

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Use of the Internet
for Efficient International Trade

Guide for SME Managers

Chapter 3

**INTERNET FOR
INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat



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Chapter 3

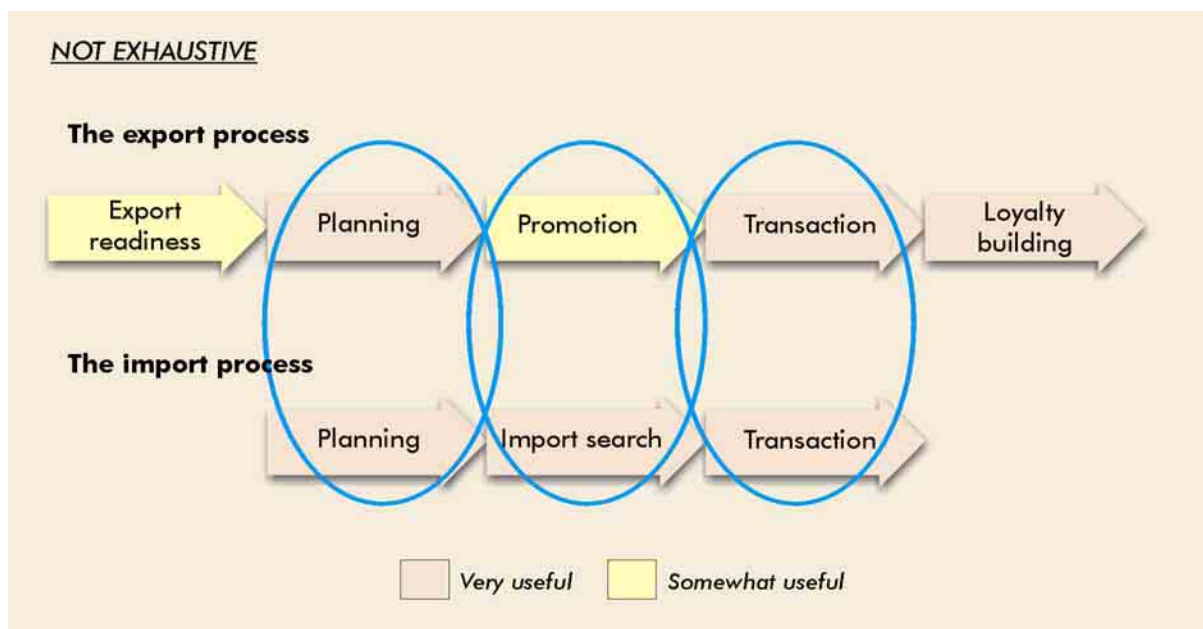
INTERNET FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE

1. Objectives and organization of this chapter

The goal of this chapter is to show how the Internet can be useful for each key function of the import/export processes. This chapter intends to be very practical. Consequently, an array of websites and Internet-based tools will be presented.

As illustrated below, the export process can be broken down into five steps. For some steps, the Internet is very useful, while for others it is only somewhat useful. The import process can be broken down into three steps. For each of them, the Internet is very useful.

Figure 3. Breakdown of the export and import process



In this chapter, we will start by covering *export readiness*, the initial step of the export process. As graphically suggested by the three red ellipses, we will then cover:

- (a) *Planning* of the export together with *planning* of the import processes

(b) *Promotion* of the export process together with *import search* of the import process

(c) *Transactions* of the export together with *transactions* of the import processes

Finally, we will cover *loyalty building*, a step related exclusively to the export process.

2. Introduction

It is important to emphasize that the Internet cannot solve directly all export-related problems faced by many developing countries. Examples of typical export-preventing issues which cannot be directly solved by the Internet, include:

- Insufficient quality
- Insufficient production capacity
- Too long/unreliable delivery deadlines
- Too high costs (e.g. due to low productivity, poor transport capabilities, complicated export procedures)

However, information found on the Internet can help take appropriate remedial measures. For instance, information about cocoa-cultivating techniques found on a website such as the one of *The World Cocoa Foundation* (www.ChocolateAndCocoa.org) can help farmers improve the quality of their products and win new overseas clients.

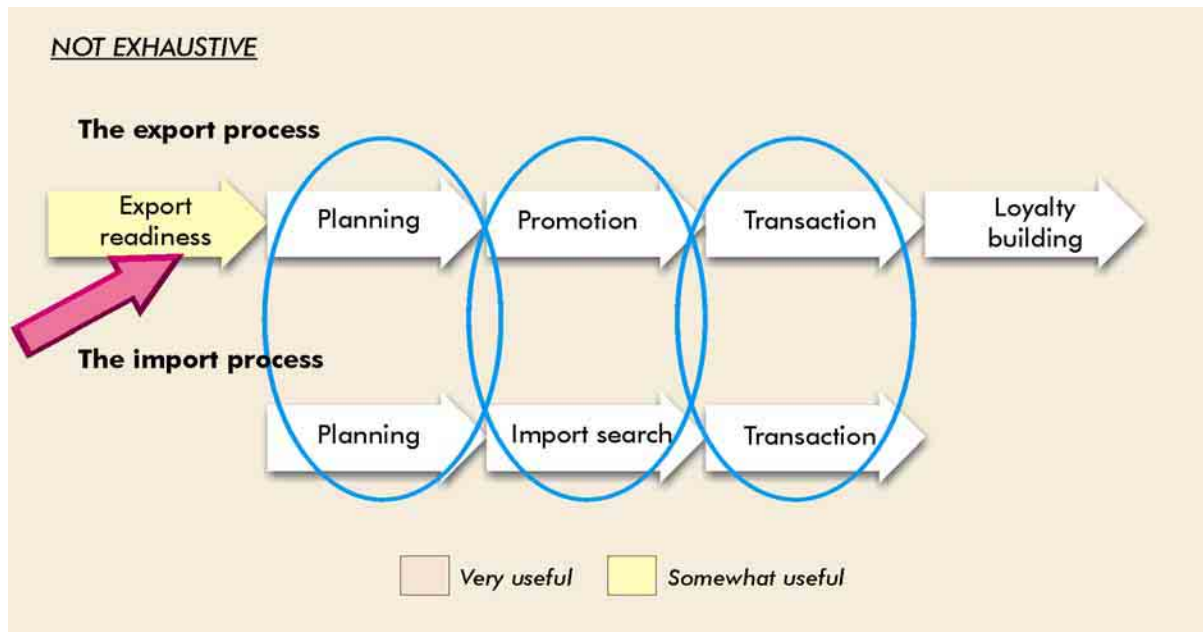
As already emphasized, **the Internet is constantly evolving**. New good websites appear every day. Existing websites disappear or change focus. Free websites become pay sites and vice versa. Web page addresses change. Consequently, **readers should not be surprised if some portions of this chapter are no longer up to date**. Furthermore, **the Internet is enormous. Consequently, the websites recommended in this chapter cannot be exhaustive**. For this reason, it is important to be able to use search tools effectively (refer to this topic presented at the end of chapter 1).

Finally, **it is important to understand how international trade-related websites (try to) make money (or at least recover some of their costs) in order to be aware of their potential biases**. Basically, most of the websites mentioned in this chapter fall into one or more of the categories below:

- They are (partly) subsidized by profitable activities or by public money.
- They sell their content (by subscription, itemized billing, overcharged connections).
- They sell (covertly or openly) information about their (registered) users (gathered explicitly or implicitly).
- They sell (online or offline) their own or other organizations' products.
- They sell (highly targeted) advertising banners.
- Their content is (openly or covertly) sponsored.
- They even do not try to bill their services in any way.
- They are simply not making money but losing money.

3. Export readiness

Figure 3a. Breakdown of the export and import process: Export readiness



The goal of this step is to evaluate one's company/product export chances and to take measures to improve those chances. To fulfil this purpose, let's consider two websites. One is Malaysian and the other is Canadian. Even though they have been designed for Malay and Canadian SMEs, they are also very useful for SMEs of developing countries.

Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE, www.Matrade.gov.my)

On this website, the following pages are of particular interest:

(a) Exporter checklist (www.Matrade.gov.my/exporter/checklist.htm)

This part gives an overview of 12 steps needed to become an exporter. Each step has a link to more detailed information.

(b) How to be an exporter in 21 steps? (www.Matrade.gov.my/exporter/how-to.htm; see below). This part is comparable to the *exporter checklist* but takes a somewhat different angle. The first six steps are reproduced below to give readers an idea of content.

Step 1: Importing country. What are the procedures in the importing country?

Step 2: Export control by the Government. Is there a restriction on exports? What kinds of products are controlled? What is the Washington Treaty?

Step 3: Marketing research. What kinds of Information should be collected? How can market information be collected?

Step 4: How to find importers?
What are the sources of information?

Step 5: Credit inquiry. How can the importer's financial standing be known? Can the services of a mercantile agency be utilized? Is there any written credit information?

Step 6: Agreement between buyer and seller. What are the key points in an agreement? What are the general terms and conditions?

