



**IWA**  
OUTDOOR  
CLASSICS

**VISION**

**IWA WHITEPAPER 2025**

**HOW TO FUTURE-PROOF  
THE HUNTING AND SHOOTING  
SPORTS INDUSTRY**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I Editorial / Foreword by Stefanie Leege .....	p. 04–05
II Introduction / The changing trade .....	p. 06–07
III The most important trends in the hunting and sporting firearms trade	
A CONSUMER BEHAVIOR	
01 Changing consumer behavior .....	p. 08–09
02 Experience-oriented and authentic offers .....	p. 09
03 Targeting women as a target group .....	p. 10
B INDUSTRY TRENDS	
04 Digitalization of retail and Retail 4.0 .....	p. 11
05 E-commerce and omnichannel strategies .....	p. 12–13
06 Labor shortage .....	p. 13–14
07 Legal and regulatory changes in the hunting and sporting goods trade .....	p. 15–16
C MARKET AND INNOVATION	
08 Growth markets .....	p. 17–20
09 Technological innovations in weapons and equipment .....	p. 21
IV Outlook / recommendations for specialist retailers .....	p. 22
Forecast by retail expert Magnus Ohlsson for 2025 .....	p. 23–24
V Conclusion / The future of retail. ....	p. 25
VI Sources / Disclaimer .....	p. 26–27



Stefanie Leege, Exhibition Director IWA OutdoorClassics

## I. EDITORIAL

### ***Dear Exhibitors and Visitors of IWA OutdoorClassics,***

*We are witnessing profound changes. The European hunting and sporting firearms market is undergoing a transformation driven by technological, economic, and societal developments. These changes present challenges but also significant opportunities for our industry.*

#### **IWA OutdoorClassics: A Constant in Changing Times**

Amidst this dynamic environment, IWA OutdoorClassics remains a reliable cornerstone and trail-blazer. Our exhibition is more than just a platform for products and services—it is where visions take shape and innovations begin. Here, we forge alliances and navigate the highs and lows together.

#### **Digitalization and E-Commerce: Shaping the Future Together**

Digitalization and e-commerce are revolutionizing trade. IWA is here to support you in mastering this transformation. Through a curated program of expert content and high professionalism, we offer valuable insights and practical solutions to optimize your digital strategies. Our goal: to safeguard your competitiveness and meet your customers' needs in the best possible way.

#### **Sustainability and Innovation: IWA as a Catalyst**

Sustainability and technological innovations are key to the future of our industry. IWA OutdoorClassics fosters dialogue on new materials and technologies that enhance product quality and durability while meeting sustainability demands. We provide a platform where these innovations are showcased and discussed.

#### **Regulatory Challenges: Stronger Together**

Regulatory requirements in Europe are complex. IWA keeps you informed about the latest developments and helps you adapt successfully. Through close cooperation with industry associations and experts, we offer the support you need to meet legal requirements and maximize business opportunities.

#### **The Whitepaper: A Valuable Tool for the Industry**

This year, we proudly present our whitepaper, "Trade in Transition." It analyzes current trends and challenges in the European hunting and sporting weapons market, highlights the impact of digitalization, the importance of sustainable products, and opportunities driven by technological innovations. It also offers insights into legal and regulatory changes affecting our industry.

Our whitepaper is a tool for everyone striving for success in this dynamic market landscape. It provides essential information and practical guidance to actively shape change and secure the future of our industry.

#### **Moving Toward a Successful Future Together**

Our market is expected to grow significantly in the coming years. This growth offers exciting opportunities but also demands flexible adaptation to evolving expectations and regulatory requirements. IWA OutdoorClassics is your partner on this journey. Together, we work to reclaim success and actively shape the future of our industry. This is what defines our trade fair—the shared commitment to a successful future and a strong specialist trade.

We look forward to welcoming you to IWA OutdoorClassics 2025 and experiencing this transformation in trade together. Let's seize this opportunity to exchange knowledge, strengthen networks, and secure the future of our industry.

