

Association for Information Systems AIS Electronic Library (AISeL)

PACIS 2000 Proceedings

Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems
(PACIS)

December 2000

Export through E-business: Cultural Issues faced by SME's

G. Hornby
Murdoch University

Simon Poon
Murdoch University

Paula Goulding
Murdoch University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://aisel.aisnet.org/pacis2000>

Recommended Citation

Hornby, G.; Poon, Simon; and Goulding, Paula, "Export through E-business: Cultural Issues faced by SME's" (2000). *PACIS 2000 Proceedings*. 22.
<http://aisel.aisnet.org/pacis2000/22>

This material is brought to you by the Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems (PACIS) at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in PACIS 2000 Proceedings by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.

Export through E-business: Cultural Issues faced by SME's

G. Hornby, S. Poon, Paula Goulding
Murdoch University, Australia

Abstract

Exporters are becoming increasingly aware of the power of the Internet, as a medium for global communication and information presentation. Small-to-Medium Enterprises (SME's), who attempt to engage in export activities through E-Business often face cultural issues that they may not have experienced before. This is complicated by how information is presented and the way marketing is conducted. Although the cost efficiency of the Internet should be an enabler for such SME's, the cultural issues can pose significant difficulties for the unaware. This paper reports a study using both survey and case study methods to investigate marketing and computer-interface issues related to cultural differences. The results indicated that SMEs are attempting to ensure their international marketing efforts take cultural differences into consideration; however, it is still uncertain how successful such approach has been.

Keywords: E-marketing, SME, Culture

1. Idea of the Global Marketplace

"With a website your marketplace is no longer your home town, but Planet Earth!"
(West Australian Electronic Commerce Centre, 1999)

The nature of the Internet is that it is world wide, being accessible in almost every country, and a regular sales pitch of E-commerce to businesses is to "access global markets" (Bennett, 1997; Fink, 1998; West Australian Electronic Commerce Centre, 1999). While it is obvious that global markets can be accessed, its real contribution and usefulness to business activities is still emerging. The 1990's have also seen a globalisation trend, with various free trade agreements being signed by major world economies (NAFTA, EU, APEC, CER, AFTA etc.), and the general lowering of tariffs. As we head towards a more global market economy, more competitive pressure is put on businesses to make the best use of resources and meet the needs of consumers.

2. SME's and Exporting

Small business has traditionally had a lack of resources, which has created barriers to international trade (Khoo, McGill, Dixon, 1998; Lefebvre E., Lefebvre L., Prefontaine., 1999), which the Internet may overcome (Khoo et. al, 1998; Kandasaami, 1998; Lefebvre et. al., 1999). Because the WWW is low-cost, small and medium enterprises (SME's), who have traditionally been restrained from international trade because of resource limitations (Kandasaami, 1998; Poon and Swatman, 1995), are able to present themselves and their products in as professional a manner as larger corporations (Bennett, 1997). Bennett's study of the experiences of web site use and perceptions of export barriers among UK businesses states that barriers to exporting may be considerably lessened by the use of the Internet. Since a firm's web site openly distributes information across the world, it is reasoned that conventional export models are no longer appropriate. The author further suggests that decisions such as which countries to export to are no longer needed, as a web site can reach them all.

If the Internet contributes to export marketing, it would be logical to see the principles and theory of international marketing being implemented on the Internet. Herbig (1998) looks at international marketing orientation by the degree of standardisation or adaptation. In a pure standardisation orientation, a firm operates as if the world were one large market, ignoring regional and national differences, selling the same products and services the same way throughout the world. In a pure adaptation orientation, a firm believes that each country should be approached separately as a different market, buying or conducting market research into the particular country and developing specific market strategy for that particular market.

Adaptation approach is hardest and most costly to implement, because geographical, cultural, legal, language and communication differences all have to be considered. An important assumption of the adaptation orientation is the belief in diverging markets and the importance of segments. This is supported by Hofstede's studies and results (1984 and 1991), and many repeats of these studies since.