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://www.matrade.gov.my/exporter/how-to.htm>. The page header for MATRADE (MALAYSIA EXTERNAL TRADE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION) includes the tagline 'YOUR LINK TO WORLD MARKETS' and the values 'QUALITY, COMMITMENT, RELIABILITY'. A navigation menu on the left lists categories like 'MAIN LINKS', 'ABOUT MATRADE', 'OVERSEAS OFFICES', 'ECONOMY, TRADE + INDUSTRY', 'ASSISTING MALAYSIAN EXPORTERS', 'FACILITATING FOREIGN BUYERS', 'SEARCH MALAYSIAN EXPORTERS', 'OVERSEAS MARKET INFORMATION', and 'TRADE MISSIONS / FAIRS'. The main content area is titled 'Assisting Malaysian Exporters' and 'How to Be an Exporter'. It features a 'MADE IN MALAYSIA FOR THE WORLD' logo and a 'Printer Friendly Version' button. Four numbered sections are visible: 1. 'Importing Country: What are the procedures in the importing country?'; 2. 'Export Control by the Government: Is there a restriction on exports? What kind of products are controlled? What is the Washington Treaty?'; 3. 'Marketing Research: What Kind of Information Should Be Collected? How can market information be collected?'; 4. 'How to find Importers? How can MATRADE assist in finding buyers? What are the other sources of information?'.

Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) Trade Tool Kit (www.acoa.ca/e/business/trade/toolkit/index.shtml)

This webpage has links to two booklets:

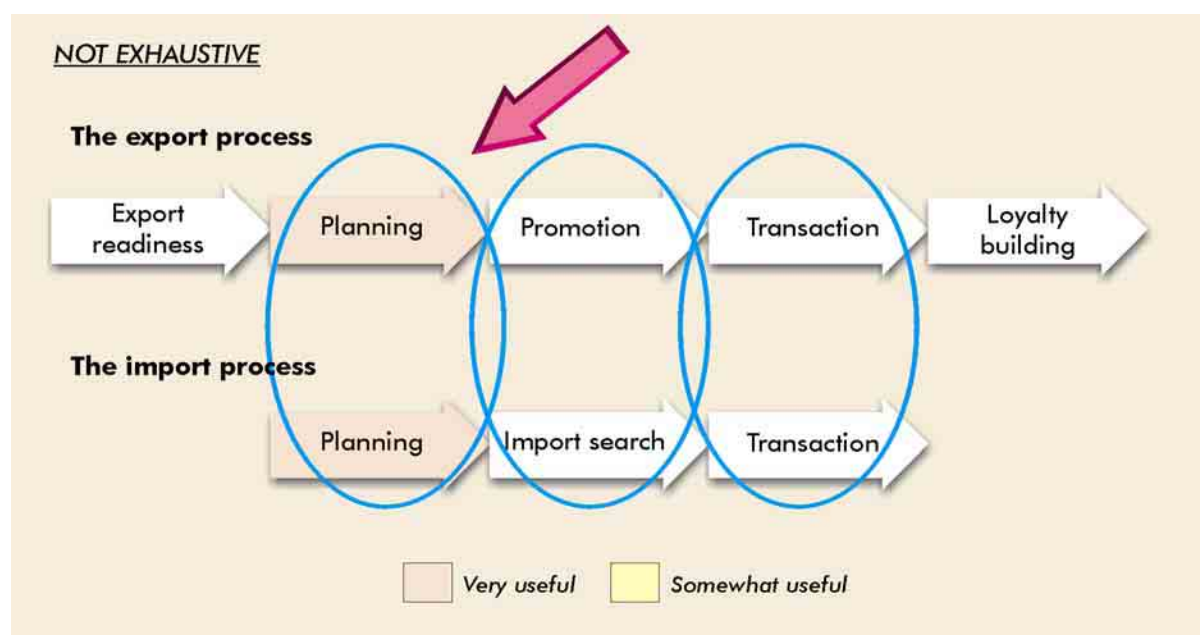
- (a) **ToolKit Summary Booklet:** this 12-page booklet is very useful for assessing export readiness.
- (b) **Toolkit Reference Booklet on Export Financing and Risk Management Services:** this booklet is an overview of the appropriate methods of payment as well as a comprehensive list of financial instruments and services available to minimize the risk of non-payment.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://www.acoa.ca/e/business/trade/toolkit/index.shtml>. The page header features the logos for 'Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency', 'Agence de promotion économique du Canada atlantique', and 'Canada'. A navigation menu includes links for 'Français', 'Contact Us', 'Help', 'Search', and 'Canada Site', as well as 'About Us', 'Sources of Financing', 'Business Info', 'Publications', 'Site Map', 'Home', 'Forms', 'News Releases', and 'Links'. The main heading is 'TRADE TOOL KIT'. Below this, there are sections for 'Entrepreneurship', 'Trade', 'Investment', 'Innovation', 'Business Tools', 'Small business profiles', and 'Working with France'. The 'Trade' section is highlighted. A world map is shown to the right. Two booklets are featured: 1. 'ToolKit Summary Booklet' which includes diagnostics and contact information for assessing export readiness. 2. 'Toolkit Reference Booklet on Export Financing and Risk Management Services' which provides an overview of financing programs and payment methods. Both booklets are available as PDF files with their respective sizes and page counts.

As a conclusion, these two websites provide some useful and free consulting for SMEs in developing countries. However, we should not expect miracles from these websites since to know what is needed in order to export is only the first step to becoming a successful exporter.

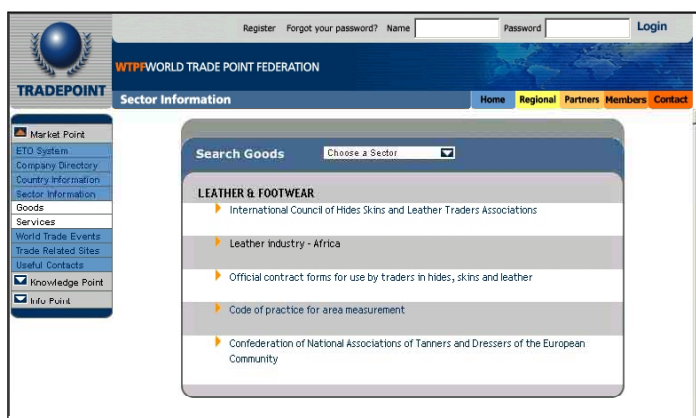
4. Export and import planning

Figure 3b. Breakdown of the export and import process: Export and import planning



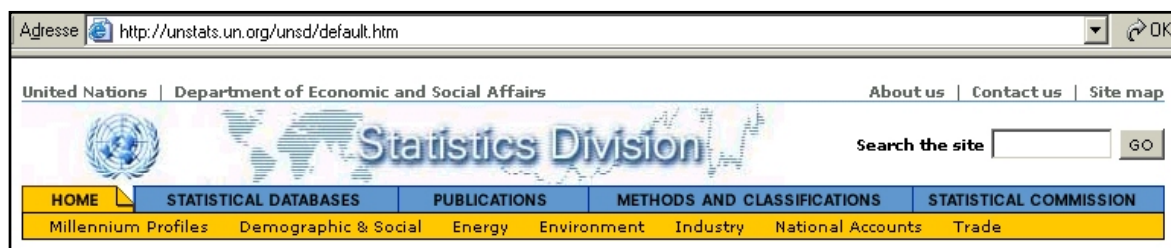
The goal of these steps is to obtain all the information needed to make a sound export plan.

One of the first things that exporters need to do is to **obtain detailed information about foreign markets**. For this purpose, useful information can be found on the website of the *World Trade Point Federation* (www.wtpfed.org; click on *Market Point*, then on *Sector Information* and on *Goods* or on *Services*; this site is illustrated beside)

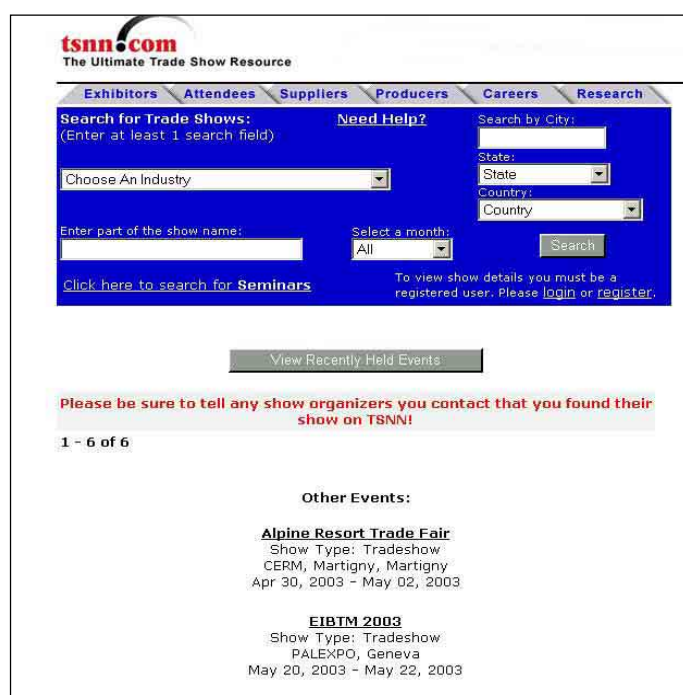


This site has gathered many links leading to specialized sites such as www.jetro.go.jp (a website published by the *Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)* about the Japanese market) and www.todaymarket.com (a website published by *Today's Market Prices* about herb, fruit and vegetable wholesale market prices).

Trade statistics allow exporters and importers to assess the size of potential markets as well as to know against which countries they are likely to compete. Detailed information about trade statistics can be obtained from <http://unstats.un.org> (see below), a sub-website published by the *United States Statistics Division*. This site compiles many sources and publishes global updates.



Even in the era of e-commerce, face-to-face contacts remain essential, for instance to generate trustworthy business relationships. To find the right **trade shows** anywhere in the world, the site of *TSNN* (www.tsn.com; see below) can be used. This site is free but requires registration. An alert system can inform surfers about specific new entries.



