

STARTING THE GLOBAL DIGITAL JOURNEY: How to Create the Best International Web Strategy

SILVIA CARTER

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The [Digital Exporter Series](#) consists of seven independent books with more than 100 international case studies, each sharing the best tools, actionable solutions, and step-by-step explanations on how to sell online across channels and borders.

- Book 1 – [STARTING THE GLOBAL DIGITAL JOURNEY: How to create the best international web strategy](#).
- Book 2 – [GETTING CLIENTS OVERSEAS, ORGANICALLY: How to set up local, international & global SEO](#).
- Book 3 – [GETTING CLIENTS OVERSEAS, BY ADVERTISING: SEA, SMA and other acquisition channels](#).
- Book 4 – [SELLING ONLINE INTERNATIONALLY: How to set up & manage a cross-border e-commerce](#).
- Book 5 – [SELLING ONLINE INTERNATIONALLY: How to sell on local & international marketplaces](#).
- Book 6 – [DEVELOPING A STRONG INTERNATIONAL BRAND: Multilingual social media & social selling](#).
- Book 7 – [DEVELOPING A STRONG INTERNATIONAL BRAND: Multilingual inbound marketing & marketing automation](#).

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Thanks

This work is the result of several years of research in export strategies and international digital marketing. It would not have come to life without my husband, Michael, who wonderfully supported me all the time and to whom I dedicate this book.

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...

Special thanks go to Claudia Piunti, who designed the cover of this book.
Cover photo by [Alex Wong](#) on Unsplash.

The Author

Silvia Carter has been active in international multichannel sales for more than 20 years. She has developed her career in cross-border trade and global digital marketing for both consumer products and B2B sectors.

As an entrepreneur with a dual expertise in export development and online sales, she founded and manages ToWebOrNotToWeb, a service provider specialized in multichannel export growth to help businesses increase sales and brand awareness in several countries, online and beyond.

In her work as an author, Silvia contributed to *Le marketing des start-ups* by Véronique Hermann-Flory (Eyrolles, 2017) and is a co-author with Jean-Éric Pelet of *User Experience in Web 2.0 Technologies and Its Impact on Universities and Businesses* (IGI Global, 2020). She is also the author of *Développer son business à l'international grâce au webmarketing* (Eyrolles, 2019), which inspired The Digital Exporter Series.

Silvia holds an Executive MBA from HEC Paris, where she is the pro-bono chair of the Alumni Advanced Technologies Club, and a degree in web development and digital strategy from the Digital Campus Paris. She also teaches courses in the field of global web marketing at the EMLV Business School and at ISCOM in Paris. Silvia decided to start teaching, in addition to her other professional activities, to share her expertise and develop new professions in digital export management.

Introduction

Marco Polo, Amerigo Vespucci and Christopher Columbus are just a few examples, among so many others, of international Italian spirits It is a fact that Italians are particularly 'international'. But I have had to learn how to become so: when I was young, I was marked by a total phobia of German and a deep allergy to other languages, all combined with a real aversion for any foreign cultural universe. Too complicated! Why bother when I had everything I needed near my home in Italy and in Italian?

Until the day when my home filled up with travelers: almost everyone around me spent time traveling, for work, study, holidays. So much so that remaining Italo-Italian became a handicap. So, there I was, launched for an Erasmus year at Trinity College in Dublin with an English vocabulary of ten words! Since then, my international journey has also become part of my work. First as an international marketing manager, then as an export and international sales director. As an expatriate in France, I started dealing with all the internet-related issues on the international scale. That was in the late 2000s when the internet was not as 'easy' as it is now. The level of confusion was the normal thing almost everywhere. Fed up with that confusion, I wanted to understand how the internet worked technically and to learn the best practices. That is why I decided to take a master's degree in web marketing in 2012 and, after that, to create ToWebOrNotToWeb. Today, I help companies sell internationally online on the several digital channels that the internet offers.

Nowadays more and more affordable and simple digital tools are available for entering foreign markets in a way that would have been unthinkable ten years ago. The recent 'Future of Business Survey' carried out by Facebook, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank about companies active on the internet, shows that two out of three exporting companies achieve more than half of their international turnover through the web and that 45% of them achieve even more than 75% of their

international turnover. The OECD also argues that, since these online tools are available to any type of business around the world, even microenterprises can now achieve significant business overseas¹.

That was the situation before the Covid-19 crisis. The coronavirus brought lockdowns, social distancing and an unprecedented drop in traditional business. That forced people to enter a new digital age where the web, the social networks and all the other digital applications are the key tools they can use to have an almost normal life. Digital technologies are therefore essential, now more than ever, to preserve a business as well as to develop it in new markets. Companies that are behind with these digital technologies will risk losing their business at home and abroad. And many of them are still struggling to understand how to use these digital technologies on the international scale. Consider the case of a French business that wants to develop its online sales in Germany. It can choose among different options for the website domain to use, such as www.example.de, or www.example.com/de, or de.example.com, or www.example.fr/de, or fr.example.com/de. However, each one of these options will reach a different number of people depending on the different digital technologies applied to the website, as you can see in the following table.

Domain type & SEO techniques	The target that search engines understand	Segment	Number of people that the website can reach
www.example.de	Country = Germany	German people in Germany	79,127,551
www.example.com/de + geolocalisation & hreflang	Country = Germany Language = German	German people in Germany	79,127,551
www.example.com/de + hreflang	Language = German	German-speaking people around the world	92,304,792
de.example.com + geolocalisation & hreflang	Country = Germany Language = German	German people in Germany	79,127,551
www.example.fr/de	Country = France Language = German	German people in France	130,000*
fr.example.com/de	Country = France Language = German	German people in France	130,000*

Why digital technologies are important².

¹ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Entrepreneurship at a Glance 2017* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2017), https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/industry-and-services/entrepreneurship-at-a-glance_22266941.

² The sources of the numbers followed by * are <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats18.htm#german> & https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communaut%C3%A9_allemande_en_France.

Helping those companies is critical and it is the purpose of these books. The Digital Exporter Series brings immediate actionable solutions on how to grow a B2B, B2C and C2C online business and on how to do that internationally. It consists of seven books, each on a different topic, with more than 100 case studies that describe step-by-step all the web tools and techniques for cross-border digital business.

The idea for The Digital Exporter Series came from my French book, *Développer son business à l'international grâce au webmarketing*, which was published by Eyrolles in France at the end of 2019. I wrote that book mainly for French-speaking digital exporters. Although inspired by it, this new series is very different from the French book. It is not just a simple translation from French into English: it is a full adaptation to the digital environments around the world. And, for that reason, The Digital Exporter Series, instead of being one book, is seven independent books, each on a different topic.

[The Digital Exporter Series](#) is for all entrepreneurs that want to start or accelerate their cross-border online business in the most effective way at the lowest risk during the Covid-19 crisis and beyond.

That's also what motivates me in my professional life: contributing to value creation around the world by increasing the number of companies selling online beyond their national borders with the innovative digital tools that are available today. Because, for everyone and everywhere, growing export sales is much easier nowadays, thanks to digital tools used the right way. So, for all entrepreneurs around the world, I have a piece of advice: don't miss the train!

P.S.: I am always fascinated by the experiences of international business expansion and would love to read yours if you want to share them with me here: silvia.carter@towebornottoweb.com.

Disclaimer

It took me several months to research and write The Digital Exporter Series, even a bit longer than originally planned.

During the same time, the internet and the web ecosystems did not stop. That might have produced some discrepancies between what I wrote and what you can find on the web.

While I will do my best to update the content of The Digital Exporter Series as regularly as possible, I am not able to keep it perfectly updated all the time.

If you find something that should be changed or added or if you cannot find something specific in The Digital Exporter Series, contact me at silvia.carter@towebornottoweb.com, and I'll be happy to help you out.

All the companies that I have mentioned as examples or as tools or for other reasons relevant to the purpose of The Digital Exporter Series are totally independent from my work. They do not have any direct or indirect interest in The Digital Exporter Series, nor do I in their business.

The Digital Exporter Series is intended for educational and informational purposes. All photos, images and screenshots, if not created by me, have either been purchased, used with permission, credited and linked back to their original sources or believed to be in the public domain. All are used to comment on, give example of, and explain the subject matter of The Digital Exporter Series. I consider that this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material within the meaning of 17 U.S.C. §107. All rights and credit go directly to its rightful owners; no copyright infringement is intended.

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SILVIA CARTER

STARTING THE GLOBAL DIGITAL JOURNEY: How to Create the Best International Web Strategy

Before getting started, you need to understand the opportunities and threats that a business can find on the web on an international scale. It's the only way to set the best direction of your multichannel development overseas.

This book explains the fundamentals of the internet and the essential web tools needed to plan a digital strategy effectively calibrated to your company's resources and export targets.

Book 1



CHAPTER 1

THE ORIGINS OF THE WEB AND ITS GLOBAL NATURE

“

In a world increasingly dominated by ‘likes’, ‘hashtags’, ‘tweets’ and so forth, SMEs have trouble understanding and effectively managing the digital acquisition of prospective clients as well as the creation of international value.

Why and how did it all start? And more importantly, how does the ‘world wide web’ work?

THE WEB AND THE INTERNET ARE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS

If you think the web and the internet are the same thing, think again! The difference between the two is very important. To understand the web, you must first understand the internet.

The internet was created in 1969 by the United States Department of Defense. The American network ARPANET, an acronym for Advanced Research Projects Agency Network, had to ensure digital communications between all strategic centers and at any time in the context of the cold war: it had to make sure that all the communications could continue even in the event of a Soviet nuclear attack. If one or more connected sites were destroyed, communications had to be delivered to recipients by alternative routes.

Almost all military and research centers, public and private, participated in the development of this network. Their internal networks were also the first to be linked to ARPANET, which made it a meta-network, i.e., a network of networks, allowing other networks to connect to it: the university and scientific communities worldwide were the first to do so.

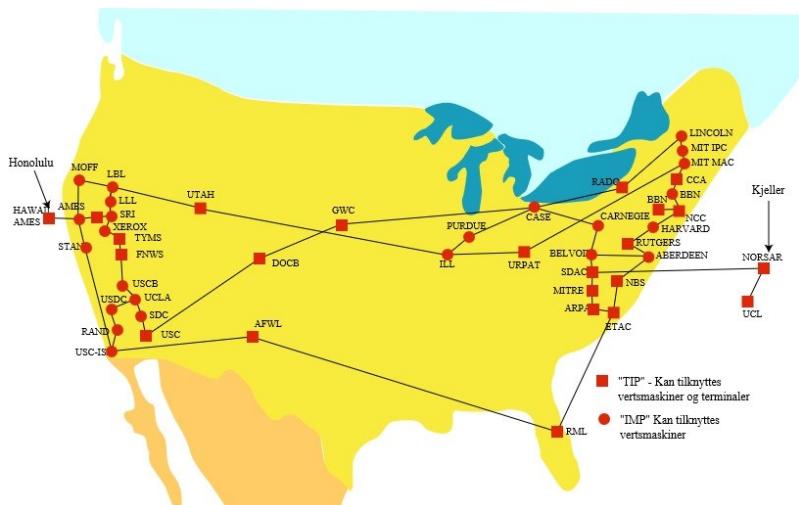


Figure 1: Symbolic representation of the Arpanet as of September 1974.³

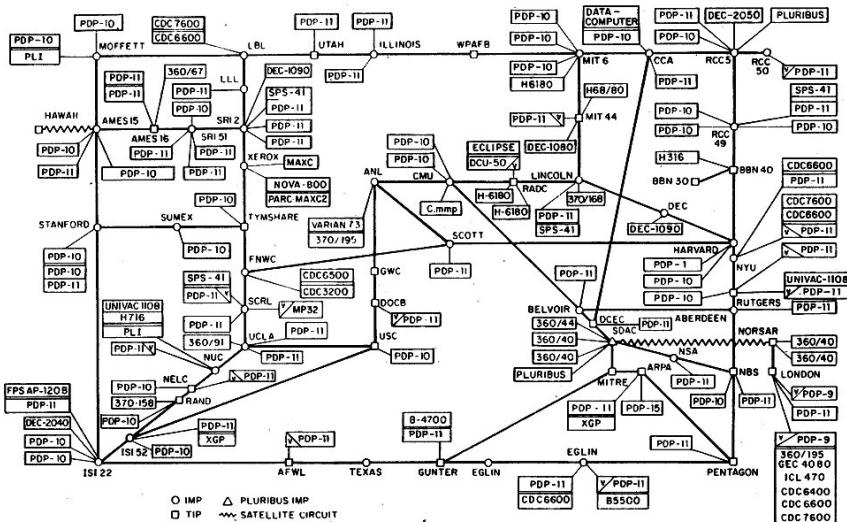


Figure 2: ARPANET logical map circa 1977⁴.

³ This figure is in the public domain:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arpanet_1974.svg.

⁴ This figure is in the public domain in the United States because it was published in the United States between 1925 and 1977, inclusive, without a copyright notice.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arpanet_logical_map,_march_1977.png.

The network arrived in Europe in 1982. In 1984, it lost its military connotation, leaving the internet to develop to its full potential for public and commercial use.

And the web in all of this? The web, which is the contraction of World Wide Web or www, was created in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee, about 20 years later than the internet. From a practical point of view, it is a new internet service that allows you to read billions of documents on almost as many server computers around the world, connected to each other thanks to the hypertext or hyperdocument principle.

To help you better understand the difference between the web and the internet, remember that the web is not the only service that uses the internet: there are many others such as email, video players, file sharing, telecom, etc. Nevertheless, it is the creation of the web that made the internet successful, hence the confusion between these two terms.

THE WEB'S FOUNDATIONS

To be able to manage international web-marketing techniques effectively, you need to understand the web and how it works. Hyperdocuments provide the electronic version of images, sound, text, programs, etc. but also hyperlinks that open other hyperdocuments, with no limits in quantity or geography since the information can be on any server. The browser is the tool, in the form of software, that translates hyperdocuments into a format that is understandable to internet users.

More specifically, the web is based on three standards:

1) URL

The URL (Uniform Resource Locator) is a line of text that makes it possible to find a hyperdocument (text, image, music, video, program...) on the internet. This line of text contains important elements for international web marketing:

- The domain name, which corresponds to the IP (Internet Protocol) address, which in turn is used to locate server computers where hyperdocuments are stored. This address is composed of a series of numbers separated by dots, or letters and numbers separated by points, but it is replaced by an alphabetical label, called the domain name, to make it easier to use.
- The access path to the resource, which allows the server to know where to search, i.e., the location (directory) and the name of the requested file.



CASE STUDY

Unclean URL:

https://www.website.com/my/digital/document?key1=value1#PointOnDocument

- *https:// = language protocol*
- *website.com = domain name*
- */my/digital/document = path*
- *?key1 = value; this is an example of additional parameters supplied to the web server to ask it to perform specific actions before sending the resource; these parameters are optional*
- *#PointOnDocument = example of anchor link, also optional*

Semantic URL:

https://www.website.com/my-digital-document/01012019/#POD

- *https:// = language protocol*
- *website.com = domain name*
- *my-digital-document/ = path*
- *01012019 = additional parameters provided in a format understandable to human eyes*
- *#POD = example of anchor link, always optional*

These semantic URLs have been increasingly preferred by internet users and, consequently, they have positively impacted the SEO (Search Engine Optimization). This impact turns out to be even more strategic in an international context because they help reassure and convince foreign internet users!

2) HTTP

HTTP (hypertext transfer protocol) and its HTTPS extension, where the *S* stands for *secure*, are the language protocols used to communicate between web clients, i.e., browsers like Chrome, Firefox, Edge, Opera, etc., and web servers. Placed at the very beginning of the URL, this protocol is used to obtain hyperdocuments such as an HTML file, an image, etc. That means all the elements that make up a website.

3) Dynamic web pages

Dynamic web pages are built on the fly by the server according to specific parameters. The content displayed can thus be personalized interactively, according to the internet users, the languages, the IP addresses, etc. A dynamic page is easily recognizable by the ending of its URL, which is displayed in the title bar of the browser: that is the case if it ends in '.php', for example, where php is one of the programming languages⁵ used to perform more complex processing functions.

IT ALL STARTS WITH CLIENTS AND SERVERS

It would be very nice but going to a restaurant is not enough to understand how the web works! Yet it too relies on client / server communications⁶.

⁵ Like ASP, Java, and many more.

⁶ The advantages of client / server architectures are multiple. First, the centralization of resources: all data is centralized on a single server, which not only simplifies their management, security, and updates, but also speeds up the search for information. Then, all the complex and powerful data calculations are done by the servers, allowing internet users to have light clients on their computers that can be simplified and therefore cheaper.

Client / server architectures also have some drawbacks. The main thing to control is the number of clients trying to communicate with the server at the same time: the risk is that the server will not support the load, becoming extremely slow or crashing before sending the information.

In the web, there are two different types of software to enable communications, the server software and the client software, which must, of course, be linked by a computer network communicating between for each other.

The client software sends requests to the server software, which executes and returns the responses. For the web, the client software is a browser, whereas the server software is a website: basically, it is the website, being hosted on a server, that is served to the clients, i.e., the browsers on a computer.



TIP

These semantic URLs have been increasingly preferred by internet users and, As communications pass between client software and server software, the distance between the two can impact your website's download speed and therefore your online export performance. Make sure that the international latency of your website, i.e., the time your overseas internet users take to download your web pages, is not too high. Over latency is one of the first reasons for high bounce rate of website visitors.

More specifically:

- The browser (client) receives a URL such as <https://www.website.com/my-digital-document/01012019/#POD> by an internet user.
- The browser extracts the domain name (www.website.com), from which it can find the remote web server, thanks to the DNS⁷, which translates the domain name into an IP address.

Another major drawback: when the server is not available, no client can communicate with it.

⁷ DNS stands for Domain Name System. It is a hierarchical and decentralized naming system for computers, services, or other resources connected to the internet or a private network. It translates more readily memorized domain names to the numerical IP addresses needed for locating and identifying computer services and devices with the underlying network protocols. By providing a worldwide, distributed directory service, the Domain Name System has been an essential component of the functionality of the internet since 1985 (Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domain_Name_System).

- The browser connects to the remote web server and communicates with it in HTTPS language to ask to retrieve the resource (/my-digital-document/01012019/#POD).
- The remote web server finds the corresponding resource and sends its content, still in HTTPS, to the browser.
- The browser interprets the resource sent by the server and sets it up in a way that the internet user can read and understand.

Database management systems, such as MySQL, for example, add one, two or more intermediate levels between clients and servers: they provide the data that the servers and the dynamic pages need to complete their performance.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

HTTP / HTTPS, browsers, URLs, IP addresses, client / server communications, dynamic web ... Do you need to learn how to use all of them to develop your export business? No, don't worry!

On the other hand, having a good understanding of these technical concepts will help you formulate your international web-marketing strategy:

- *These concepts are used all over the world.*
- *They are the bases for formulating the specifications of your project and for analyzing its performance.*
- *They will help you better communicate in the digital ecosystem with web developers, service providers, freelancers, digital agencies, etc.*

CHAPTER 2

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND WEB MARKETING

“

From AI to Big Data, from blockchain to fintech, innovation is spreading faster and faster, revolutionizing uses, sales channels, and business models. It disrupts companies in any industry by introducing more powerful tools, both locally and globally.

All businesses can now easily take advantage of the digital transformation and the web-marketing drivers, instead of undergoing them. In this chapter, you will find the key explanations on how to do that for your international development.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR EXPORT SALES

The digital transformation has been disrupting almost everything we are used to! But with it, numerous new opportunities have also been created around the world.

Wikipedia defines this concept as the use of new, fast, and frequently changing digital technology to solve problems. It is about transforming processes that were manual to digital processes.

One of the examples of digital transformation is cloud computing. It reduces reliance on user-owned hardware and increases reliance on subscription-based cloud services. Some of these digital solutions enhance capabilities of traditional software products (e.g., Microsoft Office compared to Office 365) while others are entirely cloud based (e.g., Google Docs)⁸.

In the digital transformation, digital is seen not only in terms of the choice of tools to use but also as a strategic opportunity aimed at increasing the value of the company. The goal of digital transformation is to ensure the sustainability of the business and to increase its efficiency, while preventing it from being ‘uberized’ by more agile competitors⁹.

Sometimes confused with the concepts of e-commerce, which refer exclusively to external development (customers, resellers, distributors, partners), the digital transformation goes well beyond. It concerns the 360° use of digital tools to improve the overall performance of the company, on both an operational and a strategic level: in human resources¹⁰, in logistics, in sales expansion, in communication channels, in R&D or open innovation, etc.

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_transformation.

⁹ David Fayon, *Made in Silicon Valley - Du numérique en Amérique* (Montreuil: Pearson France, 2017).

¹⁰ Collaborative intranet devices, corporate social networks, participatory innovation, collective intelligence, etc.

It disrupts existing business models while creating new ones through the integration of digital elements in products, services, competitive patterns, access to markets, purchasing habits, data management, etc.

For export and international trade, the benefits of the digital transformation depend on internet access, and therefore on data. In the traditional non-digital context, international trade was based on the free movement of goods, services, people, and capital. The advent of digital technology has created a new context for export and international trade in which a fifth dimension is opening: the circulation of digital data¹¹.

The more digital transformation impacts international trade and the flow of data, the more regulations and procedures must adapt to the needs of the web in a global border-free environment. This point is still a source of divergence around the world because of the digital transformation's impact on the fiscal, political, and economic conditions in each country.

Think, for example, of the impact of the digital transformation in the field of internet services, in which the major players, such as Google or Facebook, are going beyond their status of web service providers with the intention of challenging 'utility' providers by offering new services, like telecom for example, and by investing to build their own infrastructure, which will eventually disrupt both sectors. And this disruptive impact also concerns many areas of export and international trade: intellectual property protection, censorship and content control, data localization, co-innovation management, etc.

That is why the United States, the European Union and China, the three most decisive players on digital and export issues, are continually arguing between themselves without achieving quick and clear consensus, since each one has a contrasting approach.

¹¹ See, for example, the European Union's Digital Single Market (DSM) strategy, which focuses on the free movement of goods, people, services, capital, and data.



TIP

Never forget that the digital transformation has no borders and that it is accelerating in every country around the world. It means that the same technologies that can improve your business's performance, both in your domestic market and overseas, can also improve the performance of any other business in your country and beyond. It is therefore important that you organize your monitoring at an international level and not only for technological innovations. You must also watch out for foreign competitors wishing to penetrate your own market.

WEB MARKETING FOR EXPORT SALES

In the previous chapter, we saw the difference between the web and the internet, but there are two other concepts that are often incorrectly used as synonyms. These are 'digital marketing' and 'web marketing'.

Let's clarify the difference between them:

- Digital marketing refers to all the marketing techniques used to promote a company's activity on all digital media: computers, mobiles, tablets, TV, connected objects, video games, digital signage, etc.
- Web marketing focuses on the digital channels of the web: websites, blogs, e-commerce, marketplaces, social networks, etc. Web marketing is, therefore, only one part of digital marketing.



Figure 3: an example of outdoor digital signage¹².

A key difference between these two concepts and traditional marketing is the ability of digital marketing and web marketing to interact with national and international audiences, whether via a PC, a smartphone, a tablet or otherwise. This interactivity can go even further, when it turns traditional marketing into interactive support for digital campaigns. That can be the case when a print promotion, such as an advertising poster in the street, contains a QR code or a hashtag, which allows internet-connected devices to reach interactive digital content immediately.

¹² This figure is under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0. Resizing changes applied. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en>. Author Producer Matthew: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:ProducerMatthew>. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dow_Jones_Ticker.jpeg.

Web marketing and digital marketing are fundamental pillars of the digital transformation, in the sense that they participate in the elaboration of the company's digital strategy as well as in the implementation of operational actions and analytics tools.

In today's global environment, where more than half of the population surfs the internet¹³ and spends an average of six hours a day on connected devices¹⁴, web marketing is becoming an increasingly important part of the business. Moreover, since online actions' return on investment (ROI) is easier to track and measure across the world than that of traditional marketing, investing in web marketing is a better way to stimulate the development of an international business.



TIP

The international scale brings you a great opportunity to extend the scope of your web-marketing actions. Through a larger audience over several countries, you'll have more chances to interact with it and increase the performance of your export strategy.

WHEN TO START INTERNATIONAL WEB MARKETING

To answer this question, you should first ask yourself about the level of digital readiness or transformation in your company. The closer it is to 100%, the more international web marketing will be essential for your export development. Conversely, the further away from 100%, the more your company will have to focus on completing its digital transformation before investing in the implementation of an international web-marketing strategy.

¹³ <https://digitalreport.wearesocial.com/>.

¹⁴ <https://www.globalwebindex.com/>.