Warm regards,

*Stefanie Leege*

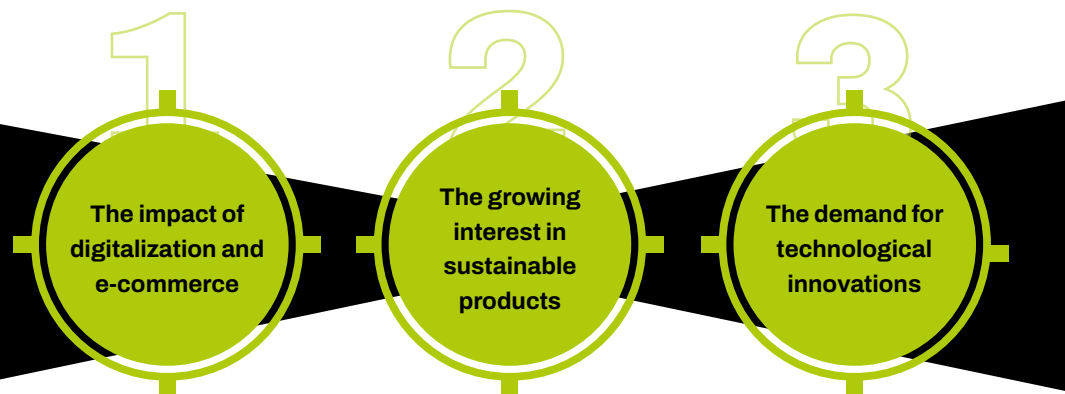
Stefanie Leege

Exhibition Director IWA OutdoorClassics

## II. INTRODUCTION

# TRADE IN TRANSITION

The European hunting and sporting firearms market is evolving rapidly, driven by technological, economic, and societal developments. Three key trends are shaping the industry:



Digital transformation and e-commerce are accelerating the pace of change. Retailers are increasingly relying on digital solutions and online sales in order to be more flexible and more broadly positioned. However, digitalization also requires better data protection measures and efficient logistics in order to remain competitive. The need for easily accessible information, simple ordering and direct delivery is strongly shaping consumer behavior.

In Europe national regulations and cultural differences influence the hunting and sporting firearms trade. The industry faces challenges such as stricter regulations, growing competition and changing social values. competition and changing social values.

Technological innovations offer considerable opportunities. Sustainability and new materials such as carbon fiber lead to lighter, more robust products, while anti-corrosion coatings extend the service life.

### Challenges for Brick-and-Mortar Retail

The current situation in the retail sector is varied. In recent years, the industry has economic changes due to stricter legal regulations and changing customer requirements. The German market is characterized by a certain degree of stagnation. Stationary specialist retailers in particular are struggling with falling sales and increasingly intense competition. There are many reasons for this.

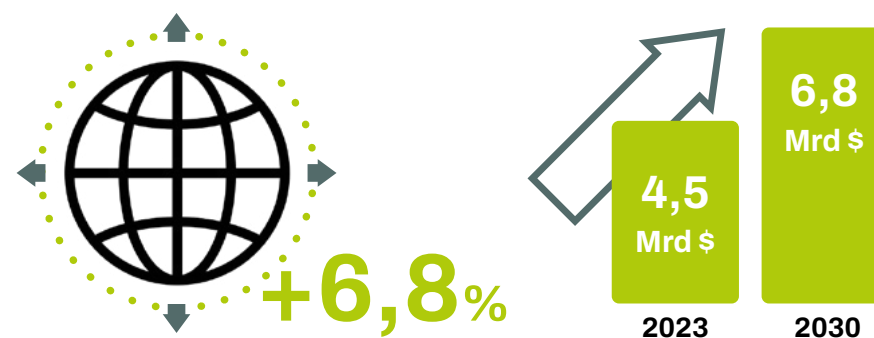
The combination of inflation, political uncertainties and a certain degree of saturation after the corona-related peak in demand is leading to consumer restraint and falling demand. Both manufacturers and retailers are sitting on large stocks, leading to price pressure, margin problems and pressure on retailers.

In the individual European countries, the situation is heterogeneous due to different traditions and regulatory bases. On the other hand, large trade fairs such as IWA OutdoorClassics continue to be highly attractive for exhibitors and visitors. It promotes the international specialist trade through innovations and new products. Manufacturers and retailers exchange information about trends such as sustainable products and modern safety standards to increase the competitiveness of the trade.

*An analysis of the various forms of retail shows clear differences: While large online retailers are benefiting from changing consumer habits small brick-and-mortar retailers are struggling to survive.*

The growing interest of a younger and female target group is opening up new market potential. These target groups often attach importance to ecological sustainability and social responsibility. Products that use natural materials and energy-saving production are gaining in importance.

Cooperations with outdoor brands also shows potential for growth, as both sectors share similar target groups and interests in nature conservation and the ethical use of resources. Such collaborations help to overcome outdated ideas about hunting and open up the industry to new customer groups. Industry experts see these developments as important opportunities that can strengthen trade structures and the industry's image through targeted synergies.



In the coming years, the global market is projected to grow by 6.4% annually—from USD 4.5 billion in 2023 to USD 6.8 billion by 2030. This dynamic market landscape presents exciting opportunities but also requires flexible adaptation to evolving expectations and regulatory demands to ensure long-term success.

Despite the current challenges, market analysts see long-term growth potential. Technological innovations, new product developments and the increasing popularity of shooting sports could boost demand.