The standardisation approach, in contrast to the assumptions of the adaptation approach, believes that either cultures around the world are converging, or that differences are superficial. This is also supported by various studies (see Levitt, 1983; Perlmutter, 1969; Wind, Douglas, Perlmutter, 1973; Douglas and Wind, 1987). The standardisation approach has many benefits - cost reductions, improved quality, enhanced customer preference, and increased competitive leverage (Herbig, 1998). The problem is that it is hard to implement; main difficulties are cultural differences, legal differences, language and communication problems, geography, parallel imports and hedging (Herbig, 1998). In Internet or web-based marketing, this would be a single web site, using a single language, interface design and marketing, to sell standardised products to all countries across the world.

Communication is one of biggest barriers to doing business internationally, and is heightened when using the standardisation approach. Advertising messages may not be what they want to convey. Some famous communication blunders are:

- a) American Airline "Fly in Leather" - output in Latin America meant fly naked
 - b) Chevrolet car *Nova* - in Spanish, means "does not go"
 - c) Parker Pens "Use Parker and avoid embarrassing situations" - translated in Spanish to using Parker pens reduces possible chances of pregnancy
- (from Herbig, 1998)

Buzzel, Quelch and Bartlett's (1995) discussion of the standardisation and adaptation approach identify strategy dimensions from which companies can have a number of different stances: market participation, product offering, location of value-added activities, market approach and competitive moves. The most relevant aspects to this study are the market approach and the product offering dimensions taken by companies, as these can be directly connected with the *design* and the *content* of a web site respectively.

In short, the market approach depicts the degree to which marketing is tailored for each country. In a standardised approach, a uniform approach is used, and no aspect of the marketing is altered. In Internet export marketing, this would mean that the one web site is used to market to all. The same interface would be used, with the same advertising approach, offering the same product. For an adaptation approach, a tailored marketing approach would be used for each targeted country (Buzzel et. al., 1995). Different interface designs would be

used, with different advertising approaches, possibly offering different products. Usually due to resource constraints, only the most viable and attractive countries are targeted.

As well as the adaptation and standardisation marketing approaches, Toyne and Walter (1993) also discuss the market extension approach. This approach is often associated with SME's. The basic philosophy of this orientation is that foreign markets are either of secondary importance to the home market or can be satisfied with the same product. Foreign markets are viewed primarily as outlets for surplus production or as opportunities to smooth domestic production, increase volume to gain scale, or raise profit margins. A firm adopting this position tries to exploit foreign markets using its existing products and marketing-mix policies, only mandatory changes are made to the marketing mix, and costs are minimised. In this approach, firms may use a web page for domestic marketing, while attracting overseas orders is an added bonus. Such an orientation implies minimal effort to attract overseas sales.

3. Culture Issues in E-Marketing Design

A key characteristic of marketing on the web is that it involves a graphical user interface (GUI). Research into the analysis, design and useability of web interfaces (e.g., Comber, 1995; Verbyla, 1999; Turner, 1999), is still in its infancy, but underlying principles of human factors can still be used:

“Web design does not call for a new field to support designers. We only need to look to the field of software useability engineering to see the strong analogies between traditional and Web software,” (pp. 5, Forsythe et al., 1998).

If this is true we can apply studies that have found differential interface preferences by different national cultures to web interfaces.

Interfaces are critical to the success of a web page or site (Janal, 1995). Bad interfaces will detract from the message, while a good interface will highlight the information being conveyed - if the consumer is confused or annoyed by the interface the export marketing will fail. Janal (1995) considers web page design in two elements: content and interface. The content of a web site relates to the products and information presented in the export marketing. The interface design involves *how* the information is visually presented, and how the user interacts with it - and relates to how the web page design can be customised for certain cultures. Murrell (1998) states that, “Ultimately if a user does not find the system intuitively easy to use it will be discarded” (pp. 1). This is especially true for web pages, where it can be discarded easily by the click of a button. Therefore, it is essential that the user, who is the intended recipient of the Internet marketing, likes the web page and finds it easy to use.

Russo and Boor (1993) state “a range of cross-cultural elements that need to be considered by the interface designer: text, number, date and time formats, Images, Symbols, Colours, Flow and Functionality”. Evers and Day (1997) have addressed the role of culture in user interface acceptance. Findings were that Asians prefer soft colours, fixed menus and explicit test-based interfaces; while the mouse is the best input device, and sound is very important. Even within Asia there are differences in interface preferences: Indonesians like soft colours, black and white displays, pop-up menus and new input technologies more than Chinese people. This demonstrates how cultural differences can alter the user perceptions of the interface - of

crucial importance when the interface may be the only representation of the firm that is available to the foreign customers.

