and The United States, the market is relatively mature and the competition is quite fierce. Moreover, due to the geometric growth of cross-border e-commerce business volume every year, it has received strong attention from local governments and relevant supervision measures are constantly introduced.

Therefore, Xiaohongshu can consider the establishment of overseas stores in small language countries, these countries, although the market is small, but the competitiveness is not fierce, the development potential is large. Local service to these small language market, the establishment and use of overseas warehouse in the local, this is not only less risk, and relatively high profit. In the overseas warehouse head and storage to do a great deal of discounts, such as zero warehouse rent, the first trip 20% off, and so on, indeed eliminate all kinds of concerns and worries about the small language market, so that small and medium-sized sellers can reduce the burden of the state to try to explore the French and Italian market.

#### **4.6. Cooperate with local agent operation companies**

The WMS/OMS system, which is independently developed and integrated with warehouse management, order management, inventory management and logistics distribution management, is used for managers to help the seller to manage inventory in a refined way and realize the whole-node monitoring of order processing. The German Hamburg warehouse was established in 2012, and the French warehouse and the Italian warehouse were added in 2018. Combined with four warehouses, the delivery range can basically radiate all over Europe. With continuous innovation and excellent service, it has successively reached cooperation with cross-border e-commerce platforms such as Amazon, eBay, Wish, Aliexpress, Vova and Tophatter.

As Xiaohongshu's products are much cheaper than local merchants and can be shipped at the same speed as local e-commerce businesses, there are also a large number of overseas buyers. Because of the impact caused by the rapid development of China's cross-border exports, overseas governments have strengthened their supervision on the customs clearance, tax law, and quality inspection of China's cross-border e-commerce enterprises.

From the legal perspective, Xiaohongshu Overseas Warehouse should be a local entity, rather than a simple warehouse, from the overseas warehouse to deliver products to local consumers, is a kind of business transaction, must pay consumption tax. As foreign governments increase their supervision, cross-border e-commerce companies are less familiar with national policies. As a result, Xiaohongshu can work with local companies to provide Chinese businesses with three-dimensional operations, customs clearance and taxation.

#### **4.7. Select high-quality third-party international e-commerce platforms**

In the early stage of cross-border trade e-commerce development, export-oriented enterprises should choose third-party e-commerce platforms with economies of scale. Aliexpress mainly helps export-oriented companies sell quickly in small batches and in multiple batches to end wholesale retailers around the world. There are more than 1 million domestic suppliers with 25 million kinds of commodities online in 224 countries and regions around the world. EBay, currently the world's largest e-commerce foreign trade platform, is committed to opening up overseas online direct sales channels for Chinese merchants and facing 380 million overseas buyers. The three companies have cooperated with a number of enterprises for many years, making them a good choice for enterprises just starting their cross-border e-commerce business. Jingdong, Yixun, Dangdang, Yhd.com, Dangdang, Suning, Amazon and a series of other e-commerce platforms can be used as platforms for the development of cross-border e-commerce.

#### **4.8. Developing fast, efficient, low-cost and safe logistics services**

Fast, efficient, low-cost and safe logistics services are the urgent needs of many online sellers. Export-oriented smes should take advantage of third-party trading platforms. Large domestic e-commerce companies have established a warehouse base to accelerate the development of self-tong logistics system and an e-commerce platform abroad to provide more perfect logistics service platform for sellers. From a long-term perspective, it is necessary for government policies to support export-oriented enterprise alliance collection and distribution mode, that is, export-oriented enterprises and logistics enterprises, the establishment of real estate companies and overseas resources construction and development of joint ventures to coordinate flood control business and marketing companies, and the formation of a transplant distribution system for foreign-funded logistics companies. Combined, to establish long-term and stable cooperative relations, the establishment of logistics information platform of third-party logistics enterprises to achieve e-commerce and logistics distribution as much as possible.

#### **4.9. Strengthening the security of electronic payment**

At present, there is no complete cross-border e-commerce payment solution in the world. Small and medium-sized foreign trade companies still rely on a third party international e-commerce platform. PayPal is the most popular online cross-border payment method in the world. More than 80% of foreign sellers use PayPal for online cross-border shopping, but PayPal has terminated its strategic cooperation with Aliexpress and Dunhuang since August 2012. Through the strategic cooperation with Dunhuang Network, Aliexpress currently supports payment of various debit cards including Visa, MasterCard, bank wire transfer, Moneybookers and also provides escrow service third-party intermediary payment service. But whatever cross-border payments are made online, there are risks to cash flow and legal aspects as a new way to pay. Due to the complexity of international trade environment, payment risk must be paid enough attention to.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Whether using third-party overseas warehouse service providers or building a warehouse themselves, all operation and management work should be carried out around a specific warehouse, so the choice of overseas warehouse is the basis of operation and management. In terms of hardware facilities, a good overseas warehouse can provide enough space, equipment and manpower to complete the warehousing, sorting, receiving and shipping of goods; From the perspective of software, it can provide ERP system with high compatibility to complete system docking and real-time data transmission, and local logistics distributors meeting the requirements to complete high efficiency and low cost delivery, etc. Only an overseas warehouse whose hardware and software meet the requirements can lay a solid foundation for the routine operation and management of overseas warehouse. Therefore, how to choose an overseas warehouse is particularly important. With the rapid development of overseas warehouse operation management science, developed countries have been in a leading position in the research and application of overseas warehouse operation management theory, which has formed a discipline and industry. For Chinese enterprises, there are still a lot of problems to be discussed in the continuous introduction, digestion, absorption and innovation, and the establishment of an overseas warehouse operation management system in line with the development of the industry and the characteristics of enterprises, and they still need to be summarized, explored and improved in the actual work.

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