

**DEVELOPING A STRONG
INTERNATIONAL BRAND:
Multilingual Inbound
Marketing &
Marketing Automation**

SILVIA CARTER

DEVELOPING A STRONG INTERNATIONAL BRAND: Multilingual Inbound Marketing & Marketing Automation



[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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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.

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.

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.

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

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

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

DEVELOPING A STRONG INTERNATIONAL BRAND: Multilingual Inbound Marketing & Marketing Automation

Content marketing is key for online visibility. Many simple and often free tools are available to adapt digital content linguistically and culturally to users across the world.

In this book you will find some of the main techniques to optimize your content. But, before you get started, one recommendation: keep a multichannel focus. That is essential, because your fans on the web are not married to you! They can come and go in the blink of an eye from one channel to another.

Book 7



CHAPTER 1

INBOUND MARKETING AND THE TSUNAMI OF CONTENT

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Globally, more than 90% of businesses say that content strategy and inbound marketing have helped them increase traffic to their website and generate leads; 64% of them say they have developed their sales in the past 12 months thanks to inbound marketing³.

But what exactly is ‘inbound marketing’? Is it the same as ‘content marketing’? Why is content a tsunami? And how can you use inbound marketing and content to develop your digital export project?

IS CONTENT KING OR A TSUNAMI?

In my opinion, nowadays content is both king and tsunami at the same time.

Why?

Check the following picture carefully, both the text and the date ...



Figure 1: Tim Berners-Lee's tweet announcing that the total count of websites surpassed one billion.

According to Tim Berners-Lee, the number of websites passed the bar of one billion on 16 September 2014. And, of course, that number didn't stop there. People and businesses went on not only building websites, but also publishing content on blogs, social networks, forums, etc.

Today, there are apparently almost two billion websites in the world⁴. If you add the quantity of content that is also published on other online and offline channels, you can easily see why some people refer to content as a tsunami. We are inundated by such a huge flood of content that sometimes it feels like an overwhelming tsunami.

³ Matthieu Gauthier, '93% des entreprises utilisant l'inbound marketing génèrent davantage de leads', HubSpot, 31 March 2022, <https://blog.hubspot.fr/marketing/93-des-entreprises-utilisant-l-inbound-marketing>.

⁴ <https://www.internetlivestats.com/total-number-of-websites/>.

On the other hand, without content, it is impossible for people and businesses to be visible, especially on the internet.

Everyone needs to communicate about his or her job, achievements, discoveries, ventures, and so on. Without communication, nobody would know anything. And, without content, there would be no communication at all. Content is, therefore, king as well!

CONTENT VS. INBOUND: SIMILAR BUT DIFFERENT!

Content marketing is part of inbound marketing. The latter allows companies to be more visible on the internet, whether on search engines or on other digital channels, anywhere around the world.

Often considered synonymous, inbound and content marketing are, however, very different: they can be compared to a smartphone and its battery.

With a smartphone, you can do hundreds of things, but if the battery is exhausted you will not be able to do anything at all. This analogy helps explain that it is indeed the content that drives inbound.

Inbound marketing strategy, therefore, uses several channels, such as social networks, emailing, blogs, etc., but also offline channels, such as magazines, billboards, TV, etc. Content is the raw material of an inbound marketing strategy and is very important for its multichannel nature.

WHY A NEW TYPE OF MARKETING?

So, why did marketers create inbound marketing? Wasn't web marketing, social marketing or just marketing enough?

This new branch of marketing was born from the changing habits of buyers, largely due to the digital transformation: fewer and fewer people want to be disturbed by a salesperson, whether in a B2B or B2C field, and that is true in any sector or country.

Buyers today are more and more comfortable with the internet and the new digital technologies. They have a level of digital skills that allows them to be fully autonomous in their purchasing process, especially when done online.

With the internet, they can access the information they need, anytime from anywhere, and buy on the channel they like at the price they prefer. These new customer journeys mean that, if your business isn't visible on the channels that your foreign prospects use when they search, they will find and buy from your competitors.

Inbound marketing allows companies to respond to these new purchasing dynamics. It involves deploying effective online content so that buyers can spot your business faster and more easily than those of your competitors.

Concretely, inbound marketing is used to attract prospects thanks to the content instead of soliciting them via commercial prospection or advertisements, which has been the rule for decades, even centuries, for any company wishing to expand its customer base.

These historical techniques are less effective nowadays not only because of the new digital habits but also because of the saturation of commercial messages. On the contrary, thanks to optimized content on several online channels, such as SEO, social media, websites, e-commerce, blogs, newsletters, etc. combined with offline materials, such as packaging, trade shows, billboards, etc., inbound marketing is

the solution to attract qualified prospects without distracting them with unsolicited communication.

Content is, therefore, the fundamental ingredient in all the channels used by the inbound strategy.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *Inbound marketing is a new form of marketing born to respond to new online shopping habits.*
- *It optimizes content across all online channels to attract prospects.*
- *Today, these inbound techniques can be optimized for foreign users and are essential to develop a digital export project.*

CHAPTER 2

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INBOUND MARKETING AND CONTENT

“

As mentioned, inbound marketing is a strategic marketing technique consisting in creating and publishing qualitative, relevant, and consistent content to acquire a clearly qualified category of people and, ultimately, to convert them into customers.

Of course, this technique is very effective in your home country as well as in the foreign country that you are targeting for your digital export project.

WHY IS CONTENT IMPORTANT FOR YOUR INBOUND MARKETING?

As just mentioned, inbound marketing is the part of the marketing strategy that consists in creating and publishing qualitative, relevant, and consistent digital content to acquire a specific category of people and, ultimately, to convert them into customers.

One of the most popular ways to provide online content to your current and potentially new audience is through your social media, including the blog on your website or on third-party websites. But, whether for your home country or for foreign markets, you need to define your inbound marketing and content strategy before your social media strategy, because you can't succeed in social media if you haven't defined the content to use on them.

Why is content important for your inbound marketing?

Simply because, if you work to add value to your products or services, you need to inform your potential customers about it. Your current customers surely already know about the value you have added to your products. But people that haven't already bought from you are unaware of that value and wouldn't understand the difference between you and your competitors if they didn't find any content explaining it. That's a rational rule that you can find anywhere around the world.

So, to attract customers, whether B2B or B2C, locally or internationally, you need to explain to them that your products or services are worth their value. And, by publishing online content, such as blog articles, posts on social media, etc., you aim to provide that explanation.

THE ROLE OF CONTENT IN THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

What kind of content do you need for your international inbound strategy? Yes, because there is content and content!

But before talking about the different types of content, it is essential for you to understand what your customers need during their purchasing process, the so-called customer journey. If you search on Google for a definition of customer journey, you will find not one but several.

However, they all follow the same key steps:

- 1) Awareness. In this step people are strangers and become visitors, that means they become aware of something, but they don't yet know whether they need it.
- 2) Consideration. In this step, visitors become prospects, or potential customers, which means they become convinced they have a need, and they search for the right solution. For example, an electrical scooter buyer will search and compare the different types of electrical scooters, their features, and their price until he finds the model that fits his requirements.
- 3) Purchase. In this step, the prospects become customers by purchasing the product or service to satisfy their need. This is considered the most important step in the customer journey but is never the last one.
- 4) Evaluation. In this step, customers are using the product or service they bought. It's only now that they are able to make a judgment about their experience with what they bought. If that experience is positive, customers will talk about it in good terms around them and they will be willing to return to the same supplier, in which case they'll open another customer journey. On the other hand, if the experience is negative, this step won't be followed by anything else.

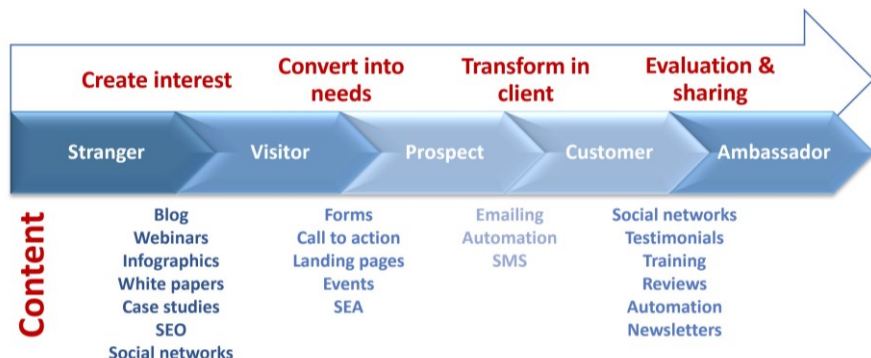


Figure 2: an example of customer journey and of the content associated with the key steps of the purchasing process.

Although this customer journey can be more or less detailed with other or different steps, the important thing to understand is that content must be specific for each step of the process. The content that is best suited for raising awareness is not the same as the one to help prospects buy.

And that is the case anywhere online, whether in your home market or in the foreign country where you plan to sell.

LOCAL VS. INTERNATIONAL INBOUND MARKETING

So, for good inbound marketing the first thing you need is to generate good content that can attract potential customers during all the steps of their purchasing process. Is that work in the foreign countries you target for your digital export project different from that in your own country? A little bit!