### III. THE MOST IMPORTANT TRENDS IN THE HUNTING AND SPORTING FIREARMS TRADE

## A: CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

### 1. Changing Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior in the hunting and sporting firearms trade is changing significantly. Various factors are influencing this change. Retailers who understand and respond to these trends can gain a competitive advantage.

#### Price Awareness and Quality Orientation

Ongoing economic uncertainty and inflation have increased consumers' price awareness. According to a study, 76% of German consumers are paying more attention to **product prices**<sup>03</sup> when shopping. At the same time, customers are attaching increasing importance to quality and durability. They prefer to invest in high-quality and durable equipment instead of choosing cheap alternatives in the short term. The hunting and sporting firearms industry, which is **characterized by high quality**<sup>04</sup>, can score points with consumers here.

#### Sustainability and Environmental Awareness

Despite increased price awareness, sustainability remains an important factor in purchasing decisions. Customers are increasingly looking for environmentally friendly materials and **sustainable production processes**<sup>05</sup>. There are approaches to this in the hunting and sporting firearms sector that are not yet established across the board in firearms manufacturing.

However, high-precision weapons require special alloys and material properties that recycled metals cannot always fulfill. Biodegradable materials play virtually no role. An early trend in this direction was the development of lead-free ammunition as an environmentally friendly alternative to conventional lead ammunition. In the meantime, it has improved ballistic properties. Materials such as copper and brass ensure precision, penetration and less barrel fouling; however, the harder materials lead to greater abrasion in older barrels. Lead bullets with a tombac jacket have a slight advantage as they are less abrasive. **Innovations**<sup>06</sup> are driving development forward.

#### Digitalization and Online Shopping

The e-commerce market for sporting goods, including hunting and shooting equipment, is growing steadily. In the EU, 75% of 16- to 74-year-olds in 2023 said they had already made a purchase online. For retailers, this means that a **strong online presence**<sup>07</sup> and a seamless digital shopping experience are essential. Despite the high intensity of advice, online full-range retailers such as Alljagd, Frankonia and Jagdwelt24 already dominate the hunting sector. Stationary retailers cannot avoid digitalization in order to remain competitive.

#### Personalization and Customizing

Customers are placing increasing value on individualized products. In the hunting and sporting firearms sector, this is reflected in the demand for tailor-made solutions and **personalized accessories**<sup>08</sup>. In addition to in-depth advice, gunsmith workshops and service are a USP of retailers in the sector and an absolute advantage over online retailers.

#### Experience-oriented Consumption

Despite the trend towards online shopping, the shopping experience in stationary retail remains important. Retailers should therefore **create unique experiences**<sup>09</sup> and intensify interaction with customers. These trends offer both challenges and opportunities for hunting and sporting goods retailers. A clear positioning in terms of quality, digitalization and customer service combined with personalized offers can strengthen customer loyalty and tap into new target groups.



State-of-the-art examples include the new Frankonia flagship store in Rottendorf and the new shooting and retail world "Target World" - a test & store concept from Target World Landscheid.

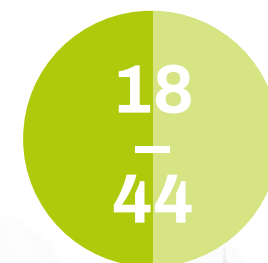
### 2. Experience-oriented and Authentic Offers

The increasing demand for experience-oriented and authentic offers in the hunting and shooting sports trade shows a broader trend in consumer behavior. At the same time, hunting influencers offer new opportunities to appeal to younger and digitally-savvy target groups.

Influencers connect brands and fans by offering a more personal and **authentic perspective**<sup>10</sup> on hunting and shooting sports. This is especially relevant as 50 percent of hunters are **between the ages of 18 and 44**<sup>11</sup>.

Retailers need to make their offers and sales channels more flexible and personalized. AI-supported solutions can help **generate personalized product recommendations**<sup>12</sup> and improve the shopping experience. In addition, retailers should use both online and offline channels to provide a **seamless and personalized shopping experience**<sup>13</sup>.

By adapting to these trends, retailers can strengthen customer loyalty and tap into new target groups. It is important to continuously gather customer feedback and adapt strategies accordingly to stay relevant and competitive.



years is the age of half of all active hunters





### 3. Specifically Address Women as a Target Group

The hunting and shooting sports industry is changing: more and more women are discovering these traditionally male-dominated fields. This trend has gained momentum over the last ten years. Manufacturers, distributors and retailers should no longer hesitate to address this growing target group.



of the hunter exams are taken by women.

In Germany, the German Hunting Association estimates that around **25 percent of hunting examinations are taken by women**<sup>14</sup> – an increase of more than a fifth in the last ten years. Similar developments can be seen internationally. In the USA, women already make up 22% of hunting participants, which corresponds to around **3.1 million female hunters**<sup>15</sup>. Interest in shooting sports is also **growing among women**<sup>16</sup>. They are interested in sport shooting, self-defense and Olympic disciplines.

