

10 tips on how to go digital in the home decoration and home textiles sector

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Doing business has become increasingly digital in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated digitalisation among both consumers and businesses. This study gives you 10 key tips on how to work digitally and how to benefit the most from digitalisation in the home decoration and home textiles (HDHT) sector.

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1. Be aware of the most common types of digitalisation

Digitalisation is stimulated by several powerful drivers, including:

- The new [millennial](#) and [Gen Z](#) consumers (and buyers);
- Wellness, including the positive and negative effects that digitalisation can have on mental health;
- Sustainability and transparency; and
- The ongoing push from the tech industry and its strong creative and marketing power.

These trends are related, and also strongly influence the HDHT sector in general. Millennials and Gen Z are quickly becoming the main consumers and professional buyers in Europe. Their key buying motive is improving their mental and physical wellness. Sustainability is an important aspect of this.

As customers, millennials and Gen Z demand complete convenience – including 24/7 online access to products and services, plus accurate and quick delivery. They are less sensitive to traditional marketing messages but are still looking for authentic, ethical brands. Because of this, marketing must be relevant, targeted and present on their favourite social media channels. Online reviews and the opinions of online peers inspire trust.

Lockdowns and travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic forced both businesses and consumers to

further accelerate their digitalisation. After the initial outbreak, [digital adoption made 5 years' worth of progress in just 8 weeks](#). In the HDHT sector, perhaps the most notable change was the shift from physical to digital sales. Although this mainly affects the relationship between consumer and retailer, digitalisation will also become increasingly important for you as a manufacturer/exporter from a developing country.

A 2022 ITC survey among micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in 11 French-speaking African countries reflects how digitalisation can boost your business. [85% of enterprises using digital technologies said they increased sales as a result](#), and 81% said the digital technologies helped them cut costs. In addition, digital technologies helped enterprises access international markets – ranging from 34% for micro enterprises to 72% for the largest enterprises in the survey.

The most relevant types of digitalisation for you include:

- Business software – digital solutions to streamline your business processes;
- Digital communication – tools for meeting and doing business online;
- Business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce – online B2B sales via (HDHT) platforms/marketplaces;
- Business-to-consumer (B2C) e-commerce – online B2C sales via retailers or your own webshop;
- Product management – systematic collection and processing of production and marketing data;
- 'Big' trade data – market research based on the analysis of international trade data;
- Digital trade events – online/hybrid events for networking and the latest trends;
- Digital innovations – new technologies used in HDHT.

2. Invest in relevant business software solutions

[Business software](#) can transform the efficiency of your business processes and reduce costs. These systems can handle everything from inventory and order management to billing and customer relationship management (CRM). An added benefit is that digital documentation is generally more reliable than paper archives. Now that digitalisation is becoming increasingly common, you have to determine what software solutions your company requires to keep up with your buyers' digital needs.

The easiest way is usually to start with individual software applications for specific business processes such as accounting, CRM, invoicing, inventory and order management, HR, and compliance management. For example, accounting software like QuickBooks, Xero or even Excel can streamline your financial management. There are also local suppliers that specialise in solutions for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): [SME Vai](#) from Bangladesh offers digital solutions for accounting, marketing and legal services for SMEs and [Africa Digital Genius](#) from Côte d'Ivoire specialises in digital transformation, providing solutions for processes like accounting, CRM, marketing, HR and inventory.

For many business processes you can even use free applications. Although these may have relatively limited functionality, they can be a good way to try out a specific type of software and determine whether you need to invest in a more elaborate tool.

For more experienced users, [Enterprise Resource Planning](#) (ERP) systems are the most comprehensive option. These systems offer an integrated set of applications for all your main business processes, including inventory

management, order processing, logistics and risk analysis. Although ERP systems like [SAP](#) and [ORACLE](#) are traditionally associated with large companies, less expensive options are becoming available for SMEs. Many of these are cloud-based.

Procedures in export logistics are also increasingly cloud-based, such as in the [Registered Exporter \(REX\) system](#) of the European Union (EU). Registration in this system allows you to certify your products' origin based on self-certification, via a 'statement on origin'. You can then include this statement in your invoices, so you don't need to apply for a certificate of origin upon each export.

This kind of streamlining can also be helpful in the context of sustainability due diligence. For example, supplier members can use the [Sedex](#) platform to easily share their sustainability performance data with multiple customers at once. Such standardised ways of sharing sustainability compliance data may become increasingly available as the EU rolls out its [Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive](#).