An audit of the company is, therefore, more than recommended. To help you with this, you can find a checklist of the main points to be validated internally later in this book.



TIP

This preparation, although necessary, will not be useful if it is run in a disconnected way from the digital context in the export market that you are targeting. Indeed, even the best international web-marketing strategy will fail to achieve good export sales if the prospective customers in the target country do not have the digital capabilities to discover, buy or use the products / services offered. The European Commission's 'digital single market' initiative offers free access to an online database providing very interesting information on the degree of digitalization in each EU member state¹⁵.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Digital transformation and web marketing are two distinct concepts.
- Web marketing is a fundamental pillar of the digital transformation, in the sense that it participates in the elaboration of the company's digital strategy as well as in the implementation of operational actions and analytics tools.

¹⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/countries-performance-digitisation>.

CHAPTER 3

INTERNATIONALIZATION AND LOCALIZATION

“

In web terminology, we often find the words 'internationalization' and 'localization'.

While the first reaction is often to see them as totally contradictory words, these two terms are complementary and part of the same process.

Let me explain.

INTERNATIONALIZATION: WHAT IS IT?

Definition

According to the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), internationalization is ‘the design and development of a product, application or document content that allows easy localization for target audiences from different cultures, regions and languages’.

Sometimes written ‘i18n’ - where 18 represents the number of letters between the *i* and the *n* - internationalization is the first step in transforming a single-country website into an international one or in creating an international one from scratch. It involves adding to the website, or developing it from scratch with, all the technical and cultural elements that would help its localization in other territories (for example, adding non-Latin characters to the CSS so that they can be used when localizing the site for China, or installing a multi-currency module in the CMS instead of a euro-only module for online payments, etc.).

Key steps

In the i18n of a website, everything related to themes, templates or layouts must be developed in such a way that they can be easily adapted to any local foreign context. For example, for the internationalization of an English website into German, you will need to anticipate 40% additional space for the texts in any tag, whether it is `<p>`, `<title>`, `<h1>`, etc.

In practical terms, for a good i18n for export you need to design your website including at least:

- Enough space in each web page to accommodate all the texts that you have translated into other languages.
- Internationally adapted design, navigation, and CTA¹⁶ to local needs.
- Replacing all text embedded in images or videos with CSS elements.
- Neutral visual content with no religious, social, cultural, political, or similar connotations.

¹⁶ Call-to-action.

- Adapting or replacing social networks with those that are recommended or imposed locally in the countries your website is targeting (e.g., in China).
- Neutral seasonality and holidays.
- International legal terms of use, sales terms, and warranty conditions.
- Clear technical specifications and return conditions.
- Neutral dates, times, currencies, units of measurement, etc.
- Neutral colors, pictograms, and other graphic elements.
- The terminology used in the sector and the most effective content guidelines in the company's field of activity.
- Pictograms, icons, and logos relevant to export and international sales such as a button to switch between currencies, languages, or countries (avoiding flags).
- Proof of compliance with relevant local, national, or international regulations on the protection of personal data.

English (US)	Brazilian Portuguese	Korean
Exit	Desconectar	나가기
Battlefield	Campo de Batalha	전장
Pet	Animal de Estimação	펫

Figure 4: an example of space needed from U.S. English to Brazilian Portuguese and to Korean for an online role-playing game user interface¹⁷.



TIP

Internationalization is the process of creating or modifying a digital product (a website, an application, etc.) in a way that it can be easily adapted to other export markets afterwards. As we will see in the following paragraph, a well-executed website i18n is essential for a more effective web localization.

¹⁷ The figure is under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>. Adaptations applied. Source: <https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Localization>.

LOCALIZATION: WHAT IS IT?

Definition

The W3C defines localization as ‘the adaptation of a product, application or document content to meet the linguistic, cultural or other requirements of a target market (the regional parameters)’. The term was first used in the IT sector, particularly when software was fully adapted to a new market (technical, visual, and linguistic adaptations).

Sometimes written as ‘l10n’ - where 10 represents the number of letters between the *i* and the *n* - web localization is about providing the website with a fully local look-&-feel design so that the people in the market concerned perceive it as exclusively created for and dedicated to them.

This means that, for the purpose of localizing a specific export website, you need to look at it with the eyes of your future foreign users that are browsing on it from their country and in their local language.

Key steps

In practical terms, in addition to the internationalization and the translation of the website, localization includes the adaptation of the following elements for each country:

- Domain name and extension.
- User scenario (e-commerce, showcase site, corporate, etc.).
- Communication style: legal, medical, construction, etc.
- SEO and keywords.
- Measurements, formats, dates, times.
- Design and graphic style: logos, pictograms, colors.
- Currencies and payment systems.
- Direction of the text.
- Images and videos.
- Legal terms, terms of use, sales conditions, privacy, and cookies information, etc.
- Loading time.
- Customer and after-sales support.
- Promotions and advertising campaigns.



CASE STUDY

There are many examples of companies that missed their localization, starting with KFC whose slogan 'finger licking good' was translated into Chinese as 'eat your fingers off', or Honda one of whose compact car names corresponded to the term for female genitalia in Sweden, or Electrolux with its slogan 'nothing sucks like Electrolux'. The target country's cultural, historical, or digital specificities must be the first elements to consider in a localization project to avoid this type of problem!



TIP

While translation is part of localization, it is not always necessary for internationalization. Internationalizing, translating, and localizing a website are, therefore, three distinct and complementary phases: properly designing the internationalization of a website is the starting block for more effective translations and localizations for each new foreign market that the website wants to reach.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Internationalization is the process of modifying a digital product (website, application, etc.) so that it is ready to be easily adapted to each export market afterwards.
- Then localization is the process of modifying an internationalized digital product to adapt it fully to a specific export market.

CHAPTER 4

GLOBALIZATION

“

If you ask entrepreneurs what the indispensable thing is to make their business global, 90% will answer ‘a website in English’.

Although it is true that a website is accessible from anywhere in the world, accessibility does not mean usability¹⁸.

If people do not understand the language in which the website is written, they will not use it. So, what does it take to make a website global?

¹⁸ <https://usabilitygeek.com/the-difference-between-web-site-usability-and-accessibility/#difference-usability-accessibility-7>.

THE GLOBALIZATION LEVELS OF A WEBSITE

A website can have several degrees of globalization: from 0%, when it is solely domestic and monolingual, to 100%, when it is fully globalized.

In between, you can find countless numbers of possible combinations of languages and countries served by the website.

Each version of a website dedicated to a foreign country or to a foreign language includes the same fixed costs for the:

- Translation of texts.
- Adaptation of the content to local markets.
- Integration of the translated texts in the back-office of the website.
- SEO and SEA for the search engines of each country or language.
- Content management and updates.

This can represent a significant budget, especially if you target languages or countries without having set a clear internationalization digital strategy beforehand.

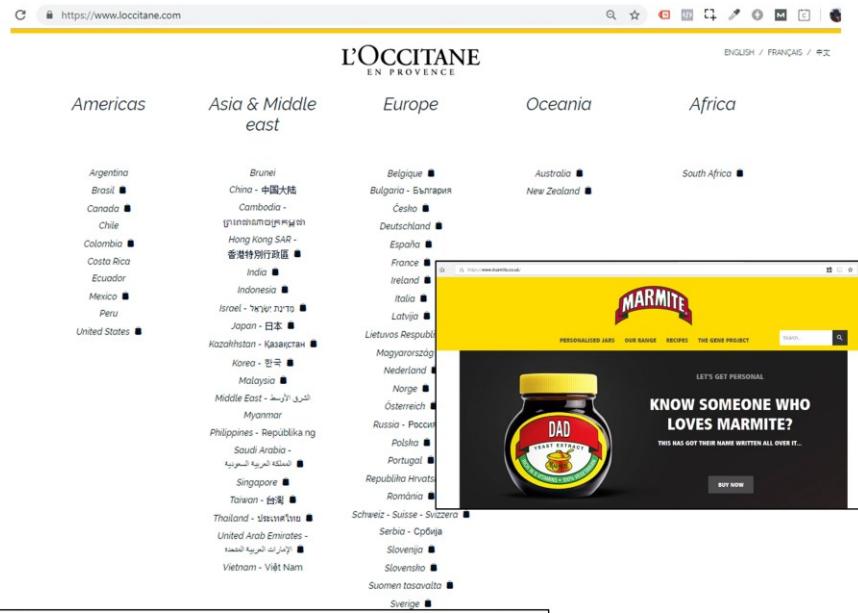


Figure 5: examples of different levels of website globalization: the almost-entirely global L'Occitane En Provence, the partially global 1001maquettes, and the non-global Marmite.

THE ‘GENERALIST SPECIALIST’ APPROACH

The neologism ‘glocal’ is probably more recent than the expression ‘think global, act local’ used for almost half a century. It is a concept that still applies to explain, among other things, the approach of companies to conquer international markets by implementing a global strategy linked to local operational deployment, for example with subsidiaries.

It is a global strategy that adapts to the specifics of each local market that the company wants to enter.

This ‘glocal’ approach is complicated for SMEs because it requires considerable investments. However, they can still effectively apply it with a different approach: ‘act global, think local’ instead of ‘think global, act local’.

We all spontaneously think ‘local’ all the time. Consumers too, in any country. Do we need to think ‘global’ to buy Bolognese pasta or chicken tikka masala in the supermarket near home? This approach could be qualified as ‘generalist specialist’, by analogy with physicians specializing in general medicine¹⁹. For their international expansion, businesses also need ‘generalist specialists’ i.e., professionals that are perfectly familiar with export in the global/general sense and know which local specialist to hire to achieve the desired objectives. Because, when it comes to export, mastering a little part of many markets is more effective than being the expert of everything in just one market.

Key steps

Starting from a mono-language and mono-country website, the first thing to do is to globalize it in a very ‘generalist’ way: this corresponds to the ‘act global’ phase. In other words, you must make your website as visible as possible around the world, and in as universal and simple a format as possible to offer all foreign visitors a similar usability and a similar user experience.

A website in English helps achieve these goals. English is certainly far from being a universal language, especially if you consider that it has less than 400 million native speakers²⁰ worldwide and that it is surrounded by 7,000 other languages spoken in 200 countries²¹.

Despite that, combining native speakers and those that use it as a foreign language, English remains the most spoken language on the

¹⁹ A typical type of medical practitioner in France and in other countries

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English-speaking_world.

²¹ <https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/how-many-languages>.

internet²². For that reason, a website in English can interact with more than half of the internet users in the whole world²³. No other language can do that.

Besides the use of English, in this first phase you also need to offer a similar, if not identical, user experience and discoverability to any person in the world.

To do that, your website must not be associated with a specific country: the domain must be generic with a .com, or .net or other similar top-level domain (this type of domain is referred to as a gTLD, or generic top-level domain²⁴) and the SEO²⁵ must be done for international search engines like google.com or bing.com rather than for local search engines like google.fr, google.com.mx, etc.²⁶ With these ‘act global’ actions you will get two major benefits:

- Your gTLD will immediately start gaining authority with Google and other search engines on the international scale. The authority of a website is key for its SEO, and, since it takes time to get a good ranking, you need to start it as soon as possible. You will be able to capitalize on this global authority when localizing your website²⁷ for your specific target countries, which you will do in the second phase.
- Your website will be visible and can be used everywhere, worldwide. Internet users around the world will be able to browse it, to download information, to purchase products and services online, and much more.

With that, we have seen the ‘act global’ and the ‘generalist’ actions. Now let’s see the ‘think local’ and the ‘specialist’ actions.

²² <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>.

²³ https://w3techs.com/technologies/history_overview/content_language/ms/v.

²⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generic_top-level_domain.

²⁵ Search Engine Optimization

²⁶ It is not a problem if you already have a local website such as with .fr, or .co.uk, or with another country-specific domain. You can keep it and simply create a new gTLD website. The two websites can remain independent in this phase.

²⁷ As seen in the last chapter, localization is the development of a specific website locally adapted to the digital target of each export market.

The first of these actions involves the study of all the data and statistics, also called analytics, of your visitors' organic activity on your gTLD website: their country of origin, their language, the keywords they search for, the websites they come from, the time they spend on each web page, etc.

After a few months, the analysis of this organic activity can help you select the countries that offer the largest potential for your export sales.

THE SPECIFICITIES OF E-COMMERCE

As we have just seen, a website in English can reach more than half the internet users in the world. However, for an e-commerce it is not that simple.

Although internet users are buying more and more on cross-border websites, 75% of them prefer to do so on websites that are in their native language, 59% rarely buy from English-only websites, and almost 93% prefer to buy in their own local currency²⁸.

An e-commerce website therefore needs more extensive actions to develop export sales: from the products and services to the payment systems, from logistics and deliveries to customer service, and so forth, everything must be translated and adapted to the users in the export markets.

For that reason, developing an international e-commerce for several export markets at the same time is often an overwhelming, complex, and expensive project. The 'generalist specialist' approach can help make it smoother but with an important difference: it must be accelerated by using the analytics of the gTLD website in association with other data such as market studies, consultants, industry associations, etc. to identify the high-potential export markets faster.

²⁸ <https://www.shopify.com/enterprise/global-e-commerce-statistics>.

Speeding up this phase is key for the development of cross-border e-commerce because it allows you to seize sales opportunities that, once missed, will hardly ever come back any time soon.



TIP

You do not need to create a website overnight that speaks all foreign languages and suits all markets in the world. The budget for that would be substantial and difficult to finance for many SMEs. The 'generalist specialist' approach makes it possible thanks to its gradual process: first you start with the generalist internationalization, and then you expand through step-by-step specialist actions depending on your targets and budget.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

The 'generalist specialist' approach for website internationalization consists of these steps:

- *Start with a generalist website in English with a gTLD aiming to make it accessible and usable to as many internet users as possible around the world. This generalist international website must also have a generalist SEO and not be associated with any specific country.*
- *After a few months, study the analytics to identify your visitors' countries of origin, their language, the keywords they search for, the websites they come from, the time they spend on each web page, etc.*
- *Depending on the results, you can move forward with step-by-step specialist actions for developing country-specific websites for each export market your business wants to enter.*

CHAPTER 5

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL WEB MARKETING FOR EXPORT SALES

“

The first thing you need for a digital export project is an international website.

Nowadays creating a nice-looking website is very easy but making it effective for sales overseas is more difficult because it needs to be found by foreign prospective customers, and the quicker the better!

That is what international web marketing does: it helps people from abroad find your business easily online. Let's see how.

HOW INTERNATIONAL WEB MARKETING HELPS EXPORTS

When people need to find something on the internet, they open a browser and enter a request on a search engine, such as Google, by using some words associated with what they need to find, the keywords. After clicking on the Enter button, they get a long list of results on several pages, the so-called SERPs, Search Engine Result Pages.

However, while globally on average 28% of people click on the first result on Google's SERPs, only 15% click on the second result, 11% on the third result and as little as 2.5% on the tenth result²⁹. It is, therefore, essential to be in the first results of the SERP that people see when they search for something related to your business in the foreign countries you target.

This is what international web marketing helps achieve, but many businesses around the world still struggle with it. The main challenge for them is to understand two key aspects in parallel:

- On the user side, the web searches made by prospective clients abroad are different in each country, from the search engines (google.com vs. google.de vs. yahoo.com and so forth), to the keywords, the language and the devices.
- On the website side, the local search engines also work differently in each country, and the elements that the website must implement to rank well in the target export countries must be adapted.

Businesses very often underestimate the consequences of not considering these two aspects and end up using their website in the wrong way for their target export countries. Also very often, they don't understand the importance of web marketing, because they simply do not do any in their home country, since they have a lot of internet visitors drawn by their strong brand popularity. But this privileged

²⁹ <https://www.sistrix.com/blog/why-almost-everything-you-knew-about-google-ctr-is-no-longer-valid/>.

situation may not exist abroad where the brand does not have the same fame. In such a context, if the website is not optimized for the foreign internet users and for the local search engines they use, it will be invisible and useless for the acquisition of new clients abroad.

Let's consider the case of a French business that wants to develop its online sales in Germany. It can choose among different options for the website domain to use such as:

- www.example.de, or
- www.example.com/de, or
- de.example.com, or
- www.example.fr/de, or
- fr.example.com/de

However, each one of these options will reach a different number of people, depending on the different international web-marketing techniques applied to the website, as you can see in the next table.

Domain type & SEO techniques	The target that search engines understand	Segment	Number of people that the website can reach
www.example.de	Country = Germany	German people in Germany	79,127,551
www.example.com/de + geolocalisation & hreflang	Country = Germany Language = German	German people in Germany	79,127,551
www.example.com/de + hreflang	Language = German	German-speaking people around the world	92,304,792
de.example.com + geolocalisation & hreflang	Country = Germany Language = German	German people in Germany	79,127,551
www.example.fr/de	Country = France Language = German	German people in France	130,000*
fr.example.com/de	Country = France Language = German	German people in France	130,000*

Figure 5b: why international web marketing is important³⁰.

You can find all the details and instructions on how to use these international web-marketing techniques in [book 2 of The Digital Exporter Series](#).

³⁰ The sources of the numbers followed by * are

[&](https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats18.htm#german)

[https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communaut%C3%A9_allemande_en_France.](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communaut%C3%A9_allemande_en_France)



TIP

To understand the importance of international web marketing, you can compare it to participating in a trade show. Any business can rent a booth. However, if you do not send invitations to your local and international prospects, if you do not communicate on the specialized media of your sector, if you get a booth that is difficult to access, if you do not prepare translated catalogs, and so forth, your booth not only risks being deserted, but the few participants will have a bad experience and will not be tempted to come back to you.

Your website is, therefore, like your booth at a trade fair: you need SEO to have qualified visitors, to give them a positive experience, and to make them want to come back as soon as possible.

INTERNATIONAL WEB MARKETING & SEARCH ENGINES

Wherever you want to develop your business, you cannot dissociate web marketing from the search engines. And Google immediately comes to mind whenever someone talks about a search engine.

The global leader with a market share exceeding 90% in 2020³¹, Google dominates in Europe, North and South America, and Africa. Nevertheless, it has significant competitors in several countries. This is the case in China, where Google failed to enter because of the power of Baidu and the other local actors, in Russia with Yandex in first position, and in South Korea with Naver.

Google and most of the other search engines are localized. What does that mean? It means that they have domain names and languages that are specific for each country: for example, google.es is dedicated to people searching in Spanish in Spain, google.de or de.yahoo.com to people searching in Germany in German, google.com.au for people searching in English in Australia, etc.

³¹ StatCounter, <https://gs.statcounter.com/search-engine-market-share>.

To optimize the performance of your international website, therefore, you need to adapt your international web marketing not only to the way your foreign prospective clients search on the internet but also to the local search engine and to the language they use in their country.

There are almost as many localized search engines as there are languages on the internet. Optimizing a website for all these search engines and in all their languages is a huge technical challenge and a major investment for any business.

However, an English-only website is not a solution either, because only 25% of internet users are native English speakers and because an English-only website cannot rank well in the local search engines, since the crawlers of these local search engines speak only the local language, not English! They cannot understand the keywords correctly and, therefore, place these websites in lower positions or in irrelevant SERPs.

The solution is to proceed gradually.

You need to prioritize the most strategic countries for your digital export project and then deploy specific web marketing according to this priority list. This is what you will find in the next chapters.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *International web marketing is essential for a website to rank correctly in the SERPs abroad, which is the only way for it to be found on the internet by foreign prospective clients.*
- *For international web marketing to be effective, it must be adapted to the search methods used by foreign internet users on the internet and to the specific parameters of the local search engines that your prospective clients use most in their country.*

CHAPTER 6

FINDING KEY EXPORT MARKETS WITH GOOGLE ANALYTICS

“

The global market is full of export opportunities. Yet it is better to start gradually exporting to selected countries rather than trying to sell everywhere around the world at once.

Choosing the right countries is therefore essential. But, with almost 200 countries in the world, or more³², how do you find them? How do you estimate their long-term potential? Especially when many trade fairs and other B2B events are cancelled due to Covid-19...

In this and the following chapters, you will find some free tools to help you in this search.

GOOGLE UNIVERSAL ANALYTICS (GUA)

You have probably heard that, to make the most out of Google Analytics and unlock deep insights about your website, you must link it to Google Ads³³. That is true³⁴, but it does not mean that you must spend money in advertising!

You can use Google Analytics even if you do not run any advertising campaigns with Google Ads. Google Analytics, whether the Universal or the new 4 version, is free and independent from Google Ads, so you can use it freely as much as you want for your international researching.

Why should you use Google Analytics? Because one of the best and cheapest ways to know the potential of a foreign market is through the traffic statistics of your website, and this is what Google Analytics provides.

Google Analytics is a data goldmine on your website users' interests, behavior, and demographics. For almost any market in the world³⁵, Google Analytics should be your first tool for drawing out your export web-marketing strategy, since it gives you key geolocated data such as number of unique visitors, average time spent by session, viewed pages, bounce rate, acquisition channels, including social networks, used browser, etc.

Before going more into the practical details, consider the following case study, which explains how to install the Google Analytics ID code in case

³² According to Worldometers (<https://www.worldometers.info/geography/how-many-countries-are-there-in-the-world/>) there are 195 countries in the world, but this number can be different, depending on the definition of country.

³³ The new name that AdWords has had since 24 July 2018,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Ads

³⁴ If you want to link your Google Analytics and Google Ads, follow this guide https://services.google.com/fh/files/misc/analytics_ads_guide.pdf.

³⁵ At least for the countries where Google is most used.

you do not already have it installed in your international website³⁶. You can skip it if that is not your case.

Otherwise, if you have a website that is already running GUA, you can upgrade it to use Google Analytics 4 directly from the GUA Admin. Once you have connected GA4, a new window will open showing the GA4 Admin, which looks just like the GUA Admin but with a simplified menu on the left side.

The major difference between GUA and GA4 is that the latter can be used for a website or an application, or both, while the former is for websites only.

However, since GA4 is quite young³⁷ and doesn't yet offer the international reports, the best for now is to keep both side by side. You will be able to access both via the Admin screen.



CASE STUDY

How to setup GUA for an international website

To start with Google Universal Analytics, follow these steps:

Go to <https://marketingplatform.google.com/about/analytics/> and click on 'Start for free'. You will be redirected to the 'Create your account' page where you must fill out the first step 'Account Setup':

- 1) Enter the name for your account.*
- 2) Select the options for sharing your website data with Google.*
- 3) Click 'Next' to move forward to the second step!*

³⁶ There are two GA methods for analyzing your website's data: the Universal ID and the Tag Manager. Using both is not good. Since this chapter is not about how to use GA but about how to optimize it for an international web strategy, the focus here is only on the Universal version. For more information about the Tag Manager, you can check Google's instructions here: <https://marketingplatform.google.com/about/tag-manager/>.

³⁷ It was launched on 14 October 2020.

Analytics

ADMIN USER

1 Account setup

Account details

Account name (Required)
Accounts can contain more than one tracking ID.

CaptainText

2 Account Data Sharing Settings ⓘ
Data you collect, process, and store using Google Analytics ("Google Analytics data") is secure and and in rare exceptions for legal reasons as described in our privacy policy.

The data sharing options give you more control over sharing your Google Analytics da

Google products & services RECOMMENDED
Share your Google Analytics data with Google to help improve Google's product: Insights services, maintain critical Spam Detection services that benefit all linke enabled. If you disable this option, data can still flow to other Google products li

Benchmarking RECOMMENDED
Contribute anonymous data to an aggregate data set to enable features like ben website is removed and combined with other anonymous data before it is share

Technical support RECOMMENDED
Let Google technical support representatives access your Google Analytics data

Account specialists RECOMMENDED
Give Google marketing specialists and your Google sales specialists access to) share optimization tips with you. If you don't have dedicated sales specialists, g

Learn how Google Analytics safeguards your data .

You have access to 1 account. The maximum is 100.

Next Previous

3

© 2020 Google | [Analytics home](#) |

Figure 11: the first steps to set up Google Analytics.

You will now be on the 'What do you want to measure?' step where you must choose if you want to use it for your website or for your app or for your website and your app. Since the contents that follow are website related, click on the first option. Then click 'Next' to move to the third step.