Indeed, you need to adapt your content to the foreign languages and to the possibly different customer behaviors. But on top of that, when it comes to digital export, the first thing is to make sure you know your

potential buyers, what they do on the internet, and how they buy online. To put it in another way, you need to make sure you know the steps of your foreign customer journey and adapt your actions, or rather your content, to them.

If you think again about the four steps listed above, you can easily associate specific content to each one:

- 1) Awareness: in this step you need content that can attract strangers and turn them into qualified visitors that go to your website. Qualified visitors mean people with precise characteristics, such as age, interests, what online channels they use, etc., since it is pointless to attract everybody! You need to attract only those people that can be interested in becoming your customers. Among the best practices for this step there are the On-Page and Off-Page SEO for the version of your website that is dedicated to these foreign qualified visitors⁵ combined with optimized content on your social networks, also dedicated to them⁶.
- 2) Consideration: in this step you need content that can convert your qualified visitors into prospects, or potential customers, after they visited your website or social networks. At this point, it is critical to make these people feel comfortable and reassured as they go on searching for additional information about you. Among the best practices for this step is international Search Engine Advertising (SEA), specially dedicated landing pages for your foreign prospects⁷ with effective call-to-action and forms to increase the chances to get connected with them.
- 3) Purchase: in this step you need content that can help your prospects buy. It is often different for B2C and B2B: for the former, the purchase is directly online, while, for the latter, the prospects deal with sales managers to negotiate the price, the delivery, etc. Among

⁵ You will find all the step-by-step explanations in book 2 of The Digital Exporter Series, [GETTING CLIENTS OVERSEAS, ORGANICALLY: How to set up local, international & global SEO.](#)

⁶ You will find all the step-by-step explanations in book 6 of The Digital Exporter Series, [DEVELOPING A STRONG INTERNATIONAL BRAND: Multilingual social media & social selling.](#)

⁷ You will find all the step-by-step explanations in book 3 of The Digital Exporter Series, [GETTING CLIENTS OVERSEAS, BY ADVERTISING: SEA, SMA and other acquisition channels.](#)

the best practices for this step is multilingual email or SMS to send reminders and last-minute special discounts.

- 4) Evaluation: in this step you need content that can delight your customers. Just because your customers have bought your product or service, that doesn't mean your work is finished. You need to make sure they are happy with what they bought and will talk about that with their friends and family. Among the best practices for this step are special training and technical support, newsletters with updates and personalized discounts, dedicated feedback and tips on social networks.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *Inbound marketing is a strategic marketing technique consisting in creating and publishing relevant content online to acquire a clearly qualified category of people and, ultimately, to convert them into customers.*
- *It is, therefore, directly associated with the content strategy, which for a digital export project must be adapted to the foreign customers' journey.*

CHAPTER 3

INBOUND VS. OUTBOUND MARKETING

“

As we live in a dichotomous world, with light-dark, public-private, male-female, tea-coffee, PC-MAC, and so forth, it wouldn't have been more natural to have both inbound and outbound marketing!

While the debate on which one is the best has divided marketing experts into two groups (what else?), both inbound and outbound marketing have pros and cons for your digital export project.

You will find some explanations and tips in the following pages.

IS INBOUND MARKETING BETTER THAN OUTBOUND MARKETING?

Before answering that question, let's see what outbound marketing is and how it differs from inbound marketing.

Basically, outbound marketing concerns promotional activities, and therefore content, that reach potential customers without their wanting it. Since your potential customers can be unaware of your products or services, you can simply show them to these prospects even if they are busy doing something totally different.

Some typical examples are TV commercials, advertising, cold calls, etc. They tend to be more expensive and less ROIstic than inbound marketing activities.

One reason for the lower ROI is that this kind of marketing and content often reach potential customers that are not directly or immediately concerned by the product or service. As a result, they are usually less qualified, or, in other words, less ready to buy.

It's the opposite for inbound marketing, which aims to let potential customers find what they need when they are ready to buy it.

It is who is searching that makes the big difference in terms of results. Someone that finds your business online because he is searching for something that you have and that he needs has everything to buy it right away. And, if he cannot find your business, he will find, and buy from, one of your competitors. The outcome doesn't change for him, but it does for you, and it is directly related to your inbound marketing!

So, if outbound marketing is more expensive and less ROIstic, why do businesses still bother with it instead of fully concentrating on inbound marketing? Simply because marketing is not an exact science, and there is never just one strategy that fits all situations.

A mix of all relevant channels that are available and consistent with the business objectives and resources is always the right approach, which might also include outbound marketing.

INBOUND OR OUTBOUND MARKETING FOR DIGITAL EXPORT?

Although inbound marketing is about letting your prospects come to you, while outbound marketing is about interrupting your prospects to persuade them to come to you, answering this question in favor of the first type can be misleading.

Whether inbound or outbound marketing is best for your digital export project depends on many factors, such as your sector, your target customers, your products or services, etc.

As mentioned before, marketing is not an exact science, and it is impossible to lay down a general rule that fits all cases. But, when it comes to deciding for your digital export project, there are two factors that are significantly more important than others:

- 1) The ad blocker rate in the country you are targeting⁸. If the rate is very high, it shows that people are tired of being interrupted by commercial messages and that they are blocking as much digital advertising as they can. In this case, outbound marketing will be hardly effective or very expensive or both.
- 2) The short time that forces you to go fast, either because you started late or because you have a special offer that expires soon. In these cases, outbound marketing will be a better option than inbound marketing.

⁸ You can check the ad blocking rate in Q3 2021 by country here:
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/351862/adblocking-usage/>.



TIP

Integrating a long-term inbound marketing strategy with some short-term outbound activities can also be a good approach, since it will help you get fast results while developing your future growth through a more robust plan.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

The dichotomy between inbound and outbound marketing has divided marketing experts across the world. However, both techniques have pros and cons for a digital export project.

Choosing between inbound and outbound marketing will depend on several factors, two of which are key for digital export:

- *The ad blocker rate in the country you are targeting.*
- *The short time that might force you to go faster.*

CHAPTER 4

BUILD YOUR INTERNATIONAL INBOUND MARKETING STRATEGY

“

In general, the techniques you will use in your international inbound marketing are the same as those you might have used in your own country.

However, if you are thinking about limiting that internationalization to the simple translation of the various items of content, think again!

You will need to work your international strategy in an independent way, fully dedicated to the potential customers you target abroad.

HOW TO START YOUR INTERNATIONAL INBOUND MARKETING STRATEGY

Building an international inbound marketing strategy is not much different from building a local one, but just copy-pasting your domestic inbound strategy to foreign countries will not work. The most important things to pay attention to are your foreign potential customers, i.e., the prospects, their behavior, and the content that needs to be adapted or tailor-made for them.

The first steps to follow can be:

- Validate the type of potential customers you want to reach in the foreign countries you target. They can be either B2B, such as distributors, importers, retail chains' buyers, etc., or B2C, which means consumers or end-users.
- Clarify their pain points and how you can solve them, which implies setting up your objectives. The best way to approach this point is by direct interviews and field study in the foreign country.
- Determine the digital channels that are the most relevant to your foreign potential customers.
- Optimize your website and your social networks in a way that can be found quickly and easily by your foreign potential customers.
- Start generating content to publish on the relevant channels for your foreign prospects.

As you can see, these steps are nothing new if you have already deployed an inbound marketing strategy in your home country. But the important thing for your international strategy is the focus on prospects and content, which are clearly not the same.

Only by attracting foreign potential customers will you succeed in getting interactions from abroad, but that should not be the sole aim of your international inbound marketing strategy. Yes, it must first attract foreign prospects, but it also needs to convince them, then to make them buy, and finally to delight them.

In other words, your international inbound marketing strategy must take care of your foreign potential customers during their entire purchase process.

THE DETAILS OF YOUR INTERNATIONAL INBOUND MARKETING STRATEGY

To go into the details of building your international inbound marketing strategy, you need to proceed through these main steps:

- 1) Define your objective and what you want to achieve with your international inbound marketing strategy. This objective, for example, to increase the traffic to your German website, or increase the number of German fans on your Facebook page, etc., can be totally different from the one you might have in your own country.
- 2) Choose the online channels that are strategic to reach your foreign potential customers. That means the channels they use in their country. Although there are tons of online channels in each country, it doesn't mean you have to use them all. You only need to use those that are relevant for your foreign prospects. How do you identify them? You need to do some homework! A market study on the digital situation in the country you target. There are several sources of information about that, such as the Digital Reports that are published regularly by We Are Social and Hootsuite⁹, or other databases of international institutions such as the United Nations, the European Union, etc.
- 3) Validate the keywords used by your foreign potential customers. This is a very critical step and cannot be handled just with simple translations. You can start from that, but you need to go much further with analyzing the competitors and partners you have in the foreign countries. And for that you need specific tools, such as:
 - Google Trends and Google Keyword Planner in Google Ads

⁹ You can find all global and country reports here: <https://datareportal.com/library>.

