

# Expanding Zappos to New Zealand

## **Letter of Transmittal**

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Tony Hsieh Chief Executive Officer Zappos.com Henderson, NV 89074

Dear Mr. Hsieh,

Enclosed is a copy of "Expanding Zappos to New Zealand." This report is a summary of my findings on where our next international expansion should be located. After extensive research, I have proposed a Zappos site in Auckland, New Zealand and have detailed the benefits.

If you have any questions and/or comments regarding this report, please feel free to contact me at the address or phone number above. I look forward to working with you again soon.

Sincerely,

**Chad Tomas** 

**Enclosed: Final Report** 

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# **Executive Summary**

Even though we've had troubles in the past in establishing an international market, we should expand to Auckland, New Zealand because of favorable conditions on a number of fronts.

Firstly, the costs and time to establish a company in New Zealand are nearly second to none. The entire process from business registration to logistics involves very few processes and takes a short time to accomplish. We're also able to provide service around the globe from a Zappos New Zealand. In most cases, the New Zealand Post can deliver faster than USPS around the globe and shipping prices are low enough that we can subsidize the costs of shipping almost completely to our customers, something that couldn't be done with Zappos Canada.

The market was also a big consideration in the matter. Hundreds of shoe manufacturing plants in East Asia make it faster to restock items in Zappos New Zealand because of the factories' close proximity. It's also advantageous because of New Zealand's great relations with those countries. Free trade agreements with big markets like Australia and China make importing those goods fast and cheap, and we're able to offer the best prices to our customers while maximizing profits because of that reason. The New Zealand market is also favorable for starting a business now, even in a down economy. The New Zealand dollar continues to get stronger and an investment in the market could increase Zappos stock in the long run.

A Zappos in New Zealand would also be beneficial for all parties involved, including our employees, customers, and the country itself. Auckland offers a lot to do that contributes to the high quality of life, while living prices are slightly cheaper than the US at the moment, making it an ideal place for our employees. The technology-driven New Zealand would also help our online retail business to grow and would show positive effect on the city. Zappos New Zealand would attract other businesses to the area as well as help out smaller, existing businesses in the area, which would create jobs and generate revenue for the country. Lastly, the demographics of the country make New Zealand an ideal place to get the word around and increase site traffic.

Overall, there is no other country that can meet the same kind of benefits that New Zealand has to offer us.

### Thesis of Research

Establishing a Zappos fulfillment center overseas would be critical to the success of establishing a presence in international markets, and our best option to do so would be in Auckland, New Zealand based on a number of factors including business costs, area of service, and geography.

# **Zappos Background**

Zappos is a privately-owned online shop dedicated to selling shoes and apparel. Started in 1999, Zappos was founded by Nick Swinmurn with investments from Tony Hsieh and Alfred Lin. Hsieh came on board as co-CEO in 2000 and by 2006, Hsieh took over the company for good after Swinmurn's departure. In

2009, Zappos became a subsidiary of Amazon. Today, Zappos has become the largest online shoe store backed by the belief of great customer service and \$1 billion in gross sales. Zappos currently has offices in San Francisco and Las Vegas as well as a fulfillment center in Kentucky.

# Case Study: Zappos Canada

Deciding to widen our audience, we offered service to our Canadian neighbors in 2009 and it was met with open arms. Over time however, Zappos Canada did not deliver the same type of customer service as it did in the US, and our Canadian customers noticed.

Sarah C., a Zappos customer from Canada, noted on her blog that Zappos Canada has "much poorer navigation than on the US site" and "cartoony images," ending her rant with, "Are Canadians not worthy of good styling, up-to-date design and fun widgets?" (C., Sarah).

Other customers commented on her post, adding their own comments of Zappos Canada:

A user by the name of Mariane wrote, "If this is supposed to be a Canadian site, show the price in Canadian dollars!" (C., Sarah).

Yue wrote, "Zappos Canada is an insult to Canadians...They do not have...free shipping...they do not mention the high import fees upfront...They are definitely a big failure in my eyes" (C., Sarah).