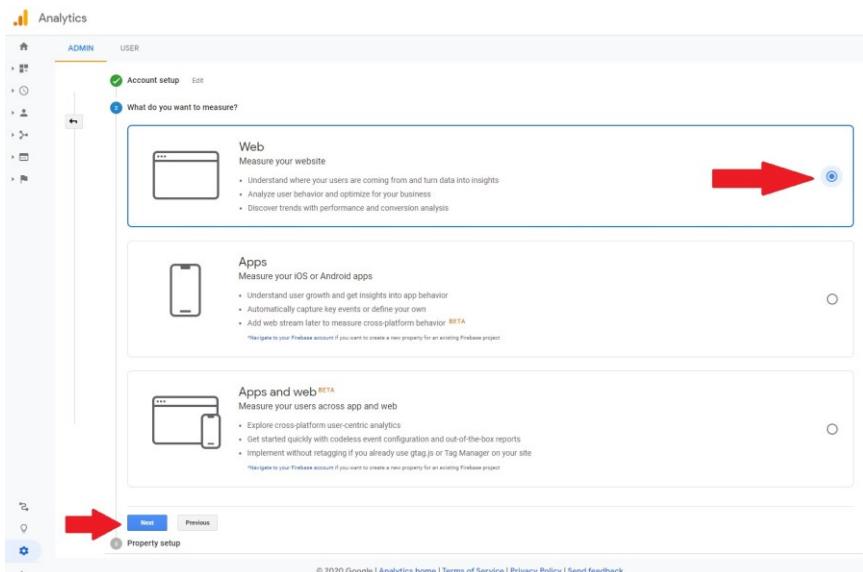


Figure 12: selecting what you want to measure.

You will now be on the 'Property Setup' step. What is a 'Property' for Google Analytics? It is an online resource associated with your ID tracking code. By adding the ID to your property, such as a website, you will be able to analyze its performance using GUA. But before that, you need to set the details of your property, which is what you do in this step.

To do that:

- 1) Name your website and enter its URL.
- 2) Select your industry category from the drop-down menu.
- 3) Select the time zone from the drop-down menu.
- 4) Click 'Previous' if you want to change your setups or 'Create' to move to the next step.

Figure 13 & 13b: setting up a property in GUA.

The figure consists of two screenshots of the Google Analytics 'Create account' interface, showing the process of setting up a new property.

Screenshot 1: This screenshot shows the initial steps of creating a new account. Step 1 (highlighted by a red box) shows the 'Property details' section where 'Website Name' is set to 'CaptainText' and 'Website URL' is set to 'http://captaintext.com/'. Step 2 (highlighted by a red arrow) shows the 'Industry Category' dropdown menu open, displaying various categories such as Games, Healthcare, Hobbies and Leisure, Home and Garden, Internet and Telecom, Jobs and Education, Law and Government, and News. The 'Home and Garden' option is selected.

Screenshot 1b: This screenshot shows the continuation of the setup process. Step 2 (highlighted by a red arrow) shows the 'Reporting Time Zone' dropdown menu open, displaying options like 'France' and '(GMT+02:00) France Time'. The '(GMT+02:00) France Time' option is selected. Step 4 (highlighted by a red box) shows the 'Create' and 'Previous' buttons at the bottom of the page.

As soon as you click on the 'Create' button, at the end of the previous step, a window will pop up asking you to select your country and to agree to Google's service and GDPR terms related to your country.

After that, you enter the dashboard of your GUA account, which looks like the figure below. To help you move around, the key markers are:

- 1) Your account details: by clicking on 'All accounts' you will find your accounts, your properties and your views.
- 2) The Global Site Tag (gtag.js) tracking code for your property. This is the code you must copy and paste into the <HEAD> of every webpage you want to track. To do that, you have several options, for example:
 - Use a plugin in your CMS, or
 - Add it directly in the header.php file between the <head> and </head> tags in the Theme editor of your CMS, or
 - Add it directly in the header.php file between the <head> and </head> tags in your hosting server via FTP.

Once you have copy-pasted the Global Site Tag in your website, click on 'Send test traffic'. By doing that, GA will check your property and open your website URL in a separate window.

The screenshot shows the GUA dashboard with the following elements highlighted:

- Marker 1:** An arrow points to the "Create Property" button in the top navigation bar.
- Marker 2:** A red box highlights the "Global Site Tag (gtag.js)" section, which contains the tracking code snippet:

```
<!-- Global site tag (gtag.js) - Google Analytics -->
<script async src="https://www.googletagmanager.com/gtag/js?id=UA-174994590-1"></script>
<script>
window.dataLayer = window.dataLayer || [];
function gtag(){dataLayer.push(arguments);}
gtag('js', new Date());

gtag('config', 'UA-174994590-1);
</script>
```

- Marker 3:** An arrow points to the "Send test traffic" button in the "Website Tracking" section.

Figure 14: GUA dashboard and the Global Site Tag.

If your code is properly implemented, GUA will show you the active-user count if you click on 'real-time traffic reports' just above the 'Send test traffic' button. If you are creating a new website, the number of real-time traffic will probably be 1 as in the example below. Otherwise, if your international website were not a new-born and if it had been running for some time, your 'real-time traffic reports' would show a higher number even if you had just set Google Analytics up now.

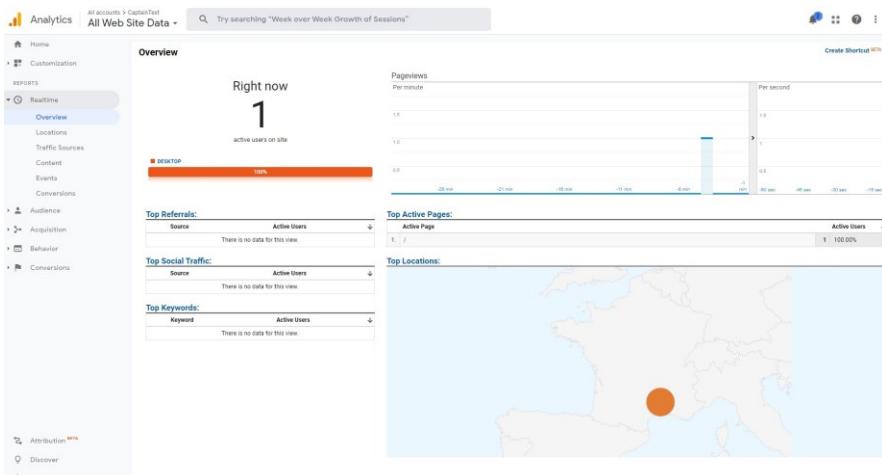


Figure 15: GUA real-time traffic report.

Once you have completed the whole setup, you will be able to use other GUA functions, such as 'Views', 'Filters', and 'Segments'. They are useful for organizing the data of your website. You can also set up several properties, but before that it is better to get familiar with your first one on the international scale, especially if you are new on Analytics.

For your international analyses, you need to understand the difference between 'Property' and 'View':

- **Property:** as mentioned, it is an online resource associated with your ID tracking code. You can have several properties, since you can have several ID tracking codes.
- **View:** it is associated with a single domain and is made of a specific set of rules with which you tell GUA how to show you the traffic data on that domain. Since GUA can only show traffic data for one view at a time, the best practice is to set up several views for the same domain. For example, for analyzing Canada, you can set:
 - One view for all traffic to your website.
 - One view for Canada visitors.
 - One view for Canada visitors that speak English.
 - One view for Canada visitors that speak French.

After setting up GUA for your international website, the first interesting data for you to look at³⁸ are your visitors' geographic location and their languages.

In the main left-side menu, click Audience > Geo. Here, you can choose the report by:

- Language: when selected, 'Language' will be your Primary Dimension and it will show the data by the language your visitors set up in their web browser. You can also add Secondary Dimensions, and several Sub-Secondary Dimensions. For the Secondary Dimensions you can choose among the following options, each one of which has a scroll-down menu for selecting among several Sub-Dimensions:
 - Commonly used
 - Users
 - Acquisition
 - Advertising
 - Behavior
 - Custom Variables
 - E-commerce
 - Social
 - Time
 - Users
- Location: when selected, it shows you the same data as before but by the locations from which your visitors searched your website. The location is, therefore, your Primary Dimension, and you can set it by Country, City, Continent or Sub-Continent. For each one of these Primary Dimensions, you can add the same Secondary Dimensions and Sub-Secondary Dimensions as in the Language option above. The results are displayed on a map, and in a list, for any of the dimensions.

³⁸ That is true if you are dealing with a Google Analytics property that already contains some data, like a website that has been online for some time and has already had several visitors. If instead you have just created your website and a Google Analytics property for it, you should wait several weeks before it is able to gather interesting traffic statistics.

Although that is an easy way to get the first international information, you can get much more out of Google Analytics for your export development.

For that, you simply need to set up some, or all, of the following five rules:

1) Filters for regions and countries

If your website is only in English and you are interested in seeing how visitors all around the world interact with your web pages, then a generic view³⁹, without country specifications, is enough.

Instead, when you start translating your website into other languages, it will be interesting for you to understand how your German pages are browsed by your German visitors, how your Italian pages are browsed by your Italian visitors, and so forth for all the other languages you decide to use in your website. To do that, you should apply a filter.

You can either create filters at the Account level, and then apply them to one or more views, or create filters at the View level, and then apply them only to that view.

To create a Filter at the Account level:

1. Click on Admin at the bottom of your left-side menu in your GUA dashboard.
2. Click on All Filters in the left column.
3. Click the '+ ADD FILTER' button⁴⁰

³⁹ As defined in the previous Case Study.

⁴⁰ If the '+ ADD FILTER' button is not visible, it means that you do not have the editing permission in the Google Analytics account.

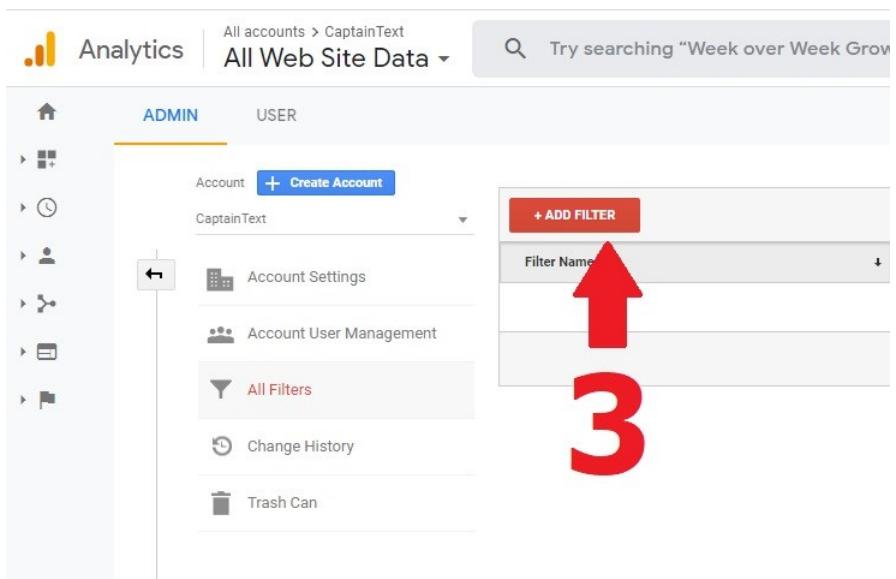


Figure 16: adding a filter in GUA at the Account level.

4. Give a name to your filter.
5. If you want to apply a predefined filter, click on Predefined, and choose one of the following options:

-Exclude/Include only traffic from the ISP domain: with this filter you can either exclude or include the traffic from a specific ISP or company network, e.g., example.com without the host server label 'www'.

-Exclude/Include only traffic from the IP addresses: with this filter you can either exclude or include the clicks from one or more IP addresses⁴¹. This type of filter is useful for excluding, for example, the traffic on your website coming from your internal organization. If your views contain both internal and external visitors, it can be difficult to understand how your target customers are using your website. For example, to exclude a single IP address, follow these steps: 1) enter the filter name 2) in filter type, select

⁴¹ If you want to filter a range of addresses, you can use the 'that begin with' or 'that end with' options, and, if you want to filter a more complex range of addresses, you can use a Custom Filter and specify your Filter Pattern.

'Predefined', 'Exclude', 'traffic from the IP addresses', and 'that are equal to' 3) enter the IP address 4) save.

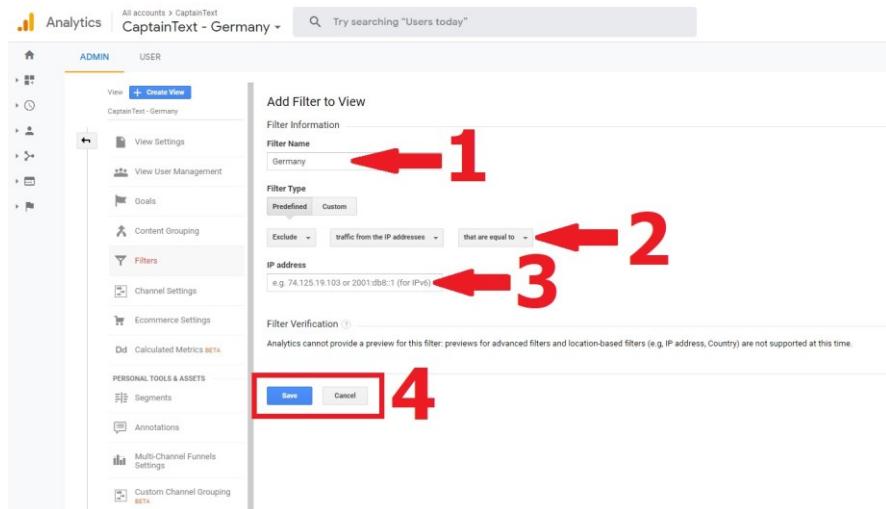


Figure 17: how to exclude the traffic from an IP address in GA.

-Exclude/Include only traffic to the subdirectories: with this filter you can either exclude or include the traffic to a subdirectory (such as /de or /fr)⁴².

-Exclude/Include only traffic to the hostname: with this filter you can either exclude or include the traffic to a sub-domain or hostname (such as de.example.com or fr.example.com).

6. If you want to apply a customized filter, click on Custom, and choose one of the following options:

-Exclude: with this filter you exclude all the hits related to your Filter Pattern. For example, if you exclude Chrome, you also exclude visitors, path, referral, domain, and all other information related to Chrome.

-Include: with this filter you include all the hits related to your Filter Pattern, such as a country or a region. All non-matching hits are ignored and unavailable in the reports.

⁴² In this case, filters must be specific to the structure of your website: they must be for '/de-de/', '/it-it/', etc. if you have a sub-folder structure, or for the 'de.', 'it.', etc. if you have a sub-domain structure.

- Lowercase / Uppercase: with this filter you can change all the contents in uppercase or lowercase. It only affects letters, not special characters, or numbers.
 - Search & Replace: with this filter you can search for a pattern and replace it with another one.
 - Advanced: with this filter you can build a new field from one or two other fields.
7. To complete the filter creation, go to Available views list, select the views to which you want to apply the filter, then click Add and Save.

To create a Filter at the View level, the steps are the same as the above, apart the second one: when you are in your Google Analytics dashboard, you must click on Filters in the right column and then, as before, click the '+ ADD FILTER' button⁴³.

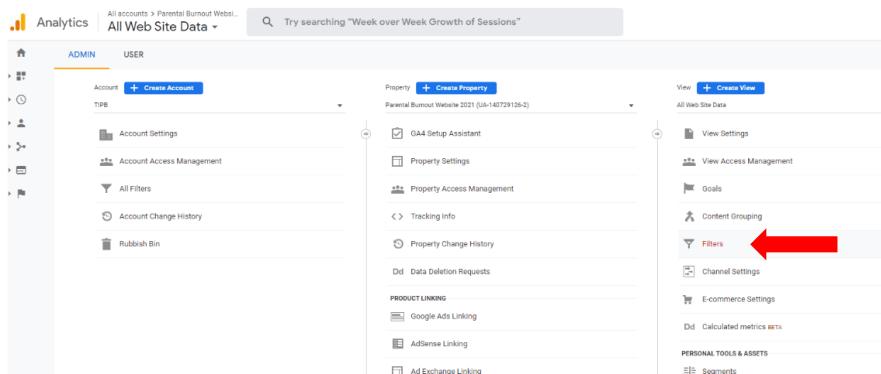


Figure 18: adding a filter in GUA at the View level.



TIP

Since filters permanently alter the way your data are shown, the best practice is to duplicate your view before applying a filter and to name that copy in such a way that it will remind you that is the view without filters, as in the example in the following figure. That is the only way to compare the original generic view with the country-specific new ones.

⁴³ If the '+ ADD FILTER' button is not visible, it means that you do not have the editing permission in the Google Analytics account.

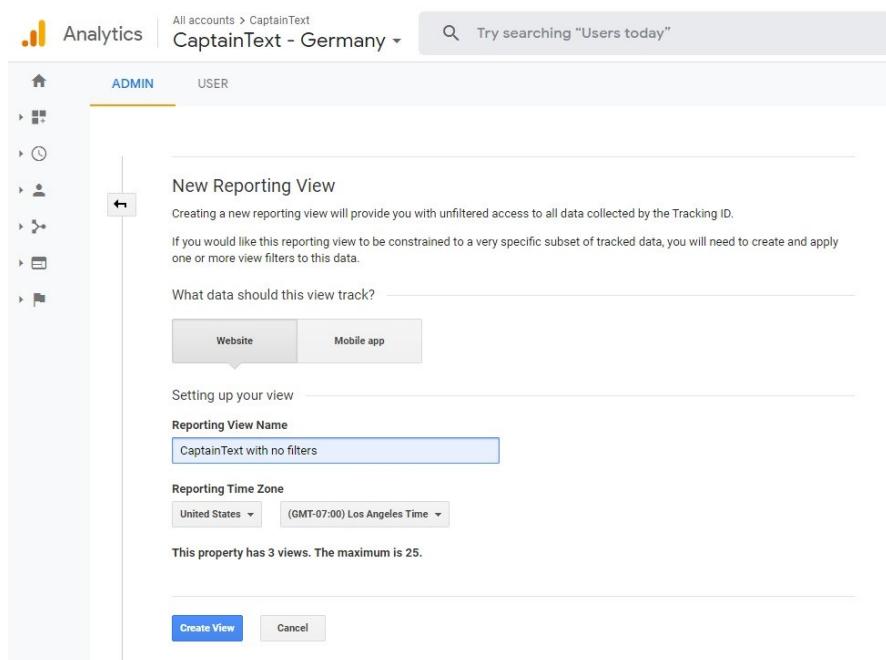


Figure 19: duplicating a view before applying a filter.

2) Segments

Unlike filters, they help you see subsets of your data without permanently altering the way data are shown. With segments you can narrow down your visitors' data by different target areas and types of demographics, such as which URL they came from, which language they used, their age, etc.

To set up a segment in GUA, click on Audience > Overview and then on the '+ Add Segment' button on the right of 'All Users' at the top of the screen.

The screenshot shows the 'Audience Overview' section of Google Analytics. On the left, there's a sidebar with navigation links like Home, Customization, Reports, Realtime, Audience (which is expanded to show Overview, Active Users, Lifetime Value, and Cohort Analysis), and other options like User Explorer, Demographics, Interests, Geo, Behavior, Technology, Mobile, and Cross Device. The main area is titled 'Audience Overview' with a green checkmark. It shows a summary for 'All Users' (100.00% Users) and a 'Overview' section with a dropdown menu set to 'Users'. Below this are two tables: one for 'Users' (Active Users: 6, Total: 4) and another for 'Sessions' (Active Sessions: 6, Total: 4). A large red arrow points upwards from the bottom of the 'Overview' section towards the '+ Add Segment' button, which is located in a dashed box.

Figure 20: adding a segment in GUA.

This will open the list of all the segments that are available in your property and to create a new one, click on the red '+ NEW SEGMENT' button.

The screenshot shows the 'Create New Segment' dialog box. At the top, there are three tabs: 'Import from gallery' (selected), 'Share segments', and '+ NEW SEGMENT' (highlighted with a red box). Below this is a section titled 'VIEW SEGMENTS' with a dropdown menu set to 'All'. To the right is a table with columns for 'Segment Name' and 'Actions'. The first row in the table has a checked checkbox next to 'All Users'. Other rows include 'Bounced Sessions', 'Converters', 'Direct Traffic', 'Made a Purchase', 'Mobile and Tablet Traffic', 'Mobile Traffic', and 'Multi-session Users'. At the bottom of the dialog are 'Apply' and 'Cancel' buttons, and a small 'Overview' tab at the very bottom.

Figure 21: creating a new segment in GUA.

By clicking on '+ NEW SEGMENT', you will be able to customize your segment. These are the steps:

1. Enter a name for your customized segment.

2. You can set up any of the variables listed on the left under the name. For your international analysis, the most important variable is the first one, ‘Demographics’.
3. Click on ‘Demographics’ to select your visitors’ language and/or location to include or exclude.

The screenshot shows the 'Audience Overview' page in Google Analytics. On the left, there's a sidebar with various reports like Realtime, Audience, and Demographics. The main area is titled 'Audience Overview' and shows a summary for 'All Users' (100.00% users). A red arrow labeled '2' points to the 'Segment Name' input field where 'French-Canadian' is typed. Another red arrow labeled '3' points to the 'Language' filter dropdown, which has 'contains' selected and 'fr' entered. A third red arrow labeled '3' points to the 'Location' filter dropdown, which has 'contains' selected and 'Canada' entered. There are also sections for Age, Gender, and other demographic filters.

Figure 22: customizing a new segment in GUA.

For example, to get a better understanding of how French Canadians use your website, you can create a segment, name it ‘French-Canadian’, then select the language that contains ‘fr’⁴⁴ and the location that contains Canada as country.

The right-side column shows you the segment’s summary, which is the number, expressed as a numeral and as a percentage, of your visitors included in this new segment: it helps you grasp whether the segment is correctly set up before saving it. Once you have saved it, your customized segment will appear in the initial list with all the other segments available for your property.

⁴⁴ The ISO 639-1 language code for French.

The screenshot shows the Google Analytics Audience Overview page. On the left, there's a sidebar with navigation links like Home, Customization, Realtime, Audience, and Overview (which is currently selected). The main area is titled 'Audience Overview' and shows a segment dropdown set to 'French-Canadian'. Below it, there's a table for creating new segments, with a red button '+ NEW SEGMENT' and three tabs: 'Import from gallery' and 'Share segments'. The table lists various segments under 'Segment Name', with 'French-Canadian' checked.

	Segment Name
<input type="checkbox"/> All Users	All
<input type="checkbox"/> Bounced Sessions	System
<input type="checkbox"/> Converters	Custom
<input type="checkbox"/> Direct Traffic	Shared
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> French-Canadian	Starred
<input type="checkbox"/> Made a Purchase	Selected
<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile and Tablet Traffic	
<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Traffic	

Figure 23: the 'French-Canadian' segment in GUA.

Likewise, you can copy that segment, by clicking on 'Actions' on the right-side of the line, and tailor it to contain the language 'fr' in other locations, like France, Belgium, Switzerland, etc.

Another difference between segments and filters is that segments allow you to analyze your visitors at any time, even before the segment creation, while with filters you can only analyze from after the filters are created.

3) Make sure GUA handles your international traffic in the right way

Can GUA mishandle traffic data? Yes!

There are so many sources from which your international visitors land on your website, that, unfortunately, GUA often considers some of these sources as 'referral' rather than 'organic' sources. That is especially the case for other international search engines, which are all but 'referral' sources.

To check whether your website is concerned by this referral/organic issue, check the list of websites that have driven visitors to your web pages by going to Acquisition > All Traffic > Referrals.

If you see search engines in this list, your analytics will be biased. In that case, go through the following case study for a solution.



CASE STUDY

If Google Analytics is considering some organic sources, such as other international search engines, as referral sources, go to Admin > Property > Organic Search Sources. There, you can add the search engines that you saw listed under 'referral'.

After that, Google Analytics should stop considering these sources as referral and start considering them as organic. I say 'should' because for some search engines this correction does not work.

If that is your case, you need to create a separate view and apply a filter.

To do that go to Admin > View > Create View. Give your new view a name that will remind you that it is, and must remain, free of filters, for example 'no-filters view'.

Now you can go back to your original view and add one or more filters: go to View > Filters > Add Filter > Custom. To change a traffic source from referral to organic, follow these steps:

- *Filter Type: Custom, then click Advanced.*
- *Field A – Extract A: Referral – enter the domain of the search engines you want to reclassify.*
- *Field B – Extract B: Campaign Medium – referral.*
- *Output To – Constructor: Campaign Medium – organic.*
- *Then make sure the 'Field A Required', 'Field B Required', and 'Override Output Field' options are selected!*

4) Goals

Setting up some country-specific goals for your international visitors is a very interesting technique, especially when you have achieved some understanding on how people around the world use your website.

For example, you can set a goal for analyzing how many visitors download a coupon in Germany. This goal is not relevant for your Italian visitors, but it is a very good indicator of how your website is performing in Germany. Therefore, this type of goal must be set specifically for each country that you want to analyze.

To create this type of goal, go to Admin > View (the one that includes the country where you want to set the goal) > Goals > New Goal.

In the 'New Goal' page, you can either choose a template goal or create your customized one. In this example, for the coupon in Germany you need to create a custom goal because you must track the number of clicks based on a specific German page, the one with the button to download the coupon.