Trade policies also have a key impact on trade flows. Information about these policies can be found at http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tratop_e.htm.

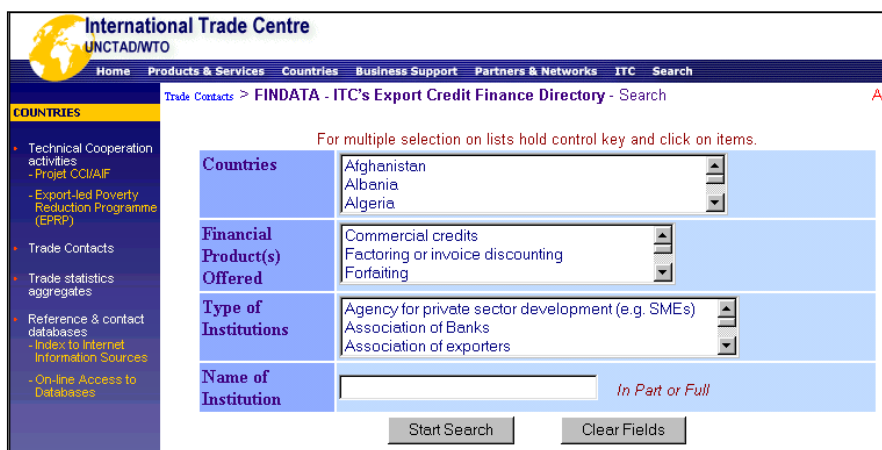
Imports are usually not duty-free. **Trade tariffs** are actually one of the key elements of a trade policy and can signify key advantages or disadvantages for exporters or importers. To know about trade tariffs, the website www.WorldTariff.com (published by *WorldTariff*, a *FedEx Trade Network Company*) is very useful even though its information is rather expensive unless special deals at the national level have been concluded.

International trade occurs within the framework of often complex legislations. In this context, **the legal aspects of international trade** can be found in *Juris International* (www.Jurisint.org; see picture). This site is a multilingual collection (English, Spanish and French) of legal information on international trade. It is the result of a partnership between the *International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO*⁴⁴ (*ITC*), *LexUM* of the *Center for Research in Public Law at the University of Montreal*, Canada, and *Juripole* from the *University of Nancy*, France.

⁴⁴ WTO stands for World Trade Organization (see www.wto.org).



SMEs are likely to need **export financing**. Even though it is never easy for SMEs in developing countries to obtain such financing, it is worth trying. Within the site of the *International Trade Centre (ITC; see more details later)*, the webpage www.intracen.org/tradinst/ (click on FINDATA – Export Credit Finance Directory) provides a good list of financial institutions in developing and transition countries that support international trade.



Furthermore, detailed information about trade and export finance can be found on the site of *UBS*, a major Swiss-based universal bank (www.ubs.com; click on *Services for Companies, Small Businesses, Trade & Export Finance*; the resulting page is illustrated below).



International trade transactions are rarely conducted in local currencies of developing countries. Therefore, **foreign exchange rates** are important. In this regard, the website of OANDA Corporation⁴⁵ (www.oanda.com or, more specifically, www.oanda.com/convert/classic; see below) is an excellent and sophisticated source for past and current exchange rates.

Adresse <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>

OANDA .COM Want to See what happens to money over time

THE CURRENCY SITE™ FXInvestors Travelers Businesses Products Partners

Quick Convert FXConverter - 164 Currency Converter Results

US . USD Sunday, May 4, 2003

Euro . EUR

1 US Dollar = **3,986.30** Cambodian Riel
1 Cambodian Riel (KHR) = 0.0002509 US Dollar (USD)

Median price = 3,684.30 / 3,986.30 (bid/ask)
Minimum price = 3,684.30 / 3,986.30
Maximum price = 3,684.30 / 3,986.30

Rate for [previous](#) day

Get exchange rates with amount:

Quick Links

Currency Tools

- FXConverter
- FXBrowser
- FXHistory

[Print Travelers' Currency CheatSheet for US Dollar and Cambodian Riel.](#)

[Print Friendly Conversion Results](#)

[Understanding](#) the results

[Add a currency converter](#) to your Web site today.

Finally, it is always useful to obtain **general information about target import countries**. For this purpose, the site www.CountryReports.org (see below) operated by *Emulate Me*⁴⁶ is excellent. Relevant information provided by this site includes history, geography, government, people, economy, transportation, communications and transnational issues. As of 2003, information provided by this site was to a large extent free, while full access to it was priced at US\$ 10 per year. The sources of information of this website are official US sources.

CountryReports.org™ 2003 Edition

Select A Country

World Countries	Current Weather
Country Flags	National Anthems
Online Discussion	Reference Maps
History of Nations	Online Store

Search For:

Cost Survey

Other web sites charge up to \$20/year. What would you be willing to pay for our site?

Less than \$1.00

\$2.00 to \$5.00

Country information from around the world. A resource for business, tourists, students and teachers. The Internet's best source of country data!

No subscription needed. Unlike other sites, there is no fee to view our content. So enjoy!

~ Monday the 5th of May, 2003 ~

⁴⁵ OANDA Corporation provides several currency exchange services.

⁴⁶ Emulate Me is a web content company based in the United States.

Country information can also be obtained from www.wtpfed.org (click on *Market point* and then on *Country Information*; see below); www.wtpfed.org is a website published by the *World Trade Point Federation* (see more details later).

The screenshot displays the WTPF World Trade Point Federation website. The main content area is titled "Country Information" and shows details for Mexico. The "Basic Profile" section includes the following data:

Country	Mexico	Currency	Mexican peso (MXN)
Official Name	United Mexican States	GDP	USD 574.4 billion (2000), USD 698.7 billion (2001 est.)
Area	1972550 sq km	GDP per Capita	USD 5604 (2000), USD 5950 (2001 est.)
Population	97.4 million	GDP Growth Rate	6.9% (2000), 3.5% (2001 est.)
Capital	Mexico	Inflation Rate	9.5% (2000), 6.9% (2001 est.)
Official Language	Spanish	Unemployment Rate	2.3% (2000), 2.5% (2001 est.)
Head of State	President Vicente FOX Quesada (since 1 December 2000)	Balance of Trade	-USD 10326 million (2000)
Head of Government	President Vicente FOX Quesada (since 1 December 2000)	FDI inflow	USD 13286 million (2000)

The "Advanced Profile" section lists various resources with "Click here" links:

- Country Data Profile
- Key Country Indicators
- Trade Statistics By Country
- Trade Policy Reviews
- Generalized System of Preferences Handbooks
- Investment Fact Sheets
- Investment Policy Reviews
- Investment Guides
- Doing Business in
- Corporate Tax Guide
- Tax News International
- CBI Access Guide
- Country Credit Rating

Additional features include a search bar, a "Choose a Country" dropdown, a "Mexico" section with a flag and map, and a "Corporate Tax Guide" section with a summary of the guide.

The disadvantage of using websites such as www.CountryReports.org is that information from official sources tends to be filtered and polished. To have a better understanding of what really happened in a country, newspapers (provided that they are independent) can be more instrumental.

The websites of newspapers from all over the world can be found in onlinenewspapers.org (www.OnlineNewspapers.com; see below).

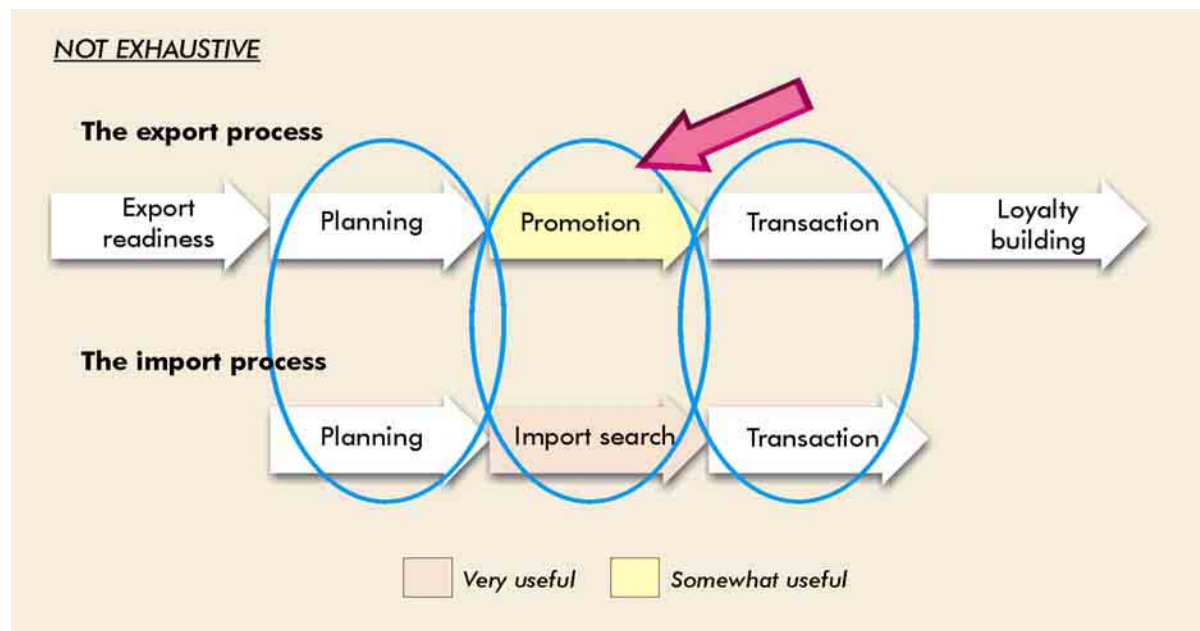


Another similar website is *WebdoPresse* (www.WebdoPresse.ch; in French).