To successfully reach this audience, companies should:

- 🎯 Developing women-specific products
- 🎯 Organize events and workshops for women
- 🎯 Involve female role models and influencers in marketing campaigns
- 🎯 Create an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere in stores
- 🎯 Hire women in the sales team to better understand the perspective of the target group

By targeting women, companies can expand their customer base and contribute to the diversification and modernization of the industry. In the long term, this promotes broader social acceptance of hunting and shooting sports.

## B: INDUSTRY TRENDS

### 4. Digitalization of Retail and Retail 4.0

Digitalization is changing the entire retail process and offers retailers who use these technologies a competitive advantage. Digital processes such as automated inventory management, electronic payment systems and AI-supported customer services increase efficiency and improve customer loyalty.

#### EXAMPLE

#### Academy Sports + Outdoors



The successful implementation of these strategies at Academy Sports + Outdoors provides an example from another sector and a look beyond the horizon. The company has developed an omnichannel strategy that links online and offline retail:

- 🎯 **Local availability check:** Customers can check the availability of products in their nearest store in real time on the Academy Sports e-commerce platform. This feature enables informed purchasing decisions and ensures that desired items are available locally.
- 🎯 **Click & Collect:** The option to order online and collect in-store is popular. Over 80 percent of Academy Sports' e-commerce sales are processed via BOPIS (Buy Online, Pick-up In Store) or Ship-from-Store.
- 🎯 **Growing e-commerce presence:** In the second quarter of 2024, e-commerce sales accounted for 9.7 percent of total sales, an increase of 30 basis points compared to the previous year.
- 🎯 **Innovative partnerships:** The cooperation with DoorDash for same-day deliveries expands digital opportunities and appeals to younger and urban customers.
- 🎯 **Digital loyalty programme:** The "myAcademy" rewards programme offers digital benefits such as faster checkout online and in the app as well as personalized offers.

These digital initiatives increase customer interaction and satisfaction. Academy Sports predicts over 10 million members in its loyalty program by the end of 2024.

For retailers in the hunting and sporting goods sector, this example shows how important it is to invest in digital technologies and omnichannel strategies. The integration of online and offline channels, coupled with data-driven decisions and personalized customer experiences, is increasingly becoming the key to success in modern retail.

Of course, these concepts cannot be transferred 1:1 in a highly regulated industry, as weapons and ammunition are often not suitable for simple shipping and numerous regulations must be complied with. However, there are great opportunities here, particularly in the equipment and accessories sector.

## 5. E-Commerce and Omnichannel Strategies

In the digital era, retailers in the hunting and sporting goods sector need to be present both online and offline to meet customer expectations. Omnichannel strategies seamlessly connect both worlds and offer a comprehensive shopping experience. This is particularly important in the regulated hunting and sporting firearms trade. Successful retailers integrate their sales channels.

### EXAMPLE

#### Jagd&Sport-Shop: Click & Collect Model

Jagd&Sport  
.store

The Jagd&Sport store, a leading provider for hunters, sport shooters and nature lovers, uses an innovative Click & Collect model. Customers buy online and collect the products from the store. **This effectively combines online and offline retail<sup>17</sup>**, especially for regulated products such as weapons and ammunition. Customers enjoy the convenience of online shopping and can inspect products on site and receive advice.

The combination of e-commerce and brick-and-mortar retail offers many advantages:

Greater range and better  
accessibility

More efficient inventory management  
and logistics

Stronger customer loyalty through  
personalized experiences

Compliance with legal regulations  
when using digital benefits

Successful omnichannel strategies require the seamless integration of technology, processes and customer service across all channels. Retailers who master this will secure a **competitive advantage<sup>18</sup>**.

### EXAMPLE

#### Silencer Central: Digital Platform for Regulated Products

SILENCER  
CENTRAL

Silencer Central, a leading supplier of silencers, has developed a digital platform that handles the entire purchasing process – including legal documentation – digitally. Customers obtain approvals via a user-friendly interface and purchase regulated products easily and efficiently. **This solution<sup>19</sup>** simplifies the complex purchase of silencers and makes it more accessible while meeting all legal requirements.

Omnichannel strategies improve the personalization of the customer experience. The hunting outfitter Frankonia uses an intelligent checkout marketing solution to make personalized offers and increase the conversion rate. By integrating online and offline data, retailers create comprehensive customer profiles and carry out **targeted marketing<sup>20</sup>**.

The use of smartphones requires mobile-optimized websites and apps. Sporting goods retailers such as Nike show how apps serve as a **sales channel and platform<sup>21</sup>** for customer loyalty and service. In the hunting and sporting arms sector, apps could provide information on hunting grounds, shooting ranges or legal regulations.