Figure 24: creating a Goal in GUA.

Since you can set up to 20 goals for each view, you can easily track many actions on your international pages to see how well they are performing in each country.

5) Table filtering by location

This setting also helps you analyze how people in specific locations are using your website. It means adding the geography as a secondary dimension on the table of data you are analyzing.

Again, let's take the example of the German coupon. In addition to the coupon, you now also want to run an ad campaign to push it in Berlin.

With the specific goal set previously, you can analyze how the coupon page is performing, but how can you see whether your ad campaign is also performing well? By adding 'City' as a secondary dimension on the table of your data: on the left-side menu select Audience > Geo > Location, then click on Secondary dimension, Users, and City.

If you want to analyze other actions for different dimensions, you can choose among many other geographic criteria such as continent, sub-continent, region, etc.



TIP

These five rules combined with the other Google Analytics information, like the number of visitors, the number of new visitors, the bounce rate, the average session duration, the conversion rate, etc., will help you determine in which countries people are spontaneously attracted by your products or services.

At the same time, you will be able to understand the web behavior of people in foreign countries and compare it to that of people in your own country.

This information will help you break down the first hypotheses for your international web strategy.



Figure 25: GUA dashboard by location.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Google offers several free tools that can be used to get an initial idea of the potential sales that can be achieved in a foreign market.

Among them, Analytics is probably the most interesting one. However, even if it is free and easy to use, it should not be the only one to be used to choose which country to invest in.

CHAPTER 7

FINDING KEY EXPORT MARKETS WITH SEARCH CONSOLE AND OTHER WEBMASTER TOOLS

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As explained in the previous chapter, choosing the right countries for your digital export project is essential. Besides Analytics, Google and the other search engines offer several free tools that can help you in this search.

In the next pages you will find how to use Google Search Console and other Webmaster Tools to get an initial idea of the potential sales that can be achieved in a foreign market.

GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE (GSC)

Google Search Console (formerly Google Webmaster Tools) is a free tool that provides data and analytics to help improve your site's performance in Google search. Once you connect your website Search Console to your Analytics property, you will be able to see Search Console data in your Google Analytics reports.

Why should GSC be connected to GA? Because GSC and GA handle data in different ways and their results often differ. For example, GA tracks traffic only from users that have enabled JavaScript in their browser and only to webpages that include the Analytics JavaScript code. Websites that don't have that code correctly configured are not in Analytics reports. They will instead be in Search Console because here the data are coming from visitors' clicking on a SERP⁴⁵ link or from Google's crawling robots.

Connecting GSC to GA allows you to have more precise reports and to keep all the data together in one place.

To connect your website GSC to GA follow these steps:

- Go to Google Marketing Platform
<https://marketingplatform.google.com/>, sign in and click on Integration Center.
- In the new page, click on Analytics + Search Console integration, then click on Add integration.
- In the new window, you must select the Analytics property that you want to integrate with Search Console.
- Click on Set up in Analytics

⁴⁵ Search engine results page;

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_engine_results_page.

Integration configuration

Create an integration between a Search Console property and an Analytics property in the Analytics admin section. Choose an Analytics property to get started.[Learn more](#)

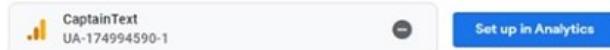


Figure 26: connecting Google Analytics with Google Search Console.

- Now your Analytics and Search Console are connected, and you will be directed to the Search Console.
- If you have already added your website as a Property in the Search Console, you will immediately see it. Otherwise, you will have to click on Add a site to Search Console.
- You will then need to verify your domain ownership following Google's instructions. That might involve copying a TXT record into the DNS configuration for your website, as in the figure below, or doing a simpler automatic verification if your ISP is in Google's list.

Verify domain ownership via DNS record
captaintext.com

Instructions for: Any DNS provider ▾

1. Sign in to your domain name provider (e.g. godaddy.com or namecheap.com)
2. Copy the TXT record below into the DNS configuration for **captaintext.com**

google-site-verification=N420L6YuyoLTkHqDseUtgERGzHEApullRK73FeJ4EWU COPY

3. Press **verify** below

Note: DNS changes may take some time to apply. If Search Console doesn't find the record immediately, wait a day and then try to verify again

[Full details](#)

Can't verify via Domain name provider?
For more verification methods, [try a URL prefix property instead](#)

BACK VERIFY LATER VERIFY

Figure 27: verifying your domain ownership.

- Click on Verify or on Start verification. If everything goes well, you will see this green-light message allowing you to go to the property, which is the website you just validated.



Verification method:
Domain name provider

To stay verified, don't remove the DNS record. To avoid losing verification, you may want to add multiple verification methods from the **Settings > Ownership verification**.

[DONE](#) [GO TO PROPERTY](#)

Figure 28: ownership validation.

Of course, you can also use GSC alone to analyze your international traffic. To do that, just open your dashboard and go to Performance > Country. This page will show you the list of countries that your internet users came from, along with the number of clicks and impressions.

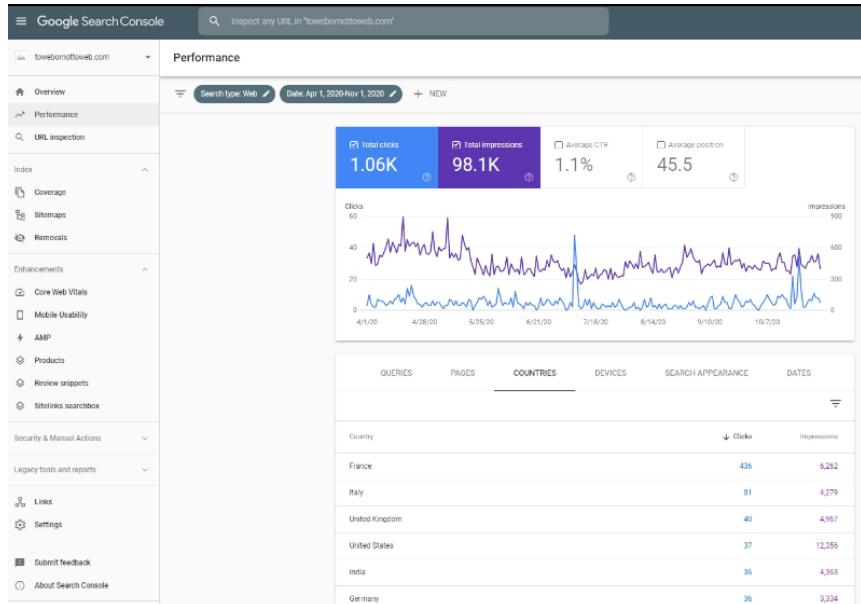


Figure 29: GSC performance report by country.

By clicking on one of the countries in this list, you obtain all the details for that country in terms of searched keywords, the most found URLs, the average click-through rate (CTR), the average position of the website in the local SERP, etc. To get even more details, click on a keyword from the country list: this will give you the number of clicks, impressions, average CTR and average position of the keyword related to the Google search engine in that specific country.

As GA, this information helps you identify the countries where your website already has good visibility and traction, which is essential for deciding where to invest your SEO budget. With GSC, you can study:

- The countries from where visitors found your website.
- The keywords they used in their language.
- The performance of these keywords, which is expressed as CTR, in other words the conversion rate per click of these keywords.
- The comparison of keywords' performance over several countries.

With this analysis you will have a better understanding of the behavior of your international visitors. That will help you select the markets to target for your export business.

Other search engines offer their own tools like GSC: they are generally called 'Webmaster Tools', yes, like the former name of GSC! They work approximately the same way as GSC. They are important when Google is not the most used search engine in the foreign market that you are looking to enter, like Russia or China. With these other Webmaster Tools, you can perform detailed analyses for these countries that will be more precise than what you would get using Google's tools.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GUA AND GSC

After reading the previous paragraphs, you might think that GSC and GA do the same thing. But they do not!

GA is a complete analytics suite with thousands of metrics on user behavior, and it can be configured in almost unlimited different ways, most of which you will never use. Because of that, GA can also be awfully confusing, especially for new website owners. On the other hand, GSC is a bit more digestible.

Most importantly, as mentioned earlier, GSC and GA do not handle data in the same way, and therefore their results differ: GA tracks traffic only from users that have enabled JavaScript in their browser and only to webpages that include the Analytics JavaScript code. Websites that do not have that code correctly configured are not in Analytics reports. Instead, they will be tracked by Search Console if visitors land on them by clicking on a link on a SERP, or if Google's robots crawl them.

This technical difference exists because they serve different purposes: GA provides data about users that visited and interacted with a website coming from any web source, while GSC provides data about users that visited and interacted with a website coming specifically from its search engine, which is meant to help site owners improve the SERP performance.



TIP

GSC and GA will never give the same results. So, do not waste time comparing them. Instead, use them together to validate your decisions when setting your international targets as explained in the 'specialist generalist' approach in a previous chapter.

In what follows are the key differences between Google Analytics and GSC or other search engines' tools:

GA and the Analytics of other search engines allow you to:

- Study the website statistics, including the number of visitors from all channels where the website is listed.
- Obtain information about the profile of visitors.
- Know how visitors found the website.
- Know the pages and content that attract most visitors.

- Understand the behavior of visitors and their navigation on the website.

GSC and the Webmaster Tools of other search engines allow you to:

- Analyze how Google and other search engines' bots see the website.
- Check whether the website is properly configured for the search engine in question.
- Ensure that all pages on the website are crawled correctly.
- See the keywords that visitors are using in the search engine in question to find the website.
- Identify any broken links or faulty pages (e.g., 404 pages).

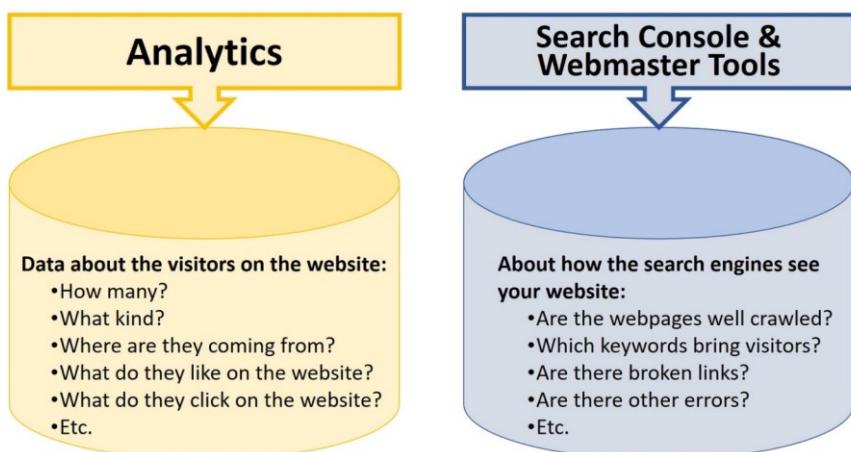


Figure 30: an overview of the differences between GA and GSC/Webmaster tools.



TIP

A tool like GSC or Bing Webmaster Tools is designed to help businesses analyze their websites' performance on their own search engines, in this case Google and Bing. If you plan to expand into a country where Bing or another search engine is more relevant than Google, GSC would not be the best SEO tool to use for your analyses.

TOOLS OF OTHER SEARCH ENGINES

Like the free Google tools, there are many other free tools for studying keyword trends around the world. They are almost always provided by all other search engines.

Such as:

- Phoenix Nest or Index for Baidu⁴⁶
- Wordstat for Yandex
- Search Ad for Naver
- Keyword Research and Ads for Bing
- Etc.

As we will see in the next chapters, if these search engines are predominant in the export markets you are targeting, it will be more efficient to use their free tools rather than those provided by Google to analyze the potential of your products or services in the markets you are targeting.

In addition to the free tools provided by the generic search engines, you can use the free tools provided by specific search engines such as those used by marketplace platforms like Amazon, Walmart, Carrefour, OfficeDepot, Best Buy and many others. In the following case study, you will find out how to use eBay to analyze such market potential for your products or services. The process is very similar to the other tools we saw previously and totally free. You might need to create a user account, but you will never need to buy anything to carry out this kind of research.

⁴⁶ To use these tools, a Baidu account and a registered activity in China will be required.



CASE STUDY

In addition to being an international C2C and B2C marketplace, eBay is a completely free online tool for analyzing the potential of an overseas market!

Here is how to use it for that:

- First go to the eBay of the foreign country you are interested in. Use the country selector button on the right side at the bottom of the page to select it.
- Then, click on 'Advanced search' at the right side of the top search menu. For example, if you want to study Spain, go to eBay Spain, and click on 'Avanzada' at the right side of the top search field.
- When in the advanced search, type the product in the language of the selected country. In the example for Spain, I used 'vinilos decorativos pared'.
- Then, select the country in 'Place', which in Spain would be 'Ubicación'.
- Click Search, or 'Buscar' on eBay Spain.
- In the result page, select the same country for delivery from the left-side menu. For eBay Spain, you must check 'Ubicación' again in the left-side menu. The result will list all the local offers for similar products in Spain.

This method gives you the level of sales of your products in any country where eBay is selling, currently in 49 countries. It provides an additional indication of the sales potential of your products, the level of e-shoppers' demand, and the level of local competition in each specific country.

The indicators to watch and to compare are the number of sales, auctions and 'powersellers', or 'vendedor excelente' in Spain, etc.



Comprar

- [Cómo comprar](#)
- [Garantía al cliente de eBay](#)
- [Ofertas de eBay](#)
- [eBay Móvil](#)
- [Eventos](#)
- [Marcas](#)
- [Marcas de coche](#)
- [Tiendas eBay](#)
- [eBay Extra](#)
- [Mapa del sitio](#)
- [Traducciones](#)

Vender

- [Cómo vender](#)
- [Centro](#)
- [Comisión](#)
- [Tiendas](#)
- [Central](#)
- [Protección](#)
- [Ventas](#)
- [Noticias](#)

Alemania	Chile	Francia	Kazajistán	Portugal
Argentina	China	Guatemala	Malasia	Puerto Rico
Australia	Colombia	Honduras	México	Turquía
Austria	Corea	Hong Kong	Nicaragua	Reino Unido
Bélgica	Costa Rica	India	Países Bajos	República Dominicana
Bielorrusia	Ecuador	Irlanda	Panamá	Rusia
Bolivia	El Salvador	Israel	Paraguay	Singapur
Brasil	Estados Unidos	Italia	Perú	Suecia
Canadá	Filipinas	Japón	Polonia	Tailandia

[Español](#)

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Figure 34: eBay country selector.

ADVANCED SEARCH IN LOCAL GOOGLE

As we saw throughout this chapter, you need to analyze the local competitive environment before selecting a foreign country as the target market for export sales. If you have read up to here, you are probably now more familiar with the free online tools available to help you do that kind of analysis. But there is another free tool that can be very useful: Google, or any other search engine!

Google and search engines in general are excellent for doing research about competitors in foreign markets.

To do that, you need to apply some specific settings in Google to make searches as if you were a local person based in the country you are interested in. Similarly, specific settings must also be applied in the other search engines if you have to use them instead of Google.

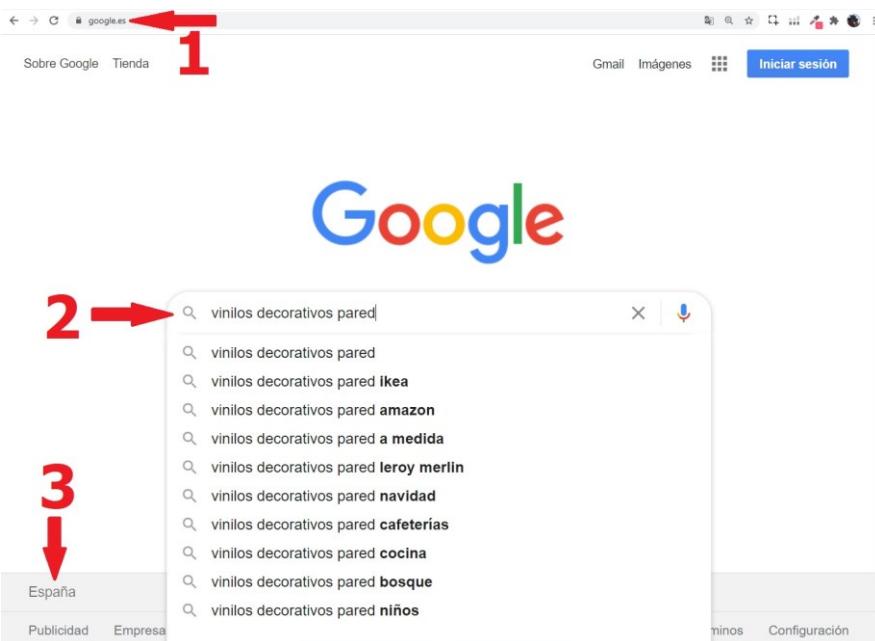
The following case study shows you the steps to follow for the specific settings.



CASE STUDY

Taking the previous example of Spain as the target country:

- 1) Go to google.es and click on Settings at the bottom right, then on Search settings.
- 2) In the new page, click on Languages on the left menu. Select Español and save.
- 3) You will be redirected to the Google main page.
- 4) Click again on Settings at the bottom right, then on Search settings.
- 5) In the new page, scroll down to Region Settings. Select Spain and save.
- 6) You will be redirected to the Google main page again, but now you can go on google.es and:
 - Your google search speaks Spanish and understands Spanish keywords such as 'vinilos decorativos pared'.
 - It is located in Spain: you should get search results just as any other Spanish person in Spain.



A screenshot of a web browser showing the Google homepage. A red arrow labeled '1' points to the URL bar containing 'google.es'. A red arrow labeled '2' points to the search bar which has 'vinilos decorativos pared' typed into it. A red arrow labeled '3' points to the 'España' button in the bottom left corner of the search results area. The search results show various suggestions related to decorative vinyls for walls.

1

2

3

vinilos decorativos pared

vinilos decorativos pared

vinilos decorativos pared **Ikea**

vinilos decorativos pared **amazon**

vinilos decorativos pared **a medida**

vinilos decorativos pared **leroy merlin**

vinilos decorativos pared **navidad**

vinilos decorativos pared **cafeterías**

vinilos decorativos pared **cocina**

vinilos decorativos pared **bosque**

vinilos decorativos pared **niños**

España

Publicidad Empresa

Configuración

Figure 35: Google localization settings.

With this setting you can obtain more precise and localized results than you would by using your local Google or google.com.

These steps are also very similar to the steps you would follow on other search engines.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Google offers several free tools that can be used to get an initial idea of the potential sales Google and the other search engines offer several free online tools that can be used to get an initial idea of the potential sales that can be achieved in a foreign market.

- *In the case of Google, the options are numerous: Analytics, that you saw in the previous chapter, Search Console, and the advanced searches in the local search engines such as google.de, google.co.uk, etc. And then, even more with the tools that you will see in the next chapter,*
- *Similar tools can also be found in other search engines such as Bing, Yandex, Baidu, etc.*

Although these tools offer the great advantage of being free and easy to use, they should not be the only ones to be used to choose which country to invest in.

CHAPTER 8

FINDING KEY EXPORT MARKETS WITH GOOGLE MARKET FINDER, KEYWORD PLANNER AND OTHER FREE ONLINE TOOLS

“

The global market is full of export opportunities. Yet it is better to start gradually exporting to selected countries rather than trying to sell everywhere around the world at once. Choosing the right countries is therefore essential.

In this chapter, as in the previous ones, you will find more free tools to help you in this search.

GOOGLE MARKET FINDER (GMF)

Google Market Finder was created in 2010 and went through a major update at the end of 2017 to help businesses uncover the most promising markets overseas⁴⁷.

How does it work?

For each country, GMF provides several levels of information based on the search statistics on its search engines and on other third-party global indicators. You will get the first level of information by submitting your website domain.

This level of information includes data about the following four categories related to your industry:

1. The number of monthly searches, in millions, performed on Google search engines in the top markets.
2. The cost per click in USD.
3. The Ease of Doing Business Index, on a scale from 1 to 190. This indicator, created by the World Bank in 2003⁴⁸, ranks the business situation in 189 countries. A low number means that the country's environment is favorable for business.
4. The average household yearly net income in the country.

⁴⁷ <https://marketfinder.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en/>.

⁴⁸

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IC.BUS.EASE.XQ?end=2019&start=2019&view=map>.

Your top recommended markets

We've used key metrics from your chosen categories to calculate which markets offer you the best opportunities for growth, discover your first recommendations below.

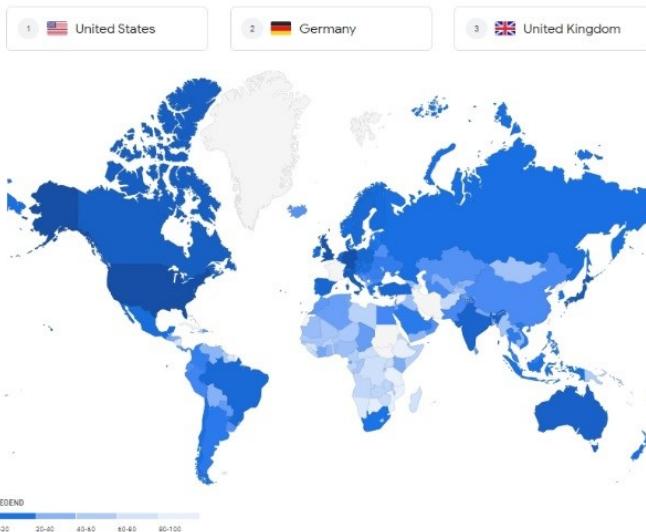


Figure 37: an example of GMF for a home decoration business.

To access the second level of information, you need to connect to your Google account.

Then you will be able, for each country, to access these additional data, which aim to provide more operational information for starting a business in a new market:

1. Overview: monthly searches across categories, Google Ads competitiveness, ease of doing business index, and household net disposable income.
2. Country profile: population, languages, currency, corruption perception index, median age, and population breakdown by age.
3. Economic profile: GDP, GDP per capita, GDP purchasing power parity per capita, GDP annual growth, household net disposable income, unemployment rate, global competitiveness index, ease of doing business index, logistics performance index, payment methods.

4. Online profile: monthly searches across categories, Google Ads competitiveness, Android, and iOS usage.
5. Purchase behavior: product research breakdown by device, internet usage during purchase stages, weekly online purchase breakdown by device.
6. Logistics: trading across borders rank data, time to import border compliance data, time to export border compliance data, cost to import documentary compliance data, cost to export documentary compliance data, cost to import border compliance data, cost to export border compliance data, time to import documentary compliance data, time to export documentary compliance data.

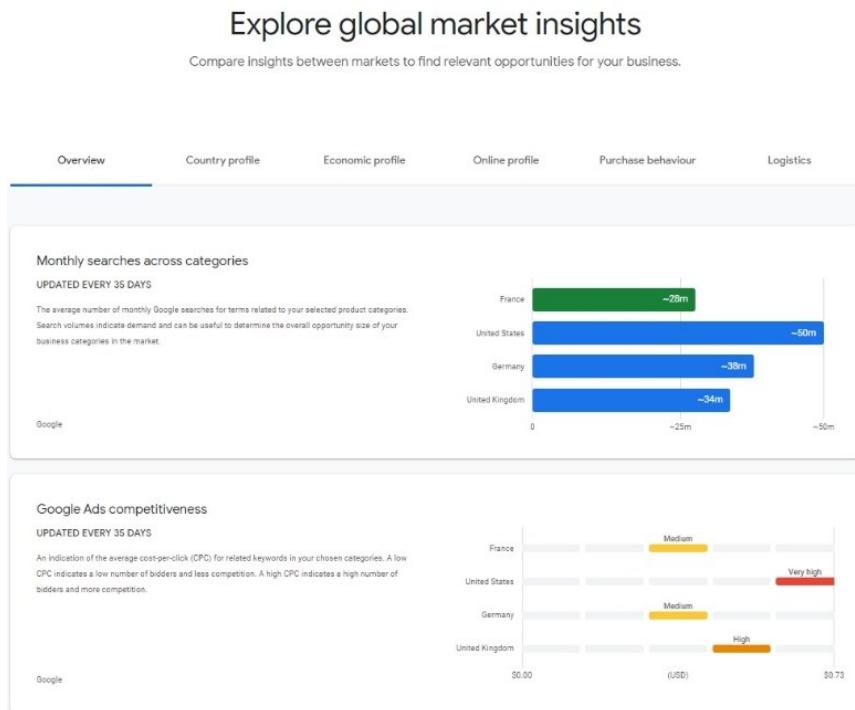


Figure 38: GMF overview of the selected countries in the home decoration business.

