

TDM STORIES #3

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Zalando is one of Europe's greatest success story in tech. Our company was founded in Berlin in 2008, and soon grew to employ about 15,000 employees in 100 countries to become Europe's biggest online vendor of clothing and footwear. Present in 15 markets, our key to success is innovation: seizing opportunities from ground-breaking technological developments such as Artificial Intelligence.

As a research scientist in Zalando's Research lab, I try to find new ways to enable machines to better interact with people in a more conversational way to see how we can continuously match and surpass our customers' expectations. Technologies like Text and Data Mining can help us create tools to do that: from creating virtual shopping assistants to analysing the latest fashion trends and customers insights from conversations happening on the web or social media, we can pioneer technology that will create the best online shopping experience for our customers, right here in Europe.

One of my current projects focuses on teaching computers to understand different human languages, and trying to do TDM in the face of multilingual data, for example how to transfer the tools we built to operate a search function in German to do a similar search function in Spanish without having to rebuild a specialized system for each language.

Being able to mine data that is freely available online, or that we have legal access to, as we collaborate a lot with Universities as well, is what will enable us to develop these kinds of ground-breaking tools and further innovate. Grey areas around copyright rules are a challenge for us: there's a lot of uncertainty from our side in terms of understanding what would or would not be allowed. A copyright exception for TDM that covers both public and private sectors, and that is applicable across the EU, would certainly put a cross-border company like Zalando in a much better position to effectively compete with e-commerce giants.