As a conclusion, all these websites allow potential exporters and importers to get for free (or at very low cost) a lot of essential information that would have been otherwise very expensive and difficult to obtain.

5. Export promotion and search for import opportunities

Figure 3c. Breakdown of the export and import process: Export promotion and search for import opportunities



The goal of these steps is to help companies find clients and/or suppliers.

To promote one's products and to search for suppliers, the following Internet-related actions can bring a lot of value:

- (a) To have **one's own (sub)website**
- (b) To conduct **direct e-mail marketing campaigns**
- (c) To use **e-marketplaces**

(a) **To build one's own (sub)website** can be relatively easy and inexpensive, but to promote it is usually a challenge (see chapter 2). In a nutshell, it is generally easier to use a website as a supporting online "brochureware" rather than as a tool to generate on-the-spot online transactions.

(b) **Direct e-mail marketing campaigns** consist of **personalized mass e-mailing** to potential clients or leads. These e-mails can have links to one's own (sub)websites (or FTP sites). One of the key ingredients of a successful mass e-mail marketing campaign is to obtain relevant (i.e. targeted, *permission-based*) e-mail addresses. *Permission-based* means that e-mail recipients have (clearly) agreed to receive (usually promotional) e-mails about specific topics (and usually at pre-defined frequencies). Another expression for *permission-based e-mail address* is *opt-in e-mail address*. *Permission-based mass e-mails* are the opposite of *spam e-mails*, i.e. untargeted and unsolicited mass e-mails; spam e-mails can damage a corporate image because they tend to upset people who receive them.

Potential sources of suitable e-mail addresses include:

- E-mails obtained from one's own existing leads/clients. An interesting way to gather e-mail addresses is exemplified by *Cafés Trottet* (www.trottet.ch or www.trottet.com), a Swiss SME selling coffee and coffee machines. From the Internet, consumers can order free samples of coffee bags. In that fashion, *Cafés Trottet* can build a database of leads.



- Directories such as the World Directory of Importers' Associations (see below). This directory is accessible from the website of the *International Trade Centre* (www.intracen.org/tradinst/: click on *World Directory of Importers' Associations*).

International Trade Centre
UNCTAD/WTO

Home Products & Services Countries Business Support Partners & Networks ITC Search

Trade Contacts > World Directory of Importers' Associations - Search

For multiple selection on lists hold control key and click on items.

Countries	Afghanistan Argentina Australia
Products	Adhesives Agricultural machinery Agricultural products
Services	Assistance to foreign exporters for contacting member importers Circulation of trade offers to member importers Foreign trade regulations affecting imports
Name of Association	<input type="text"/> <i>In Part or Full</i>

Start Search Clear Fields

- E-Marketplaces are covered below. While the main purpose of many e-marketplaces is to generate online transactions, it is also possible to use these marketplaces to collect contact data (including e-mail addresses) about potential buyers or suppliers for specific products.

- Brokers of permission-based e-mail addresses such as:
 - *YesMail*⁴⁷ (www.YesMail.com)
 - *Topica Inc* (www.Topica.com)
 - *Yahoo! Inc* (www.Yahoo.com)
 - *Kompass International Neuenschwander SA* (www.Kompass.com)
 - *Microsoft Corporation* (www.bCentral.com)
 - *MarketingFile Ltd* (www.MarketingFile.com).

To know how to mass e-mail, please refer to section 8 of chapter 1.

(c) e-marketplaces (and related websites) are web-based applications which allow suppliers and buyers to meet and conduct transactions through the Internet; subsequently, physical goods are naturally shipped the normal way. These e-marketplaces play an important role for many exporting/importing SMEs. There are many variations of these e-marketplaces, sometimes called *virtual marketplaces* or *online exchanges*. The majority of them deal with *B2B (business-to-business)* relationships, as opposed to B2C (business-to-consumers) or C2C (consumers-to-consumers) relationships.

As at April 2001, there were some 2,000 marketplaces worldwide.⁴⁸ For most of these e-marketplaces, the biggest challenge is to get a *critical mass*⁴⁹ of buyers and sellers. For this reason, new buyers or sellers are usually welcome to join for free (registration is however normally required). According to management consultancy *McKinsey & Co.*, most marketplaces have experienced their first transactions between a few buyers and suppliers, but with at best 1 or 2 per cent of the buyers' expenditure, the value they have realized is hardly impressive.⁵⁰ Consequently, many marketplaces will not survive, or at least not thrive.

Why do most B2B exchanges have such a low volume? For at least four reasons:

- Long-term exclusive contracts prevent suppliers/buyers from looking for new buyers/suppliers
- There are close personal relationships between suppliers and buyers
- To use these exchanges would require significant IT investments
- It is difficult to convince buyers/suppliers to change their habits. Besides, employees (e.g. buyers) may be afraid of losing their jobs.

The most successful online marketplaces tend to be relatively *closed marketplaces* run by (groups of) large buyers such as *General Electric's Global eXchange Services* (see below) and *CPG Market* (see below). A *closed marketplace* means that suppliers (or buyers) must go through an (often severe) screening process before being granted the right to use the marketplace. For instance, *General Electric* buys and sells more through its private online

⁴⁷ *YesMail* was acquired by *infoUSA* in February 2003 and integrated with *ClickAction*, the former e-mail marketing division of *infoUSA*, in April 2003.

⁴⁸ Total Romtec. E-marketplaces: New challenges for enterprise policy, competition and standardisation. April 2001. See www.total-romtec.com/downloads/pdf/E-MarketPlaces.pdf.

⁴⁹ What is a "critical mass" and why is it needed? Critical mass refers here to the minimum volume necessary to be profitable. For many businesses, large volumes are required in order to reach critical mass because fixed costs are high.

⁵⁰ Berryman, Ken and Stefan Heck. Is the Third Tome the Charm for B2B? *The McKinsey Quarterly*, 2001 Number 2.

marketplaces (i.e. about \$20 billion in 2001) such as "Global eXchange Services" (www.gxs.com, see below) than is traded in all the independent B2B marketplaces together.⁵¹



CPG Market (www.CPGMarket.com; see below) is specialized in the consumer packaged goods (CPG) industry and has been created by 28 major companies, including Nestlé, Danone, Henkel and Coca Cola West. Any supplier can register (cost: 500 euro) to be considered as a potential supplier, but competition is keen and face-to-face contacts are highly recommended to help increase one's chance of becoming a regular supplier.



After having seen two major closed marketplaces, let's see now four relatively successful open marketplaces, which are readily accessible to SMEs in developing countries.

Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)'s Trade Tie-Up Promotion Program (www.Jetro.go.jp/ttpe/; see picture) is a leading *open marketplace*. The *Trade Tie-up Promotion Program (TTTP)* supports searches for international business partners via the Internet. Buyers and sellers are invited to post their business proposals on the *TTTP* website so as to search for proposals and get in touch with counterparts. One of the major strengths of

⁵¹ *The Economist*. E-strategy Brief: General Electric While Welch waited. 19 May 2001.

TTPP is that JETRO's foreign offices ensure a good quality of data by making contact with buyers and sellers in order to verify their seriousness.

The screenshot shows the JETRO TTPP website interface. The header includes the JETRO logo and navigation links. The main content area displays a list of 'NEW PROPOSALS' with details for each, including proposal numbers, product categories, and registration dates.

Proposal Number	Product Category	Country	Registration Date
1021347	Marketing and Market Research for ICT Businesses	United Kingdom	Apr 04, 2003
1021346	Woods Products	Argentina	Apr 04, 2003
1021345	Materials for Electrical Cable	Japan	Apr 04, 2003
1021344	Bali Handicraft	Indonesia	Apr 04, 2003
1021343	Herring fillet, Mackerel fillet	People's Republic of China	Apr 04, 2003

Korea Business Opportunity (KOBQ, www.kobo.net or www.kobo.org), is a site run by the *Korea Trade-Investment Agency (KOTRA)*, which helps importers meet with exporters. It is based on the experience of *Trade Point Chiangmai/Thailand* (www.TradePointThailand.com), a Thai organization supporting local SMEs in their exporting efforts, and approximately 30 per cent of offers placed in this site in 2002 led to successful transactions. As at December 2003, there were 89,674 offers to sell or buy or for business opportunities from companies based in the Republic of Korea. Similar figures for other countries (as at December 2003) are as follows: United States (9,279 offers), Japan (1,370 offers), Mexico (536 offers), Switzerland (499 offers), France (304 offers), Cambodia (33 offers), Nepal (15 offers), Nigeria (0 offers) and Bhutan (0 offers).

The screenshot shows the Kobo-net website interface. The header includes the Kobo-net logo and navigation links. The main content area displays a 'Catalog' of products, organized into various categories such as Computer & Telecommunications, Electrical & Electronics, Machinery & Equipment, Chemical & Plastics, Mineral, Environment, Stationery & Gift, Beauty & Household, and Wood & Furniture.

