

SPOTLIGHT

From Novices to Export Stars: Ningbo's Cross-Border E-Commerce Success Stories

By Zhao Yu

On the morning of the 26th, more than 200 foreign trade business owners gathered for the "Brand Globalization Accelerator" Ningbo Cross-Border E-commerce Summit.

The keynote speaker was Qiu Yuxi — a manager in his twenties who oversees the Foreign Trade Department for the Ningbo team at Anji Ansheng Medical Dressing Co., Ltd.

"In 2021, I tried my hand at cross-border e-commerce during school breaks, and I quickly found out losing money was the only thing I could count on," he said, drawing knowing laughter from the audience.

Behind the laughter is a harsher truth: as cross-border e-commerce moves into more competitive waters, relying on platform traffic and waiting for orders has become a dead end.

In Ningbo — a long-standing stronghold of China's import and export trade — a new cohort of entrepreneurs is emerging. Among them are seasoned exporters reinventing their business models, second-generation family operators, and a wave of twenty-something entrepreneurs crisscrossing the city's industrial parks.

20- Something's Aesthetic Medicine Breakthrough

"Cross-border e-commerce in Ningbo has long moved from being an emerging model to becoming the new normal," said Xie Shangwei, Secretary-General of the Ningbo Cross-Border E-commerce Association.

The Ningbo Cross-Border E-commerce Comprehensive Pilot Zone is now home to more than 20,000 e-commerce import and export companies.

After returning from overseas studies in 2024, Qiu took over his uncle's medical



Ningbo Export Trade Fair. [Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

dressings factory and made an aggressive bet: he invested 600,000 yuan in Alibaba.com's four-star guaranteed-results package.

The payoff was immediate. With guaranteed traffic, his cost per click fell from 25 yuan during his early trial runs to 2.62 yuan. Brand certification further boosted credibility, lifting the share of repeat buyers. One overseas client alone placed 60 repeat orders, generating a total of \$900,000 in revenue.

AI has become central to Qiu's strategy. By using data-analysis tools to review 30,000 overseas customer comments, he spotted a 180% year-on-year surge in searches for "medical bandage" coupled with "cosmetic cold compress". Within a week he identified a potential blockbuster product. He went on to obtain the EU's CE marking in 15 days and shifted production into the fast-growing aesthetic medicine market.

The results followed quickly: Qiu earned \$1 million in profit in 2024. By November 2025, revenue had climbed to \$2.5 million — a 150% increase.

Homemaker Revitalizes 27-Year-Old Factory

When An Di, sales director at Ningbo Kaicheng Electric Co., Ltd., stepped onto the stage, some attendees were already whispering as they scanned the program: a long-time full-time homemaker diving into cross-border e-commerce?

She smiled as she introduced herself. "I've now taken over our family's 27-year-old ice-maker OEM factory."

At the time, the business was stuck in a difficult spot: no sales platform, no sales team, and total reliance on OEM production. Less than 10% of sales came from exports — all of it secondary orders passed along by trading companies.

"Relying on OEM work meant we had no control over the market," An said. "We were constantly squeezed on pricing, and margins kept getting thinner."

She set out to overhaul the business, taking charge of sales, launching the factory onto B2B platforms, and building up a brand reputation for it.

At the same time, she re-

structured the customer base. When a Middle Eastern buyer from a seemingly unrelated industry placed an inquiry, her team sent free samples and offered discounts. The effort paid off: the client confirmed a \$120,000 initial order within two weeks.

In just 11 months, the factory completed a dramatic turnaround. The share of export sales surged to 50% of total sales, and the company entered the top 10 in its category on cross-border e-commerce platforms.

More Ningbo manufacturers are making similar shifts — moving from small OEM workshops to brand-driven exporters, and showing growing resilience and momentum in the global market.

Scoring Huge Cable Deals Without Speaking English

When Gao Liang, general manager of Tiantai Cable (Ningbo) Co., Ltd., took the microphone, the first thing he said was, "My English is limited to 'OK' and 'Bye', but AI helps me negotiate million-dollar orders." The room broke into laughter.

A veteran of domestic e-

commerce on Taobao 1688, Gao made the jump to Alibaba.com in 2019 with no prior export trade background. "The operating system is the same, the backend is in Chinese, and AI handles the translation. It couldn't be more convenient," he said.

