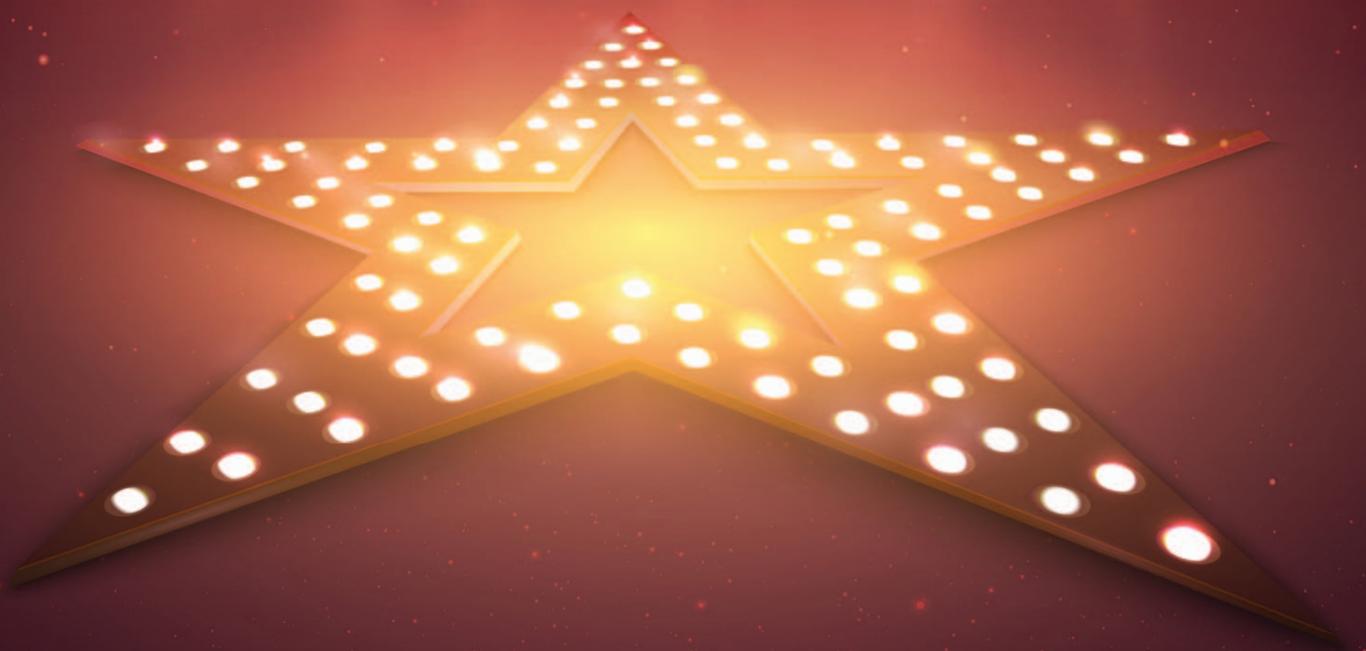


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# THE HOT 100

The 100 most innovative e-retail  
companies from around the globe,  
as selected by our editors  
and researchers.



a publication of

**DIGITAL** 360  
COMMERCE

## 6

overview

## FRESH THINKING

The 100 retail companies featured in the 2019 Hot 100 have taken 100 different approaches to drive consumers to make a purchase—from revamping their websites and apps to opening up forward-looking stores. In doing so, they're offering a glimpse of where retail is heading.

BY ZAK STAMBOR

## 04 GREETINGS

This year's Hot 100 retailers demonstrate that there are many ways to drive e-commerce sales.



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# E-commerce and embargoes

There is a digital awakening occurring in Old Havana.

One clever designer found a way to take her local apparel brand—popular with the burgeoning tourist set—worldwide despite decades of Cuba’s isolation from global markets. In October 2017, Idania del Río’s Clandestina became the first Cuban brand to sell online. Even to the United States.

The move took some finagling, with del Río and co-founder Leire Fernández finding a loophole to sidestep U.S. legislation. The importation of goods from Cuba is heavily restricted, but the law allows for Cuban designers to provide their services to U.S. customers. So the brand’s products are designed in the Havana studio with images uploaded for American manufacturers to print and ship to customers in the United States and abroad.

The last 12 months have been a period of trial and error as the Clandestina team has familiarized itself with e-commerce. Challenges crop up daily.

“When we least expect it, any service we use becomes banned for Cuba due to the embargo, and we have to find an immediate solution,” del Río says.

Employees have to use virtual private networks for almost everything—sometimes even using VPNs to access other VPNs to skirt censorship or geographic online restrictions.

## Clandestina



Clandestina calls the task of managing e-commerce from the brand’s home country, where internet access is spotty, “a little nightmare.” Wi-Fi is expensive, and the connection is highly inconsistent and painfully slow. For the first three months after the Clandestina launched its site, del Río had to run the online store from hotspots around the city before she started getting a signal from the office.

But despite the logistical issues, the team says it tries to abide by the Cuban philosophy to “resolver.”

## Going abroad

After a strong two-year run in the U.S., electric bike maker Rad Power Bikes launched sales into 28 European countries late last year. Its Europe initiative fits the company’s goals of provide efficient and affordable transportation in countries with deep cycling cultures.

“Connecting with people online was key to growing our direct-to-consumer company,” says Ty Collins, co-founder and chief marketing officer at Rad Power Bikes. “E-commerce has allowed us to reach a massive amount of people from around the world that would otherwise take an infinite number of physical storefronts to achieve.”

Earlier this year Rad Power Bikes rolled out a commercial division that aims to provide sustainable transportation and last-mile delivery options for commercial customers including logistics and delivery companies, courier services, and fleets for corporate campuses and universities.

## Rad Power Bikes



VENDOR SPOTLIGHT |