According to Murrell (1998), cultural factors may greatly influence the users' perceptions of the useability of the system. Graphic literacy is one such factor, as certain graphics and images may offend users on cultural or religious grounds eg popping a champagne bottle will offend Muslim users. Of course it is of crucial importance not to offend any potential or existing customers with the firms web page design. Graphic literacy also may affect navigation. What may be assumed as universal symbols may not be known to everyone. An emergency exit sign, for example, was interpreted by a Zulu as “don't run that way or you will get your head, hands and feet chopped off” (Andrews, 1994). It is important not to make assumptions in Internet marketing, as they may have undesirable consequences for the firm's export trade.

On screen metaphors are also affected by culture. Screen metaphors such as the “trash can” are often used, which Thai users would not understand because in Thailand, a “trash can” is a wicker basket (Sukaviriya and Moran, 1999). It is important to note that the users interpretation of metaphors is based largely on their past and current knowledge (Murrell, 1998).

Despite the international nature of the Internet, many businesses limit themselves to only the English speaking WWW. Converting your web page to different languages can lead to significant sales in foreign markets. Graph 1 demonstrates the growth rates of different languages on the Internet, showing that other languages are becoming more prominent. Language can also impact on how a user perceives the layout of the screen. Indo-European languages usually read from top to bottom, and left to right. This means that users who speak this type of language will naturally look to the top left-hand corner of a screen as they do a page in a book. In marketing, it is common practise to place advertisements in such places where more attention is paid, such as at the top or on the left-hand side. When users of the web site speak other languages, such as Japanese, and do not read top-to-bottom or left-to-right (Takasugi, S., 1999), advertisements then need to be placed on different parts of the screen. The same principle applies for the placing of informational text or graphics.

Vassos (1996) also identifies a number of additional factors that should be considered, which are particularly relevant to firms taking the adaptation orientation:

- Pricing and payment also needs to be considered - local currencies, but also shipping, duties, tariffs and others. Different cultures may prefer different payment systems. For example, the use of E-cash (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1999) has not yet been widely adopted in Australia.
- Content can be customised for certain countries, including regional information such as events, special prices or promotions, different branding strategies or contact information.

Bishop (1998) also mentions that if a web site is aiming to reach customers in another country, then the web site should be registered on international search engines. If the web site is only registered on local search engines, it will not receive any attention internationally.

While some of the cases presented above may seem extreme, mistakes in any of these areas could hamper the export marketing efforts of a firm, and even have the potential to cause a company a public relations crisis. In an adaptation orientation, a firm would consider the

above factors, and could have different web sites for different countries, while a firm with a standardised approach would ignore the cultural differences.

4. Research Design

This research was part of a larger project, which also investigated: the perception of export barriers, the contribution of the Internet to export activities, reasons why exporting firms did not have a web site, and web site management. To explore how much cultural interaction is being considered by Australian SMEs when designing and implementing their E-Marketing strategy, we carried out a preliminary study using a combination of survey and case study methods. The rationale of such approach was firstly to replicate Bennett's (1998) study and secondly to examine the differences in marketing issues between European and Australian export SMEs. Particularly we focused on the perceived effectiveness of their websites as a marketing tool and how this effectiveness was monitored. How focused firms are in targeting specific markets was also studied, with the aim of identifying whether target marketing was performed, how much cultural issues were taken into consideration, and in what way this influenced practice. The survey gathered demographic data, profiled the export approaches used, and allowed for comparison with the UK data, whilst the case studies were used to explore whether Australian SMEs which target overseas markets that have a significantly difference cultural context make an attempt to overcome that difference.

A total of 300 questionnaires were mailed to exporting firms. 150 questionnaires were sent to exporting firms already known to have web sites. These firms were chosen systematically from the Austrade web site (<http://www.austrade.gov.au>). Another 150 questionnaires were sent to exporting firms of which there was no knowledge of them having web sites or not, chosen systematically from the 1998 'Australian Exports' reference journal (Isaacson, 1998).