Tips:

For more information on business software and how it can benefit your company, you can check out NI Business Info's [guide to computer software for business](#) and ProjectLine's [Ultimate Guide to ERP Software for SMEs](#).

Study which business software solutions best suit your needs. For example, check rankings like the best [accounting and invoicing](#) and [inventory management](#) software for small businesses.

Prepare your staff for the new digital tools by providing training. Your supplier may offer online training; [LinkedIn Learning](#) offers online courses in various types of ERP and other software.

For more information on the REX system, see the accompanying [links and documents](#), including an e-learning module and a guidance document.

3. Use digital communication tools

Face-to-face meetings and company visits used to be the standard, until the COVID-19 pandemic forced companies to move their business online in 2020. Interestingly, [many European buyers prefer digital interactions and self-service](#), mainly due to ease of scheduling, savings on travel expenses and safety. They also believe this new model to be equally or more effective than the pre-pandemic way of doing business. Unsurprisingly, then, the shift towards digital channels has persisted.

Source: McKinsey

B2B sales have become omnichannel, with traditional (for example, in-person meetings), remote (for example, phone and video calls) and self-service (for example, e-commerce) channels all playing a role in sales. According to McKinsey, a 'rule of thirds' has emerged across all major industries, at all company sizes, in every country. At each stage of the sales process, [buyers use a fairly even mix of sales channels](#).

[Online ordering and reordering are especially popular in Western Europe](#) with 40% of total orders. This kind of

B2B e-commerce is rated as the most effective sales channel by 35% of respondents to McKinsey's December 2022 Global B2B Pulse, ahead of in-person sales (26%), video conferencing (12%), email (10%) and telephone (8%).

Still, [meeting new buyers in person](#) continues to be key in HDHT – for instance during or around trade fairs like [Ambiente](#), [Maison&Objet](#), [Heimtextil](#) and [imm cologne](#). Face-to-face meetings and company visits can help you gain trust and build a long-lasting relationship, especially when you are getting to know each other. In this sector, buyers often like to experience your products (and production process) in person before deciding whether to buy from you. Digital communication is more useful once you have a well-established business relationship.

Your website and social media channels are key digital tools to showcase your products and processes online. European buyers look for stories they can use in their marketing towards resellers. The more relevant, lively and interactive your maker and making stories, the more added value they offer down the distribution chain. Environmental and social sustainability are becoming increasingly important topics. Impact data about aspects like meaningful employment, recycling or a reduction of your CO2 emissions can give you a competitive edge.

Tips:

Offer buyers a mix of sales channels, such as in-person meetings, video calls and online self-service.

Use tools like [Zoom](#), [WhatsApp](#), [Microsoft Teams](#) or [Skype](#) for video calls with your potential and current buyers.

Use your website and social media to engage customers through storytelling. Transparency builds trust, so highlight your [unique selling point](#) and share your origin story: where your product is made, who makes it and how, why it's made, and why you sell it. You can also share testimonials of satisfied customers. On social media, invite followers to provide feedback and contribute ideas for product development.

4. Sell your products via digital B2B marketplaces

You can also attract new buyers online on B2B HDHT marketplaces. Such platforms allow convenient B2B sourcing and one-stop-shopping.

Important European HDHT trade fairs now have a B2B marketplace as a permanent online presence. A good example is [MOM](#), which offers you a dedicated 'mini site' at an annual fee. You can use digital showrooms to showcase products, upload a company video, and highlight collections, projects and news. Interested buyers can contact you directly, so you can do business outside of the platform. The platform has just added the option to shop directly on the marketplace, but this feature is currently only available for European brands.

Figure 2: MOM, the new marketplace to be

Source: [Maison & Objet @ YouTube](#)

Another option is [nmedia.hub](#) (formerly [Nextrade](#)), an international B2B store solution for the home and living industry. This platform is linked to Messe Frankfurt, the organisation behind HDHT fairs like [Ambiente](#) and [Heimtextil](#); it facilitates direct B2B transactions, allowing buyers to order your products directly via your shop on the platform. In addition to the annual fee, it charges a commission per order for this service. The platform also offers dropshipping, which allows suppliers to ship products directly to retailers' end customers.

Other relevant marketplaces are the Dutch online wholesale marketplace [Faire](#), connecting small independent retailers and brands around the world, and [Fairling](#) – particularly for sustainable and eco-friendly retailers and independent brands. Marketplaces like [Orderchamp](#) and [Ankorstore](#) are currently only available to suppliers from Europe, but you should be aware of their existence.