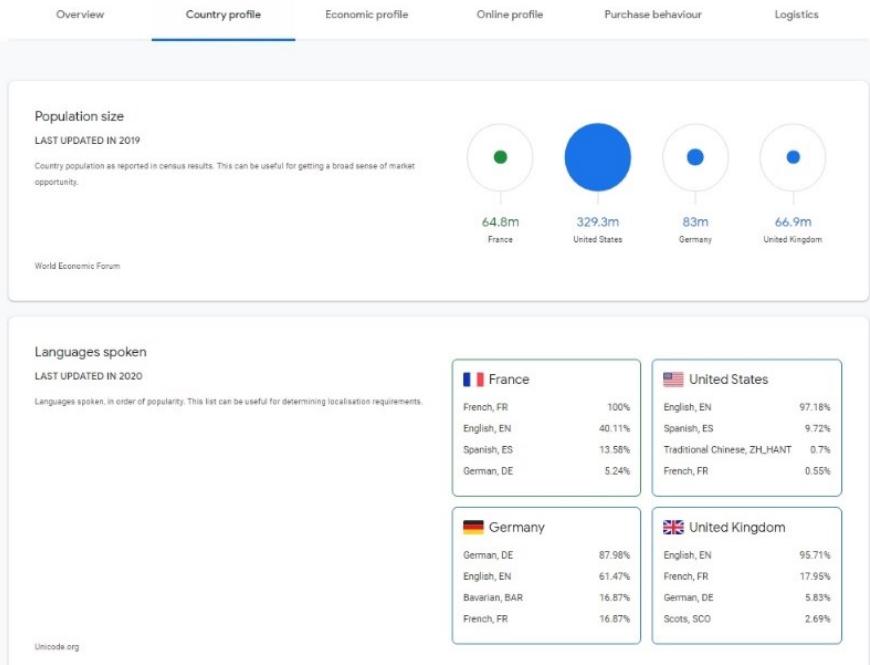


Figure 39: GMF country profiles for the selected countries in the home decoration business.

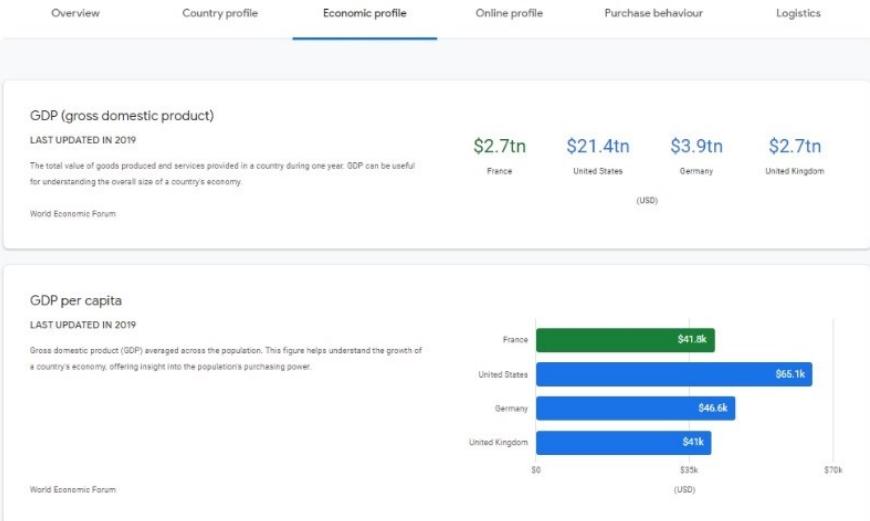


Figure 40: GMF economic profiles for the selected countries in the home decoration business.

For the third level of information, you have the choice in the top menu between 'Plan your operations' or 'Market your business'.



Figure 41: GMF top menu with the advanced sources of information.

Both provide tips, case studies, and tools on how to adapt either your operations or your marketing strategy for the selected foreign market. Here are the details of what you can find:

Plan your operations:

- Localization
- Global Payments
- Customer Care
- Logistics
- Talent recruitment
- Tax and Legal

Market your business:

- Global Marketing Strategy
- Business performance and measurement
- Search advertising
- Display advertising
- Video advertising
- Find a marketing partner



TIP

This free Google tool can be very useful for getting a grasp on the size of each market and for ranking the countries by their online sales potential for your export development. But do not forget that all the data provided by GMF are Google-centric in the sense that GMF mainly provides data that are available using Google's apps in each country.

So, what is the best practice?

- 1. Check what are the most used search engines in the countries where you want to sell online.*
- 2. Since Google is the leader in almost all countries in the world, you will hardly ever encounter the risk of targeting a country where GMF is inadequate. That can be the case for China, Russia, Japan, or South Korea, as we will see later. In those countries, the most used search engines are different and perform mainly local searches: they do not seem to provide anything like GMF, therefore. If you are interested in one of those countries, you should not rely on GMF only, although it can still provide useful macroeconomics and digital information about them. The best for you is to combine GMF information with other relevant sources of information about those countries.*
- 3. As a matter of fact, the best practice is to combine GMF data, case studies, and tools, even when Google is the leader on the digital scene, with other sources of market information before validating your international web-marketing strategy.*

GOOGLE KEYWORD PLANNER (GKP)

Google Keyword Planner is a tool used to estimate the potential of keywords for possible Google Ads campaigns or simply for any other digital content where keywords are... key!

Although you need a Google Ads account to use GKP, you can use it for free, even if you do not run Google Ads campaigns, in the same way as for Google Analytics.

With GKP you can analyze the potential of a product or service in a specific market. How does it work? It is very simple. The potential of a product or service in a specific market is determined by the volume of keywords related to the product or service that are searched on the Google search engine in the specific country.

Here is how to use it for your export project:

1. Log in to your Google Ads account or create a new account even if you will not use it for advertising campaigns.
2. Click on the 'Tools & Settings' icon. A menu will scroll down. Click on 'Keyword Planner'.
3. In the new page, you will have two options: either to get new keywords ideas related to your business, or to get search volume and forecasts for your keywords. To analyze the potential of your product or service in a specific market, you need to click on the first option, 'Discover new keywords'.

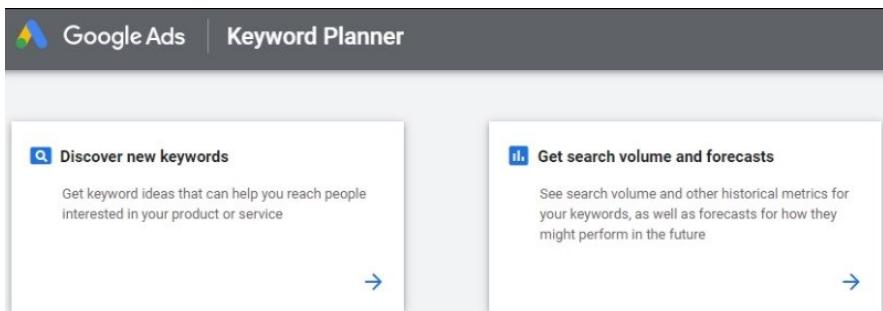


Figure 42: the two options in Google Keyword Planner.

Then:

- Define the target country.
- Define the target language.
- Enter the keywords related to your business in the language spoken in that country.

In the following example, the competitiveness results for the keywords 'vinilos decorativos de frases' in Spanish in Spain. The fact that the competitive level is 'High' means that there are a lot of people searching for that product or similar products on Google. It is one of the first data indicating that Spain is possibly an interesting country to export to for a producer of decorative lettering stickers.

The screenshot shows the Google Ads Keyword plan interface. The search term 'vinilos decorativos de frases' is entered in the search bar. The results table has columns for Keyword, Avg. monthly searches, Competition, Ad impression share, Top of page bid (low range), Top of page bid (high range), and Account. The 'Competition' column is highlighted with a red box.

<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword (by relevance) ↓	Avg. monthly searches	Competition	Ad impression share	Top of page bid (low range)	Top of page bid (high range)	Account :
Keywords that you provided						
<input type="checkbox"/> vinilos decorativos de frases	10 - 100	High	—	€0.14	€0.38	
Keyword Ideas						
<input type="checkbox"/> frases para vinilos	10 - 100	High	—	€0.04	€0.11	
<input type="checkbox"/> frases en vinilo	1K - 10K	High	—	€0.05	€0.25	
<input type="checkbox"/> vinilos decorativos frases	100 - 1K	High	—	€0.06	€0.38	
<input type="checkbox"/> frases para decorar paredes	100 - 1K	High	—	€0.03	€0.15	
<input type="checkbox"/> frases para la pared	100 - 1K	High	—	€0.03	€0.27	
<input type="checkbox"/> frases para pegar en la pared	10 - 100	High	—	€0.03	€0.11	
<input type="checkbox"/> vinilos frases personalizadas	100 - 1K	High	—	€0.15	€0.40	
<input type="checkbox"/> frases en vinilo para pared	100 - 1K	High	—	€0.04	€0.19	
<input type="checkbox"/> frases de vinilos	100 - 1K	High	—	€0.05	€0.23	

Figure 43: the results for 'vinilos decorativos de frases' in Spanish in Spain.

GOOGLE TRENDS

Google Trends (GT) is another free tool that you can use to understand the potential of an export market. Like the previous ones, it provides information on keyword trends country by country.

GT reports indicate whether there is a high demand for a product or service, or even for a specific topic. It is also based on the quantity of searches that people performed on the local search engines, with the difference that it adds the historical seasonality for each market.

With this tool you can also compare keyword trends across several countries, which is useful for identifying similarities among those countries.

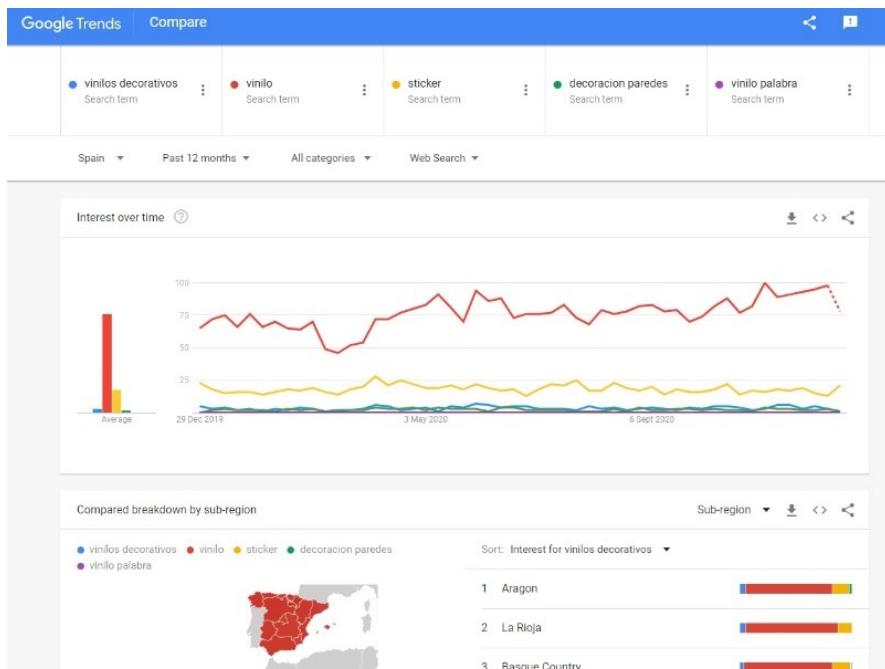


Figure 44: using Google Trends for comparing the historical use of keywords related to decorative wall lettering in Spanish in Spain.



TIP

Nevertheless, these types of analysis must be part of a broader strategic plan. Since they cannot replace traditional market studies, it is essential to use them together to make an effective selection of the export markets that you should invest in.

The best practice is to use these tools to make an initial analysis and identify the first international signals, which must be confirmed through deeper field studies. With that, you can gather all the key information to select your target export markets and move forward with your international web strategy.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

As we saw in the previous chapter, search engines offer many free online tools that can be used to get an initial idea of the potential sales that can be achieved in a foreign market.

- *Google offers various options: not only Analytics, Search Console, and the advanced searches in the local search engines such as google.de, google.co.uk, etc., which we saw before, but also Google Market Finder, Google Keyword Planner, Google Trends, among others.*
- *In addition to search engines, other international e-commerce platforms can provide useful information about the potential of a foreign market.*

As mentioned earlier, although these tools offer the great advantage of being free and easy to use, they should not be the only ones to be used to choose which country to invest in. You also need to validate the conclusions of these free tools with deeper business-specific market studies.

CHAPTER 9

PLANNING AN EFFECTIVE DIGITAL EXPORT STRATEGY WITH THE T.O.S.CA METHOD

“

As the cornerstone of the online presence of a company and a brand, the website is one of the first points of contact with customers, and it is now even more essential for both domestic and international markets because of Covid-19. The static brochure website from the 1990s has been enriched with increasingly dynamic and multilingual content to engage internet users around the world.

Nowadays building an effective digital export strategy is a must for any business. The T.O.S.CA method is a clear and easy way to do that.

T.O.S.CA, NOT ONLY FOR OPERA LOVERS!

In 2020, almost 60% of people around the world, and up to 95% in the most connected countries⁴⁹, regularly go online at home, at work, in stores, or on the move anywhere there is a working internet connection.

But with about two billion websites on the internet in the world, trying to make people find a new one can sound like trying to make them find a needle in a haystack.

The good news is that the mission of a website is not to be the best among about two billion! Its mission is to achieve a specific objective that compels only a specific audience in a specific country and not everybody around the world.

You must therefore concentrate your resources on the right foreign market, on the right objective, on the right customers, and on the right actions. This is the foundation of an effective digital export strategy!

Unfortunately, that is too often treated lightly. Here is where the T.O.S.CA⁵⁰ method, not the opera, can help you define a good digital export strategy and build an effective international website for it. This method is simply based on asking some key questions. Let's see which ones.



TIP

A website is a permanent communication channel that can be visited by anyone around the world. Indicating your URL on all physical (brochures, packaging, business cards, ...) and digital media (e-mails, social networks, blogs, ...) is the first thing to do to highlight your digital asset.

⁴⁹ Source: <https://wearesocial.com/digital-2021>.

⁵⁰ T.O.S.CA = Target, Objective, Segment, and Call-to-Action.

T: TARGET

Where do you want to export?

The identification of the target foreign market must be done before anything else!

It is the first step when planning a digital export strategy. You need to assess and rank the key foreign markets for your business based on these factors:

- Macroeconomic data and future trends.
- Microeconomic data and future trends.
- Direct and indirect competition.
- Fiscal and legal conditions.
- Cultural and linguistic differences.
- Logistics and payment requirements.
- Digital environment and local shopping behaviors.

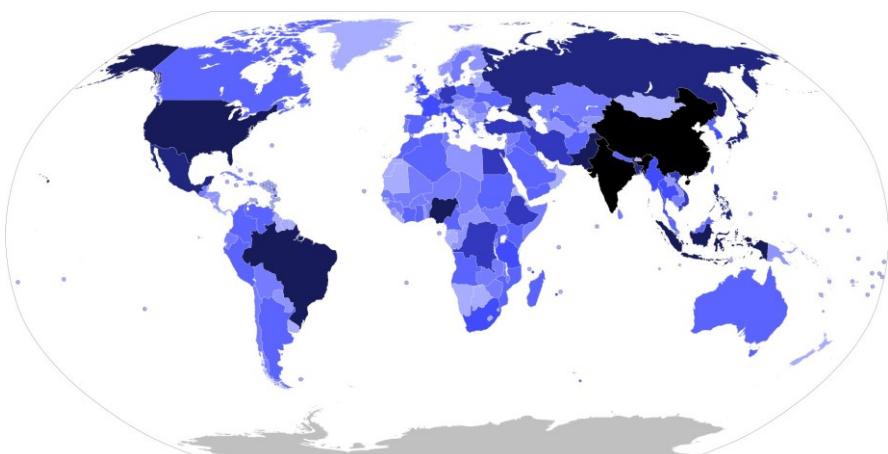


Figure 45: the countries in the world⁵¹.

However, with almost 200 countries in the world, you might ask yourself how ... on earth ... you are going to assess and rank them all.

⁵¹ This figure is under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International. Resizing changes applied <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:World_Population.svg.

You do not have to, simply because there is no need to assess and rank them all! The next case study explains the best options for setting your target effectively and quickly.



CASE STUDY

1. *To start with, you can use the free web tools explained in the previous chapter to gather as much information as possible about the best foreign countries for your business.*
2. *You can also find relevant studies, reports, surveys and statistical analyses on the internet, for free or for a relatively small fee. You can try to find them by, first, setting the local Google search engine parameters for the country you are interested in, following the steps presented in the previous chapter; then, by using specific keywords related to your sector in the local language. Based on the previous example of a company interested in selling to Spain, the keywords to use on google.es could be something like 'estudio de mercado sector decoración hogar y pared España'.*
3. *Additionally, you can hire an external consultant that can do tailored market research for your business.*
4. *Moreover, you can contact chambers of commerce, economic development organizations and trade associations.*

Once you have gathered sufficient data and looked at them from a bird's-eye view, you should be able to shortlist the ten or so countries where your product or service has the highest potential for sales. Based on this list, you can now examine each country more closely and compare all the factors in the list above before making the final decision as to which target foreign market to invest in.

This market-selection process may seem annoying to some, but it should not be, because selecting the wrong market is MUCH more annoying than that!



TIP

Your market analysis is not over and never will be! A successful export business is built on a strong and rational plan. And, to be strong, the plan must be agile: it must be able to adapt quickly to possible changes. Therefore, to spot those changes, you must consistently monitor your export market as well as other markets, at least those in your shortlist.

Since a high-potential export market at time T may become low-potential at time T+x, it is important to stay observant at all times.

O: OBJECTIVE

Now that you have selected your target foreign market, you must answer the second question: what do you want to achieve there?

All the classic SMART⁵² long- and short-term marketing and sales objectives are also valid for a digital export strategy, as long as they are more precise than just 'selling online'.

Here are some examples:

Sell surplus

A simple change in domestic demand can turn a best-seller product or service into a no-seller or a slow-seller, leaving a company with overstock that can have better sales in the foreign country.

Extend life-cycles

Phased-out products or services often have long new lives in foreign markets, opening new sales opportunities that would not otherwise be available at home.

Achieve economies of scale

⁵² SMART = Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Timely.

Increasing production can improve the operational cost and the use of a company's resources, which will increase profits of both domestic and export sales.

Test different business models

Even if you are successfully selling your product or service in your country on a fixed-price basis, other business models could also be as successful, like selling to a new distribution channel, selling B2B instead of B2C, selling subscriptions instead of fixed prices, etc. The advantage of testing them in a foreign country is that it reduces the risk of disrupting your domestic business.

Manage seasonality

Selling to other countries allows you to flatten the slowdowns and fluctuations that you might have in your domestic market during specific seasons in the year.

S: SEGMENTS ... AND PERSONAS

Once you have your target and your objective, you can answer the third question: what type of clients do you need to achieve your objective in the target foreign market?

Many companies, when starting export, try to sell their products or services to anyone, thinking that if they do not do that, they will never get any customers!

That is a wrong approach. It is not only expensive but also counterproductive, because it shows to the industry that you do not know who your customers are, which will eventually jeopardize your credibility with your key potential clients!

Instead, before entering your target foreign market you need to set your segmentation. That's the only way for you to concentrate on and invest where the target customers are.

Customer segmentation requires large-scale quantitative research for grouping people (i.e., potential customers) based on their distinct needs and features. Segments are usually done based on demographic and psychographic data like age, sex, socio-professional category, lifestyle, location, job, company, opinions, life stage, etc.



CASE STUDY

For example, for its customer segmentation, a German innovative home decoration business looking to export to Spain should analyze:

- Age: 'Generation X', 'Millennials', and 'Generation Z'.
- Ethnicity: Spanish, South American, European, Asian, other.
- Location: the number of households within a certain radius from major Spanish cities.
- Sex: percentage of female vs. male.
- Income: the number of households with income above a certain threshold.
- Etc.

It is important to keep in mind that a segment provides insights of a group of customers on a wide macro level, and not on a narrow micro level, which is what 'personas' do.

A persona is a semi-fictional character created to simulate a real client's behavior. It is made by analyzing and collecting data on real people's behavior through one-to-one interviews or focus groups with the people in a specific segment group. It is the representation of a customer group that shares similar behaviors.

So, even if segments and personas are both groups of customers, they are different: personas add the narrow micro and behavioral elements to segments. Where segmentation measures people in a group at a wide macro level, personas provide richer understanding at the real customer level by analyzing their context, emotional needs, motivations, behavior, and the associated threats/opportunities.

Personas are part of segments, and different personas can be in the same segment. They provide additional information about customers within the segment.



TIP

The words segment and persona have often been used synonymously to define the characteristics of customers. However, as we saw, they mean two very different things, and you need both for your digital export strategy: you need to get your segmentation right, before building personas around them. Do not jump into creating personas without an accurate segmentation exercise.

For your digital export strategy, the combination of the data collected from the segmentation and the data gathered from the personalization allows you to shape a backstory on how a potential customer – a persona – would behave on the internet and on your website in their country.



CASE STUDY

From the previous example, the German innovative home decoration business looking to export to Spain could come up with this type of profile for its persona exercise:

Catarina, the hectic single mom:

- Middle class
- Female
- 46 years old
- Single with two daughters
- Lives in Bilbao
- History graduate
- Works as museum curator at the Guggenheim Museum
- Homeowner of a downtown three-room apartment
- Personality: extrovert, creative, analytical, loyal, eco-friendly
- Interests: spending time with her kids, gatherings with friends, reading, art, interior design
- Goal: make her place comfortable and nice to enjoy with her kids and friends
- Lifestyle: hectic because she has all the kids and home responsibilities on top of her job
- Frustrations: lack of time and space for more home decoration and a mortgage to payback
- Shopping behavior: buys interior decoration items four to five times a year, always online, from a laptop. Quality is more important than price. Big Instagram user to follow home decoration influencers and trends
- Brand affinities: Habitat, Zara Home, Bemz, Domésticoshop, Deco&Lemon.



TIP

The criteria impacting personas' online behavior are many. Here are the examples of the most common:

Age

The differences related to the age groups are obvious. For example, even if now most seniors are internet users, their use is very different from that of 40-something year old people who discovered the internet at the end of their studies. And that difference is even more accentuated when comparing senior internet users to schoolboys that received an iPad for Christmas.

Contact time

At what time do personas come on a website? For example:

- For a B2B company, it will be mainly during the week, when personas are at work.
- For a consumer DIY business, it can be either when purchasing in a store, or when using the purchased product, or when installing it.
- For a farmer, it can be somewhere at the farm by using the personas' smartphone.

Device

This results from the previous criteria. It can be for example:

- A desktop computer for an executive in his office.
- A smartphone for a student or a shopper in a store.
- A tablet by a nomadic salesperson during the weekend.



CASE STUDY

There are numerous online studies and statistics about internet users according to the socio-professional category, job, etc. They can be easily found on search engines by using keywords such as 'internet users UK by age' or 'usuarios internet México por edad'.

With this information, it is important to create use-case scenarios for the main personas using the available statistics in the target country. For example:

- Persona A in country A: already client, owner of his house, in the upper socio-professional category, he searches for information on a product when using it from his smartphone, either by typing the name of the product in a search engine or by scanning the QR code on the packaging.
- Persona B in country A: prospective client, HR manager in a company with 150 employees, connects from his office computer to the product demonstration page after receiving a commercial e-mail.

CA: CALL-TO-ACTION

The last question: when you have your target, your objective, your segments, what action do you want your personas to take when they arrive on your website?

Answering that question allows you to set your call-to-action (CA) strategy.

But what is a CA? For websites, a CA is simply a hyperlink element, such as a button or a text, that is meant to trigger an instant reaction from a target audience and prompting them to click on it.

The hyperlink element is most often made of words or short phrases that must compel your personas or prospective clients to act in the specific way you want. The words or short phrases are usually imperative verbs such as 'call now', 'visit our store today', 'read more', 'download your coupon', 'order before midnight to get -50% off', 'watch our video', 'request a demo', etc.

CAs have been used in marketing materials for long, and they are not exclusive to websites. They can be used as well on brochures, emails, TV ads, etc. The advantage of website CAs compared to off-line marketing materials is that the triggered reactions are faster.

Powerful CAs are the ones that convert visitors (your personas) into leads and leads into customers, or visitors directly into customers!



TIP

To track your Call-to-Action performance you need to measure three metrics:

1. Click-through rate

The CTR is the most important metric to check when analyzing the performance of a CA. It is the ratio of the number of people that clicked on the CA to the number of people that have seen it, expressed as a percentage.

2. Submission rate

This metric is the ratio of the number of people that filled out the form on the landing page that comes after their click on the CA to the number of people that clicked on the CA, expressed as a percentage. It tells you how well the CA, the landing page, and the form work together.