- Ubersuggest
 - SEMrush
 - SimilarWeb
 - MozBar
 - BuzzSumo
 - Etc.
- 4) Choose the content types that are adapted to your foreign prospects. As for the channels, there are tons of different types of content in each country, but it doesn't mean you have to use them all. You only need to use those that are relevant for your digital export project which might differ from those you use in your own country. Some examples:
- Videos
 - Carrousels
 - Animations
 - Pictures
 - Webinars
 - Texts
 - Infographics
 - Landing Pages
 - Podcasts
 - White papers
 - Ebooks
 - Emails and newsletters
- 5) Set the frequency and your editorial calendar. That means deciding on the topics and the time to publish in advance, in general at least one or two months beforehand. For this step, you need to follow the key dates and events that occur in the foreign country you target for your digital export project¹⁰. For the layout of your editorial calendar, you can use different free or freemium tools such as Google calendar, Excel, Trello, Airtable, Notion, HubSpot, etc.

¹⁰ You will find all the step-by-step explanations in book 6 of The Digital Exporter Series, [DEVELOPING A STRONG INTERNATIONAL BRAND: Multilingual social media & social selling](#).

HubSpot		Blog Editorial Calendar					
Publish Date	Due Date	Author	Topic/Title	Content/Details	Keyword(s)	Target Persona(s)	Offer/CTA
1/1/2022	12/29/2021	Jelisse Rodriguez	12 Revealing Charts to Help You Benchmark Your Business Blogging Performance	Explain importance of blogging and how to benchmark your efforts to guarantee success	business blogging, blogging benchmarks	Marketing Mary	How to Get 100,000 Readers for Your Blog
1/2/2022							
1/3/2022							
1/4/2022	12/30/2021	Caroline Forsey	Top SEO Tips Straight From the Industry Experts (INFOGRAPHIC)	Highlight SEO tips with expert advice while promoting on-page templates	search engine optimization, SEO	Marketing Mary	On-Page SEO Template
1/5/2022	12/31/2021	Basha Coleman	9 Tips for Creating Quick Graphics for Your Social Media Posts	Provide tips and tricks to creating graphics without the burden of learning Photoshop	marketing graphics, social media graphics	Sales Leader Alex	Social Media Image Templates
1/6/2022							
1/7/2022							
1/8/2022							

Figure 3: HubSpot template for an editorial calendar¹¹.

Besides the tools to help you schedule your content, you should also think about calendar management. There are two options:

- One editorial calendar for each country.
- An integrated editorial calendar for all countries.

The second option is the most frequent and ensures complete consistency of content in all countries with careful monitoring. But in certain cases, depending on the company organization, especially when there are subsidiaries, or independent distributors, using separate calendars may prove to be more practical.

- 6) Decide how to measure the performance of your international inbound marketing strategy. The objective you set in the previous step must be as specific and quantitative as possible. If it is too broad, for example, increase sales, it will be hard to choose rational KPIs and track the performance of your inbound marketing abroad. Having a SMART¹² approach for your objective-setting will help you choose your KPIs! For example:

- Objective: increase the traffic to your German website up to at least 50% of your own country website in one year.
- KPIs: click-through-rate (CTR) on your German newsletters, traffic and bounce rates on your German landing pages, etc.

- 7) Generate and publish your content following the milestones and topics set in your editorial calendar. By regularly checking the performance of your content via the KPIs you decided, you will be able to see what type of content works best and adjust your

¹¹ See <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/business-blog-editorial-calendar-templates>.

¹² Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

international inbound marketing strategy accordingly. But not too quickly. Since inbound marketing produces results in the long run, you need to wait a few months before deciding to make radical changes. In any case, if your KPIs show that you're too far from your objective, you clearly need to revise your strategy.

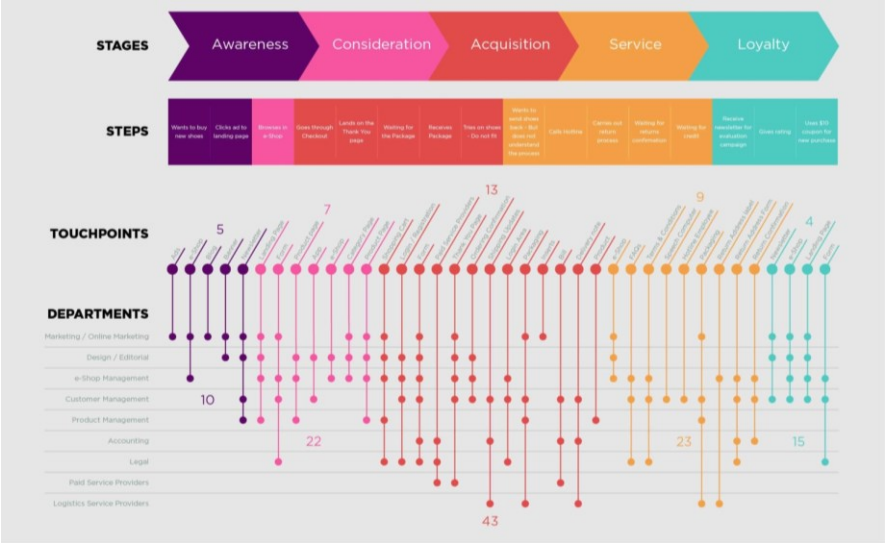


Figure 4: an example of the different types of content that can be used for each step of the customer journey, by BrightVessel¹³.



TIP

Although these steps are more typical for B2C businesses where customers can buy directly online, they can be easily adjusted to a B2B sales process. The main difference is that, instead of buying directly online, B2B customers will need to negotiate with the sales team to close the deal.

¹³ See <https://www.brightvessel.com/customer-journey-map-2018/>.

INTERNATIONALIZE YOUR LOCAL INBOUND MARKETING

In 2018, more than 60% of companies' marketing budget was spent on creating content to attract new visitors to the website and generate new leads, or, in other words, prospects.

For your digital export project, you have several options for generating and managing international content:

- Translate all of your content into each language and for each of the foreign countries you target.
- If your budget does not allow you to translate everything, or if some of your content is not relevant for your foreign potential customers, translate a selection of your content.
- Create content specific to the foreign countries you target. This is about using local resources to write about popular topics that can convey the right message to your foreign potential customers.
- Adapt the contact form: this is the most essential action for lead generation, which is the conquest of qualified prospects. If your form is not clear, or if it is poorly translated, you risk losing these prospects and having a very disappointing conversion rate.



CASE STUDY

Archos, a French company specializing in consumer electronics, has a cross-border e-commerce site that can serve several countries with a sub-directory dedicated to each one. On the Italian website, the content is fully translated, but on the technical support page, <https://www.archos.com/it/support/index.html>, the Q&A, or Domande Frequenti, are only in English.

Italian potential customers that are inquiring about the technical features of some Archos products might struggle to find the information they need or to understand it, which might result in a lower conversion rate.

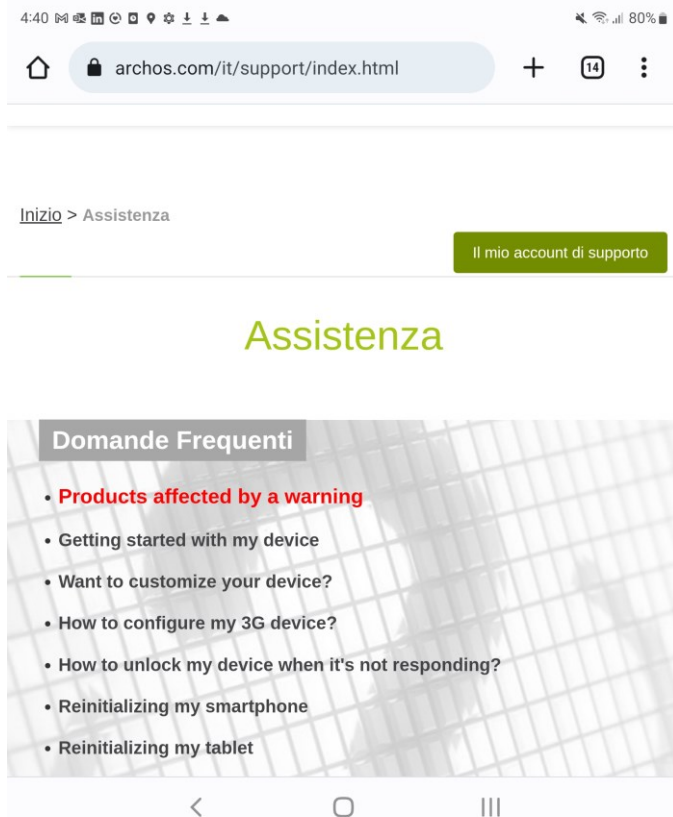


Figure 5: an example of non-adapted content on the Archos website.

ORGANIZE YOUR CONTENT INTERNATIONALLY

Whatever option you choose, you need to organize the content management for the inbound strategy for each foreign country.

There are two main options:

- Centralized management: from your own country, you ensure the production, publication, analytics, archiving and automation. This is probably the easiest and cheapest option in terms of management costs.
- Decentralized management: this option involves the use of your subsidiaries, or your distributors, or local marketing agencies. It allows you to have more localized content. On the other hand, it becomes more expensive to manage.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

The dichotomy between inbound and outbound marketing has divided marketing experts across the world. However, both techniques have pros and cons for a digital export project. Choosing between inbound and outbound marketing will depend on several factors, two of which are key for digital export:

- *The ad blocker rate in the country you are targeting.*
- *The short time that might force you to go faster.*

CHAPTER 5

CONTENT IS KING... MEET INTERNATIONAL CONTENT, HIS QUEEN!

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Content has become the king of the internet, regardless of the communication channels and countries. Its power is borderless under any digital circumstances.