Figure 3: The Faire Guide for Shop Success

Source: [Faire @ YouTube](#)

The [AliBaba](#) B2B marketplace is especially suitable for sellers of larger volumes. It can be challenging to stand out from the competition on this platform. Successful sellers often have a dedicated AliBaba team to attract buyers.

There may also be national/regional initiatives you can join: [Qalara](#) is a global sourcing and wholesale platform from India for responsibly produced goods across all consumer categories from South and Southeast Asia; wholesale platform [ANKA](#) offers services to sellers of African products on a global scale; [Buyamia](#) is a one-stop marketplace that connects international buyers with local Indonesian artisan suppliers.

Figure 4: Welcome to Buyamia

Source: [Buyamia @ YouTube](#)

Tips:

Study your options at online marketplaces. You can compare features and fees to select the platform that suits you best. Make sure that it caters to your preferred buyer type: if you produce large volumes, you should not use a marketplace that targets small retailers.

Search for online marketplaces that facilitate trade in other markets as well, such as your own region.

Provide high-quality product details, images and videos to showcase your products online, both on your own website and on digital marketplaces. You can generally apply the tips from the [Faire Guide for Shop Success](#). Also see Conzoom Solutions' [guide to product photography](#) to learn more.

If you are new to e-commerce, register for UNIDO's [e-commerce training course](#), a facilitating guide specifically for SMEs.

For more information on digital B2B platforms, see our [tips for finding buyers](#).

5. Tap into the digital B2C sales market

E-commerce can help you reach a broader range of customers. In 2023, [15% of EU consumers ordered furniture, home accessories and garden products online](#) (in the 3 months preceding the survey). This ranged from up to 10% mainly in Eastern European countries to about 30% in countries like Denmark and the Netherlands. Nearly half of all EU online shoppers ordered goods and services from national sellers, and about 12% from sellers outside the EU - including the UK. E-commerce is most popular among millennials and Gen Z.

Consumers generally prefer to buy from brands with both an online and a physical presence. Such hybrid or multi-channel retailers allow them to gather information and inspiration online as well as in the physical store. [Online is considered 'better' than offline across many criteria](#), including variety, reviews, price, comparison of brands and products, and fun. However, physical shopping wins on the ability to try a product before purchasing it and advice from staff.

In HDHT particularly, experiencing items in person before buying still plays an important role. This allows consumers to try out and feel the items, and also helps them avoid having to arrange returns for large home-delivered furniture pieces if they do not meet expectations. Because of this, even 'digital-first' retailers may have physical showrooms in their target markets.

Supplying to online or hybrid retailers

A good way to tap into the e-commerce market is to supply to a European wholesaler or retailer with an online presence. This has fairly little effect on the way you do business as an exporter. Because European HDHT retailers often sell their products both in stores and online, the way you supply to them stays the same. Even digital-first retailers like [Wehkamp](#) (Netherlands) and [MADE](#) (UK) need to take stock before they can sell to consumers. This means that supplying to online retail is not a separate market channel in itself.

Selling your own products online

Another option is to open your own webshop. However, selling directly to European consumers like this can be complicated and costly.

Selling directly to consumers via e-commerce means:

- Supplying small batches and/or individually packaged items;
- Being prepared to pre-stock and offer more just-in-time supply concepts;
- Arranging effective consumer payment systems;
- Offering doorstep delivery and special (gift) packaging;
- Competing with experienced and well-known European and producer-country wholesalers/retailers;
- Dealing with aftersales on a business-to-consumer (B2C) level, including returns and replacements.

In addition, the new [General Product Safety Regulation](#) requires you to have an 'economic operator' in the EU who is responsible for product safety. In B2B sales, this is often the importer. For B2C sales you need to make specific arrangements, such as mandating an authorised representative or fulfilment service provider in the EU.

The EU also introduced [new value added tax \(VAT\) rules for e-commerce](#) in 2021. VAT must now be paid for all imports, in the EU member state where the goods are to be delivered – either via the EU's [Import One-Stop Shop \(IOSS\)](#) or via a full import declaration. According to the Dutch Consumers' Association Consumentenbond, [Dutch consumers buy less from non-EU webstores because of the new VAT rules](#). They are deterred by the increased VAT on orders up to €22 and the uncertainty about additional costs.