5. Results

The response rate was 25.6% (77), with 18 of these operating multiple web sites for different markets or products. Extensive qualitative analysis has already been carried out on the survey data (Hornby, Goulding, Poon, 1999), while here the focus is on case examples of different market approaches. As can be seen in Graph 2, the manufacturing sector makes up a large portion of respondents, being 46.8%. While such a large representation may seem abnormal, previous OECD research (1995) also found a large representation of the manufacturing sector in exporting.

6. Experiences Related to the Management of Web Sites

Comparisons were made with a similar survey carried out in the UK (Bennett, 1997) in relation to the experiences of running web sites.

Based on Table 1, an overwhelming number of the surveyed Australian exporters were positive about their experiences of operating a web site. 88% of them are either very pleased or pleased with their experience. This is in accordance with the result shown in Table 2, where 91.3% of the respondents are planning to expand their web site activities. Compared to the dichotomised results in the UK sample, it suggested that the Australian experience is far more positive. There could be a number of reasons that lead to this. Firstly, Australian small businesses are rapidly adopting the Internet, and this study was done almost two years after the UK study and the user experience might have matured over the time. Either way, a more

positive picture among the Australian firms suggested that we might have to re-visit the UK sample to draw a direct comparison.

In addition to the current experiences and future plan of their web sites, we also dissected their experiences in terms of how they reached such conclusions. Essentially we operationalised their monitoring approach, because different ways of looking at the same experience might result in either satisfaction or disappointment. Table 3 shows that the UK sample monitored effectiveness of web sites by the number of visits and the number of orders attributed to the web. Although these are both objective measures, they may provide a false sense of success or failure. For example, a well-visited web site doesn't necessarily mean success if one has no idea why the visitors are coming and what will keep them coming back in the future. In addition, few visitors would make a purchase on their first visit. Consequently, ignorance of the real picture (eg. low visiting rate and low number of actual sales online) translates into disappointment as reflected in both Table 1 and 2.

Among the Australian cohort, the emphasis on number of visits and number of orders attributed to the web site was less than the UK cohort. Instead the Australian cohort tended to carry out in-depth analysis of the content of the communications, monitor the e-mail inquiries and keeping record of the sales leads – order conversion rate. As such the Australian cohort seemed to focus on close examination of how to improve and fine-tune their E-Commerce operations, rather than just take the outcomes as success or failure. The emphasis on number of site visits and orders directly from the web as measurements of web site effectiveness was considered by a significantly lower percentage of Australian respondents. Again, this may be attributed to the greater maturity of the Australian cohort about what contributed to the effectiveness of the web due to the extra two years of experience.

7. Target Markets

Looking now at table 4, there are a high number of firms targeting the "Entire Globe". This is supported by 82.4% of respondents registering their web sites with international search engines. However, it was also found that only 11.8% of respondents translated their web sites into different languages. This indicates that exporting firms have generally overlooked this issue, and should be of great concern.

Table 5 gives the indication that while 68.7% actually target the entire globe with their web sites, only 34.8% are actually receiving sales from the entire globe. This gives cause for concern as it shows almost half of the participants did not effectively reach their intended markets with their web site marketing efforts.

8. Case Examples

Only 23.3% (18) of respondents operated multiple web sites for various markets or products, 9 of these for different products, and 9 for different markets. All were intending to expand their web site activity in the future. Such a low number of responses suggest that whether or not a market extension approach was being used, exporters were not implementing planned "standardisation" or "adaptation" marketing approaches. The following cases were selected on the basis of giving a description on the range of approaches that were represented.

8.1 Case A: A Typical “Standardisation Approach”

This exporter was a relatively young organisation, and was new to exporting, having only existed and exported for 1 to 3 years. Size of the organisation was 11 to 24 employees, but exported 51-75% of their output. Although there were quite a lot of IT literate staff in the organisation, an outsider was still used to develop the organisations web site.

Web site Intentions

The web site was originally planned to target the “Entire Globe”, most probably to support marketing to existing export destinations of the Pacific region, South Asia and North America, and also to expand the customer base. To do so, the organisation had multiple web sites developed for different products, but kept the product offering and marketing approach fully standardised.