Emma wrote, "Zappos please either put some love into your Canadian site and update it or close down this insult to ecommerce" (C., Sarah).

An anonymous user commented, "I really wanted to purchase a pair of Birkenstock...Then when browsing the Canadian site, they do not have that brand. It's crazy how there are so much less selections on the Canadian site" (C., Sarah).

On April 1, 2011, Zappos Canada closed for good, announcing shipping only to the United States and its territories ("Canada.zappos.com"). Zappos CFO/COO Chris Nielsen addresses the closure in a letter to our Canadian customers, citing our lack of delivering "WOW through service" ("Canada.zappos.com"):

We have made the difficult decision to shut down the canada.zappos.com site and stop shipping to Canada. One of our core values is to "deliver WOW through service". That means the best selection of brands and products that can meet just about every individual's needs as well as fast, free shipping and free returns, all at competitive pricing. Our Canadian customers know that we have not lived up to these service levels.

Chris then went on to discuss Zappos' problems concerning brand distribution and lengthy customs inspections:

Product selection on canada.zappos.com is limited due to distribution agreements with the brands we sell in the United States. In addition, we have struggled with general uncertainty and unpredictability of delivering orders to our Canadian customers given customs and other logistics constraints.

Overall, there were just too many humps and hurdles to jump over that made shipping orders to Canada unappealing for both parties. Zappos' main focus of delivering the best customer service wasn't realized with Zappos Canada and as a result suffered an unfortunate demise.

# By the Numbers: The Cost of Shipping to Canada

### Canada Custom Duties

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) ensures that Canadians can get duty-free items manufactured in the United States and Mexico. Unfortunately, most Zappos products are manufactured elsewhere, meaning duties of at least \$1.00 needs to be collected by Canada Customs (Munroe).

### Canadian Taxes

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) charges 5% on almost all items imported into Canada (Munroe).

### Customs Fees

Canada Post, the postal service for Canada, charges an additional \$8.50 handling fee in order for each package to clear Canada Customs (Munroe).

### Shipping Time

Assuming we ship the shoes from our warehouse in Kentucky using the Unite States Postal Service Priority Mail, the shipment could take six to ten days before finally reaching its destination (USPS.com).

# The Need for Expansion

Zappos Canada proved to be a good learning experience if we are to service international customers again. In order to do so, it is imperative to expand our company by establishing an international warehouse. Zappos Canada showed that it would be costly to ship directly from our Kentucky distribution center without incurring large shipping fees.



Figure 1 – Zappos Gross Sales from 2000 to 2009. Source: Zappos.com

Based on our gross sales as shown in Figure 1, Zappos made \$1.2 billion in 2009 when Zappos Canada was first launched. When we compare our 2008 to 2009 sales to our 2007 to 2008 sales, we see a similar increase from the previous year of approximately 20%. Based on that information, our 2009 numbers should have been higher because of increased sales from Canadian customers, which would have boosted our gross sales in 2009 closer to \$1.35 billion.

In order to maximize on our profits, we need to expand our offices internationally if we are to offer service to other customers around the world. Doing so in Canada would've increased customer satisfaction and decreased shipping times, thus leading to better customer retention rates and higher profits.

# **Goals for International Expansion**

Using what we learned from our Canada failure, there are several criteria that we should keep in mind when seeking out possible candidates for international expansion:

### • Zappos Family Core Value #1: Deliver WOW Through Service

Expanding with the Zappos Family Core Values in mind is essential to maintain company integrity. Zappos believes in delivering "WOW" through service, which the company felt was not apparent in our expansion in Canada. Higher prices and longer shipping times was the downfall of Zappos Canada and in order to expand successfully, we need to avoid these same problems in order to follow through with our commitment to deliver WOW service.

### Reach as broad an audience as possible

Reaching a large enough audience increases our margin of profit due to high volume. Our international expansion would also need to serve the biggest area of customers in order to reach a variety of demographics.