Taking advantage of this power is essential! From your own country to any other country that you target around the world, the first thing your content needs to be powerful is 360° consistency.

Let's see what that means.

EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL CONTENT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The basis of effective international content is to convey the business value proposition in a way that is understandable to the multicultural audience you target abroad. So, your company must be depicted as a legitimate reference in all the content you publish in all relevant countries.

There are three key factors to consider.

The topics

There are many topics that your company can use for its content locally and internationally:

- Your products and/or services: new features, functionalities, examples, demos, help ...
- Your customers: new, testimonials, added value, customer cases, number, ...
- Your employees: job openings, recent recruits, evolutions, ...
- Your news: trade shows, international development, awards, fundraising, capital increase, interviews, ...
- Your results: sales, growth, acquisitions, mergers, ...
- Your sector: trends, key players (competitors and partners), ...

The formats

Each topic and piece of information can be the subject of several publications in different formats: short text for Twitter, medium text for Facebook, long text for a blog, illustration for the key figures on an infographic, a video for YouTube, etc.



TIP

Video is now the most popular format on the web on the global scale.

For international purposes, it is more useful to host your videos on an external cloud platform to make sure it can be easily accessed even from very distant countries.

Also, it is better to use the captioning functions since more and more people watch videos while on the go without sound. Without subtitles, it loses its relevance.

The text formats themselves must be available on several types of media. In addition to direct publications on your own websites, blogs, and social networks, you can distribute them on third-party blogs, or even produce PDF for white papers, press kits, etc. to be circulated on document-sharing platforms, such as SlideShare.

The tone can vary significantly from one country to the others. If the cultural environment allows it, do not hesitate to change from a serious tone to humor. Also, the playful dimension can be important in attracting foreign prospects: games, contests, competitions, etc.

The international SEO

All your content must be adapted to your international SEO and to the targeting system you are using¹⁴:

- By country: the SEO is adapted to the specificities of each country locally.
- By language: the SEO is adapted to a specific language internationally without a direct association with any country.

So, all multilingual content must be designed in relation with your international SEO strategy for the foreign potential customers you target. Here, whether you target by country or by language, the SEO techniques are not the same as those for your home country.

¹⁴ You will find all the step-by-step explanations in book 2 of The Digital Exporter Series, [GETTING CLIENTS OVERSEAS, ORGANICALLY: How to set up local, international & global SEO.](#)

It is not just a question of translating the keywords. It is also about effectively adapting the user experience (UX) and all the semantic fields, including your images, backlinking, etc., to your foreign prospects.

THE SOURCES FOR INTERNATIONAL CONTENT

There are many content-sourcing tools that are very convenient. But before subscribing, make sure they cover the geographical region that you target for your digital export project.

These tools can help you save time and create synergies between local and international content that can be published across several countries, offering the possibility of sharing a broader vision and richer insights.

In general, the further you move away from your core business, the less legitimate you are. Staying focused is, therefore, essential! At the same time, you also need to post content frequently and regularly. So, you need continuous inspiration for content. Combining the writing of your own content with the republishing of relevant third-party content is an effective tactic for your international inbound goals.

This republication also makes it possible to comment on, ask questions, and express one's point of view on the subject, by showing expertise in the field. Prospects and foreign customers will appreciate that your company can broaden its publications to local themes without trying to generate content that could have a different positioning.

The multiplicity of formats also makes it possible to republish the same content, whether one's own or of that of a third-party, several times without its being identical or redundant in its impact on the foreign prospects you target.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Content is an integral part of inbound marketing. To deploy it in an effective way internationally, you should:

- *Consistently use as many topics as possible to position your company as a legitimate reference.*
- *Multiply the types of formats according to your objectives.*
- *Optimize the content for international SEO.*
- *Identify effective sources and combine your own content with that of third parties.*

CHAPTER 6

NEWSLETTERS AND EMAILING FOR DIGITAL EXPORT

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Newsletters and emailing are key tools for customer loyalty and lead-generation strategies.

They can be used for multiple objectives: to strengthen the ties with your customers, to promote your brand, to launch a new offer, to relay your company's news, etc. If well managed, emailing and newsletters can be very effective.

Why not using them for your digital export project?

EMAILING OR NEWSLETTER?

These two terms are almost always used as synonyms, but they are not.

A newsletter is a form of email sent to people that have previously subscribed. It can be regular (weekly, monthly, etc.) or ad hoc depending on the business and the information distributed. Its content can be simply informative or be used to promote a special offer for a specific event, such as a Mother's Day discount.

Newsletter templates are usually very graphical with images or videos, and they remain consistent over time.

Emailing goes far beyond just email. It is part of a 'direct marketing' strategy that uses email as a distribution channel, instead of paper leaflets distributed by regular mail, and includes several formats: newsletters, anniversary or birthday email, subscription confirmation email, subscription renewal reminder email, abandoned-cart reminder email from an e-commerce site, etc.

Except when they are newsletters, emailing templates are less graphical. In most cases they are simply textual, and their frequency is not regular.

Both emails and newsletters can be automated through marketing automation software as explained in the following pages. That means you can create an automated emailing or newsletter workflow, which is a series of specific marketing tasks that follow the steps of a customer journey or any other business process and that are dependent on the completion of a previous task.

For emailing and newsletter automation, these workflows are set up to send messages based on either a special trigger, for example subscribing to a newsletter or downloading a PDF, or a special time, for example the end of free trial, or a year of use, etc.

You will find more details about marketing automation in the following chapters.

SOME NUMBERS

‘Emailing is dead!’ Haven’t you heard that before? However, it is not yet time to bury it, and certainly not in the case of international emailing.

Globally, Radicati predicted that the number of business and consumer email users will be more than 4.1 billion in 2021 and almost 4.6 billion by 2025. These users generate more than 319 billion emails per day, and that number is expected to grow to more than 376 billion by 2025¹⁵.

According to a 2019 study of adults in the U.S., consumers spend about five hours per day on average checking their emails: about three hours per day checking work emails and two checking personal emails¹⁶.

In some countries, such as the United States, email is the primary communication tool in business.

Emailing, therefore, is alive and well! It is even generating better performance than many other paid levers: on average, the ROI of an emailing campaign is 3600%¹⁷, which is much higher than Google’s own conservative estimate of 800% for Google Ads¹⁸.

¹⁵ ‘Email Statistics Report, 2021-2025’, The Radicati Group, February 2021, https://www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/Email_Statistics_Report_2021-2025_Executive_Summary.pdf.

¹⁶ Giselle Abramovich, ‘If You Think Email Is Dead, Think Again’, Adobe, 8 September 2019, <https://blog.adobe.com/en/publish/2019/09/08/if-you-think-email-is-dead--think-again.html>.

¹⁷ Roberta Phillips, ‘Email Marketing Statistics – Everything You Need to Know’, EmailToolTester, 6 September 2021, https://www.emailtooltester.com/en/blog/email-marketing-statistics/#B2B_Email_Marketing_Statistics.

¹⁸ <https://economicimpact.google.com/methodology/>.

FREE OR PAID?

For digital export, although there are free online tools for emailing, certain strategic options can shift that feature towards paid:

1) Multilingual features¹⁹: to do emailing in multiple languages, you need software with specific features to create your multilingual campaigns and manage them by geographic segmentation. Software such as MailChimp, SendinBlue or Mailjet offers features of this type, but in general they are not included in their free subscriptions. You, therefore, need to pay between €5 and €50 per month depending on the software. The benefit of these features is that they manage the translated content not only for the text of the email, but also the Call-to-Action buttons that have to be filled out by the recipients in their language, and all the other dynamic fields of the email, as you can see in the next picture. It is possible to avoid these extra costs by subscribing to a different free software for each country and each language without the multilingual function. Basically, you have three options:

- You can create a different account for each language or each country, which is quite efficient and practical if you do not have many languages or countries to manage.
- You can write in only one language, for example in English, to all your foreign recipients, a solution that is sometimes just as effective in certain areas of business, such as in the industrial B2B sectors.
- You can also write all translated versions in the same email or in the same newsletter. However, this is the least effective method in terms of conversions: very few people will 'scroll down' to see if their language is there.

¹⁹ Gmail or Outlook is not recommended because of limits on the number of emails per day and the number of contacts as well as concerns about spam and phishing.



Figure 6: an example of a multilingual mobile emailing.

- 2) The purchase or rental of emailing recipients when you don't have any or sufficient qualified email addresses in the foreign country you target. This is a fairly frequent case when you are starting your business in a new market.



TIP

- Work on the subject line of your email to make it as attractive as possible in the language of the foreign country you target. That is the first criterion that will motivate people to click on and open it.
- Use a short, simple message that can take advantage of generic visual elements to facilitate comprehension by foreign recipients.
- Check the regulations in the relevant countries before starting. In some countries emailing or the purchase of recipients' files is illegal and can have negative consequences on the rest of your digital export development.
- Also make sure to obtain the 'opt-in' necessary for compliance with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- Use a tool like <https://ga-dev-tools.appspot.com/campaign-url-builder/> to track 'clicks', 'openings', 'unsubscribed' and other statistics directly on your Analytics under Acquisition instead of their being bundled and biased into 'direct' traffic.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Email marketing and newsletters are not the same thing: the former defines the direct marketing strategy replacing paper flyers with emails while the latter is just one of the formats, and the most graphical one, used for email marketing.