Category	Product Examples
Computer & Telecommunications	Telecommunication, Computer H/W, Network Equipment ...
Electrical & Electronics	Electronics & Electrical, Home Appliances, Measuring Instruments ...
Machinery & Equipment	Plastic & Rubber, Pumps & Valves, Tools ...
Chemical & Plastics	Rubber & Plastics, Raw Materials, Pigments & Dyes ...
Mineral	Metallic Products, Ceramics, Non-metallic Products ...
Environment	Equipment & Products, Solar & Other Energy Recycling, Miscellaneous ...
Stationery & Gift	Gifts, Stationery, Timepieces ...
Beauty & Household	Kitchenware, Cosmetics & Beauty care ...
Wood & Furniture	Furniture, Paper & Pulp, Wood ...

Alibaba.com Corporation (www.alibaba.com; see below) is a major Hong Kong (China)-based SME-focused global e-marketplace for importers and exporters. This top-quality website has many handy features and one million registered members from more than 200 countries (but more than half are from mainland China and many others are from developing countries). Membership is free for a trial period; otherwise, it costs US\$ 299 to become a regular member; the creditworthiness of regular members is verified by major credit services companies.



Lately, exporters and importers have been advised not to expect (too many) new transactions by the simple posting of some offers to buy or sell in *Alibaba.com*. In other words, *Alibaba.com* now considers itself a tool to generate *trade leads* rather than *online transactions*. Exporters and importers are therefore encouraged to be proactive and to mention the URL of their *Alibaba.com* webpage in their offline advertisements. These advices have triggered doubts about the adequacy of *Alibaba's* business model as well as *Alibaba's* actual impact on its members. As at December 2003, there were in *Alibaba.com* 38,450 companies based in China. Similar figures for other countries are as follows: United States (6,041 companies), Africa (590 companies), France (294 companies), Japan (271 companies), Mexico (141 companies), Switzerland (63 companies), Cambodia (9 companies) and Bhutan (4 companies).

There are **many other interesting generic e-marketplaces** such as:

- Republic of Korea-based: *EC Plaza Network, Inc.* (www.ecplaza.net); *Tpage Global Co., Ltd.* (www.tpage.com, partly US-based)
- China/Hong Kong (China)-based: *Hong Kong Trade Development Council* (www.tdctrade.com)
- Taiwan Province of China-based: *China External Trade Development Council (CETRA)* (www.cetra.org.tw)
- US-based: *Thomas Publishing Company* (www.thomasregister.com); *Associated Business Publications, International* (www.cnewsusa.com); *Tpage Global Co., Ltd.* (www.tpage.com)
- Europe-based: *Worldbid Corporation* (www.eceurope.com)
- Teleservices-oriented: *Elance, Inc.* (www.eLance.com)

In addition to the above generic e-marketplaces, there are also many **highly specialized e-marketplaces**. One example is *ResortandLodges.com* (www.ResortsandLodges.com). This site targets the owners and users of lodges and resorts.



The best way to find other generic or specialized marketplaces is to use search tools. In addition, the following webpages which provide lists of marketplaces are useful as well:

- www.gurutrade.com/wtm.htm (published by the *South African Department of Trade and Industry*)
- www.gurutrade.com/bd1.htm (published by the *South African Department of Trade and Industry*)
- www.internationaltrade.org/tradehub.html (published by the *Federation of International Trade Associations, FITA*)

Specific categories of e-marketplaces are **auction sites**. Online auctioneers started mostly as C2C (consumer-to-consumers) platforms, but their major players are now full-time freelance online auctioneers, SMEs and even large corporations. Many players from developing countries are very active in these auctions. Commissions and other fees are usually affordable.



eBay (www.eBay.com) is the leading auction site. It was founded in 1995 as a non-profit endeavour. As at the end of 2002, it had nearly 62 million registered users and annualized gross merchandise sales totalled almost US\$ 15 billion.⁵²

Trust among eBay's users is largely based on references from past transactions i.e. the so-called *Feedback Summary*. The screen capture below shows the *Feedback Summary* of

⁵² eBay.com Inc.'s 2002 Annual Report. See <http://investor.ebay.com/annual.cfm>.

ThaiGem.com (www.thaigem.com); this Thailand-based exporter of gems has been evaluated 103,102 times positively by its buyers; 1,210 evaluations have been neutral and 856 have been negative (as of mid-2003). Given that the rate of positive evaluations is above 98 per cent, new buyers are very likely to trust *ThaiGem.com* despite the fact that it is a SME without a well-known brand name and which sells products that can be easily counterfeited.

The screenshot shows the eBay feedback page for **www.thaigem.com**. At the top, there are navigation links for home, my eBay, site map, and sign in. Below that are buttons for Browse, Sell, Services, Search, Help, and Community, along with filters for categories, regions, themes, and stores. The main content area features a feedback summary for **thaigem.com (17688)**, a Power Seller. The summary includes:

- Feedback Summary:** 103130 positives, 18112 are from unique users. 1210 neutrals, 11 were converted from users no longer registered. 856 negatives, 467 are from unique users.
- See all feedback reviews** for thaigem.com.
- eBay ID card:** Member since: Tuesday, Aug 18, 1998 Location: Thailand. Summary of Most Recent Reviews:

	Past 7 days	Past month	Past 6 mo.
Positive	1653	11313	39843
Neutral	18	74	321
Negative	1	32	308
Total	1672	11419	40472
Bid Retractions	0	0	0

At the bottom, there are links to view the store, items for sale, ID history, and feedback about others.

eBay.com has also a *Trading Assistants* Program. *Trading Assistants* are eBay specialists who sell other people's products on eBay sites for a fee. Details can be found in <http://pages.ebay.com/tradingassistants.html> (see below), including how to become a *Trading Assistant* and who are the *Trading Assistants* working in a given area. To become a *Trading Assistant* could actually be an interesting business opportunity for qualified people in developing countries. As of December 2003, there were 17,472 *Trading Assistants* in the United States, 503 in France, 53 in Switzerland, 7 in Japan, 4 in India, 3 in Mexico, and 0 in Cambodia and in Bhutan.

The screenshot shows the **Trading Assistants Program** page. It features a search form for finding a Trading Assistant in your area. The form includes:

- Area Code:** **Submit**
- U.S. and Canada**
- Or Find a Trading Assistant in your State or Country.**
- State:** **Country:**
- Submit** **OR** **Submit**

Below the form, there is a disclaimer: "While Trading Assistants are experienced members of our community, we can't guarantee their performance. Please research each Assistant before enlisting them to sell your item. The two of you are responsible for negotiating all terms."

On the right side, there are several links:

- [Become a Trading Assistant](#)
- [Edit your profile](#)
- [Remove your profile](#)
- [Trading Assistant Information. Learn more!](#)
- [Discuss this program](#)
- [Click here to learn how to market your Trading Assistant status](#)
- [Let eBay help pay for your marketing - co-op advertising is here!](#)
- [Program Basics](#)
- [Download Templates](#)
- [Co-op FAQs](#)

At the bottom, it states: "Trading Assistants are neither employees nor independent contractors of eBay Inc."

Among many other things, *eBay.com* also provides *tools to build online stores* (see section how to build websites in chapter 1) and *payment mechanisms* adequate for a growing number of developing countries (as from 2003, *eBay* uses *PayPal.com*: see section on payments in chapter 2. *Paypal* has been acquired by *eBay*).

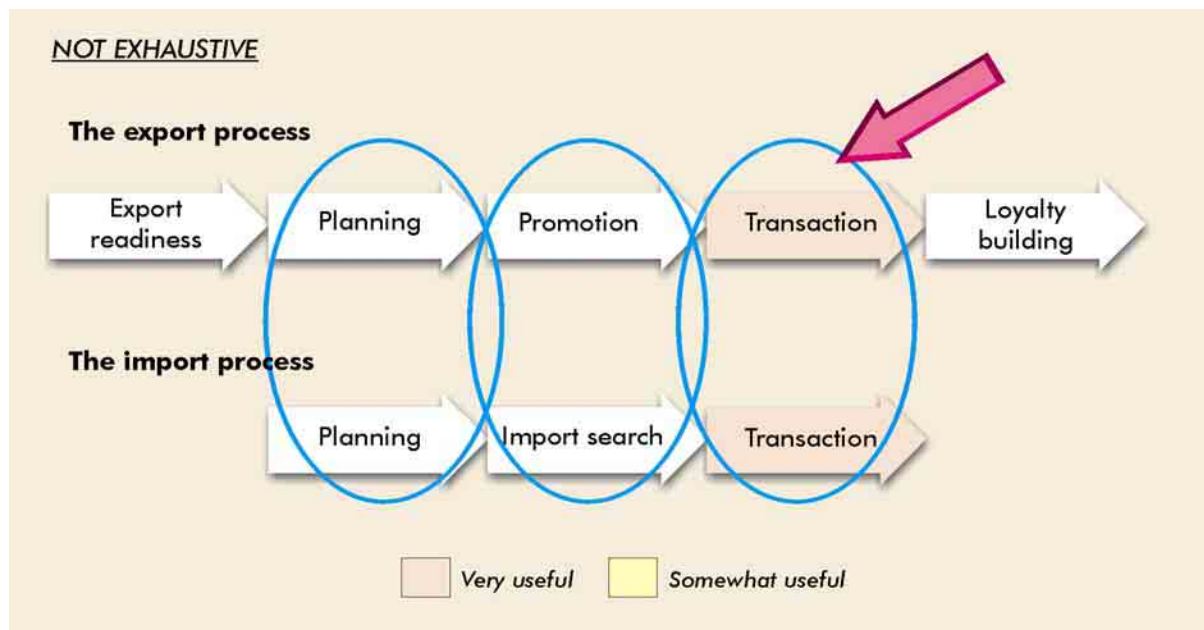
eBay.com is the leading online auction platform, but it has many competitors, such as:

- Yahoo! Auctions <http://auctions.shopping.yahoo.com>
- Amazon.com Auctions <http://auctions.amazon.com>.

