

Everywhere you export

The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service

# SPOTLIGHT

ON E-COMMERCE



TCS



Global Affairs  
Canada  
Trade Commissioner  
Service

Affaires mondiales  
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Service des  
délégués commerciaux

Canada



# E-commerce is helping companies export to global markets in a variety of ways.

The following Spotlight can help your company stay informed with the right resources to effectively sell to consumers around the world through digital platforms. From e-marketplaces to virtual storefronts and search engine optimization, this short guide can assist your business in taking the important first step to market your products and services online to a much wider audience.



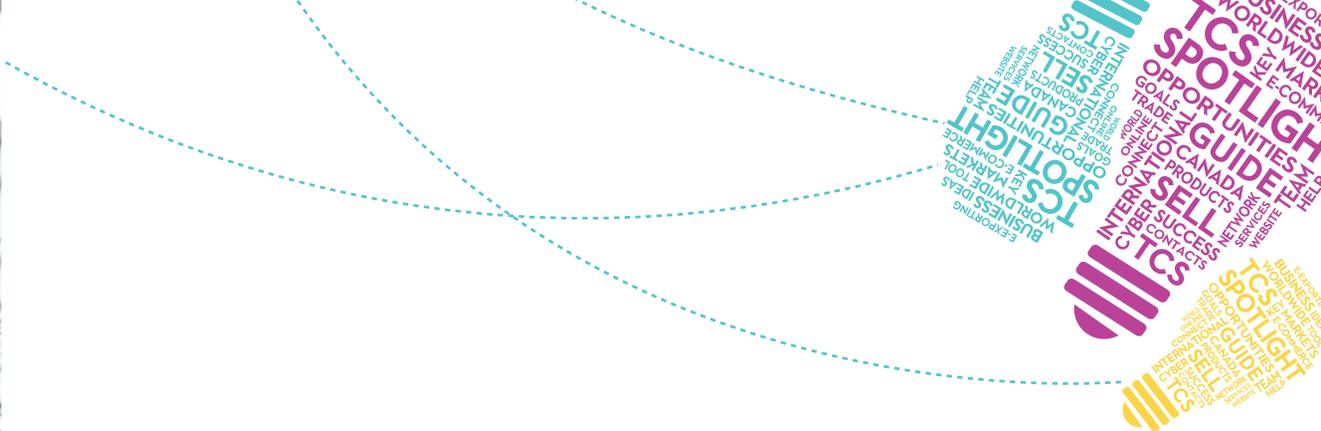
*“It is very exciting to arrive at the office in the morning to realize you have been selling all night, while you’ve been sleeping.”*

**- E-commerce exporter**

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## The lucrative business of E-commerce

The realm of business is constantly changing – which can be difficult for companies looking to stay ahead of the game. That’s why many Canadian businesses are turning to the internet to boost their sales through e-exporting.

The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) is pleased to present the following Spotlight on E-commerce, which compiles essential information for companies looking to either start doing business online with consumers in markets abroad, or for those who already have an online presence to explore best practices to diversify their sales to target consumers in some of the world’s largest markets.

Since the rise of the internet, online marketing and sales have become increasingly popular. In fact, some customers consider an online presence a necessity for companies in today’s global marketplace.

For more information on E-commerce, consult the TCS [Step-by-Step Guide to Exporting](#) which contains a special section dedicated to ‘Selling online: E-commerce for exporters’ as well as covers other important steps involved in the exporting process.

### What is E-commerce?

**E-exporting** is the practice of receiving and processing orders online from customers located in foreign countries.

**E-commerce** (also known as digital commerce) refers to the act of selling and buying via the internet.





## Benefits of an online presence

Taking business to the Web has advantages for most companies:

- **Website customization** – allows your company to tailor content to specific audiences and/or markets. Some markets may value different aspects of your product or service than other ones. With different language options, you can also develop a relationship with customers in their preferred language.
- **Product/service advertisement** – your website provides an ideal platform to explain your product or service in detail, localize content for cultural sensitivity and language accommodations and offer additional information and resources for your customers.
- **Customer support** – developing a solid, trusting relationship with customers is important to your company's success; an online presence provides you with the opportunity to develop this bond with customers through different communication platforms such as customer support services, Q&As and other tools.
- **New customers** – for companies only doing business in Canada or select markets, taking your business online can extend your reach and help you to quickly develop a global network. Additionally, monitoring online activity and customer demand can help you determine what market(s) merit further expansion as your company grows.