### • Offer consistent service on international orders as on domestic orders

If free shipping is not a possibility, we want to ensure that international customers are getting great deals with the lowest shipping prices possible. We also want to offer the same selection to our international customers as our US customers while delivering the same great customer service. This in turn would increase our ratio of returning customers, which would increase our sales.

### • Maximize profit margins while maintaining competitiveness

When expanding internationally, the key factors include taxes and customs, and we want to expand to a location that is most beneficial to Zappos in terms of revenue by reducing the cost of logistics.

### Location of best fit

We want to find the best location that adheres to other Zappos Family Core Values not only for our customers, but for our employees. The country's culture must fit the Zappos culture. Our ideal expansion would be located in a country with a high quality of life, rising tech sectors with a focus on green technology, and a high propensity for our business to affect the local economy for the better.

In a 2009 interview with marketer Katrina McKay, you noted that our Canada expansion was in response to requests from Canadian customers and wasn't based on any metrics (McKay). Based on the Canadian expansion, the metrics above should be heavily considered to ensure a successful expansion. Overall,

the vision of international Zappos locations should mirror the company's core beliefs of delivering the very best customer service and the very best customer experience.

### **New Zealand: The Next Frontier**

Based on our research, we feel that our best option for international expansion is New Zealand. The proposed business plan is to establish a fulfillment center for our shoe department in Auckland, New Zealand in order to serve our international customers.

### The Bottom Line

Other than locating in China, a warehouse in New Zealand would be one of the closest locations to shoes manufactured in countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and China. This would save time and money on importing shoes to our warehouse, and would serve a wide geographic area including Asia, Australia, and the entire Pacific.

# Supporting the Move to New Zealand

### **Business Costs**

In terms of business costs, New Zealand is a very savory expansion option compared to other areas like Hong Kong, United Kingdom, and even the United States. New Zealand boasts one of the best places to expand a business according to a 2010 report by The Wall Street Journal (May). This is because New Zealand presents a very good cost-to-time ratio, enabling Zappos to establish a business as soon as possible with ease while maximizing sales. The entire procedure from registering a business to getting shipments delivered to customers is very quick and comes at comparatively low costs.

### **Business Registration**

When we talk about business costs, we look at actual costs but we also took into consideration the time it takes to register the business with the country and the procedures needed to get the business cleared.

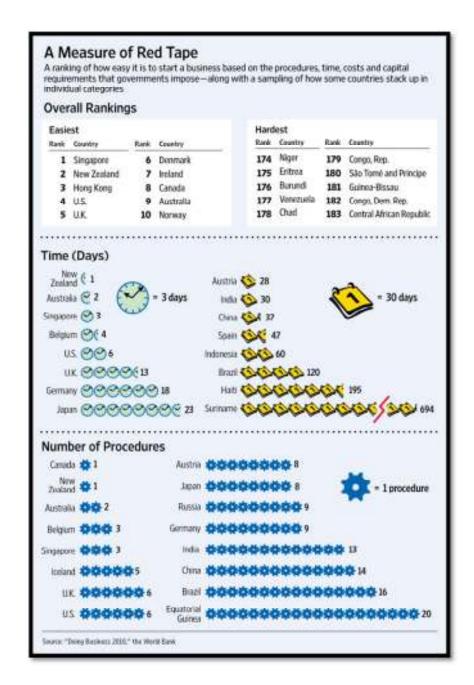


Figure 2 - Time and Procedures to Start a Business. Source: The World Bank

Figure 2 supports a move to New Zealand- boasting a world-best one procedure that takes one day to clear before the business can successfully operate in the country. The company only needs to register with the Companies Office online to register a company name with given stakeholders and tax information, and a certificate of incorporation will be issued via email within minutes of receiving the proper forms ("Starting a Business in New Zealand").

