

SILVIA CARTER

STARTING THE GLOBAL DIGITAL JOURNEY:

**How to create the best
international web strategy**

BOOK 1 OF 7



Excerpt from:

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

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

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

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CHAPTER 5

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL WEB MARKETING FOR EXPORT SALES

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

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

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

HOW INTERNATIONAL WEB MARKETING HELPS EXPORTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Figure 5b: why international web marketing is important³⁰.

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

³⁰ The sources of the numbers followed by * are

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

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



TIP

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

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

INTERNATIONAL WEB MARKETING & SEARCH ENGINES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The solution is to proceed gradually.

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



KEY TAKEAWAYS

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