Two factors can make this tool switch from free to paid:

- *Use of multilingual functionalities.*
- *Purchase or rental of recipients' contacts if they are not yet available for the foreign country.*

CHAPTER 7

HOW MARKETING AUTOMATION CAN INCREASE YOUR EXPORT PRODUCTIVITY

“

Does marketing automation mean that robots are in charge of your marketing? Of course not, but these tools, often enriched with AI and machine learning, allow you to analyze large amounts of data, generate relevant international content, and provide 24/7 service automatically.

They help you save time, accelerate the pace, and, therefore, increase productivity.

Today any business, local or international, can't be competitive if it is only operated manually.

COMMUNICATE AT THE RIGHT TIME AND IN THE RIGHT LANGUAGE

Faced with customers' saturation with advertisement and other kinds of overly intrusive communication, inbound marketing focuses on improving personalization and performance. Marketing automation is one of the tools that can be used to achieve that, and in an international environment it is among the most effective.

But what is it?

Marketing automation is software, either local or cloud-based, that is designed to create many different automated workflows based on specific conditions and types of prospects or customers that progressively trigger actions in each stage of the workflow one after the other until the completion of the workflow itself.

The triggered actions can be on your website, in your newsletter, by email, or by SMS, etc. Basically, marketing automation software makes it possible to generate more rational communication campaigns by personalizing the messages and the workflows of actions taken by prospects and customers.

Whether they live in Brazil, in Australia or in the Netherlands, the reactions of your foreign potential customers will depend on their behavior, which is based on different factors, such as family, friends, interests, profession, location, languages, etc.

Automation tools can analyze all that data and deliver optimized content or strategic recommendations depending on the type of subscription you choose.

WHY MUST INTERNATIONAL MARKETING BE AUTOMATED?

All over the globe, most businesses of all industries and sizes are driven on the one hand by the digital transformation, and on the other hand by increasingly connected and demanding customers, who expect personalized and consistent experiences across every channel.

Marketing automation combined with AI and machine learning allows customer segmentation, which has become essential to meet these expectations, locally and internationally, whether B2B or B2C.

Why am I emphasizing this point? Because, when I was reading a Salesforce annual report ‘State of Marketing’, in which 3500 marketing leaders were surveyed in several countries around the world²⁰, I was amazed by one statistic: 52% of people are likely to switch brands if a company doesn’t make the effort to personalize its communications with them. And this percentage rises up to 65% in B2B.

That was in 2017²¹!

In 2022, at the time of writing of this book, and after the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which pushed the digital transformation to a much faster pace, the two percentages cited above must have grown very close to 100%.

Without good international marketing automation software, it would be impossible to customize and optimize your communications for your foreign customers and prospects.

²⁰ U.S., Canada, Brazil, UK, Ireland, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Japan, Australia, New Zealand.

²¹ Manny Rivera, 2017 State of Marketing Report, SlideShare, 9 October 2017, <https://www.slideshare.net/MannyRivera13/2017-state-of-marketing-report>.

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH MULTILINGUAL MARKETING AUTOMATION?

With multilingual marketing automation software, you can automate communication workflows and marketing tasks to reach your foreign prospects and customers more efficiently. These workflows and tasks are based on recurring events or specific actions that are performed repeatedly on your e-commerce, on your mobile application, on your social networks, on your blog, etc.

The use of this information through marketing automation software will allow you to segment (profiling) prospects and customers according to their country, their language, and much more, resulting in a full 1-to-1 personalized communication.

Here are marketing automation workflow examples for three customer journeys that will show you in a more practical way what can be done with this type of software.

For a cross-border e-commerce

After a purchase on the international website, the marketing automation software immediately retrieves the information, attaching it to an email address in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool that will automatically determine the country and language.

Using that information, it can adapt the follow-up message not only to the geographical factors, but also to whether it is a first purchase, a second, or a tenth, etc.

If it is a first purchase, for example, the software can automatically send an email a few days later to thank the customer for his purchase and also to take the opportunity to delight him with an exclusive 'new customer' offer.

If it is instead a second, or even a third or further, purchase, the software can automatically offer to allow the customer to join the company's loyalty program.

For B2B services

The international website offers a white paper to download free of charge, as long as the user fills out a form that collects his name and email address²². These contact details are automatically integrated into the CRM database, and the software can automatically link the new prospect to the most consistent segment according to the information it has collected via the form, including the prospect's country and language.

The prospect immediately receives an automatic email after completing the form to download the white paper in his own language. A second email is sent two weeks later to ask for feedback about the white paper.

If the feedback is positive, the prospect will receive a third email with an offer of the company's services, which will be followed by a commercial call.

If there is no response to the second email, a reminder will be sent automatically a week later.

If the feedback is negative, an email is sent acknowledging this disappointment and offering a call with a technician to discuss the issue in more detail.

For lead nurturing

The marketing automation software allows people to manage multiple channels, such as social networks, newsletters, SMS, online advertisements, etc., by combining the creation of several types of content from e-books to videos, from stories to infographics, etc.

The goal of this automatic feed is to maintain an active and charismatic brand image and subtly, but regularly, invite foreign customers and prospects to purchase in the right language.

²² In accordance with the GDPR and other privacy laws.



TIP

According to the profiling²³ of a prospect or customer, marketing automation makes it possible to:

- *Develop export sales and cross-selling.*
- *Increase the generation of leads in foreign countries and enrich the CRM with foreign contacts.*
- *Accelerate the interest of prospects to become customers.*
- *Manage customer journeys in several countries at the same time.*
- *Increase the engagement, conversion and loyalty of international prospects and customers.*
- *Save time to dedicate to other projects.*

THE BENEFITS OF MARKETING AUTOMATION FOR DIGITAL EXPORT

Marketing automation is an effective tool for increasing export sales performance and analyzing the progress of customer acquisition in each country and language segment.

In general, the benefits of marketing automation are numerous, from improving productivity, to minimizing human error and manual tasks, from increasing the number of generated leads, to raising conversion rates.

But international marketing automation offers an additional benefit. These tools allow marketing teams, export salespeople and local partners to work together. Since all the multichannel and international information of prospects and customers are centralized in and managed through the company's CRM system, the integration of marketing automation software makes it possible to segment and profile all contacts automatically according to the country, language

²³ The level of progress in relation to the customer journey. See more details in the following pages.

and other socio-demographic criteria as explained in the following pages.

This same software will then make it possible to send automatically personalized messages to B2B customers, or B2C customers if you directly manage the entire value chain up to the final export customers, or B2B2C customers, if on the contrary you go through local distributors. In the latter case, which is particularly common for both traditional and digital export, prospects and customers can be managed on behalf of the distributor and in its name.

The centralization of such a service is very efficient for digital export because:

- You will know how to talk about your offers in a relevant way while highlighting your local partner, who very often does not have the time, skills or tools to manage this marketing automation.
- Providing this service to your distributors will differentiate you from your competitors when you are negotiating for a new distribution contract and will help you not only with the signing of the contract, but also for the continuation of the commercial relationship.

This configuration also improves the performance of the sales and marketing departments:

- On the sales side, your own, or your local partner's, sales representatives can be informed automatically as soon as a strategic contact has completed an action, such as opening an email, downloading a file, making out an online purchase, etc., and they can immediately adapt their follow-up actions.
- On the marketing side, with information on contact preferences, you can better analyze the behavior of your customers and prospects to decide, for example, whether to launch new products, rationalize existing products, adjust prices, offer promotions, etc.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *Multilingual export marketing automation makes it possible to achieve several objectives and increase sales performance in foreign markets.*
- *It offers several benefits for digital export development:*
 - *Better commercial performance whether for internal salespeople or external ones belonging to a local partner.*
 - *Better marketing performance thanks to the possibility of exploiting field data from international countries in real time.*

CHAPTER 8

HOW TO USE MARKETING AUTOMATION FOR YOUR DIGITAL EXPORT

“

Marketing automation is an important driver for improving your company's digital export performance.

By using software to automate repetitive jobs, such as those performed in managing multilingual email or social media campaigns, you can free up the time needed for these tasks and focus on more strategic projects.

But how does marketing automation work in practice? Let's see the key steps for your digital export project.

MARKETING AUTOMATION: HOW DOES IT WORK?

As previously mentioned, the marketing automation software will first analyze the behavior of your foreign prospects and customers, according to the cookie options they choose²⁴.

In particular, this type of software can study:

- All the browsing data on your website or e-commerce, including the pages they viewed, the time they spent on them, the bounce rate or other possible actions they took on it, etc.
- The results of a newsletter or an emailing campaign in terms of open rate, reading time, CTR, etc.
- The engagement on social networks: number of likes, shares, comments, etc.
- The behavior of your application's users, such as the number of downloads, the number of uninstalls, the time of use, etc.
- Any other type of actions that is performed online.

Then, based on the results of this analysis, this software will allow you to automate the repetitive tasks of your marketing strategy. That means creating specific customized automation workflows for each segment of customers or prospects you target in each foreign country using the most appropriate multilingual content.