All this can make direct online sales to European consumers especially challenging for exporters from developing countries.

Tips:

Focus on [finding a European importing wholesaler or retailer](#) with an online presence to supply to.

See our special study about [alternative distribution channels](#) for more information on international B2C e-commerce. This includes pros and cons, pricing, and expected services. For more information on the use of B2C e-commerce per European country, see Ecommerce Europe's [European E-commerce Report 2023](#).

If you do decide to sell to consumers via your own webstore, see Conzoom Solutions' [step-by-step guide to creating your own online shop](#).

Check out the International Trade Centre's [ecomConnect programme](#) (2018-2021) and its community platform [ecomConnect](#). This programme facilitates shared learning, innovative solutions, collaboration and partnerships to help small businesses in developing countries start selling online. Use the [readiness quiz](#) to check your readiness to engage in international e-commerce and see where you need to concentrate your efforts.

Study the information at [eTrade for All](#), a multi-stakeholder initiative helping developing countries harness e-commerce and digital trade for development. [eTrade for Women](#) focuses on empowering women entrepreneurs in developing countries via masterclasses, communities and policy dialogues.

6. Collect data for your product management

Big business and public services increasingly work with 'big data' – extremely large sets of highly unstructured raw data, usually from abstract internet or corporate and governmental sources. For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), a more focused and systematic approach to collecting and processing production and marketing data is a better fit. An important area of their data management is product management.

Exporters must comply with EU legal requirements, which sets off a data mining and processing process that involves at least the following steps:

map out the product ingredients and components – this is often registered in your [bill of materials](#), and includes data on your suppliers and any certifications they may have

establish the [HS code](#) for your product

establish the relevant [EU legal requirements](#)

test your product to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation

design or adapt product specifications that ensure a safe product

create an admin system – this should include information such as the bill of materials, [specification sheets](#), internal and external test reports, certifications, cost sheets and price dates

keep the system accurate and up-to-date

share relevant data with your buyer – this helps them with quality assurance and sustainability communication

Such standard operating procedures may also apply to areas like social and environmental compliance, sales analysis and production efficiency, such as reject percentages and production input/output data. This kind of data management will help you become a more effective business and a more relevant partner in the distribution chain.

Data security

The potentially negative side effects of the global digitalisation trend are also becoming clear. Consumers feel overloaded and are cautious about issues like spam, hacking and phishing. What's more, privacy issues are the order of the day, both in business and in private communication. Processing data comes with the responsibility to keep those data safe, so you should not collect more information than you need and must safeguard it with secure password systems and restricted access.

Tips:

Protect your data from internal or external abuse, for example via strong and frequently changing passwords, staff awareness training, restricted access, and backups. Procedures involving cybersecurity should be written up and shared with staff.

Make sure your customers' secrets are safe: their order admin, designs and any other exclusive arrangements should be honoured and treasured. Dedicate a limited number of staff to specific customers and make sure this is frequently checked by top management. Exclusivity arrangements should be reflected in your admin system.

If you handle personal data of European consumers, make sure to comply with the European [General Data Protection Regulation](#).

7. Study international trade data

For a good understanding of the European HDHT market, you have to invest time and effort into market research. The European market is sophisticated and segmented, so to be successful you must match your offer

to a corresponding segment. Our [market information for the HDHT sector](#) is a great start, giving you information on topics such as trade flows, trends, requirements and market segments.

When looking at big trade data and statistics, you will find that the larger Western European countries are generally the main importers of HDHT products. However, importers in these countries are generally re-exporters who sell their products across Europe. As such, individual countries are not markets. Instead, your best strategy is to focus on [market segments](#), from low- to high-end.

For a deeper dive into the specific trade flows for Europe and your country or product, you can use international trade data from free tools such as ITC's [Trade Map](#) and the EU's [Access2Markets' trade statistics portal](#). These can provide you with insights into country or product performance, demand, alternative markets and the role of competitors.

Tips:

Use the tutorials for [Trade Map](#) and [Access2Markets](#) to learn how to use these tools.

Analyse the raw data and discuss it within your internal teams. This turns data into market intelligence that can help you create or support your strategies.

For more information on HDHT market segments, see our study on [channels and segments](#).