Implementing a successful omnichannel strategy in the hunting and sporting goods retail sector presents specific challenges. Legal regulations and safety requirements play a central role here. At the same time, this strategy opens up the opportunity to reach new customer groups and strengthen customer loyalty. Retailers who combine the advantages of online retail with the expertise and service of brick-and-mortar retail can achieve a decisive competitive advantage.

*Hunting and sporting goods retailers need to develop a robust omnichannel strategy to remain competitive in a rapidly changing market environment and meet rising customer expectations.*

## 6. Labor Shortage

The hunting and shooting sports industry is facing a major challenge: despite its growing popularity, there is a lack of qualified junior staff. This problem reflects the general **shortage of skilled workers in Germany<sup>22</sup>**, which could rise to 3.1 million by 2030.

### Causes and Challenges

There are several reasons for the shortage of workers in the industry:



#### **Ideological divide:<sup>23</sup>**

Younger generations often see the industry as unfashionable and not future-oriented.



#### **Demographic change:<sup>24</sup>**

The ageing of society is also affecting this sector.



#### **Lack of promotion of young talent:<sup>25</sup>**

The industry may have invested too little in attracting and promoting young talent.



#### **Competition from other sectors:<sup>26</sup>**

Flexible working models and attractive career paths in other sectors attract potential employees.



## Solutions and Modern Strategies

To overcome these challenges, leading companies such as RWS and WAIMEX rely on innovative approaches:

### Flexible Working Models

Adaptation to modern work concepts for a better work-life balance.

### Open Corporate Culture

Creating an inclusive working environment with clear career paths and development opportunities.

### Technological Innovation

Emphasizing the high-tech aspects of the industry to attract tech-savvy young people.

### Events and Workshops

Organizing events<sup>27</sup> that provide insights into the industry and generate interest.

### Further Training Opportunities

Offering specialized training programs such as obtaining a hunting license or training to become a master gunsmith.

### Focus on Sustainability

Emphasis on nature conservation and responsible wildlife management to appeal to environmentally conscious young people.

### Authentic Communication

RWS uses digital media and social networks to appear modern and attractive. WAIMEX relies on the retailers.

## Best Practices



RWS GmbH sets out to:



WAIMEX focuses on:

- Regular "open days" at the training center
- Direct discussions between visitors and trainees
- Transparent communication of corporate values
- Flexible working models and digital processes
- Promotion of industry-specific training and further education programs
- Combining traditional know-how with modern technology
- Using social media to reach young people
- Organizing events and workshops for beginners

*Overcoming the labor shortage in the hunting and shooting sports industry requires a rethink and active action.*

By emphasizing sustainability, technological innovation and modern working practices, the industry can increase its attractiveness for young talent. The successful integration of the next generation of professionals will be crucial for the future viability and growth of the industry.

## 7. Legal and Regulatory Changes in the Hunting and Sporting Firearms Trade

The hunting and sporting firearms trade in Germany and Europe is faced with constant legal and regulatory changes that can have a significant impact on business. Dealers must be flexible and adaptable in order to comply with legal requirements and minimize potential risks. Some of the most important current developments and tips for dealers are presented below.

### TIP FOR DEALERS

*These developments will also be an important topic in the supporting program of the IWA, especially in the lecture program on the SHOOTING EXPERTS' Stage.*

### Tightening of Gun Laws in Germany

Das deutsche Waffenrecht hat sich in den letzten Jahren mehrfach verschärft, zuletzt durch das Dritte Waffenrechtsänderungsgesetz, das am 1. September 2020 in Kraft trat. Wichtige Änderungen umfassen:

Verification of the need to possess firearms every five years

Regular inquiry with the constitutional protection agency as part of the reliability check

Expanded marking requirements for firearms and essential components

### TIP FOR DEALERS

*Implement a robust compliance management system that includes regular training for employees and automatic notifications of changes to the law.*

### Tightening of the EU Firearms Regulation

The EU has revised its Firearms Regulation in order to combat the illegal arms trade. The main changes are as follows:

Extension of the scope of application to various semi-automatic weapons in category B and clarification of categories A, B and C

Better EU-wide networking of the electronic licensing systems (ELS) of the member states

Increased monitoring of imports and exports





## TIP FOR DEALERS

*Invest in digital systems that are compatible with the ELS to ensure smooth cross-border transactions.*

### Extended Labeling Requirements

The new regulations provide for extended marking requirements for weapons and essential parts. This includes:

More detailed marking of weapons and essential parts

Electronic reporting obligation for firearms manufacturers and dealers regarding the handling of firearms and essential parts

## TIP FOR DEALERS

*Implement a digital inventory management system that automatically captures and manages advanced labeling requirements.*

### General Recommendations for Retailers

UP-TO-DATE

- 1 **Stay informed:**  
Use industry associations, trade publications and regulatory information sources to stay up to date on upcoming changes.