Export Destinations and Efforts Made

As the web sites were “fully standardised”, no changes were made to product offering, web site design, web site content, the marketing approach, and the web sites were not translated to foreign languages. They were registered with international search engines. Of changes to interface features, only screen colours and navigation were considered important factors when marketing to different countries with different cultures. Due to the lack of changes in the web site to accommodate national and cultural factors, this case could be labelled a “standardisation” approach to web based marketing.

Outcomes

While the web sites were supposed to market products to the entire globe, the organisation found that sales were only received from certain individual countries. It was not known where web hits or sales inquiries were received from, as this was not monitored.

Generally, the organisation was “disappointed” with their experience in operating a web site. It is not confirmed whether this stems from the web site not producing sales globally or not. A number of other factors may have been relevant here. For example, the only effectiveness measure the organisation employed was the monitoring of the number of web site hits, and the number of e-mail inquiries, and as mentioned previously, this does not always give a “true” representation of the web sites effectiveness. The organisation also would have had to contribute a significant amount of funds to employ an outsider to develop the web site, and so this judgement of satisfaction may have been from the perceived return on investment that the web site had given them.

The web sites not being translated into other languages would have certainly reduced the number of different countries the web site is accessible to. Whether the other interface related factors contributed to receiving sales from only “certain individual countries” it is not certain.

8.2 Case B: A Typical “Adaptation” Approach

This organisation was a larger and maturer organisation, having over 200 employees, and had been in existence for more than 10 years, and had also been exporting for more than 10 years.

The organisation had quite a lot of IT literate staff, so much so that they designed and implemented the web site “in-house”. 26-50% of output was exported.

Web site Intentions

The web site was intended for the “entire globe”. The organisation already exported to the entire globe anyway. Multiple web sites were created for different markets. For these markets, both the product offering and the marketing approach were described as fully customised.

Export Destinations and Efforts Made

The web sites were translated into different languages for the appropriate markets, but not registered with international search engines. The product offering, web site design, web site content, and general marketing approach were changed for the different markets.

While there was considerable changes at this “macro” level, there was a lesser degree of change at the “micro” or interface level. Screen colours and screen layout were considered important factors, yet others such as payment system, screen metaphors, graphic literacy and navigation were not.

Outcomes

As a result of this approach, web hits, inquiries and sales were received from across the globe. The organisation generally considered their experience with web site operation “Acceptable”. This generally came from an informed view, with the organisation monitoring the source of web site hits, sales increases and the number of orders attributable to the web.

One would assume that if a web site targeted the entire globe, and then produced orders from the entire globe, the organisation would be “very pleased”. The lower satisfaction level may related to the “number of orders” that were received compared to the effort applied to produce such comprehensive “culturally adapted” web sites; or simply not being happy with the amount of effort needed to operate what is supposed to be a “cheap and effective way” of marketing to a global audience.

8.3 Case C: Somewhere in Between

Case C was a small organisation that had been in existence for 1 to 3 years, and had been exporting for the same period of time. They exported over 76% of their outputs, and had quite a lot of IT literate staff.

Web site Intentions

The web site was intended to target certain individual countries, presumably in Europe and Asia where they already exported. Different web sites were produced for different markets, and an outsider was used to develop the web sites. The product offering and marketing approach used was somewhere “in between” standardised and adaptation.

Export Destinations and Efforts Made

The web site was translated into different languages, and was registered with international search engines. The organisation's product offering was not changed for different markets, but the design and content of the different web sites were. Screen colours, screen layout, graphic literacy and navigation were all considered important factors when marketing to different countries with different cultures.

Outcomes

While Asia and Europe, having quite different cultural contexts, were targeted, the organisation did not have knowledge of where web hits, sales or inquiries came from. Because of this, we can make no judgements on the success of this approach, only document that such an approach has been taken.

The organisation's rating of its experience in operating the web sites was "Acceptable", but this did not give any further insights into our understanding of their situation. This judgement was made from a reasonably informed basis, with the organisation monitoring e-mail inquiries, sales conversions from e-mail inquiries and the number of web site hits.

8.4 Case D: A Typical Market Extension Approach

Case D is a medium sized organisation, with 50-99 employees. It exports 1-25% of outputs, and has been exporting for 1-3 years, while the organisation has been in existence for more than 10 years.