The list of tasks that marketing automation can manage is long, almost endless. Some examples are:

- Creation and sending of newsletters and emails
- CRM, including segmentation, profiling and deal management
- Surveys and polls
- Generation and sending of promotional coupons
- Customized videos and animations
- Ads management
- Social networks optimization and management
- Landing pages creation and management

²⁴ Under the GDPR for Europe, the CCPA for California, the LGPD for Brazil, etc.

- Chatbots
- Analytics
- Ad hoc integrated tasks and interactions between several of these tasks

As you can see, marketing automation is not just about emailing. It is much more. But it cannot be considered a substitute for inbound marketing either. Although emailing is part of inbound marketing, inbound marketing is not part of marketing automation.

Although they are very complementary and using them together will help you increase your productivity at home and abroad, the fact remains that they are two different things. Inbound marketing is about a process, while marketing automation is about software tools, some of which do indeed help inbound marketing.



TIP

Some marketing automation software can also analyze very large volumes of data, the Big Data, and perform A/B testing, two additional functions that are very useful for businesses that must manage content for a very large prospect base and in several countries.



CASE STUDY

A French company in the tourism sector has used A/B testing to improve the performance of its newsletter and its conversion tunnel for American prospects wishing to visit France. The French version has not undergone any modification, since the motivations of the two types of clients are not the same.

SEGMENTATION AND PROFILING FOR DIGITAL EXPORT

One of the first thing to do with marketing automation software is to segment contacts according to whether they are prospects, suspects, customers, individuals or professionals, large accounts, or small businesses, etc. Each contact must be categorized, or profiled, in one or more categories to personalize the automatic workflows and the tasks accordingly.

This segmentation of contacts is a key task that consists in grouping them based on specific similarities, which will condition the content of all the following marketing actions. And, since a good customer experience starts with the first interaction with the seller, you can easily understand why this task is key!

Almost any marketing automation software has profiling or segmentation features that allow you to analyze your contacts and group them accordingly. But how do you start if you have never done that before?

The best thing in this case is to start by considering two dimensions of profiling. The first one is the segmentation by the similarities that are most commonly used, of which there are four:

- 1) Geographical: definitely the most important thing for the profiling of your digital export prospects and customers. The tags to use can be country, city, district, region, language, season, weather, time-zone, measurement system, etc.
- 2) Socio-demographical: in this segment you can group people by similarities related to their nature such as gender, age, marital status, job, social status, education, etc.²⁵
- 3) Psychological: these similarities, concerns all the psychology factors of your contacts that condition their life. Some examples of

²⁵ Processing of personal data must be performed in accordance with applicable data privacy laws. For example, article 9 of the GDPR prohibits the processing of special categories of personal data.

psychological factors are interests, lifestyle, motivation, values, preferences, tastes, etc.²⁶

- 4) Behavioral: this category might look like the previous one, but it concerns a different type of factors, those conditioning the purchasing behavior of your contacts. For example, shopping habits, brand loyalty, payment habits, product usage, satisfaction after shopping with feedback or reviews, discount preferences, etc.



TIP

For your digital export project to customize international marketing automation workflows effectively, you need to proceed by geographic and linguistic segmentation first, and then by adding one or more sub-segmentations from other categories or from another dimension.

It is, therefore, important that you clearly validate the country or countries that you want to target as well as the level of sub-segmentation before choosing the automation marketing software, because some systems limit sub-segmentation to two levels.

The second dimension is about the readiness to buy of your contacts, which is related to the customer journey explained in chapter 2. In our example, this customer journey was horizontal going through four steps from awareness, to consideration, then purchase, and finally evaluation. But this journey is also very often depicted in a vertical way, with the same steps, or more, as in the example in the next picture.

²⁶ Id.

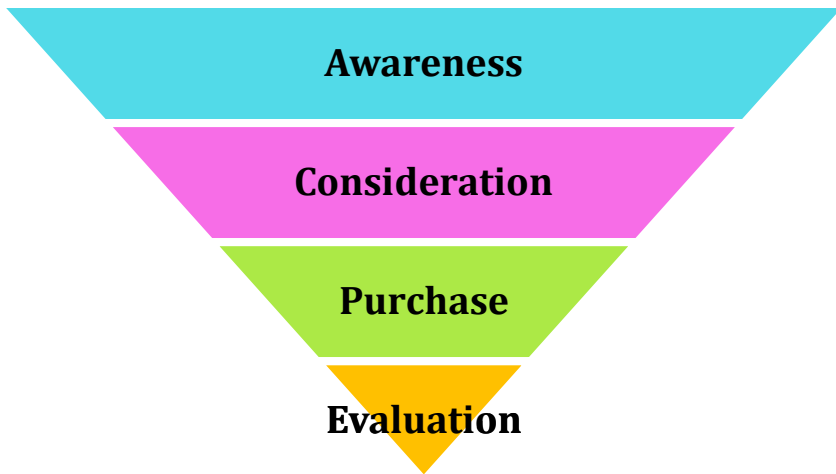


Figure 7: the customer journey in a vertical format.

Thanks to this picture it is visually easier to see a funnel and to understand the following concepts:

- TOFU: Top-Of-Funnel. This is when your contacts are in the first step of the customer journey, the awareness step.
- MOFU: Middle-Of-Funnel. This is when your contacts are in the second step of the customer journey, the consideration step.
- BOFU: Bottom-Of-Tunnel. This is when your contacts are in the last steps of the customer journey, the purchase and evaluation steps.

These three concepts help you group your contacts based on time, which means how close they are to take a decision and buy your products or services.

This type of information is fundamental because, for your marketing to convey a message that is always adapted, you must know if the people you're addressing are almost ready to buy or instead have just entered in the first step of the customer journey.

Now, with this two-dimension profiling you can apply specific tags to all your contacts, first related to each of the previous four segments, including the geographical one, then to these three temporal concepts.

By doing so, you'll be able to recall your contacts by segment and sub-segments in your marketing automation software to generate consistent workflows that will be optimized for all, for any language, and for any country where they are located.



TIP

The combination of sub-segmentation with multiple languages is a key marketing automation feature to have if you want to develop your business internationally.

Not only does it allow you to automate all your marketing actions, as any other standard marketing automation would do. It also helps you adapt the languages of all texts whether in the landing pages, or in the Call-to-Action, or in the input fields on a form, or even in the back-end – very useful if your team is multicultural.

This feature can definitely increase the quality and effectiveness of your international marketing automation. However, check the software you want to use to make sure that it doesn't have any sub-segmentation and multilingual limits before investing time or money. Paid options can quickly blow-up your budget.

THE KEY INGREDIENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETING AUTOMATION: TRIGGERS AND WORKFLOWS

To get good results with international marketing automation software, you need to go through the following steps:

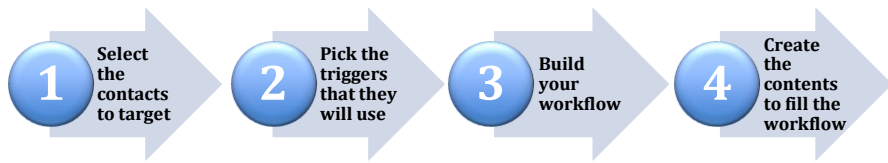


Figure 8: the key steps for international marketing automation.

All these four steps are critical for your digital export project:

- First, it is obviously important to select the right contacts that you want to reach abroad.
- Secondly, you need to find out how they behave online in their country to select the most relevant triggers that they will use to activate all the steps of your workflow.
- Finally, to build your workflow and manage your international content, you need marketing automation software that can track users' languages and provide different templates for each foreign language.

So, in marketing automation, what are triggers? And what is a workflow?

They are both essential for marketing automation, and they are essential to each other: one can hardly imagine a workflow with no triggers or triggers without a workflow.

A trigger is simply one's action that starts, i.e., triggers, a series of different actions managed by the marketing automation software. And this series of actions is the workflow, which was already programmed in the software.



TIP

In marketing automation, triggers are usually hyperlinks that redirect to other web assets. But, to be effective, these hyperlink triggers must be embellished with something that can urge people to click on them. Very few people would click on a long string of characters and numbers. Instead, they might be more willing to do so if such a string were replaced by a catchy phrase or a button.

The most common are:

- *Get your guide for free now!*
- *Book a call*
- *RSVP*
- *Register now*
- *Replay the event you missed*
- *Contact our customer support*
- *Get your gift*
- *Upgrade now*

There is a second category of triggers that doesn't involve hyperlinks but concerns a specific occurrence or an elapsed period of time between actions. Some examples are:

- *Customers inactive for more than six months*
- *Birthday*
- *Welcome to a new customer*
- *Re-activation of old customers*
- *Expiring subscription*
- *Renewal supply*

Generally speaking, a workflow is a sequence of actions that are performed to accomplish a job. The job can be of different types, from finance to production, from logistics to customer services, etc.

In the specific case of marketing automation, a workflow can be thought of as a series of triggers, the sequence of actions, whose purpose, the job, is to deliver the right marketing offer to the right contact at the right time.



TIP

In marketing automation, carpe diem is essential! Reaching the right contact with the right offer at the right time is the only way for your marketing automation campaigns to deliver good results.

On the international scale, you, therefore, need to pay particular attention to set the right moment to deliver your offer to your foreign contacts. That moment must not be too early or too late. It must be just right!



