

Internet Opens New Markets for Brazil Overseas

Contributed by Geovana Pagel
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The Internet has become an important tool for Brazilian exporters. Small, medium and large companies in the country are reaching the foreign market with the help of the worldwide computer network. Apart from serving as a window for products, the web works as a channel for research about foreign markets.

At company Brazilian Bikinis, an international distributor of three brands of bikinis, the Internet is the main export channel.

"100% of sales are through the Internet," explains the company owner, Thales Panagides, who receives orders from the United States, Europe, and Australia.

The company, from Fortaleza, capital of the northeastern Brazilian state of Ceará, was established in March this year and has closed thousands of sales on the Internet since then.

Specialists guarantee that with a well-made site, one that works, is fast and has options for navigation in various languages, it is possible to export to the Europeans, Americans, Asians, Africans and Arabs.

In the opinion of the foreign trade consultant of the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae), Jaime Kochi, the Internet is the easiest means for a company, specially a small one, to export. But he recommends that a detailed study of the market to be reached.

"It is necessary to know the foreign customer well and to adapt your site to your customer's profile. It is also important for the site to be translated into the language used in the country," he pointed out.

According to Kochi, it is also very important to offer safety at the moment of purchase, as well as answering to customer questions, doubts and orders.

The owner of Brazilian Bikinis says that, due to the contact being done on the Web, it is fundamental to keep all the information detailed and with many photographs of the products for potential customers to see.

"And it is also important to send samples, if necessary," he explained.

Panagides guarantees that it is possible to significantly reduce export costs through the use of the Net. "The cost of communicating worldwide has dropped significantly after the Internet," he pointed out. It is possible to economize, for example, on trips and on telephone calls.

So as to reduce the cost of international calls, the businessman who owns Brazilian Bikinis uses the voice service on the Internet. "Talking to a customer in Australia for 30 minutes on the new system, I only spend US\$ 0.73. If I made an international telephone call, it would cost around US\$ 11."

Apart from representing three brands on the foreign market, Panagides also does consultancy to businessmen interested in learning a little more about the use of the Internet as a sales tool.

Low Cost

Businessman Eduardo Marzano, who produces semiconductors for the auto industry, discovered that reformulating his site was a way of entering new markets. With approximately US\$ 1,500 the businessman updated the company portal, Aegis Semicondutores, and sales rose 40% in three months.

"Our old site was structured badly and was incomplete. In the reformulated version, it became much more attractive and dynamic, and the products started being presented in a more direct manner, with many pictures," explains Marzano.

Thanks to the new site the number of hits rose by around 60% and good business arose with companies in Belgium, Italy, Germany, Australia, and the United States.

The businessman also listed his site on free search engines. Each month, the company receives on average 3,500 hits. At least half of these hits generate sales.

"The site is our main visiting card. And it has shown that it is an efficient form for foreign companies to see my company,"

he commemorates. Aegis is based in the city of São Paulo, in southeastern Brazil.

The free search engines used by Marzano may be a good option for company advertising.

Exporter Portal

The Exporter Portal, a site created by the Development, Industry and Foreign Trade Ministry three years ago, also simplifies the life of Brazilian exporters.

The objective of the portal is to offer businessmen, in a simple and direct manner, basic information regarding exports. The future exporter learns about the main terms, mechanism, legislation, events and activities that may help him reach the new markets.

In November the site registered 39,800 hits. This number represents a 17.22% increase over the same month last year.

The Exporter Portal has two environments. The first has information about procedures, institutions, and links related to the export process. The second brings program "Learning to Export", destined to explaining, in a simple way, the step-by-step process for exporters to take their products to the foreign market.

Also through the site, the 18,000 exporters in the country may register themselves as exporters, in the Integrated System for Foreign Trade (Siscomex), belonging to the Revenue Service.

Useful sites:

www.braziltradenet.gov.br

www.bancocentral.gov.br

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