Web site Intentions

The web site was intended to only target the domestic market, and different web sites were produced for different products. The product offering and marketing approach was described as "Fully standardised".

Export Destinations and Efforts Made

This organisation exported to only the Pacific region and South East Asia, while the web site was intended for only the domestic market, so little was adapted for cultural differences. No changes to web site design, product offering, web site content, marketing approach were made. The web site was not converted to different languages, though it was registered with international search engines.

Outcomes

Although only the domestic market was targeted, web site hits and inquiries were received from the entire globe. Sales were only successful from certain individual countries though. Not surprisingly, the organisation was "very satisfied" with their experience operating a web site, having received attention from all over the world, when they had only intended the domestic market to be the recipient of their web site marketing. This case gives promising results for the smaller exporters, who export mainly to rid themselves of excess output, and to fill unsolicited orders. This case supports the proposition of the web enabling smaller businesses, as it shows how a minimum of effort still resulted in an expansion of international sales.

9. Conclusions and Implications

When compared with their European counterparts, Australian firms were generally less satisfied with the experience of having a web presence, but nonetheless were more inclined to expand their web operations in the future. They monitored effectiveness more closely than the European companies, which indicates a more informed evaluation was possible. Australian firms use a more multi-faceted approach to monitoring: not just simple quantitative methods of monitoring hit rates, but in the majority of cases including analysis of the content of communications with customers, perhaps indicating an appreciation of the need to be aware of the specific needs of each customer. Based on this result, it is understandable why we also observe some evidence that SMEs in Australia are taking a culturally aware approach in their international marketing efforts, as demonstrated in case studies B and C.

The survey demonstrated that Australian exporters are not all using a strategic approach to carry out marketing on their web sites, whilst the case studies present evidence that some exporting firms on the Internet can and are using a number of different marketing approaches. What is not known, however, is the degree of success of the various marketing approaches. This raises many questions for future research: how to measure or quantify the success of a web site: by exporter standards, industry standards or Internet standards? Is there and should there be benchmarks? How do we tell if the web site is effective and efficient in reaching our goals? How do we then determine what caused the success or failure of the web site?

References

Andrews, S. J. "Some Cultural and Perceptual Implications of Courseware Development and the Use of Technology within a Multi-cultural, Multilingual society (a cautionary tale)," In: *Papers delivered at the international conference on Computer-Assisted Education and Training in Developing Countries*, Alexander, P.M. (Ed.), University of South Africa, Muckleneuk, Pretoria, pp. 7-13.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia Now - A Statistical Profile, *The information society and the information economy in Australia*, 1999
<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/c311215.NSF/Australia+Now+-+A+Statistical+Profile/724/03/997286B>, Last Accessed 5/5/99

Bishop, M. *How to build a successful international web site*, Coriolis Group Books, USA, 1998.

Bennett, R. Export Marketing and the Internet, *International Marketing Review*, (14:5), 1997, pp. 324-344.

Buzzel R.D., Quelch J.A., and Bartlett C.A. *Global Marketing Management: Cases and Readings*, 3rd Edition, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company Inc: USA, 1995.
<http://www.ecommercecentre.online.wa.gov.au>

Comber, T. "Building Usable Web Pages: An HCI Perspective," *Proceedings of Ausweb '95*, 1995. <http://www.scu.edu.au/sponsored/a...ausweb95/papers/hypertext/comber/>

Cragg, P. "Adoption of the Internet by Small Firms," *Proceedings of AusWeb96 - Second Australian World Wide Web Conference*, 1996.

<http://www.scu.edu.au/sponsored/ausweb/ausweb96/business/cragg/>

Del Gardo E., "Internationalisation and Translation: Some Guidelines for the Design on Human Computer Interfaces," In Jakob Nielsen (Ed.) *Designing User Interfaces for International Use*. Elsevier, New York, 1990, pp. 1-10.

Douglas S., and Wind Y. "The myth of Globalisation," *Columbia Journal of World Business*, Winter, pp. 19-29.