As a conclusion, we can state that to find adequate clients and suppliers is an essential goal for any company. By using the Internet only, one cannot always accomplish these objectives because human contacts are often needed, at least during the initial stage of a long-term relationship. The Internet can, however, be very instrumental in contributing to the success of these goals.

6. Export and import transactions

Figure 3d. Breakdown of the export and import process: Export and import transactions



To use the Internet for *export and import transactions* does not necessarily mean that orders are taken online. The Internet can in fact be even more useful to:

- Communicate more effectively and at lower costs.**
- Obtain information that facilitates transactions.**

This is what this section is all about.

(a) Internet-based tools to communicate more effectively and at lower costs

In dealing with international trade transactions, companies traditionally used tools such as fax, phone and mailing of specific trade documents. Examples of these documents include purchase order, commercial invoice, export licence, certificate of inspection, certificate of origin, shipping advice, packing list, dock receipt, ocean bill of lading, air waybill (air consignment note), bill of exchange (draft) and letters of credit (documentary credit). As we have seen in chapter 1, **several Internet tools** such as *e-mail* (with digital signatures and encryption), *File Transfer Protocol*, *Instant Messenger* and *IP Telephony* can be used to **make long-distance communications and exchanges of trade-specific documents more expedient and much cheaper.**

(b) Internet-based information that facilitates transactions

In a commercial transaction, buyers have to evaluate their **suppliers' ability to deliver all their contractual obligations**. On the other hand, sellers have to investigate the **creditworthiness of their buyers**.

To investigate the buyers' ability (and willingness) to pay is most important, in particular if transactions are conducted without using risk-reducing instruments such as *letters of credit*. Besides, SMEs from developing countries that sell to (large) companies based in developed countries face specific risks. The reason is that the solvency of (large) companies in developed countries is usually worse than their image suggests; conversely, the solvency of (small) companies in developing countries is usually better than their image suggests.

The price of verifying suppliers' ability to meet their contractual obligations and buyers' credit rating depends very much on the scope and depth of the required verification. This price must always be compared with the values of the transactions. Naturally, very small transactions may not justify any type of verification.

A typical way to investigate a trading partner's financial and general reliability is to ask for information about him from his commercial bank. Information can also be purchased online from companies such as *Kompass* (www.kompass.com), *Dun & Bradstreet* (www.dnb.com) or *AsianCIS* (www.AsianCredit.com). Furthermore, many buyers/suppliers ask to be listed/rated by these credit rating agencies to obtain credible and displayable proof of their creditworthiness/seriousness. It is important to note that while the Internet has made it much

easier to buy information/credit rating, it has not changed the fundamentals of this industry.

In addition to the above-mentioned traditional credit agencies, some new Internet-based companies such as *Coface Rating* (www.CofaceRating.com; see picture) offer an array of services to SMEs of virtually every country in

the world. Its service offering includes not an only *online check of a trading partner's reliability* and *online application to be rated and to obtain a so-called @rating Quality Label* but also *insurance to protect online transactions*.

Another way to verify a trading partner's creditworthiness is to consult **local trade registries** online. For example, the screen capture below shows the *Swiss portal of commercial registries* (www.zefix.ch), which is run by the Swiss Federal Government.

The screenshot shows the Zefix website interface. On the left, there are search filters for business name, identification number, legal status, and commercial register. The main content area lists 26 Swiss cantons with their respective commercial registers and the number of companies registered in each. The website is titled 'Federal Commercial Registry Office' and 'Central Business Names Index'.

In Switzerland, as in many other countries, commercial registries are regional, not national. Therefore, from the above portal site, surfers can find links to local Swiss trade registries, such as the *Trade Registry of the Canton of Geneva* (<http://rc.ge.ch>). The screen capture below shows an example of information found about a particular company from this commercial registry of the canton of Geneva (in French).

The screenshot shows the 'Registre du commerce de Genève' website. It provides detailed information for a company named 'Eurêka Cybertrading SA'. The information is organized into several sections:

- Report du**: Société anonyme, Date d'inscription: 20.03.1997, Date de radiation: (blank), Numéro fédéral: CH-660-0531997-1, Numéro de dossier: 2967/1997.
- Raison Sociale**: Eurêka Cybertrading SA (Réf. 1).
- Adresse**: chemin de Saussac 2, c/Claude Monnier (Réf. 1).
- Siège**: Troinex (Réf. 1).
- Dates des Statuts**: 05.03.1997 (Réf. 1).
- Capital-actions**: Nominal: CHF 100'000,00; Libéré: CHF 100'000,00; Actions: 1'000 actions de CHF 100, au porteur (Réf. 1).
- But, Observations**: But: commerce, courtage et représentation de tous articles, produits et marchandises principalement par le biais de l'Internet. (Réf. 1).
- Organe de Publicité**: FOSC (Réf. 1).
- Succursales**: (Réf. 1).
- Journal**: Numéro 1: 2967, Date: 20.03.1997, Page: 2249; Numéro 3: 3475, Date: 29.03.1999, Page: 2202.
- Publication FOSC**: Numéro 2: Rectification, Date: 16.04.1997, Page: 2544; Numéro 4: 8816, Date: 23.08.1999, Page: 5681.
- Administration, organe de révision et personnes ayant qualité pour signer**: Nom et Prénoms, Origine, Domicile: Monnier Philippe Diego, de Dombresson, à Troinex; "Georges Martin", à Genève. Fonctions: adm., président, et délégué; réviseur. Mode Signature: signature individuelle.

DEEE - REGISTRE DU COMMERCE DE GENEVE - 2003

There are, however, several difficulties to view local trade registries online:

- It may be difficult to find their website;
- Not all registries display their data online;
- Some registry data are not available for free, and payment methods may be local and/or impractical;
- Online trade registries (such as the Swiss ones) may be in the local language only.



Another new interesting Internet-based company in the field of suppliers' reliability rating is **BizRate.com** (www.bizrate.com; see picture). *BizRate.com* rates online transactions primarily on the basis of clients' evaluations. Consolidated results of evaluations are publicly available. Any online supplier can apply to be rated by its customers using the *BizRate.com*'s platform.

Concretely, how does the *BizRate.com*'s evaluation system work? As soon as a buyer has made a purchase from a *BizRate.com*-rated website, he is invited to rate his purchase (see pop-up window in the screen capture below). When a buyer clicks on the pop-up window, the evaluation questionnaire in the right part of the screen capture appears and buyers are invited to fill it. In a second stage, each buyer receives a week after his transaction an e-mail from *BizRate.com* asking him to rate the actual goods and their delivery.



powered by **BizRate.com**
Merchant Evaluation

EVALUATION OF: iPrint.com

Merchant Performance Ratings

How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of this online purchase?

Rate of Fulfillment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Rate of Fulfillment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product Selection & Availability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product Information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product Price	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Web Site Performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shipping & Handling Charges and Delivery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How satisfied are you overall with this purchase experience at iPrint.com's site?

Overall Purchase Experience

Rate of Satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Overall Purchase Experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How likely are you to purchase from iPrint.com the next time you are in the market to buy this type of product?

Likelihood to Buy Again

Rate of Likelihood	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Likelihood to Buy Again	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Shipping not the Web

Which of the following best describes your role in making this purchase decision?

Role in purchase decision

<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred need to purchase	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluated various products
<input type="checkbox"/> Authorized/recommended purchase	<input type="checkbox"/> Determined where to purchase
<input type="checkbox"/> Placed order	

How much did you spend on this purchase? (including shipping, handling and taxes)

U.S. \$

How much were the shipping and handling charges?

U.S. \$

Is this the first time you've ever made a business purchase online?

Yes No

Age

Gender

Business

Country

City

State

Zip

Phone

How do you see how your order from iPrint.com was fulfilled.

Satisfied Dissatisfied

This survey is now approximately 40% complete. Click below to continue to the next page.

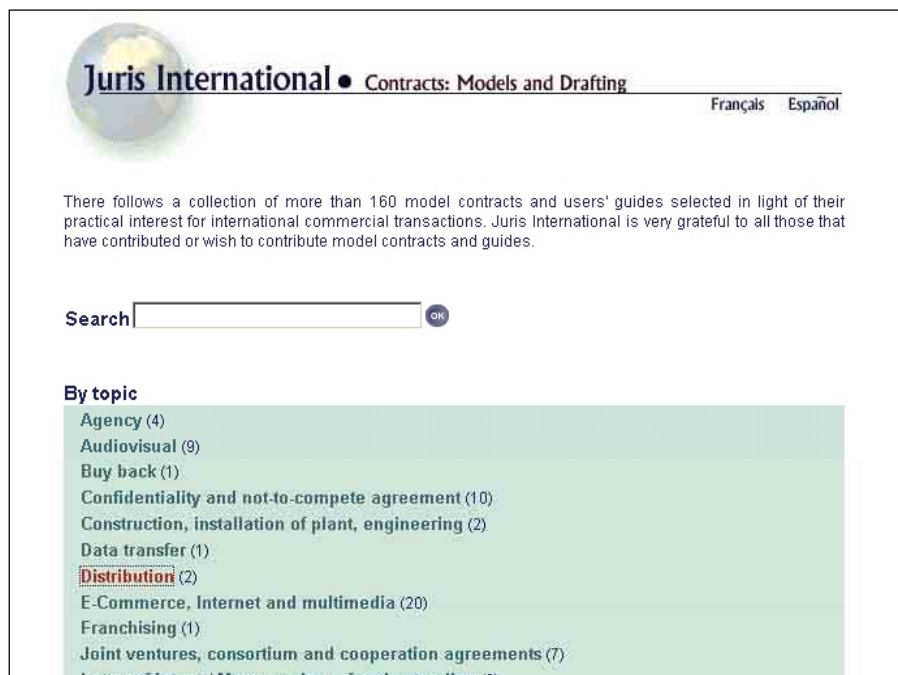
BizRate.com

The primary goal of our merchant program is to help you and your customers and provide the best possible shopping experience. BizRate.com and BizRate.com are registered trademarks. © Copyright 1999-2002. All rights reserved.