## Marketing your products & services

An online presence can help boost your profile, increase your competitive standing and attract more traffic and potential sales.

According to a study by Forrester Consulting in 2016, almost half of Canadian B2B sellers reported that over 25% of their overall sales take place online. This means knowing how to use online marketplaces and/or creating your own website are key.

### Marketplaces

- **E-commerce marketplaces** – such as Amazon, Alibaba Group, and eBay, are becoming increasingly popular and offer an additional option for Canadian companies to join established platforms. These marketplaces allow you to sell your product or service through the platform as a third party, and transactions are processed by the marketplace operator.
- **Sector specific marketplaces** are also available for you to sell your product or service as well, allowing you to hone in on your target audience. Some examples include Newegg (computer hardware and electronics) and Etsy (hand-made/vintage items).
- **Omni channel marketing** – today more than ever, companies are using multiple platforms to promote their product or service. It is important to maintain consistency between these different platforms, and to embrace new trends and technological upgrades, such as mobile searching and phone-friendly webpages. For more tips, see BDC's how-to guide on [Omni channel marketing](#).

### Market Highlight: E-commerce sales to consumers in the United States (US)

[Doing business in the US](#) is a common undertaking for many Canadian businesses. The market is both profitable and close to home, supplying access to a large consumer population with business and cultural similarities to Canada. US consumers are also familiar with sourcing goods online and spend billions annually shopping from the convenience of their home or office to buy from vendors worldwide.

**Did you know?** Canada and the US exchanged over C\$854.3 billion in total goods and services in 2016 – a direct result of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement.





## Market Highlight: Entering the Chinese Market

China has the world's largest E-commerce market – expected to be worth USD \$1 trillion by 2019. China is an expanding market that provides plenty of opportunities for Canadian companies looking to go online and establish a foothold in the market.

Middle-class Chinese consumers are turning to countries like Canada with high-quality goods and services that are safe and reliable. In particular, marketplaces (platforms where products/ services are provided by multiple third parties) are becoming increasingly popular – such as Amazon, Alibaba Group and Taobao.

[An Introduction to E-commerce in China](#) explores the steps necessary to help you delve into this vast new online market.



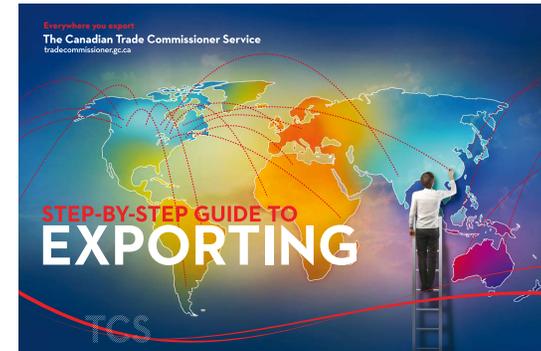


# Are you export ready?

The [Step-by-Step Guide to Exporting](#) will help you to:

- **Sell to more customers.** Target global buyers online.
- **Enter more markets.** Leverage the benefits of free trade.
- **Save time & avoid risks.** Learn the legal aspects of trade.

Download this free guide and gain access to all TCS export publications through [MY TCS](#).



## Access these additional resources:

- [E-commerce eBook](#) (source: BDC)
- [E-commerce: What to Consider When Selling Online in Canada](#) (source: Canada Business Network)
- [Canada E-commerce](#) (source: US Department of Commerce)
- [Google Report on E-commerce](#) (source: EDC)
- [E-commerce: A Platform Primer](#) (source: EDC)

## Consult these market overviews of E-commerce trends\*:

- [United States](#)
- [United Arab Emirates](#)
- [South Korea](#)
- [Japan](#)
- [United Kingdom](#)
- [China](#)

\*(source: Agriculture & Agri-food Canada)

# Trade Commissioners are on-the-ground in more than 160 cities in Canada and worldwide.

The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) is gaining market intelligence and insight, and uncovering opportunities for Canadian companies.

Our export experts can help your company:

- Prepare for international markets
- Assess your market potential
- Find qualified contacts
- Resolve business problems



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