INNOVATION

- 2 **Digitize your processes:**  
Invest in modern IT systems that allow you to efficiently adapt to new regulatory requirements.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

- 3 **Train your staff regularly:**  
Ensure that all employees are familiar with current regulatory requirements.

NET-WORK

- 4 **Maintain close relationships with authorities:**  
Good contact with the relevant authorities can be helpful when interpreting and implementing new regulations.

STRATEGY

- 5 **Plan ahead:**  
Anticipate possible future regulations and prepare your company for them.

*Through proactive action and continuous adaptation, retailers in the hunting and sporting firearms sector can not only ensure compliance with legal requirements, but also achieve competitive advantages and strengthen the trust of their customers.*

## C: MARKET AND INNOVATION

### 8. Growth Markets

*The hunting and shooting sports industry is experiencing remarkable growth in various segments. The following areas are particularly promising:*



2 MRD.\$  
expected global  
turnover  
by 2030

#### Hunting and Outdoor Clothing

The market for specialized clothing is experiencing **strong growth**<sup>28</sup> with a projected annual growth rate of 8.6 percent until 2030. Manufacturers and retailers should focus on technically advanced products that offer features such as waterproofness, breathability and durability. Collaborations with outdoor brands also show potential for growth, as both industries share similar target groups and interests in nature conservation and the ethical use of resources. The expected total global turnover by 2030 is 2 billion US dollars. The reasons for this are:

- Rising popularity of outdoor activities, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic
- Growing demand for technically advanced clothing with properties such as waterproofness, breathability and durability
- Increasing number of newcomers and returners to hunting and shooting sports

#### Optical Devices

The **market for riflescopes**<sup>29</sup> and other optical devices is growing steadily:

- Forecasts see growth from USD 765.9 million in 2021 to USD 1,193.6 million in 2028
- Annual growth rate of 6.54 percent
- Rising demand for high-precision and technologically advanced optics

Annual growth rate of  
**6,54%**





Amy9x19" at the IWA OutdoorClassics 2024



## Sporting Arms

The **sporting arms market**<sup>30</sup> is also showing positive developments:

- Expected growth from USD 4.5 billion in 2023 to USD 6.8 billion in 2030
- CAGR of 6,4 percent
- Annual growth rate of 6.4 percent
- Increasing participation in shooting sports and rising demand for precision weapons
- Technological innovations in design and materials
- Safety features and customization options

## Digital Technologies and E-Commerce

Digitalization opens up new **growth opportunities**<sup>31</sup>:

- Increasing demand for digital systems to comply with new EU regulations (EU-wide electronic licensing system (ELS))
- Digital systems for recording and managing import and export permits
- Growing e-commerce market for hunting and shooting sports products
- Innovative omnichannel strategies combine online and offline retail



increasing proportion of female hunters

**+46%**

## Female-Specific Products

With the increasing proportion of female hunters (up 46% since 2011) and sport shooters, a new growth market is emerging:

- Hunting clothing and equipment specifically tailored to women, as well as clothing and equipment for sport shooting
- Customized weapons and accessories for female hunters and sport shooters
- Targeted marketing strategies and events for female target groups

## Sustainable and Environmentally Friendly Products

Growing **environmental awareness**<sup>32</sup> is driving demand for:

- Lead-free ammunition
- Sustainable materials in hunting and outdoor clothing and equipment
- Environmentally friendly packaging and production processes

These growth markets offer manufacturers and retailers in the hunting and shooting sports industry a wide range of opportunities for expansion and innovation. To make the most of this potential, companies should react flexibly to market trends and continuously invest in product development and customer service.



Innovative approaches and hands-on technology – that's also what the IWA OutdoorClassics has to offer.

Cooperation with outdoor brands also shows potential for growth, as both sectors share similar target groups and interests in nature conservation and the ethical use of resources. Such collaborations help to overcome outdated ideas about hunting and open up the industry to new customer groups. Industry experts see these developments as important opportunities that can strengthen retail structures and the industry's image through targeted synergies.

For manufacturers and retailers in the hunting and shooting sports industry, these growth markets offer a wide range of opportunities. The focus should be on innovation, sustainability and the integration of digital technologies in order to remain competitive and tap into new customer groups. At the same time, it is important to keep an eye on changing regulatory requirements and react flexibly to them.





### Knife Market

The international market for outdoor and sports knives is growing robustly. In 2023, the estimated market value will be 2.26 billion US dollars. It is expected to rise to 3.43 billion US dollars by 2030, which corresponds to an annual growth rate of 6.2%. North America dominates with a market share of 38%, followed by Europe with 32% and the Asia-Pacific region with 20%. Fixed blades lead the segment with a value of 1.75 billion US dollars. Folding knives and side-opening knives also have significant shares.