Other similar means to evaluate buyers/sellers include mutual evaluations used in auction sites such as eBay.com and eLance.com, as we have seen earlier.

Payments – whether online or offline – are essential processes as well. This topic has been covered in depth in chapter 2.

International transactions generally require precise contracts. **Contract models for international trade** can be found in www.JurisInt.org (published by *Juris International*): click on *General Collections* and then on *Contracts: Models & Drafting* to be able to download 160 models.



The *ICC Incoterms 2000* are among the most important contractual terms. *Incoterms* are standardized terms created by the *International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)*; www.iccwbo.org) for describing conditions of sale and allowing easier international trade by helping companies in different countries understand one another. The *ICC Incoterms 2000* official source is in www.iccwbo.org/incoterms/preambles.asp; on this page, however, only preambles in read-only PDF format can be found because of copyright laws. The full version can be purchased from www.iccbooks.com.

Other *abridged* sources of information about *Incoterms* include:

- www.ubs.com/e/cc/trade_exportfinance/incoterms.html (published by *UBS*)
- www.jus.uio.no/lm/pdf/icc.incoterms.1990.pdf, 1990 version (published by the *Law Faculty of the University of Oslo*)
- www.export911.com/e911/export/incoterm.htm (published by *Export 911*)

Finally, the Internet can also be used to **track shipments** to make sure that one's goods are delivered on time. For example, clients of *FedEx Corp.* (www.fedex.com) can follow online

and in real time the delivery of their parcels (see the example below, which is a parcel shipped from Detroit, USA, to Geneva, Switzerland).

The screenshot shows the FedEx website interface for tracking a shipment. The page is in German, with the location set to Switzerland. The tracking number is 829878785190. The shipment was shipped on 01/03/2002 and delivered to a recipient in Detroit, MI, on 01/07/2002 at 10:26. The service type is Priority Pak. The scan activity table shows the package's journey from Geneva, Switzerland, through Paris, France, and Memphis, Tennessee, to Detroit, Michigan.

Tracking Number 829878785190
Reference Number
Ship Date 01/03/2002
Delivered To Recipient
Delivery Location DETROIT MI
Delivery Date/Time 01/07/2002 10:26
Signed For By J.GINER
Service Type Priority Pak

Tracking Options

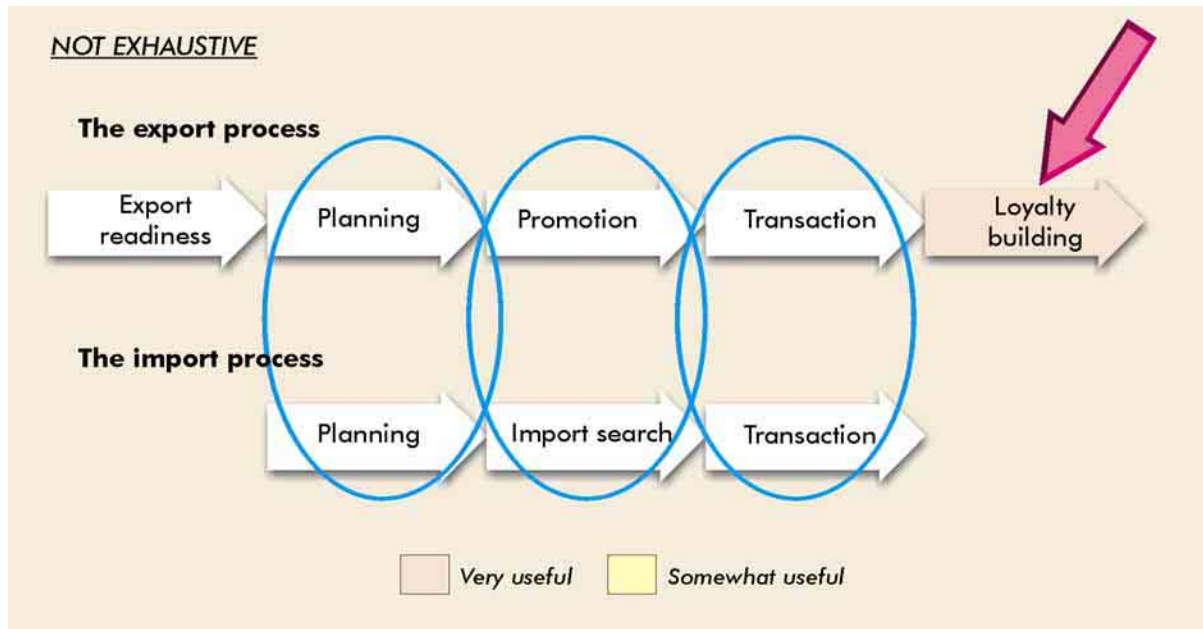
- [Email these tracking results](#) to one or more recipients
- [Track More Shipments](#)

Scan Activity	Date/Time	Comments
Delivered DETROIT MI	01/07/2002 10:26	
On FedEx vehicle for delivery DETROIT MI	01/07/2002 08:17	
Arrived at FedEx Destination Location DETROIT MI	01/07/2002 06:49	
Left FedEx Ramp ROMULUS MI	01/05/2002 09:11	
Arrived at FedEx Destination Location DETROIT MI	01/05/2002 07:57	
Arrived at FedEx Ramp ROMULUS MI	01/05/2002 06:07	
Left FedEx Sort Facility MEMPHIS TN	01/05/2002 05:47	
Left FedEx Sort Facility MEMPHIS TN	01/05/2002 02:26	
Package status PARIS FR	01/04/2002 05:00	Package in FedEx location
Left FedEx Ramp BASEL CH	01/03/2002 19:08	
Left FedEx Origin Location GENEVA CH	01/03/2002 18:33	
Pickup status GENEVA CH	01/03/2002 15:56	Package received after FedEx cutoff time

As a conclusion, Internet can play a key role in supporting import and export transactions even if the full transactions do not occur online. As in other steps, the key value additions of the Internet are convenience, speed and lower costs.

7. Loyalty building

Figure 3e. Breakdown of the export and import process: Loyalty building



The goal of this step of the export process is to use Internet tools to maximize the conversion of one-time clients into regular clients. In other words, we want to build customers' loyalty.

Interesting ways to convert first-time clients into loyal clients can be taken from **Swiss e-grocer LeShop.ch**. Indeed, all first-time clients are treated "like kings" and receive:

- A personalized letter from LeShop.ch's CEO.
- A couple of well-presented brochures, mouse pads, notepads and postcards, all of them featuring their websites and/or their URL.
- 50 Swiss francs (~US\$ 35) gift certificates usable for the next LeShop.ch purchases. These gift certificates are offered to LeShop.ch's clients for each new client they recruit.

Another way to build customer loyalty is to send regularly (e.g. monthly, quarterly) personalized e-mails to existing customers or leads. To avoid upsetting customers, these e-mails must contain content interesting to them. Naturally, they may contain links to websites (or FTP sites). Obviously, personalized e-mails are not sent one by one but generated automatically: the various techniques to *mass e-mail* are covered at the end of chapter 1.

A good example of personalized e-mails is *GemScoop*, the online newsletter of *ThaiGem.com*, a Thai web-based wholesaler/retailer of gems. *GemScoop* is received by more than 50,000 registered surfers. The content of *GemScoop* is primarily editorial but indirectly reminds its recipients of the existence of the commercial site *ThaiGem.com*.

To: PDMonnier@EurekaGroup.net
 Subject: The Gem Scoop, September 20, 2002
 Date: Sat, 21 Sep 2002 02:21:50 +0700

Gem Scoop™
Stay In The Loupe

THAIGEM.COM®
Discover the Secret™

Gems Crystals Fossils Meteorites Lab Gems Jewelry Beads Carvings Services Gem Tools


Dear Philippe,

- [Waters On The Rise](#)
- [A Colorful Family](#)
- [Show Time!](#)
- [Ask The Gem Guy](#)
- [Create Your Jewelry](#)
- [The Gem Quiz](#)

As many gem-traders and collectors are aware, gems tend not to choose easy places to reside. Our hometown of Chanthaburi, Thailand is usually a pleasant exception to this rule but as we're situated between the Bhandat mountain range and the Gulf of Thailand (which is ideal Feng Shui by the way) we do tend to experience flooding when the Monsoon rains arrive.