### **Breaking Ground**

Again, New Zealand excels when it comes to dealing with construction permits and registering property, ranking second and third in the world, respectively ("Rankings of Economies"). The

process of obtaining construction permits in New Zealand consists of six different procedures that take a combined total of 64 days to complete, which includes obtaining consents, receiving inspection, and establishing utilities (Starting). No process takes longer than 30 days, and associated costs would total approximately \$15,299 NZ, or \$11,772 US (Starting).

Registering property is even easier. The entire process, which spans two procedures over two days, costs only \$1,802 NZ or \$1,387 US (Starting).

	New Zealand	Hong Kong SAR, China	Singapore	Global Average
Procedures (number)	2	5	3	5
Time (days)	2	36	5	31
Cost (% of property value)	0.1	4.1	2.8	4.4

Table 1 - Statistics of Registering Property Around the World. Source: The World Bank

Table 1 compares the figures for New Zealand with Hong Kong and Singapore, two countries who rank in The World Bank's top 3 countries for ease of doing business. Though New Zealand falls behind slightly to Hong Kong and Singapore in that respect, New Zealand's numbers are extraordinary when trying to register property in the country, which is highlighted by the 0.1% cost to property value ratio.

### **Logistics**

Logistics was the biggest reason why Zappos Canada didn't succeed. Shipping wasn't free and the delivery time was disappointing, which led to lower customer satisfaction rates, something that Zappos prides itself in. Establishing a Zappos New Zealand would be beneficial to the company as well as our customers. The shipping rates at the New Zealand Post are low enough for the company to cover shipping costs to customers both domestically and internationally.

Let's imagine that we could offer shipping to New Zealand from our Kentucky warehouse. Typically, shipping domestically using a USPS Medium Flat Rate Priority Mail box (11" x 8 %" x 5 %") that could fit a pair of two-pound shoes would take 3-5 days and cost approximately \$10.95, which is already covered by Zappos (USPS.com). Still, assuming \$18.00 shipping is the maximum amount that Zappos can afford to cover¹, a shipment from the United States to New Zealand would take 6-10 days and the shipping cost difference billed to the customer would be approximately \$27.50 (USPS.com). Shipments to other countries from the United States may take even longer to arrive and cost even more.

If we were to establish a Zappos branch in New Zealand, shipping prices and times would be completely different. New Zealand Post, the postal service of New Zealand, offers competitive

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Zappos Canada offered \$10 flat rate shipping. Shipping cost to Canada according to USPS.com is approximately \$28, so Zappos covers \$18 of shipping fees (\$28 - \$10).

pricing on shipping charges. Based on the same parameters in the situation above, a Zappos New Zealand could ship domestically to our New Zealand customers for only \$5.53 USD with a delivery target of 1-3 days. Zappos would easily be able to cover the \$5.53 shipping costs and offer free shipping.

Estimated Shipping Costs (in US\$)							
	то						
		US	New Zealand	Australia	Asia	Europe	Canada
	New Zealand	\$1.58	FREE	\$1.58	\$1.58	\$5.41	\$1.58
FROM		3-10 days	1-3 days	3-10 days	3-10 days	3-10 days	3-10 days
	United States	FREE	\$27.50	\$27.50	\$27.50	\$27.50	\$10
		3-5 days	10-25 days	10-25 days	10-25 days	6-10 days	6-10 days

Table 2 - The estimated shipping costs to various countries using New Zealand Post and United States Postal Service.

Shipping prices estimated after the \$18 covered by Zappos is taken off. Sources: New Zealand Post and United States Postal

Service

On top of that, Zappos New Zealand would be able to ship international orders to countries with fast delivery times and low shipping costs, which would adhere to the Zappos Core Value of "delivering WOW service." Table 2 shows a significant decrease in the customer's shipping costs if a Zappos New Zealand is established. Because of high shipping costs, we aren't able to ship internationally from the US, but a Zappos New Zealand would only charge \$1.58 to most parts of the world, shipping to Europe would only be \$5.41, and even shipping to Canada would only be \$1.58("Sending Internationally"). Even better, New Zealand Post promises a target delivery of 3-10 days for international orders compared to 10-25 days to the same regions for USPS (Sending).

