Case study

Reinventing the wheel

Foldable bike company Brompton rolls out around the globe with help from Adyen
It all began with a magic carpet

Like many inner-city commuters, Andrew Ritchie was fed up with public transport and wanted a solution. “It’s the same old thing lots of people have dreamed of having,” he said, “a magic carpet you can keep in your pocket.” So the engineer and inventor set out to create the next best thing: A foldable bike that’s light enough to tuck under your arm when you hop on the train and sturdy enough to go the distance when you want to cycle. It’s the perfect antidote to train delays and traffic congestion, giving you control over your daily commute.

Since Ritchie made the first prototype back in 1975, the Brompton bike has been fine-tuned into a sleek, robust model, handcrafted in London. The company is first and foremost a manufacturer. Each bike is purpose-built and can be customized from 17 million combinations. Before completion, your bike will have passed through over 60 pairs of hands, and its parts are joined using the highly skilled technique of brazing. The brazers sign their work. Today, the bike company does business in 45 countries around the world.

Rich Spencer, President of Brompton North America, outside the company’s new flagship New York City store.
A direct route to the customer

With production down to a fine art, the company’s next focus was to take ownership of the sales and distribution process. Previously, the customer could custom-design a bike online but had to go to a local dealer to complete the purchase. This meant Brompton was losing out on valuable customer insights as well as relinquishing control of the customer journey.

This prompted the brand to start selling to customers directly, which meant processing payments. So the brand turned to Adyen with the task of going live with an ecommerce site in time for the launch of its new electric bike.

“We had three months to go live in six markets while ensuring the customer experience stayed firmly on-brand,” recalls Harry Mann, Head of Customer Experience for Brompton. “Adyen made this possible with a single platform to process payments across all markets at once, so we were able to roll out quickly and easily. The launch was a huge success and we saw an immediate lift in conversion.”

Picking up speed online and in store

To help Brompton increase its online conversions, Adyen created a one-page checkout, optimized for mobile. The payment is hosted by Brompton (cutting out the redirect to an external URL), but all payment data is hosted on Adyen’s servers, removing the headache of PCI compliance.

“We wanted to make it easier than ever for people to access our products and services,” said Harry. “Now, by taking orders online, we can personalize the journey end-to-end and learn more about our customers in the process.”

The in-store experience is another important way to strengthen the relationship with the customer. Brompton is currently growing its network of Brompton Junction stores around the world. For example, its flagship New York City store has been designed as a place where Brompton owners can congregate to ask questions and meet friends. Visitors can also rent bikes and communicate with each other, and store staff, via Bluetooth-enabled helmets.

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– Harry Mann, Head of Customer Experience, Brompton
Merging lanes with unified commerce

The next step for Brompton is to connect its online and offline sales channels to create even better customer experiences.

From the moment a potential buyer clicks on the Brompton website to the moment they roll out of the store on a bike, the data gathered along the way builds a comprehensive view of each shopper.

Adyen’s unified commerce solution lets Brompton manage both online and in-store payments in one system. Customers’ complete purchase history feeds into the same dashboard and can be viewed in one place.

Rich Spencer, President of Brompton North America, explains: “Whether it’s brick-and-mortar retail, click and collect, or other digital transactions, all of these interactions can be accommodated by Adyen anywhere in the world. The reporting and the level of data has tremendous potential value, helping us make better internal strategic decisions.”

This data can also feed back into the manufacturing process. For example, if ecommerce sales reveal that customers are purchasing new mud guards six months after buying a new bike, the factory could be notified in order to improve the product.

“The more we know about our customers, the better we can serve them,” said Harry. “Adyen’s technology lets us consolidate our channels and harness data, which will help us go from strength to strength.”
Gearing up for global customers

You can now find the iconic, foldable Brompton bike across Europe, the US, and Asia.

Interestingly, in Asia the bike strikes a very different chord with consumers. It’s not seen as a utility commuter tool, but rather a recreational status symbol. A Brompton bike may be displayed as a conversation piece. Maintaining this strong brand equity in Asia has protected the company from the competition of cheap imitations.

The customer demographic also varies greatly across Asia, as Harry explains: “In China we found the typical Brompton customer to be the middle-aged man in his Lycras. In Korea, there’s a whole subculture dedicated to ‘Pimp my Brompton’ where highly customized Brompton bikes are displayed on social media. And in Japan, we teamed up with the social network Line to create a customized bike for Sally the Duck to use on her journey around the world.”

Understanding and catering to these local nuances was crucial to Brompton’s success. It uses market knowledge to localize the customer experience, starting with geo-based personalization for the website. The next step was to make the bike available in the most relevant channel for each market.

China is the top country in terms of consumer app spending, and consumers are accustomed to making high-value purchases from their smartphones. As a result, WeChat has become an important channel for Brompton, with customers thinking nothing of ordering a $2,600 bike from the app. To accommodate this trend, Brompton set up a WeChat store and accepts WeChat Pay both in-app and on its ecommerce site.
Streamlining global operations

As well as letting Brompton customize the payment experience, Adyen makes it easy to customize its fraud management in each market, keeping the company secure without impacting local conversion rates. Brompton also has the flexibility to manage different business models in different markets; money collected from distributors in China can be settled in the UK, while US-based Brompton, Inc. can settle funds locally.

“Our partnership with Adyen is a fundamental to our growth strategy.” Harry said. “We benefit from a global overview with localized control and are learning more about our customers all the time. I’m very excited about what our future with Adyen holds.”
About Adyen

Adyen is the payments platform of choice for many of the world’s leading companies, providing a modern end-to-end infrastructure connecting directly to Visa, Mastercard, and consumers’ globally preferred payment methods. Adyen delivers frictionless payments across online, mobile, and in-store channels.

With offices across the world, Adyen serves customers including Facebook, Uber, Spotify, Casper, Bonobos and L’Oreal.

We'd love to set up a call to discuss how we can help you reach your business goals. Visit adyen.com to get started.