Last week this heavy tropical rain caused some disruptions to local electricity and telecom lines and as a result, some of our faithful readers did not receive last week's fascinating Gem Scoop about the history of one of Asia's most sought after gems. Please accept our apologies for this disruption and if you'd like to read all about the "Stone of the Loins" please click on the following link: http://www.thaigem.com/gem_scoop_sept_13.php

Some gem families are easy to recognize for even the amateur eye but some are not quite so immediately obvious. For example, at first glance regular [Yellow Beryl](#) would appear to have more in common with regular [Yellow Chrysoberyl](#) than with Diamond-like [Goshenite](#). Ruby-red



LeShop.ch also sends regular (weekly) mass-emails to its clients (see below). This e-mail contains weekly rebates. LeShop.ch's clients can choose not to receive this newsletter.

This message is not flagged. [[Flag Message](#) - [Mark as Unread](#)]





From: "LeShop : promotions" <Promotions.U.M.A.1.674@news.leshop.ch> | [This is spam](#) | [Add to Address Book](#)
 To: "pdmonnier@eurekagroup.net" <pdmonnier@eurekagroup.net>
 Subject: Quoi de neuf cette semaine chez LeShop.ch ?
 Date: Tue, 8 Jul 2003 01:01:41 +0200

Mardi 8 juillet 2003
 Bonjour Monsieur Monnier,

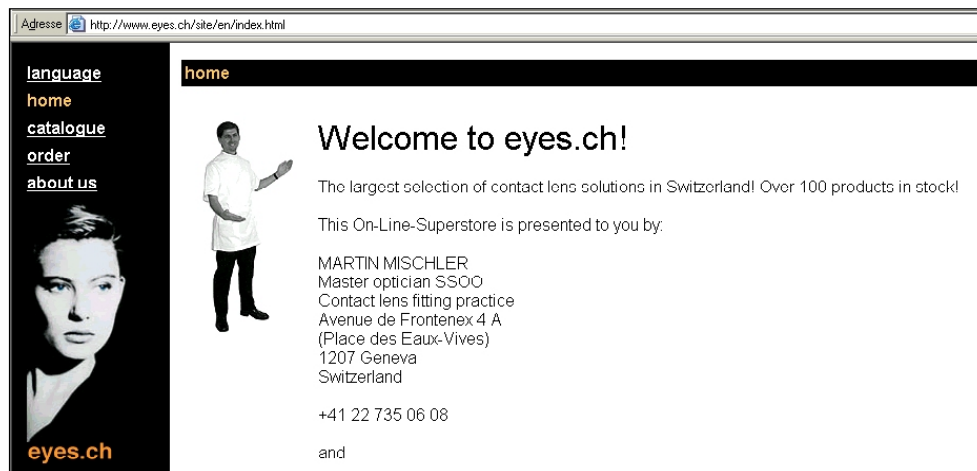
LESHOP.CH

Economisez avec LeShop.ch
 Retrouvez toutes nos offres spéciales sur www.LeShop.ch!

Tous les articles en action, les produits frais inclus, correspondent à la stricte garantie de qualité et de conservation de LeShop.ch.

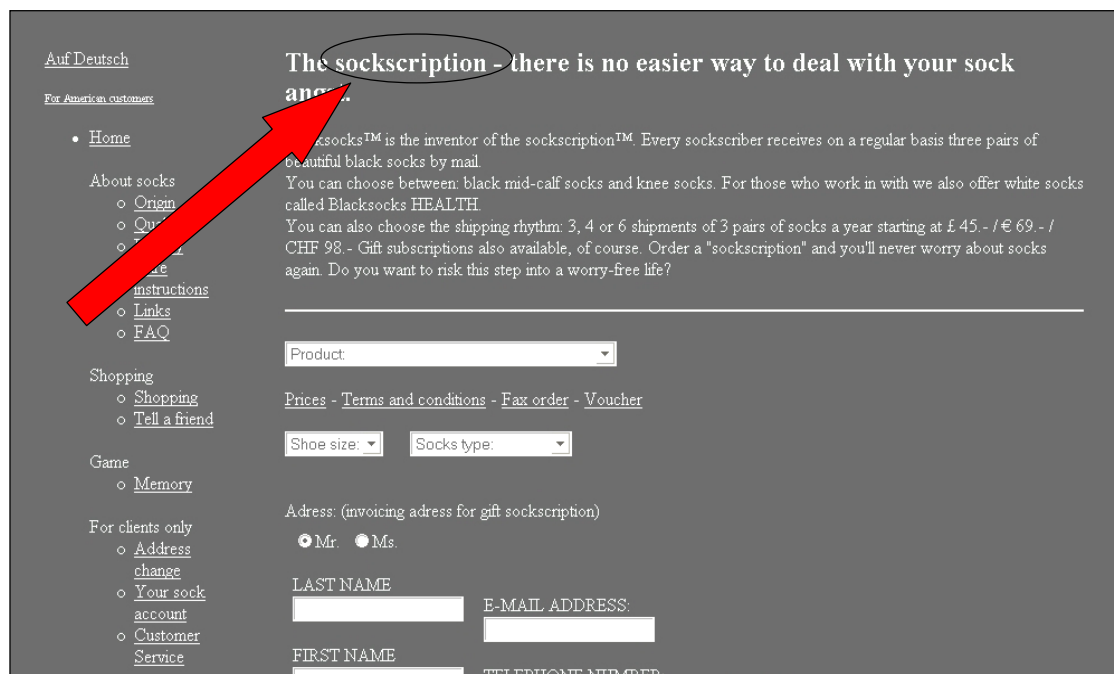
 250 g Myrtilles France CHF 5.50 CHF 4.75	 800 g Pêches Espagne CHF 3.75 CHF 2.95
 750 g Courgettes Suisse CHF 3.15 CHF 2.25	 370 g Bonne Maman Confiture Extra aux fraises CHF 3.95 CHF 3.30

Eyes.ch (www.eyes.ch, see below) is another interesting case. This Swiss Internet retailer sells contact lenses solutions.



Eyes.ch sends **regular reminders by e-mail** to its clients, making reordering very handy. Interestingly, the timing of these reminders is not randomized but is based on clients' calculated consumption speed in such a way that clients receive an e-mail shortly before having to make a new purchase decision.

Switzerland-based Internet socks retailer BlackSocks.ch (www.blacksocks.ch; see below) uses another noteworthy strategy: it strongly pushes for recurrent orders, i.e. clients have to commit to say 12 pairs of socks, which will be delivered one by one at predefined intervals.



As a conclusion, loyalty building is especially important because it takes much more effort to win new clients than to keep existing ones. Therefore, every endeavour must be made to keep clients and to make sure that they buy as much as possible. In addition, satisfied clients bring

new clients. In this section, we have seen some effective but low-cost means to build customers' loyalty.

8. Other useful websites

Some international trade-related websites are so general that they are useful for virtually every step of the import and export processes. These sites include:

(a) International Trade Centre (ITC) UNCTAD/WTO (www.intracen.org)

The *International Trade Centre (ITC)* is the technical cooperation agency of the *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)* and the *World Trade Organization (WTO)* for operational, enterprise-oriented aspects of trade development.

Its website has already been mentioned on several occasions. The following sections of its website are especially useful:

- www.intracen.org/tirc/: this part is a general presentation of ITC's Trade Information Reference Centre; it includes:
 - Webindex: country profile, market access, market new
 - Online trade journals
 - Online access to databases
- www.intracen.org/tradinst/; this part covers, among other things:
 - Trade promotion organizations
 - Importers' associations
 - Export Credit Finance Directory (FINDATA)

(b) World Trade Point Federation (www.wtpfed.org)

The *World Trade Point Federation (WTPF)*, an international non-governmental organization established in 2000, grew out of an innovative programme of the *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)*. Through a network of 122 trade information and facilitation centres, known as *Trade Points*, the *WTPF* helps small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in 80 countries worldwide to trade internationally through the use of electronic commerce technologies. Its website has actually already been mentioned on several occasions.

(c) GuruTrade (www.gurutrade.com)

This site is published by the *South African Department of Trade and Industry*. It is most useful as a tutorial and as a general reference (see specifically the section entitled "Trade Tools Resources").

(d) www.export911.com is a comprehensive Canadian export-import learning site published by **Export 911**. It has many sample documents and mini-case studies.

(e) **Australia Trade** (www.australiatrade.com.au) is an Australian site which is very didactic and especially informative on shipping matters.

Finally, here is a list of practical websites useful for people engaged in international trade.

- For **international dialling codes**: www.intelemart.com/Intlcode.htm (published by *Intelemart Corp.*).
- For **world time zones**: www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/ (published by *Steffen Thorsen*).
- For **maps** (mostly European): www.multimap.com (published by *MultiMap.com*).
- For **health advices and inoculation**: www.who.int/ith/ (published by the *World Health Organization*); www.safetravel.ch (published in French by the *University Hospital of Geneva*).
- For **world weather**: <http://weather.yahoo.com> (published by *Yahoo! Inc.*).
- For **worldwide plugs and sockets**: www.interpower.com/pcc/guide.htm. (published by *Panel Components Corporation*).
- For **unit conversion**: www.export911.com/convert/convert.htm#xConversion (published by *Export911*).
- For online (rough) **translations**: www.google.com/language_tools (published by *Google Inc.*).
- For **plane schedules**: www.Amadeus.net (published by *Amadeus GTD*).
- For **booking plane tickets and/or hotel rooms**: www.HotelDiscounts.com (published by *Hotels.com*); www.Venere.com (published by *Venere Net*); www.PriceLine.com (published by *priceline.com Incorporated*); www.PriceLine.com.hk (published by *Hutchison-Priceline (Travel) Ltd*); www.eBookers.com (published by *ebookers plc*).