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Marketing automation allows you not only to communicate in a better way with customers and prospects from different segments and countries, but also to personalize automatic workflows according to each person's profile, which improves the quality of actions and the performance of your international marketing.
- For this, you need to use marketing automation software that can analyze, segment and create automated marketing campaigns without limiting linguistic or sub-segmentation features.

CHAPTER 9

MARKETING AUTOMATION: THE KEY WORKFLOWS FOR DIGITAL EXPORT

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Marketing automation software can automate international marketing tasks as effectively as those for domestic marketing.

But there are certain points that must be managed and prioritized differently for your workflows to perform well and bring good results from foreign countries.

Here are some examples that can be helpful for your digital export project.

PLANNING THE WORKFLOWS FOR YOUR DIGITAL EXPORT

As explained in the previous chapter, after the segmentation and profiling, with the same marketing automation software you can create personalized communication workflows with specific triggers that will help all your contacts, whether local or foreign, go through all the steps of their customer journey. But for your digital export project, your marketing automation software must be able to track the languages of your users and provide a different template for each of them. Otherwise, you won't be able to build international workflows and manage your content in multiple languages.

In general, workflows can be built around two different types of events. The first type is related to special events, such as new customer registration, third purchase, order value above a certain threshold, etc. The second type is related to certain regular occurrences, such as birthday, Black Friday, Valentine's Day, etc.



TIP

For example, whether they send a coupon, a gift, free shipping or a mystery discount, birthday emails get more than 50% higher open rates and clicks than do traditional emails²⁷.

Although workflows are indispensable to take advantage of any marketing automation software, creating international automated workflows can be complex and time-consuming. The examples below will help you understand the key workflows you can use in different digital export situations and then optimize the workflows you need for your business.

²⁷ These figures are based on the average of ToWebOrNotToWeb's clients, but you can find different rates on the internet, depending on the sector.

THE ABANDONED-CART WORKFLOW FOR CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE

Do you run a cross-border e-commerce or are thinking of starting one? In either case, you'd get users, whether already customers or new potential customers, from different countries that won't complete their purchase, although they did start their cart.

Abandoned carts are probably the biggest pain point of e-commerce owners or managers. And marketing automation can help lower their number.

With multilingual marketing automation software, you can send an automatic email to all these foreign users reminding them of the products or services they selected and put in their cart. This workflow is very effective for improving the conversion rate of an e-commerce, but for a cross-border e-commerce the conversion rate won't improve if the reminder emails are not adapted to the language of the foreign users.

Another critical point for international marketing automation is that this workflow can only be used with visitors that already have an account on your e-commerce, since, otherwise, you wouldn't have their email address to send the automatic reminder. The workflow's effectiveness is, therefore, strictly correlated to the quality of the international content on your website. Since very few foreign visitors will be willing to sign up on an e-commerce that is not adapted to their language or to their payment systems, the opportunities to use the abandoned-cart workflow without such adaptations will be reduced to almost zero.

As explained in book 4 of The Digital Exporter Series²⁸, payment systems, currencies and languages are important obstacles to cross-border e-commerce if they are not adapted to the local potential buyers:

²⁸ [SELLING ONLINE INTERNATIONALLY: How to set up & manage a cross-border e-commerce.](#)

- 65% of e-shoppers prefer content in their language.
- 40% of them will not buy from a website that is in other languages.²⁹.

To maximize the numbers of foreign shoppers on your cross-border e-commerce, and consequently the chance to use the abandoned-cart workflow, you must, therefore, address these three points in advance.

An example of abandoned-cart workflow:

- 1) Trigger action: depending on the marketing automation software, it can be set on the action of adding a product or service to the basket. As soon as the software sees that action, it will trigger the preparation of a reminder email if the shopping cart purchase has not been completed within 24 hours. The software will also check the profile in the database and set the right language and content for the reminder accordingly.
- 2) Reminders: the same software can have different flow options for reminders. For example, it can send a first email two days later in which the seller offers a personalized discount, higher or lower depending on the country of residence and on the related distance and delivery costs. That first reminder email can be followed by a second one a week later. And so forth. As mentioned, with a multilingual marketing automation software, all input fields and 'call to action' are automatically translated.

That means, for example, that on the French landing page the field will be *'rentrez votre code ici'*, on the Italian landing page *'inserisci il tuo codice sconto qui'*, etc., which further reassures foreign users and increases the effectiveness of the reminders.

- 3) Automation for the positive scenario: once the foreign customer has confirmed his online purchase, the marketing automation software

²⁹ Based on a survey of 8,709 global consumers in 29 countries, Donald A. DePalma and Paul Daniel O'Mara, 'Can't Read, Won't Buy – B2C', CSA Research, 30 June 2020, <https://csa-research.com/Featured-Content/For-Global-Enterprises/Global-Growth/CRWB-Series/CRWB-B2C>.

can send a thank-you email with personalized follow-up content, all in the customer's language, of course.

- 4) Automation for the negative scenario: if, despite the first reminder, there is no further action by the foreign user, after a certain period, his shopping cart expires.

The marketing automation software will send an email, in the customer's language, to confirm the expiration of the order. The same email can remind the user of the products or services that he selected, renew the personalized discount from the first email, and provide a special code to reactivate his shopping cart.

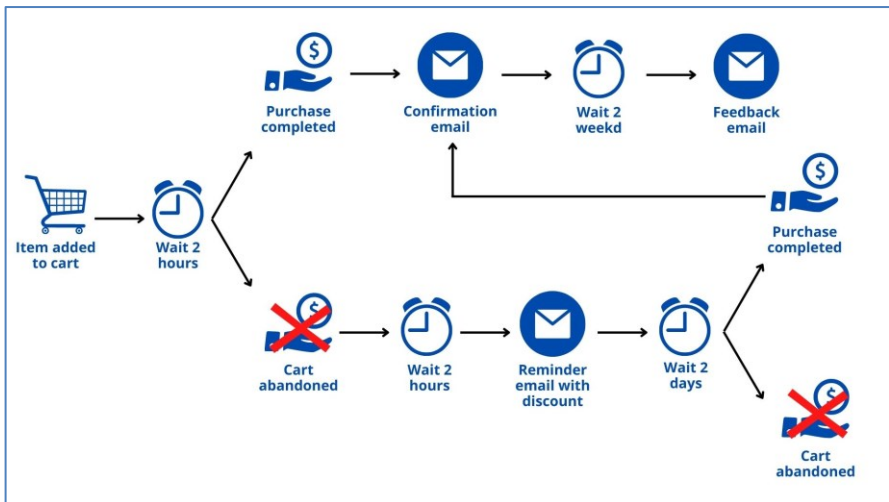


Figure 9: an example of abandoned-cart workflow.



TIP

For this workflow to be effective to motivate foreign users to complete their purchase, here are some key tips:

- *Special message when a user starts a cart: remind him that he has added some products or services in his cart and that you agree to keep them for 24 hours or more depending on the capacity of your stock.*

Also remember which steps to complete and other positive points: fast delivery, payment security, easy-to-reach customer support, etc.

- *Promo code: offer an additional discount code to convince the user to complete the purchase. For example, a discount on the next purchase, free shipping, extended warranty, etc.*

- *Testimonials: persuade your new users with positive customer testimonials or reviews. Use those you have in your own country if you do not yet have any in foreign countries.*

According to Bluecore, abandoned-cart emails are the second-best performing emails just after welcome emails³⁰.

THE WELCOME WORKFLOW FOR B2B OR B2C DIGITAL EXPORT

Getting new foreign users to register on a cross-border e-commerce website or subscribe to a B2B newsletter is a great opportunity to create a first link with them.

In general, this kind of new registration needs to be activated through a link that is sent with a separate first email.

The marketing automation software can turn these activation emails into personalized welcome messages in the right language and with the right content. This allows you to increase the open rate of your international emails.

³⁰ '2022 Retail Ecommerce Benchmark Report', Bluecore, <https://www.bluecore.com/resources/bluecore-2022-retail-ecommerce-benchmark-report/>.

By taking advantage of this opportunity, you can immediately create a positive relationship with your new users by welcoming them with a personalized exclusive offer. In the same message you can also present:

- Your mission,
- Your business values,
- Your team,
- Your added-value,
- Your story,
- And any other piece of relevant information to encourage him to try your products or services.

And that works for any type of business, whether B2C or B2B.

With your marketing automation software, you can personalize your welcome email not only linguistically but also culturally depending on the user's country.

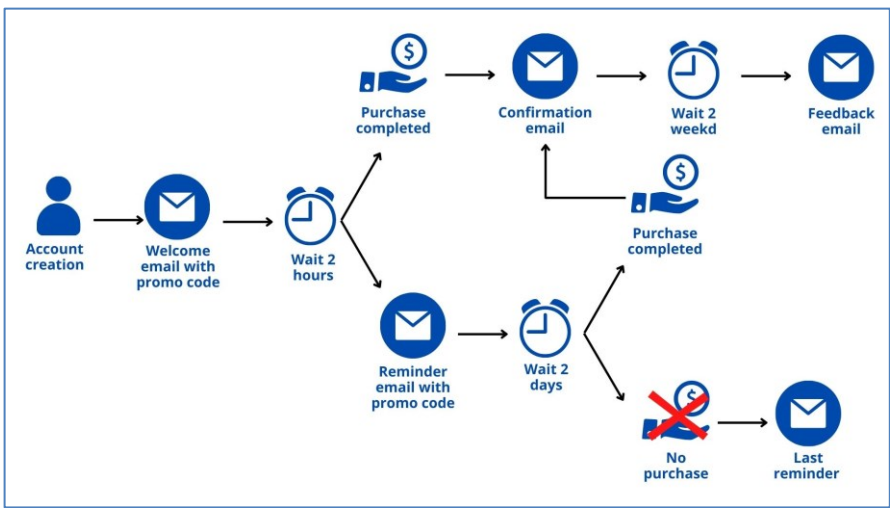


Figure 10: an example of Welcome workflow.