With decades of experience in cable manufacturing, Gao knew that breaking into overseas markets required meeting safety and technical standards. Within just a few years, the company secured U.S. UL, Europe's VDE, and the British Standards Institution's certifications.

Building trust is central to his customer outreach. Gao recalled one particularly memorable case involving a buyer in India in 2024. Pressed for time, the customer requested a virtual factory inspection. Gao and his team livestreamed the entire production line, from raw materials to final products. The buyer placed a \$30,000 order that same day and has since become a loyal repeat customer, despite never visiting the factory in person.

Exports now account for nearly 20% of the company's business, with annual overseas sales reaching 20 million yuan. "The next step," Gao said, "is scaling up investment, boosting traffic, and improving conversion."

South Korea Surges as Top Destination for Ningbo Travelers Amid Visa Boost

By Lu Xinyan

Amid shifting international travel trends, South Korea has emerged as the leading destination for Chinese tourists, overtaking traditional favorites like Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia, according to major travel platform data.

"We've seen a significant shift in client bookings toward South Korea," said Song Yueping, executive vice general manager of Ningbo International Travel Service. Travelers are favoring trips to Seoul, flight-and-hotel packages for Jeju Island, and winter skiing excursions, with bookings up nearly 30% year-on-year.

The surge is being driven in part by a pilot visa-waiver program in effect from September 29 through June 30 next year, allowing tour groups of three or more Chinese citizens to enter South Korea visa-free for stays of up to 15 days. Jeju Island maintains its existing visa-free policy for both individual travelers and tour groups, permitting stays of up to 30 days.

"A four-day, three-night semi-guided itinerary has been especially popular," said Sun Lei, deputy general manager of China International Travel Service (Ningbo). "Visitors can explore Seopjikoji and Seongsan Ilchulbong, enjoy local cuisine, and soak up the island's winter atmosphere."

Ningbo Lishe Airport reported that outbound traffic to Jeju exceeded 650 passengers from November 19 to 26, with more than 530 traveling for leisure.

Southeast Asia is also benefiting from the travel rebound. Cities such as Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur are attracting Ningbo residents seeking short getaways, while island destinations like Bali, the Maldives, and Penang are seeing rising bookings for the January-February peak season.

"The appetite for island escapes is clear," said Wu Jiechao, manager at Ningbo Wanda International Travel Service.

Further north, Russia is gaining traction thanks to visa-free agreements. Tourists are flocking to Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Vladivostok for cultural experiences including ballet performances, ice skating, and shooting. "Our five-day Vladivostok package is nearly full for December," said Zhou Yanna, a tour leader at Happy Journey (Zhejiang) International Travel Agency.

Looking ahead, the 2026 Lunar New Year holiday—set to span nine days—is expected to further boost outbound travel from Ningbo, particularly to South Korea and Southeast Asia. Travel agencies are focusing on product optimization and diversity to capture the growing market.

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Ningbo Hosts Asia-Pacific Disc Golf Open as Sport Gains Global Momentum

By Jin Lu

On Nov 22, athletes from around the world competed in the 2025 Asia-Pacific Disc Golf Open at Yinzhou Academician Park in Ningbo, underscoring the sport's growing international appeal.

Disc golf, a frisbee sport played on 9- or 18-hole courses under rules similar to golf, now has an estimated 14 million participants worldwide. It was recently added to the World Games

program, marking a step forward in its professionalization.

The two-day competition included 13 divisions across professional, youth, and amateur categories. Certified as a B-tier tournament by both the Professional Disc Golf Association and the China Disc Golf Championship, it gave athletes an opportunity to earn points towards international rankings while broadening public engagement with the sport.

Beyond the competi-

tion, a frisbee-themed market brought together interactive games, local food vendors, souvenir stalls, and major sports brands, turning the venue into a lively destination for athletes and visitors.

An emerging sports industry innovation forum was held concurrently at the University of Nottingham Ningbo, where experts and industry leaders discussed topics including sports commercialization, AI-driven training tools, and smart campus athletics.



The 2025 Asia-Pacific Disc Golf Open attracts over 120 athletes from countries like Finland, Norway, Canada, and the United States.

[Photo provided to Ningbo Times]