3. Views to submission rate

This metric is the ratio of the number of people that clicked on the CA and filled out the form on the landing page that comes after their click on the CA to the number of people that have seen the CA, expressed as a percentage.

You need to track these three metrics for several months in your target foreign market to set your averages. You can then compare them with your industry averages in that country and with your home averages as well to determine whether your CAs are successful or need further improvements.

Industry	Maximum CTR	Minimum CTR	Average CTR
Architecture	4.69%	0.68%	2.09%
Audio/Video	8.16%	0.20%	2.62%
Automotive & Marine	25.45%	0.03%	5.98%
Coaching/Consulting	11.07%	0.21%	2.81%
Construction	25.00%	0.04%	3.46%
eCommerce	68.99%	0.11%	8.16%
Education	28.38%	0.26%	3.31%
Electrical	5.98%	0.04%	1.17%
Financial	65.63%	0.08%	9.01%
Fitness	17.72%	3.07%	7.32%
Food & Beverage	55.09%	0.10%	6.68%
Healthcare/Medical	13.46%	0.03%	1.26%
Interior Design	4.69%	0.68%	2.12%
Logistics	19.64%	2.36%	8.28%
Manufacturing	22.17%	0.11%	2.47%
Marketing	60.49%	0.07%	2.93%
Non-Profit	28.38%	0.26%	6.27%
Real Estate	16.39%	0.47%	7.60%
Technology	43.72%	0.02%	2.49%

Figure 46: an indication of the CA's CTR by industry in the U.S. in 2019⁵³.

For your digital export strategy, the important thing is not only to find the local best-performing words and phrases for your CAs. You must also make sure they are relevant to your local personas if you want to achieve the objective you set in the 'O' step.

For example, providing a podcast in English to prospective clients in Spain will bring a very small CTR! On the other hand, if the same content is offered in a video format with Spanish subtitles, the CTR will be in the average values.

So, call-to-action must be relevant for the specific combination of target-objective-segment/personas. Some examples are given in the following case study.

⁵³ Source: Vye <https://www.vye.agency/blog/whats-a-good-call-to-action-click-through-rate>.



CASE STUDY

Some examples of CAs for a digital export strategy, to be translated into the language of the target foreign country:

- Call us for free.
- Contact us.
- Subscribe to our newsletter.
- Let us call you back on the day and at the time you want.
- Request a demo.
- Install the free demo version.
- Book a demo.
- Download our whitepaper.
- Rate our products.
- Register for our webinar.
- Watch our video.
- Participate in our contest.

These are examples of CAs based on international marketing best practices. If you use some of them, remember to analyze their performance and to see whether they work for your audience.



CASE STUDY

Example T.O.S.CA 1

- Target: Italy.
- Objective: sell surplus books for cheaper prices.
- Segment: low-income secondary-school and university students, for whom the website must be fully translated, presenting the books, the prices and all the other marketing mix elements, such as Italian payment systems, delivery solutions, etc.
- CA:
 - Quick look.
 - Get 15% off your first order.
 - Promotion ends soon.
 - Shop now.

Example T.O.S.CA 2

- Target: Germany.
- Objective: test the B2B channel of architects and interior designers for handmade couches.
- Segment: independent luxury architects and interior design studios, for whom the website is fully translated and presents videos showcasing some handmade couches from previous clients.
- CA:
 - What we do.
 - Start a new couch with us.
 - Download our quality chart.
 - Book a video meeting with us.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The T.O.S.CA method (*target, objective, segment, call-to-action*) is based on the concept that for the target foreign country an international website is developed to appeal to a specific foreign segment and to prompt the personas in that segment to take a specific action aiming at the achievement of a precise objective.
- It requires a call-to-action that is relevant for the specific combination of target-objective-segment/personas.

CHAPTER 10

DETERMINING THE BREAK-EVEN POINT FOR YOUR DIGITAL EXPORT PROJECT

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The break-even point is a very important piece of information, whether for a business plan or for the management of a product, for domestic or international markets.

How can you calculate and use it as part of a digital export project?

WHAT IS A BREAK-EVEN POINT?

The break-even point is the level of turnover at which the operation of a business becomes profitable. More precisely, it is the amount of sales needed to cover all of the company's fixed and variable costs over a given period: one financial year, one semester, three years, etc. As soon as the break-even point is exceeded, the business starts generating profits.

On the contrary, if the break-even point is not reached, the business loses money.

The international web-marketing director is responsible, among other things, for the profitability of any digital projects of the company. The break-even analysis helps him set profitability goals consistent with a digital export strategy, by integrating the financial dimension to the international online targets to make sure that costs are covered, and profits are earned.

THE EASIEST WAY TO CALCULATE YOUR BREAK-EVEN

The break-even (BE) calculation is based on sales and costs: the company's BE is reached when its sales cover, meaning 'are equal to', the amount of fixed costs (FC) and variable costs (VC).

The FC are those that do not vary with the business's activity (i.e., rent, insurance, software licenses, salaries excluding variables, etc.), while VC change proportionally with the business's activity (i.e., production cost, subcontractors, variable part of salaries, raw materials, etc.).

To calculate the BE, simply start with the calculation of your contribution margin (CM), which is a percentage expressing the difference between Sales and VC:

$$CM = (Sales - VC) / Sales$$

Then, to find your BE just divide the FC by the CM:

$$BE = FC / CM$$

This formula gives you the BE in terms of sales: it is the exact amount of sales that your company must generate to cover fixed and variable costs.

It is also convenient to calculate the BE by unit because that shows how many units your company needs to produce to achieve the BE. To do that, you simply need to replace the CM by the difference between your unit price (UP) and the unit variable cost (UVC) in the previous formula. This is the new formula:

$$BE = FC / (UP - UVC)$$

The BE can also be calculated in terms of number of days of sales. That tells you the date at which your business reaches the BE. To calculate it, you need to divide your sales BE by your average sales per day. Then, by counting that number of days on your financial calendar, you will determine your 'break-even day', or the day of the year from when your business starts making profits.

You can find many other calculation explanations⁵⁴ and an easy calculator⁵⁵ for free online.

⁵⁴ For example: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Break-even_\(economics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Break-even_(economics)).

⁵⁵ For example: <https://www.nase.org/business-help/calculators/business/breakeven-analysis-calculator>.



CASE STUDY

How do you calculate the break-event point for a cross-border e-commerce development project, for which the sales are not yet known?

That is possible only if there is a business plan: the BE calculation will then use the business plan assumptions. Let's suppose for example a company has these assumptions:

- *The e-commerce will sell its product, whose UVC is €30, at €50*
- *The annual FC are €100,000*
- *The CM is $(50 - 30) / 50 = 0.40$ (or $0.40 \times 100 = 40\%$)*

This company will have to achieve $€100,000 / 0.4 = €250,000$ in sales to be able to cover its costs:

- *Its BE in terms of sales is €250,000*
- *Its BE in terms of units is $250,000 / 50 = 5,000$ products in a year*

Let's take a second example to show how to calculate the BE in terms of online conversions. The formula must be adapted like this:

FC of the digital project / (Sales per conversion – VC per conversion)

Let's suppose the company has these assumptions:

- *One conversion will produce sales of €100 for which the UVC will be €50*
- *The FC of the digital project are €10,000*

This company will need to achieve $10,000 / 50 = 200$ conversions to be able to cover his costs. But to have 200 conversions, how many visitors does the website need to have? The answer comes from the BE in terms of visitors, which is calculated by dividing the BE in terms of conversions by your average conversion rate or that of your sector (for this example, let's assume 5%). Here is the result: $200 / 5\% = 4,000$ visitors are needed on the website to reach the BE.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

The breakeven is calculated by dividing fixed costs by the unit price minus unit variable costs:

$$BE = FC / (UP - UVC)$$

The BE is the level of sales at which a business starts making profits.

Why is it important to calculate the BE of an international digital project?

- *If the number of conversions or visitors required to reach the BE is higher than what you have or what you expect to have in the foreign market, you have two options:*

*1. Stop! It may be too early for you to start selling internationally... Still think about securing the future with the purchase of domain names, the registration of your trademark, etc.
2. Reduce the FC or VC of the digital project.*

- *If the number of conversions or visitors needed to reach the BE is lower than what you have or what you expect to have in the export market, it is the right time to start, but keep following your dashboard and measuring the progress of your conversions.*

CHAPTER 11

THE KEY ROLE OF YOUR BRAND TO ACHIEVE DIGITAL EXPORT SUCCESS

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Millions of already existing brands or registered names make it somewhat rough to create a clear-cut future for an international brand.

A distinctive name is a rare commodity, especially when it must be evocative on the global scale, available for IP registration in several countries, and easy to pronounce, remember and understand for as many people as possible around the world.

How can you do it when your brand is not Coca-Cola?

LESS LOCAL, MORE GLOBAL

The brand is an essential element for the success of an international digital business. This is the first sign that prospective clients see and hear in any introduction and presentation of the company. It is also the first way to differentiate a business from competitors and to make it 'unique'.

This uniqueness must be able to be repeated in each export market, to capitalize on the online and offline marketing investment aiming to make the brand findable by potential clients abroad.

Like the brand, the domain name has acquired a similar uniqueness and a strategic commercial value for the visibility of a business on the internet on the international scale. In the case of a start-up business, the domain name can be registered as a trademark, ensuring that the name chosen is available and compatible with the target export markets. In this case, for intangible or e-commerce activities, the domain name and the brand are identical for internet users.

For existing brands, the international domain name strategy can turn out to be more complex, either because the domain name is not available in the target foreign countries, or because the brand name has a negative connotation or is unpronounceable in certain regions.

In general, to create an effective international digital brand, hiring an agency specialized in global brand strategy is the best solution, because the choice of the brand will have important consequences.

International branding professionals use dedicated tools that range from on-site linguistic resources to name generators by sector, or name banks by theme, etc.



TIP

Regarding the keywords in the domain name, Google has decreased their importance from an SEO perspective. That is actually better for international websites: before that change, to help the SEO with keywords in the domain name, the keywords had to be translated, implying a different domain name for each country.

If you are targeting several countries and different languages, you should prefer your brand to keywords in the domain name.

Otherwise, if you are targeting several countries but in a single language, for example English, you can consider adding keywords in your domain name: even if Google has decreased their importance for the SEO, it did not completely erase it!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Before starting to find a name to use for your business in foreign countries, you need to consider how your brand universe resonates on the international scope.

Your brand universe encompasses your products or services, their raw materials, their characteristics, their positioning, the value proposition, the unique selling proposition (USP)⁵⁶, the history of the brand, the emotions aroused among users.

And all that is specific for each target foreign market!

When searching for that name, one of the first techniques you can use is brainstorming, but you must hold it broad: concepts, images, sounds, jokes, clichés, ethics, etc. At the same time, you must keep in mind the digital and export requirements: optimized text length for the web, understandable words in several languages and without equivocal double meanings, strategic keywords, etc.

⁵⁶ The factors that make the product / service different from competitors.

For inspiration, or just out of curiosity, here are some websites that generate brand names or domain names from your keywords:

- <https://businessnamegenerator.com/domain-name-generator/>
- <https://www.shopify.com/tools/domain-name-generator>
- <https://www.dotomator.com/>

After having shortlisted the most relevant words, you must focus on the identity of your brand and its positioning, and on the international message it should communicate to your potential foreign customers. These elements will help you identify the point of differentiation on which to build your international brand.



TIP

In this stage, focus on the unique selling points so that the name will be as close as possible to the products, to the company, and to its competitive advantage.

Another filter that can further reduce your shortlist is to apply what your prospective customers really need to remember. By doing that, you can eliminate additional possibilities from your shortlist. Finally, by focusing on the ten words that can make a good mark, you can start experimenting.



TIP

The farther your brand is from your product or service, the more expensive the investment to make it known internationally will be. On the contrary, with a name spontaneously evoking your value proposition, the brand will be more easily and quickly adopted around the world.

Also, names that are too generic require a considerable investment to obtain long-term retention in foreign markets: the apple took a long time and a lot of money before becoming associated with the Apple brand.



CASE STUDY

Example of a brainstorming exercise to find an international brand name for an easy-to-use pastry robot:

- Succeed in making cakes even without knowing how to cook.
- Be able to bake a cake even on the go, at the beach, in the garden, next to the BBQ ...
- Bake a cake in 15 minutes, stopwatch in hand!
- The pleasure of cooking for celebrations.
- Spoil the guests.
- USP: the only rechargeable portable device at €59.
- Customers: individuals of all ages that love homemade cakes.
- Positioning: quality at a good price.

ADAPTING YOUR BRAND FOR OVERSEAS

What happens if your brand, already used and known in your country, is not exportable in the foreign countries that you're targeting?

If it is too close to the competitor's brand?

Or if in foreign languages it has negative meaning, is difficult to pronounce, or is hard to remember?

In B2B, these issues have less of an impact on an international business: the French Assystem or the German ASS-automation by ASS Maschinenbau GmbH are examples showing that it is possible to establish a brand starting with 'ass' in the English-speaking markets.



Figure 47: ASS Maschinenbau GmbH website.

While for a B2B brand the functionalities of the products and the quality of the services associated with it are almost more important than the brand itself, for B2C brands it is not always that simple.

The functionalities are not enough: consumers' feelings must also be loaded into the product through its brand. That requires the brand name to be as close as possible to both domestic and international consumers, which adds a new complexity.

For that reason, when the domestic brand is not usable in the foreign country, very often the reaction is to forget about it, be it the brand problem or the export opportunity...

In reality, there are several solutions for the problem of how to adapt the brand and make it suitable overseas in a way that does not involve any drastic changes.

Here are some examples:

- Decline the existing brand word by adding another word like 'easyJet' and 'easyCar' or 'brand-group.com', 'get-brand.com', 'brand-world.com', etc.
- Associate your brand name with its translated version or a close one, if that can have a meaning without being offensive or vulgar in the target country.

- Use an offbeat approach, like the French ‘Michel et Augustin’ brand, compared to the brands of large multinationals.
- Adopt a B2B2C approach by using your local distributor brand with a co-branding strategy where your distributor takes on most of the local marketing actions, i.e., ‘Everyday Value’ at Tesco, or ‘Dr. Thunder’ at Walmart.
- Modify the brand name by replacing a syllable or a letter, i.e., ‘Publix’ the employee-owned supermarket chain in the United States.
- Create a new brand by associating several names with a relevant meaning in the target country, i.e., ‘meetic.com’ for legendary online.
- Use an acronym, i.e., ‘BP’, ‘IBM’, etc. or a name unrelated to the business, i.e., ‘Apple’, ‘Orange’, ‘Diesel’, ‘Kijiji.com’, etc.
- Pay royalties under an international license to use an already-known brand, i.e., ‘Thomson’ or ‘Alcatel’ brands used by the Chinese consumer electronics manufacturer TCL under licensing agreements with Technicolor and Nokia.



Figure 48: Michel et Augustin website.

Although a single international brand remains preferable for the lower management cost and for the better valuation, some countries require extensive brand localization.

This is the case for China, where there are only two options: either find a phonetically similar word or use a totally different word to convey the brand's values. Carrefour, for example, chose the second option by changing its brand into 家家福, Jiālèfú, literally 'the house of happiness', to express a more impactful message in the Chinese market.



CASE STUDY

The GuestToGuest web platform, a leader in the home and apartment exchange between individuals with more than 300,000 homes in around 190 countries, provided accommodation for free or for small budgets. Founded in 2011, GuestToGuest now has approximately 70 employees across headquarters in Paris, Croatia, and the United States. Until 2018, its international branding strategy capitalized on the GuestToGuest name by using it in all the countries in Europe with ccTLD domain names such as www.guesttoguest.it, www.guesttoguest.de, etc., as well as in the rest of the world with a gTLD domain name www.guesttoguest.com.

This brand strategy was the exact opposite of that of its rival and market leader (at the time), the American HomeExchange. Created in 1992, HomeExchange has developed organically on the international scale with a different brand name in each country: HomeExchange for the English-speaking countries, IntercambioCasas for the Spanish-speaking countries, TrocMaison for France, ScambioCasa for Italy, Boligbytte for Norway, etc.

Thanks to its innovative value proposition, GuestToGuest managed to stand out and in 2017 it raised 33 million euros to acquire HomeExchange!

That is when brand strategy became an international challenge: should the company continue the HomeExchange approach with localized brands all over the world? or merge all these brands under the same name? and in that case, which brand should it keep, GuestToGuest or HomeExchange?

The company chose to use a single brand: HomeExchange. With a budget of a few million euros, it has invested in the transition of all the international brands towards the unique HomeExchange. The process went gradually, to make customers smoothly adopt the new brand while avoiding their being disrupted by the technical migration of all the local websites to the one and only HomeExchange.

It was a delicate operation for certain sites like TrocMaison or even GuestToGuest, which had to give up a brand awareness already well established in their markets in favor of HomeExchange. But the advantages are numerous and obvious:

- A more specific international brand and url enriched with keywords.
- A corporate high profile in the United States, the largest market for this type of business.
- A smooth transition for the 13 other websites belonging to HomeExchange.
- A gain in brand awareness for GuestToGuest, which benefits from a global brand to accelerate its activity.
- A rationalization of the 13 HomeExchange brands because, although it paid off at the beginning, this strategy of localized brands had become too expensive.

THE CRITICAL POINTS TO CHECK ASAP

Before validating the final name, you must be vigilant as to certain points:

- Check the availability of generic and local domain names⁵⁷ for your brand or the shortlisted ones. Just connect to a hosting site, for example Bluehost, GoDaddy, IONOS, or others and enter your brand name in the search field with the desired extension (.com, .fr, .io, .de, etc.). If the domain name is not available, these sites will offer several possible alternatives.
- To protect yourself from cybersquatting⁵⁸, a practice that consists of buying several domain names corresponding to a brand to resell them at a high price to the brand concerned or to alter their visibility, it is essential to register as many generic and local domain names as possible that are still available before it is too late.
- Check whether your brand is registered in your country and in your target foreign countries. To do that, contact the IP organization in your country.

This organization in France, for example, is the INPI, and it provides a website <https://bases-marques.inpi.fr/> where companies can automatically check online the availability of a brand.

At the global level, the organization is the WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization), which also provides a website to check online the availability of a brand in the world <https://www3.wipo.int/branddb/en/>.

- Trademark registration is not essential. However, if it is distinctive for the business and has the potential to value intellectual property in the company's assets, it is preferable to file it in your country and internationally.

The INPI and WIPO websites are the references, in the example of France and at the global level, for these trademark filings according to the category of business concerned.

⁵⁷ These are the gTLD and ccTLD URLs.

⁵⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cybersquatting>.



TIP

Creating an international brand is a significant cost, but, unlike other marketing investments, it is not recurrent and is usually done once.

Once chosen, the brand is established, it is valued, and it becomes part of the company's assets. Unlike other marketing costs, such as trade fairs, blogs, social networks, ads, etc., an international brand is a major element of the corporate identity that can be a small part of a marketing budget.

THE RISKS OF OUTSOURCING BRAND MANAGEMENT FOR EXPORT

Are you thinking about making your foreign local partner, be it an agent, a distributor, or an independent importer, responsible for all the marketing actions in its country, including your brand management and your website's domain name? Think again!

That is a mistake that unfortunately many businesses often make when starting to export.

Why do they do that? There might be several reasons, such as because they do not have the linguistic skills internally, or because they think that their local partner knows better than they do how to communicate in his own country, or because their partner makes them believe he has the perfect digital skills, or, the most common reason, because they think it's cheaper ...

The real story goes differently, and, despite the promises, this approach is seldom effective. After all, the job of an agent, or a distributor, or an importer is about selling products or services. It is not about web marketing!

Things can get worse when, due to his web-marketing responsibilities, contractual or not, the local partner buys the domain name (either the

generic or the country domain⁵⁹). In that case, if you did not register your brand, he will basically be the owner of it instead of you. What can happen then?

- Your partner does nothing with the domain he bought on your behalf, or
- He develops a local website that does not match your brand image at all, or
- He uses the website to sell outside of his territory through international marketplaces, or
- He does not let you change partners or add others in the same country, or ...

Why does the local partner not keep his commitment? Because he lacks focus, especially if he has many brands in his portfolio to look after, or because his marketing budget is inadequate, or because his marketing team does not have the web-marketing skills your products and brand need, or even because he has other dubious reasons.

And things can even get worse. If, for example, the relationship between you and your distributor ceases on hostile terms, you may have problems to recover the domain name and brand website registered by your distributor. In fact, your distributor can be entitled to keep the ownership of the website, the domain name, and all the content.

The major problem is not about the content or the website: they can easily be redone. It is about the domain name with your brand name, especially if it is a ccTLD. In that case, not only does your ex-now-enemy-local partner have the ownership of that domain name with your brand name, but also, he will have a local authority stronger than any other domain names that you could use to replace the original one in that country. The ex-now-enemy-local partner could hold the domain name 'hostage' for possible litigation, or even ask for a large sum to return it to you ...

So, how can you manage your digital export asset if you do not have the right resources? Using a local partner remains among the options, but on the condition that you take these precautions:

⁵⁹ Respectively gTLD and ccTLD for generic and country-code top-level domain.

- If you consider that the domain name has real value for your business and for your brand, you must integrate your ownership of all international domain names into your digital strategy.
- If that is not possible, you must add stronger conditions regarding your international digital asset in your contract, such as a clause on the automatic transfer of domain name ownership in the event of breach of contract. If you have contracts already in progress, negotiate this type of clause in an addendum as soon as possible.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *The validation of the brand is one of the first things to do when starting a digital export project: it impacts not only the marketing strategy for developing the brand reputation in the foreign markets, but also the web marketing and the website's domain name.*
- *The domain name makes it possible to communicate around the brand and to broaden the commercial reputation on an international scale.*
- *In the case of brand creation, the process of buying an international domain name is easy.*
- *On the other hand, if the brand already exists, buying a domain name that is consistent on an international scale can be more complex because of the possible unavailability of the domain name or because of its meaning or even its pronunciation ... but several options exist to find a solution.*

CHAPTER 12

TRANSLATION, TRANSCREATION AND 'WOR(L)D-READY' WEBSITE

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What works in one country rarely works the same way in another.

To adapt texts internationally, whether for an e-commerce product page, a blog article, or a Facebook post, there are different practices, from verbatim translation, to transcreation, or ‘world-ready’ texts.

TRANSLATION VERSUS TRANSCREATION

In a digital export environment, it is essential to create content that is understood by as wide a geographical audience as possible. But that requires clever skills, and I say 'clever', not impossible.

The good performance of a publication in your country might suggest that the same results will be obtained in other countries with a simple translation. But it rarely goes that way. A simple translation will hardly be able to convey the same message abroad!

Without adapting the message to the local culture, which may be completely different from the original one, the content or the call-to-action will not generate the same results. Simply, convincing the target foreign prospects to click and engage with the brand does not follow the same path.

This adaptation requires intercultural creativity, which is the notion of 'transcreation', the fusion of the two words 'translation' and 'creation', otherwise known as 'creative translation'. It is a method that aims to retain the creative essence of a message while adapting it for a foreign audience.

In transcreation, the element of creativity is therefore fundamental. To stress the difference between transcreation and translation, you can think that translation provides text while transcreation provides meaning.



TIP

Transcreation is a full-time job. But if you want to try it, here are some suggestions:

1. *You must first validate the target and the source message, i.e., the original text with its tone and style.*
2. *Then you must adapt the original message to the cultural context of the foreign country:*
 - *Identify and rule out all 'false friends' and elements that may evoke emotions contrary to those sought.*
 - *Turn features into benefits based on the local customer needs.*
 - *Formulate creative ideas using metaphors, synonyms, antonyms, jokes, etc., respecting the cultural codes of the original text and the target country.*
 - *Select the creative ideas that have the most emotional impact in the target country.*
3. *There are cases where a good translation suffices, such as for impersonal technical texts. But as soon as the communication strategy involves emotional messages, transcreation is the only solution.*



CASE STUDY

When Coca-Cola entered China in 1927, local resellers ran advertising campaigns using the brand's transliterated translation, i.e., matching each Latin character with a sign from the Chinese writing system. The result was a series of absurd names such as 'wax mare' or 'bite the wax tadpole', which made no sense to Chinese consumers. Then, The Coca-Cola Company decided to find a new name that could retain phonetic proximity to the brand while conveying a positive meaning to Chinese consumers. This is how the brand 可口可乐, Kēkǒukělè, came into being: from the combination of kēkǒu (delicious) and kělè (happy), literally 'that makes the mouth happy'.

McDonald's is another example of transcreation, as it not only sets up the localization of its slogans in the language of each country, but also the adaptation of its recipes to the local culinary context: creation of the Parmigiano Reggiano snack in Italy, the kiwi burger in New Zealand, the Nürnburger in Germany, McLobster in the United States and Canada, etc.