Growth is driven by increasing participation in outdoor activities, rising demand for survival equipment, advances in material development and growing interest in customized, multifunctional knives. Blade shows play an important role in the industry. Events such as the BLADE Show in Atlanta, the IWA OutdoorClassics in Nuremberg and the Shot Show in Las Vegas provide platforms for manufacturers, retailers and enthusiasts to present the latest innovations and network.

The KNIFE trade fair in Solingen shows a **growing interest**<sup>33</sup> in high-quality knives for hunting and outdoor activities. Trends include:

**Technically innovative materials such as stabilized wood**

**Limited editions and collector's items**

**Multifunctional outdoor knives**

Despite a positive outlook, the industry faces challenges such as strict regulations, fluctuating raw material prices and intense competition. However, continuous adaptation to changing consumer preferences and regulatory requirements promises further growth and diversification in this dynamic market.

## 9. Technological Innovations in Weapons and Equipment

The weapons industry is currently undergoing significant technological change. New materials and networked technologies are increasingly shaping the development of weapons and accessories. Retailers who incorporate these innovations into their product range at an early stage can gain a competitive advantage. Here are some of the most important technological trends:

### NEW MATERIALS

- **High-performance polymers**<sup>34</sup>: Manufacturers are increasingly using light-weight but robust plastics for weapon frames and components. These offer a good balance between weight and durability.
- **Composite materials**<sup>35</sup>: Combinations of polymers and metals enable optimum weight distribution and improved performance.
- **Additive manufacturing (3D printing)**<sup>36</sup>: This technology allows the production of complex geometries and individualized components.

### INTEGRATED ELECTRONICS

- **Embedded sensors**<sup>42</sup>: These sensors monitor the weapon's condition and usage.
- **Improved safety systems**: Electronic safety devices and access controls increase safety.

### NETWORKED TECHNOLOGIES

- **Smart guns**<sup>39</sup>: Biometrics or RFID technology increase security and prevent unauthorized use.
- **Digital target systems**<sup>40</sup>: Advanced optics with integrated ballistic computers and environmental sensors improve aiming accuracy.
- **Connected accessories**<sup>41</sup>: Wearables and accessories provide real-time data for shot analysis and performance improvement.

### MODULAR SYSTEMS

- **Customizable platforms**<sup>37</sup>: Weapons with interchangeable components allow for different purposes.
- **Multi-caliber systems**<sup>38</sup>: These systems allow quick changes between different calibers.

### ADVANCED AMMUNITION

- **Environmentally friendly ammunition**<sup>43</sup>: lead-free and biodegradable options are gaining in importance.

*Retailers who incorporate these innovations into their product range at an early stage can position themselves as pioneers and appeal to tech-savvy customers.*

However, it is important that retailers not only offer the products, but can also provide in-depth knowledge about these new technologies. Training for sales staff and informative product presentations strengthen customer confidence in these new technologies.

Retailers should also keep an eye on the legal framework for new technologies, as regulations in this area can change quickly. Close cooperation with manufacturers and industry associations helps to stay up to date and provide customers with expert advice.

#### IV. OUTLOOK

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION FOR SPECIALIST RETAILERS

*In the short term, companies should strengthen their online presence and increase customer loyalty through targeted marketing measures. In the medium term, they should develop a comprehensive omnichannel strategy and continuously expand their range of services. In the long term, they aim to position themselves as sustainable and innovative providers. It is important to regularly measure their own progress and adjust their strategy if necessary.*



Numerous trade visitors at the IWA OutdoorClassics 2024

*Intense competition, changing legal conditions and rapid technological developments require a high degree of adaptability. Companies that master these challenges and take advantage of the opportunities will be successful in the long term.*

Specialist retailers can strengthen customer loyalty and tap into new target groups such as women, outdoor enthusiasts and young people. They should consistently digitize and create seamless shopping experiences. Sustainability is a necessity. Specialist retailers are positioning themselves as responsible companies by promoting environmentally friendly products and establishing transparent supply chains.

At the same time, they need to make their bricks-and-mortar stores attractive by offering experiences, personal advice, workshops and service. The combination of online and offline presence offers numerous synergies and enables individual customer care.