### Area of Service

Zappos New Zealand would allow us to ship to almost everywhere around the world with low costs, but it also presents one of the best locations because of New Zealand's proximity to shoe factories, the strength of the market, and good international relations with neighboring countries,.

### **Proximity to Shoe Factories**

Nike, Reebok, and Adidas are the three biggest shoe manufacturers in the world and together, they represent a 69% market share of the footwear industry (Van Dusen). The best way to capitalize on profits from selling their shoes is to find the optimal location close to these shoe manufacturing warehouses.

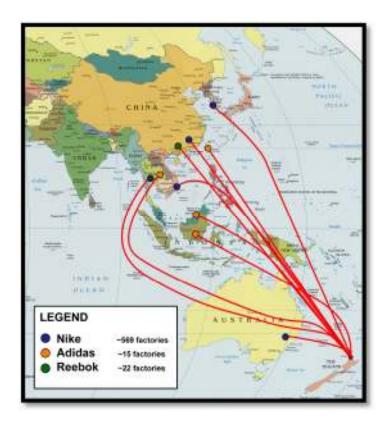


Figure 3 - Paths of travel from various disclosed shoe factories to New Zealand in East Asia. Sources: New Mexico State University and Seattle Pi

Normally, our fulfillment center in Kentucky would have to order shoes from manufacturers in East Asia as well as Latin America, which would take weeks because of customs and would cost a lot. Figure 3 shows New Zealand's close proximity with various shoe factories in East Asia. A headquarters in Auckland in particular would decrease shipment times because of nearby ports. Combined with good relations from most of these countries as well as cheap and fast shipping, Zappos would be able to save more time and money in order to meet the supply and demand of customers through a New Zealand fulfillment center.

### **Strength of the Economic Market**

Great Britain and other European Union countries presented other viable options for expansion, but New Zealand stood out over the others when talking about the strength of currency. When the United States' credit rating was lowered in August, the value of many currencies increased in relation to the US dollar. Although Great Britain saw an increase of 5.18% of its Pound sterling from August to November, the New Zealand dollar rose 9.42% in the same time period (Yahoo! Finance).

According to Bill English, New Zealand's Finance Minister, the New Zealand dollar is in "safe-haven" status and the economy is in "pretty good shape" compared to most developed nations (Tarrant). While other nations like the United Kingdom, Japan, and the EU battle their respective debt problems, New Zealand's economy, which is corruption free ("Expanding a Business in New

Zealand"), has already "devised a toolkit" in the event of crashing markets in the United States and around the world (Tarrant). The local market is highly deregulated and guarantees New Zealand companies stability, extensive free trade, and active government support for investments (Expanding). With a stabilized market to go along with a strong New Zealand dollar that's only getting stronger in a volatile global market, now would be the best time to take advantage of the economic situation in New Zealand.

### **International Relations**

Though the New Zealand population of 4.4 million people represents only 1.4% of our current domestic market, there is a lot of potential upside for increasing our market share because of New Zealand's international relations with other countries ("New Zealand").

Overall, New Zealand's foreign policy is oriented toward "developed Democratic nations and emerging Pacific economies" ("Foreign Relations of New Zealand") and is said to "hold the key" to Pacific Island markets (Expanding). But New Zealand's strong foreign policies don't stop there- the New Zealand-China Free Trade Agreement became the first free trade agreement with China, while ease of access to Australia is guaranteed through open market agreements ("Doing Business in New Zealand" 5). Imports and exports to and from China and Australia represent the biggest open markets to New Zealand, but foreign trading is also prevalent with European countries including Germany, Italy, and the UK.