INTERNET CONNECTS MACHINES; LANGUAGES CONNECT PEOPLE!

Geographical distances have been reduced tremendously thanks to the internet and other digital means of communication. Yet, planet earth is a huge territory where business opportunities can also be huge.

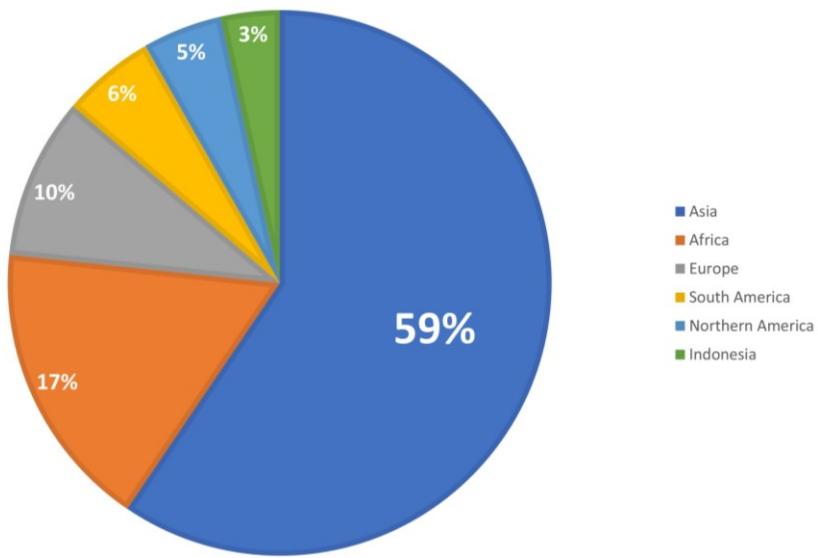


Figure 49: world population by continent⁶⁰.

Let's consider the distribution of the world's population by continent. It is easy to see that more than half of the world's population lives in Asia, mainly in China and India, the two most populated countries in the world.

But the most interesting thing in this figure is to associate it with the business context of, say, a German company that is successfully exporting to North America and achieving 30% market share in that region. It means that this company reaches 30% of 5% = 1.67% of the

⁶⁰ Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Population Prospects: The 2019 Revision.

global market! Though a positive result, it is missing 98.33% of opportunities in the rest of the world.

Being geographically closer is good but is not enough for developing export sales. Effective communication between foreign suppliers and foreign buyers is also needed. And understanding which wording works in a foreign country, and which does not, is a challenge.

However, mastering exonyms and endonyms⁶¹, knowing the local culture, and fully understanding the original message to convey are extremely valuable competitive advantages in today's connected world.

Although translators can understand the literal meaning of words and the accuracy of the terminology used, they might lack creativity and marketing skills to write compelling texts adapted to foreign cultural nuances.

A full adaptation to a country's linguistic subtleties requires a combination of marketing skills, writing talent, technical understanding, in-depth knowledge of the local culture, and, of course, fluency in the local language.

⁶¹ In this context, exonym (from the suffix 'exo', external) and endonym (from the suffix 'endo', internal) are respectively the names used to identify a place, a people, a language, etc., by people living outside or inside the relevant geographical perimeter. For example, 'Germany' is the exonym used by the French for 'Deutschland', the endonym used by the Germans. Not respecting endonyms in an export market can be interpreted as an inability to understand the local culture.

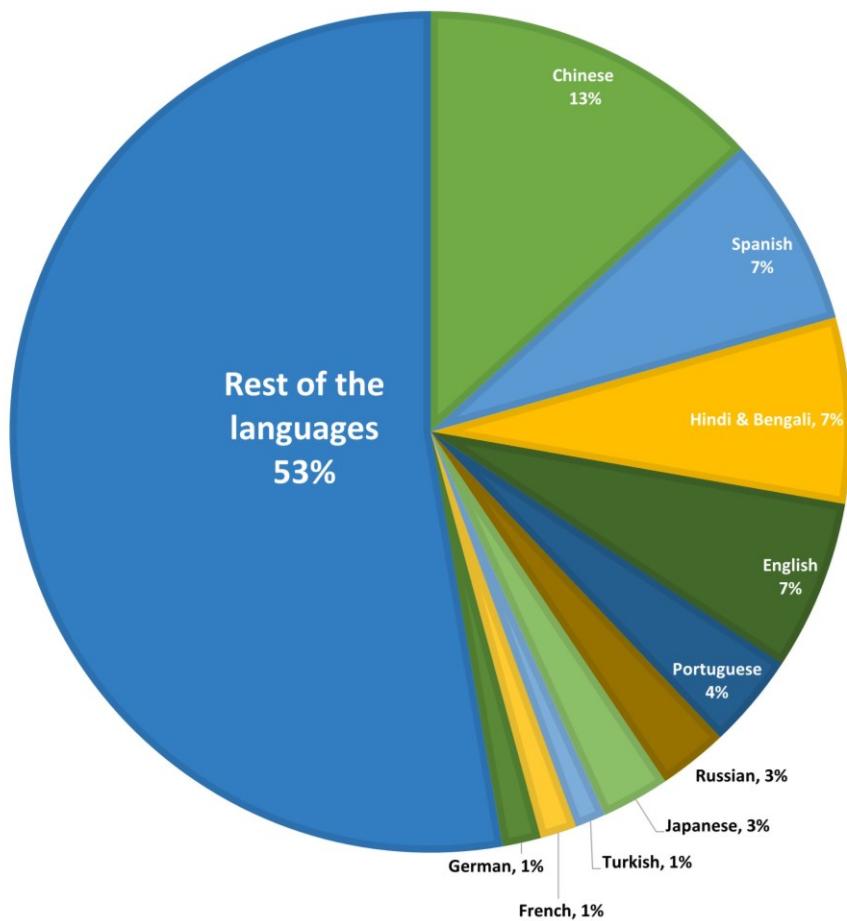


Figure 50: The top 10 native languages of internet users as a % of the total number of internet users in the world⁶².

With about 7,000 different languages on earth, the cultural complexity we can face in a foreign country can be extremely high.

⁶² Calculated from the internet penetration rate and the number of native speakers per country, Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_Internet_users, text available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License 3.0

Digital can certainly help in this situation, but before that there is another consideration that comes into play. Let's take the above figure and the world internet penetration rate of 53.6%⁶³.

Among these 53 people out of 100 that have internet access:

- 7 speak Chinese as a native language
- 4 Spanish
- 4 Hindi or Bengali
- 3 English
- 2 Portuguese
- 1 Russian
- 1 Japanese
- 1 Turkish
- 1 French
- 1 German
- 28 other languages

In this heterogeneous linguistic context, a company must choose the languages that are really important for its business. The focus should be on quality and not quantity: it is useless to translate a website into thirty languages if the products or services have an interesting sales potential in only three countries.

The majority of international companies translate their websites into fewer than ten languages, and in Europe, for example, five languages⁶⁴ cover almost 80% of the European market.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

There are different solutions for managing a multilingual website, ranging from large language service providers to cloud platforms for working directly with freelance translators: SDL, MemoQ, Lokalise, Smartling, Transifex, SmartCat, LingoHub, Eazylang, Ubiquis, DeepL, etc.

⁶³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Internet_usage, text available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License 3.0

⁶⁴ German, English, Spanish, French, Italian.

The cost varies widely, from free to €0.007 per word for automatic AI translations and to €0.3 € or higher per word for human translations depending on the amount of text, the complexity of the content (if it is a website or software as a service (SaaS), for example), the complexity of the language (it is easier and cheaper to translate from French to English than from Bengali to French, for example), and the deadline.

For a 30,000-word English website, of which 20,000 words are repeated, the number of words to be used to calculate the translation cost will be 10,000. For translating that from English to German within a standard timeframe, the average cost for a human translation is around €0.15 per word, so the total cost would around €1,500.

Another option can be to use AI automatic translation, which costs about €0.007 per word. This system does not deduct the repeated words; therefore, the final cost must be calculated on the total amount of words: $30,000 \times €0.007 = €210$.

The final cost in case of human translations can also depend on other factors, such as the negotiation with the translator or translation agency, which is one of the most important.

In general, the cost mentioned above is a little cheaper for Spanish or Italian, much more expensive for Japanese, Chinese or Russian.

But, before launching a translation project and multiplying this cost for each language, you need to:

- Optimize the content to be translated according to the objectives that the website must achieve in the target foreign country: the text can be reduced to the essential; the useless pages can be deleted; more specific separate mini-websites can be created; an optimized domain structure must be set up⁶⁵.
- Select the languages that are really needed for your export development.

⁶⁵ In this case, the internationalization phase described in an earlier chapter will be critical to the proper design of the development of these mini-sites as well as their integration into the general structure of the site.

- Prioritize the order of translations according to the potential of your export target countries: it is not necessary to do all the translations at once, you can also proceed gradually.



TIP

Such a project will not be effective if it is based solely on translating the text.

The key questions are 'what text to translate' and 'what content to adapt'.

If the budget does not allow 100% content adaptation, the best practice is to choose the most important pages for the translation and adaptation, for example the products or services pages, and leave the others in a neutral language, such as English with a note explaining that these pages have not yet been translated.

DESIGN A WOR(L)D-READY SITE

As we have just seen, adapting texts for international use requires either an accurate translation of the technical content or a good dose of cross-market creativity and transcreation for culturally appropriate stories.

In both cases, the content can be optimized during the design and development of the website, well before the international project begins.

The aim is to create this content with the ‘wor(l)d-ready’ approach, which consists of following certain editorial, graphic and UX⁶⁶ rules to facilitate its future adaptation to the foreign markets:

- Use a synthetic editorial style, with short sentences and paragraphs: one concept per sentence following a logical order.
- Use the tone that your customers use.
- Avoid the passive voice.
- Avoid jargon, colloquial expressions, and cultural references.

⁶⁶ User eXperience.

For short texts, such as slogans and baselines, the message must be expressed succinctly and often in only one language, with English remaining the preferred language: for example, Nokia's 'Connecting People', Nike's 'Just Do It', Nespresso's 'What else?', and so on.

Wor(l)d-ready websites must also take into account the differences in text length between languages, because that can greatly influence the graphic result of the website as you can see in the next figures.

WORD LENGTH	LANGUAGE
Envoyer	French
Enviar	Spanish
Send	English
发送	Simplified Chinese

Figure 51: an example of the different lengths of the word 'send' in four languages.

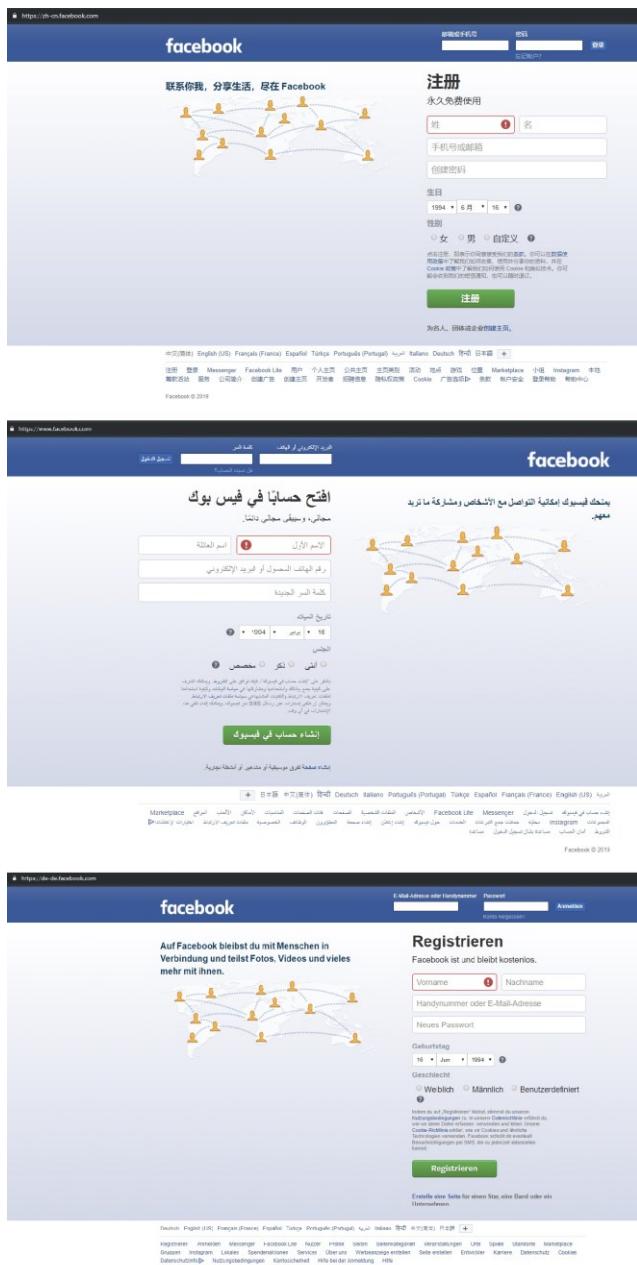


Figure 52: an example of the graphic impact of text length.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *Texts on a website, blog, or social networks must be adapted to be understood by foreign visitors and to be as effective as possible in convincing them to become customers.*
- *From simple translation to transcreation or to 'wor(l)d-ready' content, the degree of creativity depends on the nature and purpose of the message: the more 'emotional' it is, the more it needs to adapt to the cultural specificities of the target foreign country, but without altering the original meaning.*

CHAPTER 13

STANDARDIZING PICTOGRAMS FOR THE GLOBAL MARKETS

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It is unfortunately common to think that developing a multilingual website is more complex than creating a monolingual one.

That can be true, but the level of complexity is often very thin especially because there are lots of elements that can simplify this development.

The graphic interface and the pictograms are among them: they help websites communicate with the world, and they help people interact with the websites.

PICTOS, ICONS, SYMBOLS: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Signage on the web follows more or less general conventions on the international level. The difference between pictograms, icons and symbols is subtle⁶⁷:

- An icon is an ideogram, that is, a stylized figurative design used to express a concept or function otherwise expressed in text.
- A pictogram is like an icon, a stylized graphic representation, but whose meaning has become conventional to represent something specific: an archive of files, a search magnifying glass, an email, etc. Also called 'pictograph', it is used to express general information.
- A symbol is a design that replaces a concept, an attribute, or an emblem, such as a logo.

A good international pictogram on the web must be an easily recognizable symbol, quick to understand, and representative for any internet user around the world.

PICTOS AND ICONS IN COMPUTING

Pictograms are so pervasive that it may look to millennials and digital natives as though they had always been part of everyday life. In fact, they've come a long way since the 1980s, when Xerox and Apple first started using them in their consumer GUI, graphic user interface.

Before the explosion of the web, the word 'icon', which comes from the Greek eikon meaning 'image', was associated with iconography, the study of holy images in religions. Today, computer icons, i.e., images representing functions, have taken over. Some have even been officially standardized, becoming pictos, such as the on/off button, the USB, the error, etc., by the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) or

⁶⁷ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icon_\(computing\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icon_(computing)).

by Microsoft⁶⁸. Xerox was the first to develop a GUI back in 1973. This first ever GUI was used on the Xerox Alto, an extremely expensive experimental computing machine of which only a few units were sold worldwide. But its graphical interface was used on other products later on, as on the Xerox Star in 1981.

That was the very first personal computer for ordinary people to use icons, some of which, like the folder, the printer or the trash can, remained almost unchanged until now.

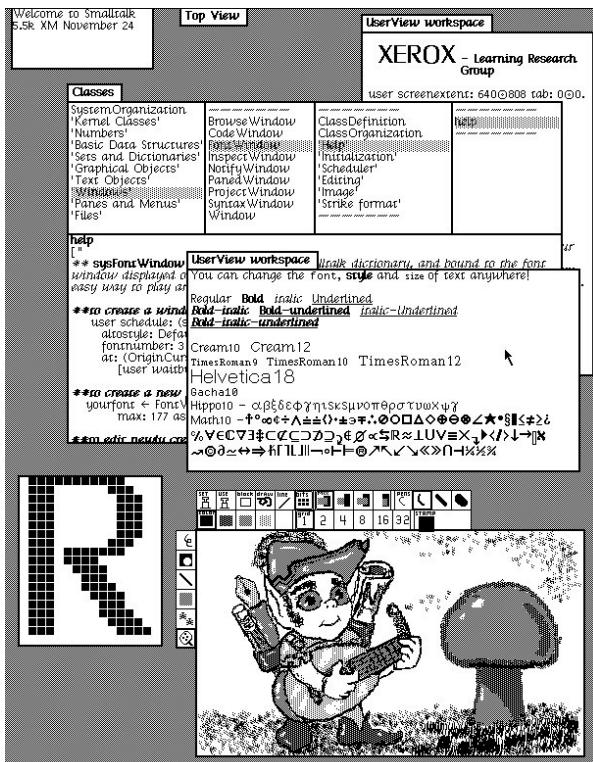


Figure 53: the Dynabook GUI, Smalltalk-76, running on the Xerox Alto⁶⁹.

⁶⁸ <https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/desktop/uxguide/vis-std-icons>.

⁶⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graphical_user_interface, file under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license,

But, despite its graphic innovation, Xerox failed to sell its computers to the mass market: the price was still too high and only a niche consumer could afford to buy them. In 1979, during his visit to Xerox, Steve Jobs was fascinated by this graphical interface.

It was a revelation for him: hiding the computer operating system from the user, who only sees the graphical interface for working with the software on it. By implementing these ideas, Apple developed its own GUI, simple and affordable enough to be quickly adopted by any consumer. And that brought icons and pictos to success.

It was in 1983, with the release of Lisa, that Apple launched its revolutionary icons & pictos interface, and, the following year, the release of the Macintosh made them legendary⁷⁰.

With this GUI, Steve Jobs revolutionized computing: indecipherable code to use a computer was no longer needed; with the arrival of the Macintosh, to delete a file it was just a question of dragging it into the trash!

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Smalltalk-76.png>.

⁷⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_graphical_user_interface.



Figure 54: the Macintosh released in 1984, the first mass-market personal computer with an integral GUI⁷¹.

PICTOS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL WEB

Almost 40 years later, these icons and pictograms are still there, adopted in many other fields: e-commerce, smartphones, mobile applications, television, household appliances, etc.

Facilitating the user interface through graphics, pictos and icons is today a standard in the international web: a simple glance is enough to know that they lead to a social network, or to another language, or to a newsletter form, etc.

⁷¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apple_Inc.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Macintosh,_Google_NY_office_computer_museum_cropped.png. Author Marcin Wichary, file licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en>.

They are immediately recognizable in any language. Textual explanation becomes superfluous, since users can find the information they want without words. That improves the web browsing experience, whether on domestic or international websites, and reduces the bounce rates.

In the context of a digital export project, there are four aspects you must pay attention to:

- 1) An icon becomes a standard picto only if many people use it for a long time and often. To benefit from their interpretation advantages, the best is to use those pictos that are already known internationally instead of creating new ones. For example, on an e-commerce website, the cart, the magnifying glass, the package, the credit card, or the telephone pictograms are not just graphic elements, they are real conventions: their absence can disturb visitors and block their motivation to buy.
- 2) Although international, some pictos sometimes need to be adapted: this is the case of arrows, whose direction must be changed in Arabic to follow the reading from right to left, or the color of letter boxes, which are yellow in many countries but blue in the United States and red in Great Britain, Australia and Japan, or the orientation of the globe ...
- 3) Despite an initiative on the standardization of a picto for the selection of languages launched in 2008, there is still no standard use of this icon. User tests have shown that this picto is hardly recognized as a language selector, so its use is not recommended on international websites. The best practice for this function is to indicate the list of language options in their translated names (Deutsch, English, Español, Italiano, Русский, Polskie, 中文, etc.).
- 4) Use of flags should be done with caution because the country-language association is not always unambiguous: does the English flag mean that the website is for all English speakers or only for those of the United Kingdom? On the other hand, having flags next to the names of the translated languages is recommended when the website provides several versions for different countries in the same language or in several languages for the same country.



Figure 55: an iPod mini with the UI set to German⁷².



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Navigation on an international website must be as easy as possible for both foreign and local users.
- Therefore, the use of graphic elements such as pictos and icons is essential to facilitate the experience of internet users coming from different countries and different cultures.
- Some precautions should be taken to ensure that they are well suited to the targeted export markets, such as the language selector, flags, pictos' color, etc.

⁷² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Apple_Inc, Author: Beavis~commonswiki assumed (based on copyright claims). File made available under the Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en>.

CHAPTER 14

HOW TO DESIGN THE BEST MULTICHANNEL EXPORT STRATEGY

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The profitability and sustainability of your digital export business require exploiting as many opportunities as possible.

To achieve that, you have different options for the same goal: exploit new markets and new channels to acquire new customers.

This is what an international multichannel strategy achieves.

MULTICHANNEL, CROSS-CHANNEL, OMNICHANNEL ...

Digital technology has created many additional points of contact between suppliers and clients or prospective clients.

That is why we now talk so much about multichannel, cross-channel, and omnichannel strategies, which also operate on the international scale. Which one applies to your export business depends on the solution you deploy to create appropriate points of contact with your foreign customers. Here is a simplified explanation of the difference between them:

The international multichannel

This approach concerns digital or physical contact points in several countries. For example, a German apparel manufacturer that sells through its multilingual e-commerce and through owned or independent stores in Germany and in other foreign countries.

The cross-channel for export

This strategy uses multiple points of contact between suppliers and customers across multiple channels in the same buying journey across countries. For example, the same German apparel company employs a 'click-and-collect' solution on his e-commerce that allows customers to buy online and collect their products at one of the company's stores or at another collect-point in a foreign country.

The global omnichannel

This is the solution when customers are using different channels ubiquitously at the same time, for example when they are connected to the internet when shopping in-store to research information, look for special deals, or benchmark products before buying. And when they find out that a promotion on the web is not applied in stores, they get disappointed ... In omnichannel, messages must always be consistent, in all channels, in the home country and globally.

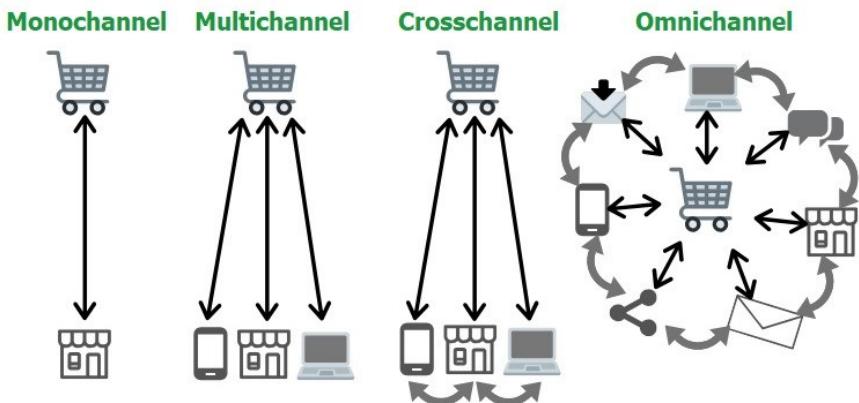


Figure 56: the difference between mono-channel, multichannel, cross-channel, and omnichannel.

These strategies are important for breaking down the barriers between the different sales channels at home and overseas. Nevertheless, the consistency of messages can become very complex in the context of cross-channel and omnichannel, and, when adding the international dimension on top of them, they become a major challenge!

On the other hand, the international multichannel strategy, especially in the early stages of export development, represents a very affordable and effective strategy for any business even the small ones.

THE MULTICHANNEL EXPORT STRATEGY

B2B or B2C, the multichannel export strategy aims to harmonize online business with offline business on domestic, foreign, and international markets: the value proposition must be consistent between stores and all other points of sales, be they websites, social media, physical resellers, e-commerce, marketplaces, etc.

After identifying the best channels in the target foreign market, the international multichannel strategy must ensure harmony between them and deploy the most effective marketing and web-marketing actions.



CASE STUDY

Harcour is a French sportswear brand dedicated to horseback riding. It designs and creates several collections every year. Its multichannel strategy is very well executed through its network of hundreds of boutiques worldwide, its own e-commerce, and special partnership on the marketplaces.



The screenshot shows the Harcour website homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for PRIVATE SALES, WOMEN, MEN, HORSE, ACCESSORIES, GREEN SPIRIT, BLOG, and FIND US. A search bar and a sign-in button are also present. Below the header, there's a large image of a brown horse wearing a blue saddle pad. To the right of the horse, the text "TOTAL NAVY LOOK" is displayed above "Made in Harcour". A "Joe Saddle Pad" is shown next to the text. Further down, the "HARCOUR" logo is centered. At the bottom of the page is a map showing the locations of Harcour stores worldwide.



A detailed map of the world showing the locations of Harcour stores, represented by small icons. A search interface is overlaid on the map, allowing users to search by address, city, state, and radius.