8. Attend online/hybrid trade events

Like in many other areas of business, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the digitalisation of trade fairs. The Indian trade fair [IHGF](#) pioneered this approach in HDHT, holding the [first virtual IHGF Delhi Fair](#) in July 2020. The leading European HDHT trade fairs also hosted online alternatives. While the travel restrictions that spurred this digitalisation have been lifted, the pandemic has emphasised the benefits of online solutions. They can provide flexibility, cost savings and a sustainable alternative to business travel.

Now that physical trade fairs have returned, many continue to offer online/hybrid events and tools. For example, online exhibitor databases allow you to connect with potential buyers in advance or schedule meetings with them to make sure they have time for you. The leading European HDHT trade fairs also have their own apps. These can provide features like directories, personalised itineraries, planning and communication tools, notifications, maps, and other practical information. There is usually free basic WiFi access on-site.

Trade fairs often host online (trend) presentations, and they may facilitate online networking. For example, Messe Frankfurt's [Digital Academy](#) is a digital event platform related to [Ambiente](#). It regularly hosts free presentations on current topics like sustainability and women leaders. For access, you have to register on the platform. This also allows you to play back recordings of previous events and network with other Digital Academy members. You can add your matchmaking preferences to your profile, and the system can recommend fitting business partners.

[Maison&Objet Academy](#) is a subscription-based learning platform for decor, design and lifestyle professionals;

mainly retail stakeholders and specifiers. Relevant topics for manufacturers include trends, surveys, and new materials and technologies. New episodes come online each month, which you can access online or through the app. You can also [replay presentations](#) from previous editions of the trade fair.

And of course, some trade fairs now have permanent [digital B2B marketplaces](#).

Tips:

If you visit a trade fair, use the online tools to plan ahead and confirm meetings with potential buyers.

Attend free online events to stay updated on the latest developments and use digital networking platforms to find buyers.

For more information on trade fair participation, see our [tips for finding buyers on the European HDHT market](#).

9. Prepare for digital innovations in HDHT

Digitalisation and digital technology will only grow in relevance for SMEs from developing countries, like yours. Innovations are moving fast. They tend to be first used by large companies and dominant sectors such as fashion and financial services before they become accessible to SMEs and the HDHT sector. Keeping track of these developments allows you to prepare for when digital technology becomes more mainstream and more specific to HDHT. Being an early adopter of digital innovation can help you stand out from any less-digitalised competition.

Important areas of innovation in HDHT are product visualisation, generative artificial intelligence (AI), design, blockchain technology and smart products.

Product visualisation

In HDHT, augmented reality (AR) technology is increasingly used to let consumers visualise items in their home via an app on their smartphone or tablet. After selecting a product, consumers scan a space in their home using the camera on their device. A 3D visualisation of the product, often a piece of furniture, is then virtually placed in the room. The app allows consumers to move the item around, change features such as colours or materials, or choose a different item altogether.

This virtual try-before-you-buy experience helps consumers make a well-informed decision. [Shopify merchants who add 3D/AR content to their stores see a 94% conversion lift](#) on average. When consumers return online purchases, it is often because the product does not meet their expectations or because they ordered several versions to choose from. AR visualisations could prevent this: [80% of shoppers feel more confident in their purchase when using AR](#) and 66% are less likely to return their purchases. This means less hassle for both seller and consumer, and a smaller impact on the environment.

Some European companies using AR apps are IKEA and Tylko. [IKEA Place](#) lets consumers virtually place 3D renderings of IKEA products in their home, from large furniture pieces like sofas and tables to furnishings like

lamps and rugs. Polish on-demand storage furniture manufacturer Tylko allows consumers to customise storage solutions and virtually preview them in their room via the [Tylko App](#), to ensure a perfect fit.

Figure 5: IKEA Place

Source: [IKEA @ YouTube](#)

Dutch [Amikasa](#) allows users to virtually decorate their living spaces with products from an array of brands. For the actual purchase, they redirect consumers to the seller's website. In 2022, social media platform [Pinterest introduced its AR Try On for Home Decor](#), which allows users to virtually place items from US retailers in their home. It has since also become available in the UK.

Generative AI

A hot topic in today's society is [generative AI](#) - artificial intelligence that can create content such as text and images using patterns and structures it has learned from its input training data. This can also be used in the HDHT sector. For example, IKEA has created [AI-generated scenarios for home and living in the 2030s](#).

Generative AI can help with activities like communication, which can be particularly useful for SMEs from developing countries. International communication demands high levels of written and spoken English, as well as accurate, to-the-point and inspiring promotional materials. Especially when there is a language barrier, tools like [ChatGPT](#) can help with basic communication and tasks like creating marketing campaigns and generating product descriptions. [ChatPDF](#) can extract information from large PDF files, which could help you navigate contracts and legal documents.