## FORECAST OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE EXPERT MAGNUS OHLSSON FOR 2025



Magnus Ohlsson, Retailomania

*Throughout history, retail has changed continuously – and sometimes external circumstances such as economic downturns, technological breakthroughs or other circumstances have caused development to take a leap. Since the end of the Cold War, we in the Western world have lived in peace and with strong economic development, as a consequence of globalization and free trade - but also through the efficiency gains brought about by digitization.*

With the pandemic, a large part of what we knew about the world was put on hold – and in its wake we have experienced changes in consumption, digital acceleration, inflation and economic turbulence. Russia's attack on Ukraine also created an energy crisis and further strengthened inflationary tendencies, and developments in the Middle East have also contributed to greater uncertainty. With a new presidential administration in the White House, we now face another possible development in the form of a looming trade war. The world has become a more turbulent place and the uncertainties are more than what we have been used to in recent decades.

It is a fact and something we can state that the

fact that we cannot rewind the development to the way it was before the pandemic and the other developments changed our conditions to act.

In the light of developments in recent years, it may seem that the market is unmanageable, but at the same time, it can be stated that economic cycles and crises have come and gone throughout history and that the “new normal” is waiting to happen.

*In addition, it is worth noting that in all market situations and that there have been economic downturns as well as upswings, there have been both winners and losers.*

During 2025, we can expect that the complexity will continue and that we will have to deal with a continued turbulent environment, while we also need to take responsibility for the journey towards a more sustainable development in all parts of society. Here are my 10 predictions about the development in the coming year, which we will also discuss more about in February.

#### DON'T MISS

##### MAGNUS OHLSSON'S TRADE FAIR KEY NOTES

Thursday, February 27, 11:30 a.m. | Friday, February 28, 3:00 p.m.

SHOOTING EXPERTS' Stage, Hall 1



## OHLSSONS FORECASTS

- 1 **Digitalization** affects the entire retail trade, regardless of whether the purchase itself is made online or in store, in that the consumer mainly uses digital channels to do research during the customer journey.
- 2 **Ecommerce** has grown by offering a more efficient distribution method than a physical store, given that customer acquisition costs at the beginning of the digital transformation were lower online, compared to paying rent for stores. After 20 years of digital transformation and the concentration of marketing to Google, Meta and TikTok, CAC has skyrocketed and we are now seeing the pendulum start to swing back. The store rent is the new customer acquisition cost.
- 3 **D2C (Direct-to-Consumer)** has been a strong trend in the years around the pandemic and still holds both potential but also risks. It costs to drive traffic to own channels and the risk is concentrated. A sustainable future channel strategy considers the benefits of being able to share the costs of generating traffic with others.
- 4 **Consumer behavior** during turbulent times can be expected to be short-term and change quickly on both positive and negative news – compare the short-term changes at the start of the pandemic or at Russia's invasion of Ukraine. After a period, even negative news becomes part of the normal picture.
- 5 During **economically challenging periods**, consumers tend to put off major purchases, have a longer period to investigate options and act more on offers.
- 6 **A strong brand that has created a clear identity** has an advantage in creating a higher willingness to pay, something that becomes even clearer. Offering value for money through quality, personalization or other factors is key in both boom and bust.
- 7 The **shift towards sustainability** is not optional. The EU's regulations will require investments to be able to participate in the market regardless of how consumer demand is assessed.
- 8 **Consumers' focus on health and well-being** is a long-term trend where both the outdoor market and the hunting market have an important opportunity for continued growth. Organic meat, outdoor life and the longing to return to nature is a growth potential that will become even more important.
- 9 In our uncertain world, **globalization tends to back off**, as it stands now. The pandemic and the actions of the Houthis in the Red Sea show the vulnerability of having the production located in Asia if the market is in Europe and the USA. Homeshoring/nearshoring/friendshoring will accelerate as a consequence of global developments.
- 10 The **future will not be what it once was** – blessed are the flexible for they shall not break.

## V. CONCLUSION

### THE FUTURE OF THE TRADE

*The future of specialist retailers in the hunting and sporting firearms sector lies in digitalization, sustainability and customer orientation.*

1

#### DIGITALIZATION

Retailers must expand their online presence and digital sales channels within the scope of legal possibilities without neglecting brick-and-mortar retail.

2

#### SUSTAINABILITY

The trend towards environmentally friendly products and practices is becoming increasingly important in the industry. The high quality of products in the hunting and sporting goods industry is an advantage.

3

#### PRODUCT DIVERSIFICATION

Retailers can tap into new customer groups and achieve synergies by expanding their product range to include related areas such as outdoor equipment.

4

#### SPECIALIZATION

Specialist retailers offer added value through their expertise, personal advice, gunsmith workshop and service that online platforms cannot provide.

5

#### EXPERIENCE-ORIENTED

Brick-and-mortar retailers should make greater use of experiential shopping and events to attract customers.

Overall, the sector shows growth potential. However, retailers must adapt to changing market conditions and consumer behavior in order to remain successful. The combination of traditional specialist retail and innovative digital solutions is likely to lead the way into the future.



# EYES ON TARGET.

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