Country	Imports	Exports	Country	Imports	Exports
Australia	7,652	6,589	Malaysia	945	468
China	4.033	1,566	Singapore	1,240	428
Germany	1,804	789	Taiwan	880	773
Indonesia	586	465	Thailand	951	338
Italy	874	446	UK	1,192	1,432
Japan	4,082	3,260	United States	4,064	4,373
South Korea	1,024	1,081	Total (world)	22,837	30,817

Table 3 - 2005 Merchandise Imports and Exports in millions of NZ dollars. Source: Wikipedia

The total numbers for imported and exported merchandise as shown in Table 3 show promise for big margins of profit. Zappos New Zealand can expose the trading channel between China, Indonesia, and the rest of South-East Asia where most shoe manufacturing warehouses are located. Zappos New Zealand's area of service, then, would span as far as the UK to the east and Canada to the west. Ideally, we're looking at a potential market of 4 billion-plus customers that would increase our gross sales by a factor of 12, or a \$12 billion international market. By taking advantage of New Zealand's good international relations, we can extend our market further than just our New Zealand customers.

### **Affecting Geographics**

Geography and how it affects a business is an important concept for any company to consider. While it is important to understand how geography would affect the business, it's also important to consider how we as a business can affect the geography. Opening a Zappos

anywhere needs to show benefit to our customers, our employees, and neighboring businesses in order to build good rapport and ensure that specific Zappos branch lasts a long time.

### Location, Location

In response to relocating the office from San Francisco to Las Vegas, you mentioned that you "want to be in an area where everyone feels like they can hang out all the time and where there's not a huge distinction between working and playing" (Medina). As a result, we took into consideration locations that would be "employee-friendly" that also followed two important Zappos Family Core Values: create fun and a little weirdness, and build a positive team and family spirit. Auckland, New Zealand offers one of the best places for our employees to do business while having fun.

On a business level, Auckland makes logical sense. The port city is connected locally and globally by highly efficient communication technologies like logistic efficient ports, a range of global airline service and high-capacity submarine fibre-optic cables (Expanding). Cutting edge research has put New Zealand in the forefront of information and communications technology which would help improve Zappo's online presence focusing on great customer service (Expanding). In addition, New Zealand is quickly rising to become a green technology powerhouse, allowing Zappos to utilize New Zealand's "natural advantages in international competition" while leaving a smaller carbon footprint in the world's 15<sup>th</sup> cleanest country (Vancouver Sun).

On the personal side, New Zealand has plenty to offer for everyone. Because Auckland is a port city, there is a beautiful view of the Pacific Ocean where you can find some of the best snorkeling. The city side of Auckland is teeming with night life where our employees can enjoy the best cafes, restaurants, and clubs that New Zealand has to offer. For those with families, there's a theme park in Auckland as well as a zoo. For those wanting to get away, Auckland offers a beautiful country side as well. Living prices in New Zealand is 17.89% lower than the US, while Auckland living prices are 4.22% lower than Las Vegas, NV where our current headquarters reside (Numbeo). New Zealand also ranks 15<sup>th</sup> in the world in terms of quality of life, which ranks in the same tier as the United States (Economist). Overall, Auckland, New Zealand offers the greatest value of living and has to enough to offer to please our employees.

### **The Trickle Down Effect**

An expansion would also need to have a positive effect on the local market. Rather than making smaller businesses close because of our expansion, we need to welcome other businesses into the neighborhood in order to create jobs and help the economy.

When we moved our offices to Las Vegas, the move was welcomed with open arms by the community as well as the mayor, who saw it as a "game changer". The move proved to be a helpful one for local businesses that were reaping the benefits from the trickle-down effect. Residents around the area are already expecting a turn-around in real estate as well as a "rebirth of Las Vegas" (Schoenmann). Jody Sherman, CEO of ecomom.com, an Internet retailer, said that the area is "ripe for redevelopment" and having an anchor like Zappos would "draw a

lot of young companies in the area" (Schoenmann). Though the move isn't set to complete until 2013, downtown Las Vegas has seen in uptick in new businesses because of Zappos' arrival.