Figure 57 & 57b: Harcour home page and its store locator around the world⁷³.

⁷³ <https://www.harcour.com/>.

EXPORT AND WEB MARKETING

Often, businesses do not dare to export, fearing the costs to develop sales overseas, confusing cost with investment, and globalization with export. Therefore, as we saw previously, the first task of marketing for digital export sales is to identify the foreign market to invest in. In the previous chapters, you have seen some free online tools to detect traction towards your web business coming from overseas. Now, further study and benchmarking will help you validate your selection of the target foreign market based on its potential in terms of revenue and profitability.

Following the T.O.S.CA method, once the target market has been selected, the good marketing approach is to validate all the other key factors that come into play for your multichannel export strategy:

- Objectives.
- Benchmarks of competitors.
- Unique selling points and unique value proposition.
- Direct and indirect sales channels.
- Business model or models.
- Human resources and skills available internally.
- Timeframe for achieving the objectives.

While defining these factors for your target export market, you need in parallel to decide on your international web-marketing actions, especially those for optimizing your website and all the other online channels that you plan to use to sell to your foreign prospective clients. Here are some web-marketing key elements for supporting your multichannel export strategy:

- The website's 'on-page' and 'off-page' SEO for the target foreign market.
- Domain structure and geolocation parameters.
- Optimization of multilingual content: website texts, blogs, chatbots, white papers, e-commerce cart, payment tunnel, call-to-action buttons, etc.
- Product descriptions in the marketplaces in the target country.
- Social networks pages and social selling catalogue.

- Multilingual advertising campaigns with Google Ads, Facebook Ads, Bing Ads, Twitter Ads, etc.



TIP

Avoid the cliché 'if it worked here, it is going to work elsewhere'. It would be a big mistake to rely on the success and performance of your website in your country and then simply copy-paste the same local web-marketing strategy in other countries. Each export market has its peculiarities to which your business will have to adapt to be successful, whether online or offline.

INTERNATIONAL MULTICHANNEL DIAGNOSIS

Before embarking on multichannel export sales, it is useful to check your internal resources. This is what an international multichannel diagnosis is meant for: it assesses your capabilities in relation to the markets you have identified as targets. This diagnosis helps you identify not only your strengths and weaknesses but also the risks and the short/medium-term levers for optimization.

Here is the checklist of the main points to assess for your target export market:

Local languages

- What language or languages do your prospective clients use?
- Do you have the internal language skills to communicate directly with them?

Your target customers

- Put yourself in your foreign customers' shoes. Consider your products or services as your foreign customers would in their country. What is their profile?
- What channels do they use for their purchasing?
- Is there sufficient demand in the foreign target country?

The international value of your brand

- How effective is your brand in the foreign country?
- Is it protected or registered?
- Does it have an internet domain for the foreign country?

Your company's resources

- What is the budget for starting up and what is the one for following up?
- Do your teams understand the challenges of developing export sales?
- Are they committed and capable to support it?

Your after-sales service, customer relations and logistics

- Will you be able to handle phone calls and emails from foreign customers?
- Will you be able to manage returns and refunds for overseas customers?
- Will you be able to manage deliveries and export/import procedures to and from your target foreign markets?

Your international payments and tax systems

- Do you have a solution to manage international payment systems, foreign currency payments, exchange-rate risks, international VAT and other taxes?

The export performance measurement and the KPI

- Which KPI will you use to measure the development of your multichannel export business?
- Do you have a dashboard adapted to your export sales?



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Digital technology is constantly evolving. Channels and points of contact with customers are multiplying all over the world and 'single-channel' companies can hardly be competitive.
- The formulation and deployment of a multichannel export strategy makes it possible to combine the channels of traditional sales with the channels of digital sales as well as with the levers of web marketing in several foreign countries. That is what multiplies new international business opportunities on both traditional and online channels.

CONCLUSIONS

Here we are at the end of this book.

But don't close it right away, because I still have a few things to tell you about the necessary costs and organization.

Then, it will be up to you to get started on your digital export action or, if you have already started, to pick up the pace!

CHAPTER 15

A FEW FINAL TIPS: COSTS, ORGANIZATION, AND ... TIME!

“

How much does international web marketing cost? What type of organization should you have for the deployment of a digital export strategy? How long does it take to get results?

Here is my latest practical advice to help you answer these operational questions.

HOW MUCH DOES DIGITAL COST INTERNATIONALLY?

In principle, you can do almost anything on the internet for 'free'. But today, in terms of efficacy, free on the internet is not the same as it was a few years ago, and the first example is Facebook.

Today, Facebook is no longer free for companies as it was before: for a few years, its algorithm has increasingly limited the pages' organic reach. As a result, standard publications are visible only to a few fans. If you want more, you have to switch to sponsored posts or advertising. The problem is the same for other social networks as well as for SEO, blogs, etc. Content is free when produced in-house by you or your teams, but:

- The time spent on the production of this content has a cost called a 'salary'.
- Visibility, a determining factor for performance, has a price that must now be added to your budget.

Build an international web-marketing budget

The share of web marketing in companies' marketing budgets is constantly increasing compared to traditional marketing, which is constantly decreasing⁷⁴.

Often these budgets are provisioned and allocated as a percentage of the company's turnover in the concerned territory. But what should you do when you start in a new export market where you have little or no turnover? Are you going without a budget? Not at all!

In this case, you need to be inspired by the web-marketing budget of another comparable country or of another business unit similar to the activity concerned, or the head office should determine the initial

⁷⁴ Jennifer Veenstra, 'The CMO Survey: Marketing Budget Gets Big Boost', Deloitte, 26 April 2021, <https://deloitte.wsj.com/articles/the-cmo-survey-marketing-budget-gets-big-boost-01619463730>.

funding, which will be provisioned beforehand and reimbursed with a more or less extended schedule or co-financed by public aid.

As in the T.O.S.CA method, there are similar elements to consider when building an international web-marketing budget, whether for a new market or for an already existing one:

- Target: foreign countries and foreign languages.
- Objectives: increase sales, brand awareness, ...
- Segments: consumers, professionals, age, level of education, etc.
- Channels and Call-to-Action: website, e-commerce, marketplaces, distributors, ...
- Paying levers: Google Ads, Display, influencers, ...
- Types of content: video, text, photo, tone style, frequency of publication, etc.
- Period to be covered: three years, five years, ...



TIP

When building your budget, do not forget to include your objectives, whether quantitative or qualitative. Without them, you will have trouble calculating the ROI of your investment.

INTERNATIONAL WEB-MARKETING COSTS

In practice, international web marketing uses several skills, each with a specific cost. For a company with ad hoc needs, such as the internationalization of its website or e-commerce, the integration of marketplaces abroad, the development of SEO for export, etc., the best solution is to call on external service providers offering linguistic and technical skills that are suited to its project.

In this context, here are some examples of the average rates of freelancers in Europe (for information purposes only).

- Web designer/graphic designer: between €150 and €300 per day.
- Web developers: between €300 and €700 per day depending on the development language and expertise.
- Artistic director: about €800 per day.
- SEO consultant: between €300 and €800 per day depending on level of experience and issues addressed.
- International SEO consultant: between €500 and €900 per day depending on level of experience, issues addressed and geographic scope.
- SEA consultant: between €400 and €800 per day depending on level of experience, budget, type and quantity of campaigns.
- International SEA consultant: between €700 and €1,000 per day depending on level of experience, geographic scope, budget, type and quantity of campaigns.
- Analytics consultant: between €300 and €500 per report depending on experience.
- International analytics consultant: between €700 and €1,000 per report depending on experience and geographic scope.
- Web-marketing strategy consultant: between €500 and €1,000 per day depending on experience.
- International web-marketing strategy consultant: between €700 and €1,500 per day depending on experience and geographic scope.

In an international approach, you can also work with local providers or freelancers based in the foreign country you are targeting, or even elsewhere. Prices can vary as much as 100% for identical services. To give you an idea: if we set the United States at 100, France would be at 80, the countries of North Africa and Eastern Europe at 70, and India almost at 50.



CASE STUDY

Since many factors condition budgets, formulas vary on a case-by-case basis, and it is impossible to generalize. To give you some guidance on how to build a budget, here are some calculations as examples.

Example 1—Banner for a hotel in the Alps in Austria, to be displayed on affiliate program websites.

Target: sporty couples with young children based in France, Germany, and Italy. Budget: €3,000 over four months.

Results:

- Impressions of the campaign on affiliate sites: more than five million times.
- Banner clicks: approximately 5,000 clicks, with a CTR of 0.1%.
- Bookings: 50, conversion rate 1%, cost per acquisition €60.
- Simplified ROI: turnover of €10,000 for the 50 reservations; $ROI = (\text{turnover} - \text{budget})/\text{budget}$ = 233%.

Example 2—Google Ads campaign to download a white paper for SaaS in the legal sector.

Target: SMEs in the UK. Budget: €1,000 over 14 days.

Results:

- 12,000 impressions.
- More than 287 clicks, with a CTR of 2.87%.
- 19 downloads of the white paper.
- Conversion rate of 6%, cost per conversion of €52.60.
- Simplified ROI: turnover of €1,500; $ROI = (\text{turnover} - \text{budget})/\text{budget}$ = 50%.

These calculations relate to simplified ROIs. To obtain the net ROI, you also need to deduct the variable costs associated with the project, such as any costs of creating the banner, translating, and producing the white paper in English, adapting the website, etc.

THE IMPACT OF CTR IN AN INTERNATIONAL WEB-MARKETING BUDGET

The budget to invest in international web marketing is also linked to the CTR⁷⁵, which is a concept used around the world to express the percentage of internet users that have clicked on a link, whether organic or paid.

How does CTR impact your budget? If your CTR on organic and free web-marketing levers (for example, the SEO on your website for a foreign country) is very low compared to the industry average, paid levers will probably be more effective: as is often the case in a new market, where a brand is still little known, it can take time to reach the strategic target only through SEO. On the contrary, paid levers can achieve these goals much faster, but the costs increase to pay for SEA, SMA campaigns, etc.

Otherwise, if your CTR is already at a good level or even higher than the industry average, you can move forward with organic web-marketing actions in your target foreign country, which will be more economical than in the previous case.

To know whether your CTR is good or bad, you must, therefore, compare it with the average for your business sector in the export market that you are targeting. To give you an idea, here are some sector averages in the U.S.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ <https://support.google.com/googleads/answer/2615875>.

⁷⁶ Mark Irvine, Google Ads Benchmarks for YOUR Industry [Updated!], WordStream, 24 September 2021, <https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2016/02/29/google-adwords-industry-benchmarks>.

Industry	Average CTR (Search)	Average CTR (GDN)
Advocacy	4.41%	0.59%
Auto	4.00%	0.60%
B2B	2.41%	0.46%
Consumer Services	2.41%	0.51%
Dating & Personals	6.05%	0.72%
E-Commerce	2.69%	0.51%
Education	3.78%	0.53%
Employment Services	2.42%	0.59%
Finance & Insurance	2.91%	0.52%
Health & Medical	3.27%	0.59%
Home Goods	2.44%	0.49%
Industrial Services	2.61%	0.50%
Legal	2.93%	0.59%
Real Estate	3.71%	1.08%
Technology	2.09%	0.39%
Travel & Hospitality	4.68%	0.47%

An example of the average CTR by sector in the U.S.

Each lever has its average sectorial CTR, which may be higher or lower than the others. In general, the CTR in Display is lower than in Search: all sectors combined, Display CTR is 0.46% while Search CTR is 3.17%.



TIP

Do not compare the CTR of one lever with that of another. This can lead you to decide, 'I just do Search because the CTR is higher'. In reality, it is the synergy between the different levers that will improve the performance of web marketing and thus the ROI of your budget, both at home and abroad.

The rise in CTR rates is proof of this: if CTR were the only factor in performance, Display budgets would have been stopped for years.

HOW TO GET ORGANIZED FOR INTERNATIONAL WEB MARKETING

Although web marketing is well anchored in corporate strategy, it is common to hear clichés about international practice, such as:

- My intern, who spent his holidays in Spain, will manage my cross-border e-commerce.
- My English girlfriend's neighbor's son is going to develop my bilingual website for free.
- We don't need to translate the website into German because everyone in Germany speaks English.
- We have created a page in English on Facebook because we were told that was the right thing to do, but frankly it is useless and in addition it is empty because no one here is comfortable writing in English.

Unfortunately, these examples are not uncommon in companies, especially in those that have not taken the time to formulate their multichannel export strategy.

In fact, digital export and international web marketing include several distinct activities and skills: SEO, SEA, newsletters, social media, e-commerce, marketplaces, influencers, marketing automation, etc., each of which must be adapted to the target export markets. Your company must not only find solutions to manage all these skills in several countries at the same time, but also ensure the integration of all these skills as well as new techniques to come.

But in addition to this complexity of technical skills and geography, digital export also imposes a shift from the offer, or the company, to the demand, or customer. With an organization focused on the offer, the company risks having the problem of 'silos' where each function works on a single axis of the customer journey by country and separately from other functions. Whether at home or abroad, you need to ensure the convergence of all actions carried out in the direction of prospective customers to provide as coherent and effective a customer journey as possible.

Organizing digital export and international web marketing is, therefore, complicated, but you can act in three areas to make it easier:

- *Bring them closer to the company's strategy.* Digital export and international web marketing must be as well-suited as possible to the short-, medium- and long-term objectives of the company and must be able to deploy the most effective levers. At the same time, the company must provide the necessary resources to align its web marketing with the objectives of its export strategy and motivate all its teams, internal and external, to work towards the same objectives.
- *Acquire an in-depth understanding of each step of the export customer journey and learn to use them correctly.* This will allow you to understand precisely not only the strengths and weaknesses of your company in this journey, but also the new skills necessary to address those weaknesses.
- *Adopt the agile organizational approach.* Since digital export requires several types of expertise in technical, graphic, commercial, managerial fields, etc., hiring several people for each area of expertise requires a substantial budget. The agile approach needs an open vision toward alternative solutions, an ability to share new ways of working, and a willingness to adopt new concepts quickly. Your organization can adopt this approach and respond more effectively to the ambitions of your digital export project.

Centralized or decentralized management

To organize the deployment of your digital export sales, you must first consider the two options for centralization or decentralization, depending on the size of your business and on your target countries:

- Decentralized deployment via subsidiaries or local partners. Some of the advantages of this model are:
 - Local management of budgets.
 - More specific positioning and content in the countries.
 - Closer organization of local events.
- Centralized deployment from your headquarters. Some of the advantages of this model are:
 - Better control of brand image.
 - Economies of scale in production and publication of content.

- International monitoring of KPIs.

Centralized deployment is usually more suitable if your business is in an international start-up phase and does not yet have local structures.

Internalizing, externalizing or both?

Often international web marketing is under the responsibility of the company's marketing manager, who is in charge of everything: traditional marketing with trade fairs, communication, packaging, catalogs, etc., and web marketing with SEO, newsletters, blog, social networks, etc. But a single person rarely has expertise in all areas of traditional and digital marketing as well as in all export markets the company targets.

On the other hand, the profile of a generalist marketing manager can be a good solution. He will have sufficient skills to negotiate and manage the service providers specialized in the fields of international web marketing that you need for your digital export project. As a company employee, he can directly take charge of some of these levers, the most critical, which will then remain internalized. He can outsource the others to selected service providers, and then gradually internalize them: recruiting a web-marketing team is a significantly expensive investment, and you will be more in favor of it once you know what ROI you are able to achieve.

So, in a start-up phase, as for ad hoc needs on specific issues, for example the internationalization of your website in German or the implementation of an advertising campaign on Yandex, working with specialized service providers is the best choice.

Things to pay attention to when outsourcing

As we have seen, there are significant price differences depending on the skills of the service provider in question. But beyond the price, there are other things to pay attention to when negotiating with future international web-marketing providers. Here are a few:

- The specifications of the international web project: clearly define who does what between you and your service provider and when.
- Ownership of accounts: make sure that you keep ownership of Google accounts, such as Google Ads, and that they are properly

linked to your name with full access to data and administrator rights to change login and password until the end of the contract.

- Ownership of product content: when providing international content creation services published on your website or social media, make sure that this content becomes your property.
- The duration of contracts: avoid commitments over several years without any possibility of emergency exit.
- The difficulty of paying for results or performance: being enormously dependent on Google's algorithms and their untimely changes, service providers cannot make 100% of their remuneration conditional on results. Success fees or bonuses for exceeding objectives are more appropriate and appreciated.
- Reporting of results and monitoring of actions: mention them in the quotes so that you can always know what has been done when and when to measure the results.

HOW LONG TO WAIT FOR RESULTS

The press and specialized media repeat it often: internationalizing a business is not just about selling a product or service abroad; it is rather a long process requiring a lot of thought and preparation. But what's the right balance so that 'a lot of thought' doesn't get in the way of action?

Premature internationalization or no internationalization?

Premature internationalization certainly carries risks, but 'no internationalization' is not a solution either.



CASE STUDY

The marketing director of a French manufacturer of bicycle accessories wanted to expand its online business to other countries. The company already had a good number of domestic customers, but it had not yet developed its own e-commerce. The marketing director then decided to integrate the e-commerce functionalities on the website, which he had translated into English, German, Spanish and Italian, and to list around 20 products on Amazon's European marketplaces in the hope that this would increase sales in Europe.

After a few weeks, the first orders arrived, mainly from the United Kingdom. The items were dispatched immediately. All UK customers tried to contact the company after receiving their package, but failed, and finally decided to return the items. The marketing director, surprised by this result, contacted them by email to find out why: the customers explained that the instructions they received were not in English, that they had tried to call the company, and no one answered, and that, unable to understand how to install and use the products, they simply returned them.

In this case study, we cannot criticize the marketing director for having started exporting without being sufficiently prepared. His initiative has enabled the company to create value⁷⁷ and to create the basis for new sources of growth. In addition, his approach is compatible with a gradual export development strategy, and the company can adapt its investment according to the degree of success of the actions deployed.

A multilingual website is, therefore, not enough to make your business international, but it is one of the first ingredients necessary to become profitable and sustainable. Think of the investment you have made to promote your business in your home country, on the internet and beyond: the website but also SEO, newsletters, marketplaces, social networks, trade shows, packaging, interviews, advertisements, etc. How much time and resources have you devoted to it and continue to devote to it on a daily basis? Would it not be normal to think that so much time and resources should also be dedicated to your target foreign market?

The secret to good results is time

Export and digital separately are two processes that take time to achieve positive results in the target countries. Although the

⁷⁷ An international website can increase the value of a business, especially an e-commerce website.

combination of the two makes it possible to accelerate international development, a multi-channel export strategy always takes time, and the ROI is long-term, generally over three to five years.

This is why intermediate stages with objectives in the short and medium term are also necessary to increase and measure the performance of the deployment over time. These stages must be described in a roadmap for five years, or even beyond. Even if reality invalidates part of this roadmap, it will serve to inspire the launch, to monitor the development, and to formulate hypotheses on what export sales could be achieved in the short, medium, and long term with their budgetary impact.

Regarding this last point, here are three concrete examples:

- For short-term goals, such as prospecting during an international trade fair abroad, investing in SEO or social media will not be effective, because they will not have the time to produce concrete results. Other levers, such as lead generation or advertising campaigns, will be capable of achieving this performance in the desired time frame.
- For medium-term goals, such as increasing sales on Zalando in Europe by 30% in one year, simply referencing the products translated into each language will be useful but not sufficient. Boosting products with promotions or advertising on Zalando and on partner sites may produce more satisfactory results within the desired time frame.
- For long-term goals, such as developing brand awareness in a new country over three years, organic levers are strategic and suitable for building this reputation on solid qualitative bases and supporting its growth over time.

Depending on the time available to achieve the objectives, the levers used will, therefore, have a higher or lower cost, which will impact your budget.

But even with a clear roadmap, many companies throw in the towel for the first year for lack of positive results. Avoid this mistake and don't give up. To extend your perseverance intelligently, here are some tips:

- Place digital export as a priority ambition in the company's strategy by not allowing it to be perceived as a simple search for commercial

opportunities. Involve as many employees as possible by making them feel that they are part of this ambition.

- Be realistic. The average time to complete an export business, all channels combined, is two years, depending on the sector. Moreover, completion does not mean profitability, because profitability generally needs one to two extra years.
- To maintain the course on your international development, subtract everything that is not in your core business and that others can do better than you. But beware of providers who promise impressive results overnight. Whether online or offline, if you want to achieve good, profitable, and lasting positive results, you have to invest in quality work, and that doesn't happen in days.
- Anticipate your funding needs to ensure that your cash flow can follow the project over the long term. Several mechanisms such as government grants or aids from chambers of commerce, etc., make it possible to finance the development of digital export.
- Regularly analyze your performance. Yes, the progress can be disappointing. But check it regularly and make sure that the best tools and practices are correctly implemented. That will allow you to intervene as quickly as possible if something goes too slowly compared to your roadmap.

So, how long will it take to get results? Neither digital nor export is a precise science; they are rather continuous projects. For the first, on average 95% of new websites can take more than a year to arrive at the first results of SERP. For the second, it can take between six months and a year, after validation of the strategy, to obtain the first customer. These times are mere estimates, and the actual time you need may vary depending on several factors, including your sector, the export market, your budget, your objectives, etc.

HOW DIGITAL DARWINISM CAN STRENGTHEN EXPORT

The internationalization of a company should be considered a journey and not a destination. Each foreign country is not just a new market; it also involves the discovery of new habits, new cultures, new opportunities. Certain countries will have specific needs for which the company will have to find specific solutions. It is the wealth of solutions that the company will be able to deploy in its new markets that will make its export journey efficient.

Until the early 2000s, export development for an SME mainly involved finding and managing distributors or importers in other countries. English was the only language used for business, often sufficient in that context.

But, in recent years, the opportunities for internationalization have evolved. Internet, e-commerce, marketplaces, and other digital tools have joined distributors and importers, multiplying the channels that help reach foreign customers, directly and indirectly. How will this evolve in the coming years? With the speed of breakthrough innovations, we can expect huge developments in several areas affecting export sales thanks to the internet.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Digital export is like conquering a summit: there is the excitement of the challenge, the pleasure of advancement, the ecstasy of the outcome. These stages are renewed at each conquered summit, but the chances of success will be greater after each successive conquest. It would be a shame to stop at the first summit, and for your digital exports it would be a shame to stop at the first country.

If you want to read more about how to sell online across channels internationally, don't forget the rest of The Digital Exporter Series, where you can find more than 100 case studies presenting the best tools, actionable solutions, and step-by-step explanations. Here is the list of books in [The Digital Exporter Series](#):

- Book 1 – [STARTING THE GLOBAL DIGITAL JOURNEY: How to create the best international web strategy](#).
- Book 2 – [GETTING CLIENTS OVERSEAS, ORGANICALLY: How to set up local, international & global SEO](#).
- Book 3 – [GETTING CLIENTS OVERSEAS, BY ADVERTISING: SEA, SMA and other acquisition channels](#).
- Book 4 – [SELLING ONLINE INTERNATIONALLY: How to set up & manage a cross-border e-commerce](#).
- Book 5 – [SELLING ONLINE INTERNATIONALLY: How to sell on local & international marketplaces](#).
- Book 6 – [DEVELOPING A STRONG INTERNATIONAL BRAND: Multilingual social media & social selling](#).
- Book 7 – [DEVELOPING A STRONG INTERNATIONAL BRAND: Multilingual inbound marketing & marketing automation](#).

I hope that this book has given you useful advice, and I wish you success in reaching as many digital export summits as possible!

SOME PRACTICAL DATA

- Trade Map (www.trademap.org): covering 220 countries and territories and 5,300 products of the harmonized system, a system adopted in 1983 by the World Customs Organization, it provides plenty of indicators on exports.
- OECD.Stat (<https://stats.oecd.org>) is a platform that provides access to statistical databases for OECD countries.
- Ecommerce Europe (<https://ecommerce-europe.eu/>) is an association representing more than 100,000 companies selling goods and services online to consumers in Europe.
- DHL, 'The 21st Century Spice Trade: A Guide the Cross-Border E-Commerce Opportunity'

(https://www.dhl.com/content/dam/downloads/g0/press/publication/g0_dhl_express_cross_border_ecommerce_21st_century_spiece_trade.pdf).

- European Commission, 'Buying goods online coming from a non-European Union country'
(https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/individuals/buying-goods-services-online-personal-use/buying-goods/buying-goods-online-coming-from-a-non-eu-union-country_en).
- United Nations (<https://unstats.un.org/home/>), statistical data globally and by country.
- Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), The World Factbook — Explore All Countries
(<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/>).
- W3C Internationalization (I18n) Activity:
<https://www.w3.org/blog/international/>.

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