TIP

To be effective with this workflow, consider the following points:

- *Create stages: if it is compatible with your business and business model, design a path by stages by proposing prices at each different stage, from the cheaper to the more expensive, or reaching a specific threshold. This technique will allow you to approach your prospects and customers with another type of email, the reminder email.*
- *Promo code: offer a special code in the email, with a limited time, to get a discount, a free test, etc.*
- *Online survey: in certain areas, having a new user means he took part in a survey linked to a special offer. This allows you to personalize this email by re-contacting the user with a thank you message and then to inform him of the results of the survey.*

THE BIRTHDAY WORKFLOW FOR DIGITAL EXPORT

This type of international marketing automation workflow is activated in connection with some specific events.

The most common is a birthday, but it can be any other recurring event, usually yearly, such as a wedding anniversary or simply the anniversary of the subscription to your website.

The construction of such a workflow is not complex per se. The main trigger is the recurrent date followed by the sending of a gift or a special offer and a couple of reminders to make sure that the recipient will take advantage of the special offer.

Long before these recurrent events take place, for example at the registration of each new user, the marketing automation software can easily allow you to choose a dedicated email that will be adapted to the recipient's language and scheduled automatically to be delivered on the right date.

This workflow is very effective to make your international users feel that they are the center of your attention despite the distance.

The most important thing for your international marketing automation is not only to know far in advance the precise dates when these recurrent events take place. You also need to make sure that you have the right gift adapted to the local celebration habits, whether it is a special discount, free delivery, free products, etc.

It means that based on the foreign country you target, you need to make sure what is the best practice in terms of gifts and celebrations for these occasions to avoid your offer's being perceived as having no value or a wrong value because it is not really considered a gift due to local cultural differences.



TIP

*Are birthdays celebrated in the same way everywhere around the world? No!
Some examples:*

- *Japan: before the 50s, all birthdays were celebrated together on the same day. New Year's Day. That has changed, and now birthdays are celebrated individually on each person's actual birthday. However, birthday parties are usually for kids, while adults celebrate a few days before and spend their birthday with their partner.*
- *China: here some ages are considered bad luck and are ... avoided. For example, women consider 30, 33 and 60 bad luck years. So, they skip them: if they are 29, instead of turning 30 they remain 29 until they can turn into 31!*
- *This can concern several countries at the same time: Jehovah's Witnesses don't celebrate birthdays.*

This type of email is also a great opportunity to wake up a 'sleeping' customer who hasn't made a purchase for a long time, for which there is also a dedicated workflow as presented below.

THE RE-ENGAGEMENT WORKFLOW FOR DIGITAL EXPORT

The key purpose of this type of marketing automation workflow is to reactivate users that haven't taken any action on your website for a long time. Although the previous workflow can sometime have the same purpose, in this case it is conveyed in a more unambiguous way.

The emails can be addressed either to customers that have already purchased your products before or to users that never bought but created an account on your website. In that case, they must be asked if they want to continue using their account on your website to comply with data-protection laws.

The reasons for non-activity can be numerous: lack of time, change of interest, unclear customer support, different needs, better offers from the competition, etc. Identifying these reasons can be hard, especially on the international scale, except for offers from your competitors. In that case, if you know the details of the better offers from your competitors, you can use that information to do better and structure your email with a more appealing offer to re-engage your non-active users.

Reactivating a foreign customer is easier than acquiring a new one, which is also true in your home country. In the first case he has already provided all his contact details and expressed an interest for your products or services. And he probably hasn't lost that interest yet. So, the effort to reactivate him is usually less expensive than the effort to acquire a new customer.

Your marketing automation software can help you reactivate these non-active customers by setting a triggering deadline after a specific period. When the deadline is reached, the software will send an automated email using proposals similar to those we saw previously, such as a promotional code, a discount, a special offer, etc.

It is important in these emails to remind the recipient of the time since the previous purchase or action, because the software can recap all the key things that happened in the meantime: the launch of a new product or service, the award received for being the best in something, major application updates, etc.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *Marketing automation software can automate marketing tasks, both local and global, according to personalized workflows to improve digital export performance. But you still have to know how to set up the right workflows for each country.*
- *The Welcome, Abandoned-cart, Birthday and Re-engagement workflows are among the most widely used especially for cross-border e-commerce.*

CHAPTER 10

HOW TO CHOOSE MARKETING AUTOMATION TOOLS FOR DIGITAL EXPORT

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Adapting marketing messages according to the behavior and culture of each foreign prospect and customer will help you increase your conversions and sales internationally. And marketing automation software is there for that!

But, with tons of marketing automation tools out there, is it better to use a different tool for each task or a single tool that automates all the tasks?

In other words, how do you choose the right marketing automation software for your digital export project?

CHOOSE YOUR MARKETING AUTOMATION SOFTWARE

Which marketing automation software for digital export? Ontraport, Marketo³¹, HubSpot, Salesforce Pardot, Infusionsoft, now Keap, Adobe Marketing Cloud, SendinBlue, to name a few, but, of course, this list is not exhaustive.

The key criteria to consider when choosing such software are:

- The price! Probably the most important of the criteria because some software can cost several hundred, or even thousand, euros per month if you have a significant number of contacts to manage or if there are several people in your company that need to use it.
- The ease of use of the software, as the automation settings can already be quite complex.
- Compatibility with other software and tools that you are using for your business, locally and internationally, including CRM, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Analytics, product feeds, Amazon³², Facebook, etc.
- Contacts or mailing limits for managing your emailing campaigns in several countries.
- The types of content that can be created and managed with the software including the graphic quality: landing pages, chatbots, videos, templates, surveys, SMS, infographics, etc., for both mobile and desktop.
- The types of workflows: static or dynamic.
- The limits of segmentation, which is the most important point for digital export because without sufficient sub-segmentation you will not be able to differentiate among recipients according to their language and their country.
- Training and customer support.
- If your business is a mobile application, make sure you can develop and manage in-app marketing automation workflows to adapt them to your needs and to the journey of your application users.

³¹ Acquired by Adobe in 2018.

³² Or other marketplaces for managing promotional codes, as Ontraport allows.

If you want to use marketing automation software for digital export, the most important criteria, as pointed out earlier, concern sub-segmentation and multilingual functionalities. They should not be neglected, especially if the size of the company does not allow it to have marketing software by subsidiary or by local organization.

For SMEs, the most advantageous thing is often to have centralized software and to manage international marketing automation via a specific segmentation linked to the language and/or the country of prospects and customers.

THE SPECIAL CASE OF EMAILING AUTOMATION

Emailing is not marketing automation but is part of it and probably the most important part. Why? Because almost all businesses are email users.

To access social networks, applications, SaaS platforms, or e-commerce, etc., it is always necessary to register with an email address. Each of us has at least one, and generally creating one is free and very easy.

Registering for online services is an important act for the internet user: by giving you his email address, the internet user gives a proof of confidence to which you can respond by strengthening his feeling of now being a member of your exclusive community and thus benefit from certain advantages and privileges by email.

Marketing automation tools for emailing are effective solutions to meet both customer and business needs. Information sent by email is increasingly capable of reproducing human communications.

Emails, even more than social media, always generate attention when done well, because they can convey an intimate dialogue or more

simply because they go through a channel that is still 1-to-1 and spared by the distractions of pop-ups, ads, etc.

In short, email still has great potential, but it won't produce satisfactory results if you don't know how to communicate the right way, not only linguistically, but also in terms of the customer journey, with your foreign prospects.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *In an international environment, the choice of marketing automation software must be the subject of an exhaustive analysis of all the solutions that are available.*
- *To make an effective choice, the key criteria to consider are:*
 - *Price.*
 - *Ease of use.*
 - *Compatibility with other software and tools in your company, including ERP, CRM, Analytics, Amazon, Facebook, etc.*
 - *Limits of contacts or mailings for emailing campaigns.*
 - *Types of content that can be created and their graphic quality.*
 - *Types of workflows.*
 - *Training and customer support.*
 - *Ability to use in-app workflows if your business is based on mobile application.*

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 11

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 decreasing³³.

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

³³ 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.C.A 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 CTR³⁴, 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.³⁵

³⁴ <https://support.google.com/googleads/answer/2615875>.

³⁵ 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 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 value³⁶ 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

³⁶ 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_spi ce_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-noneu-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/>.

FREE & PREMIUM MARKETING AUTOMATION TOOLS

There are so many different marketing automation tools available all over the world that it would be difficult to provide a comprehensive list here. Instead, I recommend you read the following article by Neil Patel, which includes a non-exhaustive but nevertheless very interesting list of useful marketing automation tools: Neil Patel, 'Marketing Automation: What is it, Examples & Tools [2022]', NEILPATEL, <https://neilpatel.com/blog/marketing-automation-tools/>.

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