Though Schoenmann argues in his article that the Las Vegas expansion probably couldn't be done in a similar city because of zoning laws, politics, real estate prices, and other impediments, he didn't consider international cities (Schoenmann). Auckland, New Zealand is one of the few cities that fits the bill- as mentioned earlier, New Zealand has the best zoning laws, advertises a corrupt-free government, and boasts better real estate prices than the United States. They also welcome new businesses in the country. An office comparable to our Las Vegas office in Auckland would create around 2,000 Zappos jobs alone, but the move would also help smaller businesses in Auckland as well as the country's economy by creating more revenue and jobs in the surrounding area.

### **Demographics**

Demographics play an important role in where we decide to expand as well. A whopping two-thirds of our current customer base is between the ages of 18-49 (Quantcast) and is tech-savvy. Therefore, it is important to find a suitable location that mirrors a similar demographic distribution where the population shows technical smarts. We should look no further than New Zealand, whose main demographic lies in the same 18-49 range as our current market (Demographics). And as mentioned earlier, one of New Zealand's main industries is Information Technology.

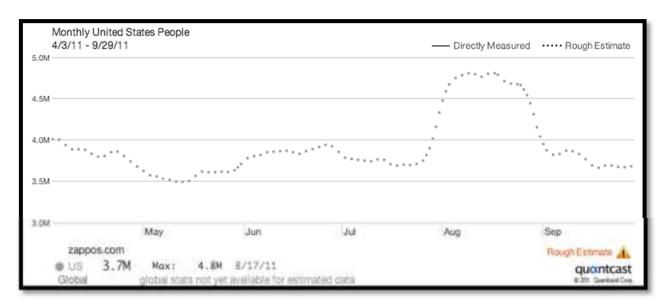


Figure 4 - Estimated traffic volume for Zappos.com in the US from April 2011 to September 2011. Source: Quantcast.com

Looking for the right demographic as well as technical education would help to boost our image in two ways: it maximizes our traffic and increases sales. We would be able to cater to the same demographic, meaning that we'd get more traffic to the site than an expansion based in a country where the main demographic is represented by the elderly. Figure 4 shows the estimates of our current traffic to our Zappos website with an average of about 3.7 million

visitors a month. Directing our efforts to New Zealand would significantly boost those numbers, and because of the global reach in Auckland, traffic would soar even higher. As a result, we would see a direct relationship with our gross sales.

Aiming the expansion at tech-savvy users accomplishes the same thing as aiming for the right age demographic. Zappos employs the use of product demo videos on the site, which is said to impact sales of 6% to 30% (Robertson). Aiming at tech-savvy users would increase sales closer to the 30% mark. The use of social media would also help to spread the word of Zappos New Zealand- Facebook alone garners 50% of New Zealand's population ("Facebook Statistics by Country"). Placing Zappos in Auckland would help to take advantage of New Zealand's social networks as well as appeal to the same demographic.

### Conclusion

Considering our initial criteria for a new international expansion, Auckland, New Zealand seems to be the perfect fit:

- Zappos Family Core Value #1: Deliver WOW Through Service
  - Contributing factors like proximity to key shoe factories in East Asia and global relations help Zappos to deliver wow through service. We can ship packages out as quickly as we receive them with little hassle, and we're able to ship out to customers from all countries from New Zealand.
- Reach as broad an audience as possible
   With a Zappos branch in New Zealand, we'd be able to ship not only to customers in New
   Zealand, but all around the world as well. The increased volume of customers would help to boost our gross sales significantly.
- Maximize profit margins while maintaining competitiveness
   New Zealand's international relations with surrounding countries give them the edge because of established free trade agreements with big markets like Australia and China. As a result, taxes and customs charges would be less, maximizing our profits while giving our customers the best prices.
- Location of best fit

Auckland is a perfect spot to combine business with pleasure. The expansion there would fit because of demographics and leading technologies, and the creation of jobs would generate revenue for neighboring businesses.

New Zealand represents a unique opportunity for us to expand. No other country shows the same qualities as New Zealand, and we should take advantage of that by starting the process of expanding there as soon as possible.

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