Designers can explore tools like [Scribble Diffusion](#), which converts sketches into detailed images. [Adobe Firefly](#) can create detailed images based on a text prompt. There are also generative AI tools that can help you improve your product photography: they can automatically make adjustments to aspects like brightness and contrast, and even remove or replace backgrounds from images.

According to a 2024 Maison&Objet survey, 34% of HDHT professionals currently use AI tools. 89% of them use ChatGPT, making it the most popular AI tool by far. 80% claim AI helps them save time and be more productive, and 84% agree that AI will become an essential working tool in the future. One out of 2 non-users expressed interest in AI solutions to help them with everyday business matters.

Design

Digital design aids such as digital printing and [FabLabs](#) are increasingly used in HDHT. 3D printing – also known as additive manufacturing – is already applied, especially in furniture. For example, [Recozy](#) prints vases and furniture from recycled plastics. Such present-day commercial examples build on experimental early adopters in sustainable furniture design such as Dirk Van der Kooij's [Endless Chair](#) (2011), made from recycled plastic, and Klarenbeek & Dros' [Veiled Lady chair](#) (2014), made from living mycelium, a fungal material.

In fashion, digital sample development technology is already being used to replace costly and lengthy physical sample processes. This will undoubtedly also become available in HDHT in the near future.

Blockchain technology

[Blockchain](#) is a digital technology that records information across many computers. Each entry is recorded in a block and linked together in a chain which is shared with a network, like a buyer and seller. A recorded entry cannot be changed without altering all the blocks that come after, which requires approval from the network. This makes the data in a blockchain reliable and transparent. As a result, blockchain is particularly suitable for tracking orders, payments and other transactions.

In HDHT, it can also be useful for purposes such as monitoring supply chains, facilitating traceability and preventing counterfeiting. For example, in 2024 Maison&Objet hosted a talk on [how tech protects designers](#), in which tech startup Unikbase explained how they [use blockchain technology to create digital passports with immutable and tamper-proof data](#) for furniture items. This allows the owner to verify authenticity, prove ownership, and/or report loss or theft.

Digital product passports can also contain other data, such as composition, raw material origins and certification. For example, [Recozy](#) uses them to provide insight into the manufacturing, materials, usage and care guidelines, and recycling of their furniture. The proposed [Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation](#) may well make this type of digital product passport mandatory for textiles and furniture. In this context, the passports must include information on topics such as durability, reparability, recycled content and/or availability of spare parts.

Smart products

The home is becoming 'smart'. [IKEA](#) is a frontrunner in this. Digital solutions range from Bluetooth-driven apps that remind you to water your plants to built-in phone chargers in bedside lighting and smart window blinds that you can program to filter the light in your room. This is set to grow, playing into consumer demand for convenience.

Tips:

Stay updated on emerging technologies in HDHT: you can discuss developments with your European buyers and conduct internet searches, and use this input to determine whether a technology is (or could become) relevant for your company.

Embrace digitalisation where you can. The basic versions of generative AI tools are often free for you to experiment with.

When using generative AI, always let a human verify the output and make sure it accurately reflects reality. Do not use the tools for enhancements that you cannot deliver.

Explore partnerships with local technology companies to discover if you can develop 'smarter' products together.

Stay updated on the proposed [rollout of the new Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation](#) and ask your buyers what they need from you.

10. Use the help of specialists in your digital transformation

For more information and help with your digitalisation process, you can check out:

- [ecomConnect](#) – community platform for small businesses in developing countries that want to sell products online. It includes a [readiness quiz](#), [online payment solution finder](#) and [e-commerce cost calculator](#)
- [OECD](#) – the Digital for SMEs (D4SMES) Global Initiative is a platform aimed at knowledge sharing and learning, where governments, businesses and experts cooperate on the digital transformation of SMEs
- [Siemens](#) – provides digitalisation consultancy services to determine the right digital transformation strategy for your company
- [Protiviti](#) – consultancy company with member firms around the world
- Local software/service providers: [SME Vai](#) and [Africa Digital Genius](#) are among those offering digital solutions for business processes like accounting and marketing

[Globally Cool](#) carried out this study in partnership with GO! GoodOpportunity and Remco Kemper on behalf of CBI.

Please review our [market information disclaimer](#).