Digital Media, (1996). <http://www.digmedia.com>

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trading, *Australia and the OECD*, 1999a. http://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/negotiations/oecd_pub.html, Last Accessed 30th June 1999

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trading, *Opening Doors*, 1999b. http://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/opening_doors/, Last Accessed 1/11/99

Evers, V., and Day, D. "The Role of Culture in Interface Acceptance," Human Computer Interaction: *INTERACT '97*, Howard, S., Hammond, J., Lindguard, G., (Editors), Chapman & Hall, 1997, pp. 261-276.

Fink, D. *Information Management in Small Business: From Automation to Entrepreneurship*, Edith Cowan University: Australia, 1998.

Forsythe, C., Grose, E., and Ratner, J. *Human Factors and Web Development*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, USA, 1998.

Herbig P. A. *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Marketing*, The Halworth Press, Inc., New York, USA, 1998.

Hofstede, G. *Software of the Mind*, McGraw-Hill Europe: London, 1991.

Hofstede, G. *Culture's Consequences*, Sage: London, 1984

Hornby, G., Goulding, P., and Poon, S. "The Role of the Internet as a tool for reducing Export Barriers: the Australian Context," 2nd Western Australian Workshop on Information Systems Research, Murdoch University, 1999.

International Monetary Fund, (1999). <http://www.imf.org/External/np/exr/facts/asia.HTM>

Isaacson, P. *Australian Exports*, Prahan, Vic, Australia, 1998.

Janal D. S. *Online Marketing handbook*, ITP, USA, 1995.

Kandasaami, S. *Internationalisation of Small- and Medium-sized Born-Global Firms: A Conceptual Model*, Graduate School of Management, University of Western Australia, Australia, 1998.

Khoo D., McGill, T. J., and Dixon M. W. *Use of the Internet by Small to Medium Enterprises in Singapore*, Murdoch University, Perth, Australia, 1998.

Levitt, T. "Globalisation of Markets," *Harvard Business Review*, May/June 1983, pp. 92-102.

Lefebvre E., Lefebvre L. A., and Prefontaine L. "The Role of Technological Capabilities in the Internationalization of R&D Intensive SMEs," 32nd AICSS, 1992.

Murrell, K. A. *Human Computer Interface Design in a multi-cultural multi-lingual environment*, Department of Computer Science, University of Natal, Durban, 1998.
<http://www.und.ac.za/users/murrell/classrm/paper1.htm>

Permuter H.V. "The Tortuous Evolution of the Multinational Corporation," *Columbia Journal of World Business* (4), January, February 1969, pp. 9-18.

Poon, S., and Swatman, P. M. C. "The Internet for Small Business: an enabling infrastructure for competitiveness," *INET'95 Hypermedia Proceedings Server Archives*, 1995.
<http://www.isoc.org/HMP/PAPER/126/html/paper.html>

Poon, S., and Swatman, P. "Small business Internet Usage: A preliminary survey of Australian SMEs," *Proceedings of the 1997 Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems*, 1996.

Russo, P., and Boor, S. "How fluent is your interface? Designing for international users. Human Factors in Computer Systems," *Proceedings of INTERCHI '93*, 1993, Amsterdam, New York: ACM, pp. 24-29.

Sukaviriya P., and Moran L. "User Interface for Asia," In Nielsen J., (Ed.) *Designing User Interfaces for International Use*. Elsevier, New York, 1993, pp. 189-218.

Takasugi, S. *Teach Yourself Japanese*, 1999.
<http://www.sf.airnet.ne.jp/~ts/japanese/index.html>, Accessed 1st Nov. 1999

Toyne, B., and Walters, P. G. P. *Global Marketing Management: A Strategic Perspective*, 2nd Ed., Allyn & Bacon, Boston, USA, 1993.

Turner, M. "Fundamentals of Web Design Principles?" *Proceedings of Ausweb '99*, 1999.
http://ausweb.scu.edu.au/aw99_archive/aw99/papers/turner/paper.html

Vassos T. *Strategic Internet Marketing*, QUE: USA, 1996.

Verbyla, J. "The Seven Habits of Effective Web-managers," *Proceedings of Ausweb '99*, 1999. http://ausweb.scu.edu.au/aw99_archive/aw99/proceedings/verbyla/paper.html

Welch, L.S. "Information Behaviour and Internationalisation," *International Journal of Technology Management* (11:1/2), 1996, pp.179-192.

West Australian Electronic Commerce Centre, 1999.
<http://www.ecommercecentre.online.wa.gov.au>

Wind Y., Douglas S., and Perlmutter H.V. "Guidelines for Developing International Marketing Strategies," *Journal of Marketing*, (37), April 1973, pp. 14-23.

Tables

Table 1

UK	Australia	Satisfaction with the experience of operating their web site:
76%	41.8%	Very Pleased or Quite Pleased
1%	46.3%	Acceptable
23%	12%	Not Very Pleased or Disappointed

Table 2

UK	Australia	Do you plan to expand your firms web site activities in the future?
28%	91.3%	Yes
20%	8.7%	No
52%	0%	Don't Know

Table 3

How effectiveness of web sites was monitored:	Australia	UK
Reviewed the contents of e-mail communications with customers	69.2%	15%
Kept records of conversion of sales leads to orders (attributable to the web)	47.8%	21%
Did not monitor web site	15.9%	*
Number of E-mail inquiries	56.7%	*
Number of site visits	53.6%	90%
Number of orders attributable to the web	30.4%	86%
Source of site visits	26.1%	*
Increase in sales	15.9%	*

* not examined

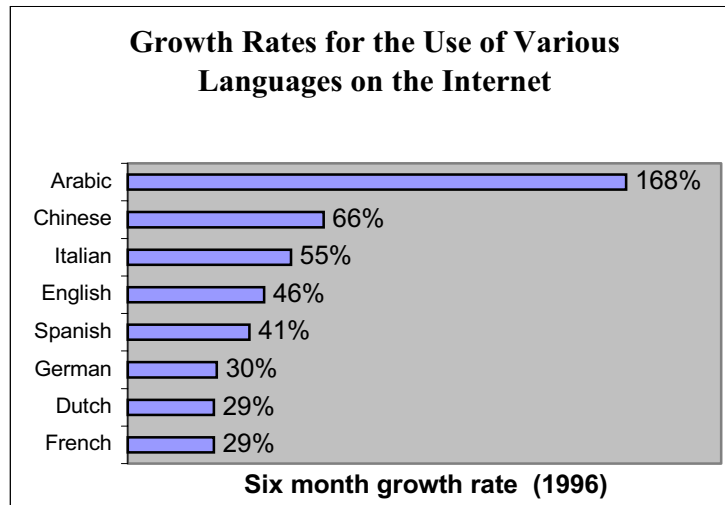
Table 4

Which firms targeted with their web sites:	
Entire Globe	68.7%
Certain Individual Countries	9%
Domestic Market Only	14.9%
Don't think about it	7.5%

Table 5

Success of those targeting "Entire Globe"	
Received web site hits from entire globe	60.9%
Not know where web site hit received from	32.6%
Received inquiries from entire globe	71.7%
Receive sales from entire globe	34.8%
Receive sales from only certain individual countries	32.6%

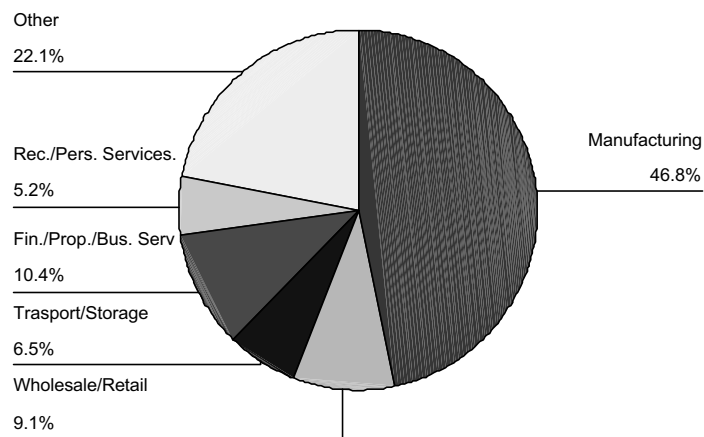
Graphs



Source: Digital Media, <http://www.digmedia.com>

Graph 1. Growth Rate of various languages being used on the Internet

Industry Sector Representation



* Sectors from Yellow Pages SBI (TM)

Graph 2. Industry Sector Representation in Responses