



Information and Communications

Creating and Managing your Website to Target Mexican Buyers

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Summary

The purpose of this study is to guide U.S. companies on how to efficiently create and manage a website to target Mexican Buyers. It represents general business practices and website principles applicable to any international market. This report includes Internet market-specific advertising procedures for the major search engines visited in Mexico that will increase the visibility of U.S. exporters among Mexican Internet Users.

Market Overview

American exporters to Mexico enter a country with a rapidly growing, Internet market. The latest figures estimate that over 23.7 million Mexicans will have access to the Internet by the end of 2007. Fifty-eight percent of Mexican Internet users are young adults between the ages of 18-34, who mostly live in urban areas, which means that the number of Internet users should continue to expand in the upcoming years.

During September 2007, the most visited Media websites in order of ranking were (unique visitors): Microsoft Sites: 9M; Google: 8.5M; Yahoo: 6.5M and Mercado Libre: 4.9M ([Source: comScore](#)).

In 2006, the [IAB Mexico](#) (Interactive Advertising Bureau), an international network with over 20 entities around the world and a presence in Mexico since 2005, conducted the first study in Internet Advertising Investment. Investment in Internet Advertising is an industry has been growing exponentially each year in Mexico, registering the bigger increases than investment in other sectors. The investments measured in this study for 14 participating websites reached 365 million pesos for 2006; in comparison to 2005, when 224.75 million pesos were invested, a 62.43% increase.

IAB Mexico estimates that this study covers 71% of the total market, the other 29% belonging to advertising in search engines, which was not evaluated in the study. The financial industry invested the most online in 2006, accounting for 12.88% of the total, followed by the transportation, travel and tourism industry (10.94%), and the beverage industry (10.88%).

American companies should also be encouraged by the rapid growth in E-commerce. Interestingly, growth in Business to Consumers (B2C) will reach a total of \$765M USD representing an increase of 59% from 2006. The main reason for this trend is that 66% of Internet transactions take place in the Tourism sector where 92% of travel sales are made by online credit card payment. The consumer sector represents the other 33% share of the market with specifically the consumer goods sector predicted to enjoy an 11% increase in online credit card payments from the previous year.

In May 2007, the [Mexican Internet Association \(AMIPCI\)](#) published results of their first study, "the Use of New Technologies in Mexico", highlighting the fact that Mexican Internet users know how to use new technologies. Leading-edge technology services frequently used in the country and certainly impacting a huge amount of consumers are: wireless connections (Wi-Fi), instant messaging programs, social networks, blogs and podcasts, and the content of cellular phones.

Optimizing your Website to Target Mexican Clients

The first challenge faced by American companies exporting to Mexico is the language barrier. To take advantage of the Mexican market, it is essential to offer a web site in Spanish. American exporters' first obstacle is that their Spanish web site may not be comprehensible if it is translated word-for-word from the English site. An added difficulty is working with a new potential customer base, with its unique cultural and local factors.

When creating the Spanish version of a web site, it is very important as a first step to define your audience and their goals in accessing your website. In other words, you need to determine who is coming to your website and what tasks they need to accomplish quickly and efficiently. When writing content, it necessary to keep in mind that you need to write plainly for your intended audience. If your targeted customers do not need to have any background or knowledge about your services or products to be potential buyers, then you need to use words that anyone can understand. Avoid using acronyms, be concise and eliminate every word that is not absolutely necessary. In all cases, clarity and comprehension are essential.

Once you identify your audience and their tasks, you will want to consider the many local factors that could affect your desired outcome: to reach Mexican potential buyers.

1. Localization.

Customizing your web site for the Mexican market will make your product look less foreign and more attractive. Mexican customers form their opinions about American companies based on their websites, so positive first impressions are crucial. Some ideas are:

- Show photos of how the product is used in Mexico
- Use packaging with all information written in Spanish
- Find a distributor or representative to take care of your local customer service
- Set up a local telephone number in Mexico

If you already have an exclusive Mexican distributor, let him “copy” your company web site—that means to replicate the look and feel, and translate it into Spanish. This translation must take a culturally sensitive approach. This ensures that language and cultural issues are appropriate to the new target audience. By adapting the content of the existing English-language web site to address the cultural norms of the Mexican audience, you will be taking the proper steps to ensure the successful branding of your product in the new market.

2. Language Use.

When designing your text areas, bear in mind that Spanish translates into longer sentences. Contract professional help when translating your web content and always avoid automatic translators. Writing style is important and Mexicans appreciate good composition skills and localized language. To appeal to Mexicans, the text should be written with the Spanish terminology used in Mexico. Also, missing Spanish accents are considered grammatical mistakes. It is crucial to avoid slang (unless it is meaningful for your target audience), and to be careful with jokes that might not be acceptable to the Mexican sense of humor. Humor is difficult to translate; be sure to get advice on the proper way to adapt jokes to avoid offending your potential customers.

3. Maintaining Updated and High Quality Content.

Keeping your content updated and of a highest quality will increase the likelihood of having your company's web site being found by Mexican buyers. Therefore, relevant and in-depth content, and easy-to-use navigation are essential. Online text should be clear and concise, and should offer answers to potential questions about your products and services. Keep your customers interested by providing fresh content and establish an ongoing review process. Offering reference materials for your industry is an easy way to attract visitors and increase traffic to your site.

4. Carefully Research and Select Spanish Keywords.

Your goal is to be among the top search results for the relevant keywords in Spanish. Spanish keywords and phrases need to be researched and carefully chosen because there are colloquial and language-specific differences, which may not translate directly from English. Competition among companies is high to identify their products with specific keyword searches. If your company is identified with the relevant keywords, the traffic volume to your site will increase. Search engine companies have made strong efforts to serve the Spanish-language market by considering link analysis and geographic locations to determine the correct pages relevant to the Spanish words. Unfortunately the latter method does not yet work as efficiently as in the U.S., though Mexican search engine industry professionals predict it will improve in the near future. Finally, ensure that your keywords are coded as metadata into each one of your web pages.

5. Importance of Links.

The popularity of your web page is based on the number of pages on the web that link to your web page. The more links that go back and forth between your web pages, the more the search engines will find them. Linking to local chambers and associations, user groups, web industry forums and other industry websites helps to increase visibility and rankings of the sites you link to. However, keep in mind that quality is more important than quantity. External links should be reviewed regularly to make sure they still work and that they are still relevant. Links should fulfill your clients' expectations to lead them to additional information related to a particular topic.

6. Selling over the Internet to Mexican users.

If you are thinking of selling online, make sure to have reliable encryption and safety procedures. Since credit card fraud is higher elsewhere than in the U.S.A, the easiest way is to offer the products and services on your Spanish site and link to your U.S. site for credit card processing. The Mexican Internet Association (AMIPCI) conducts annually a survey of Mexican Internet users that you can access on their website to obtain more information on Electronic Commerce in Mexico.

7. Registering a Domain Name in Mexico

NIC Mexico (Network Information Center Mexico) is the official organization for national domain registration in Mexico. NIC Mexico is in charge of the administration of the territorial domain name .MX, the two-letters code assigned to each country according to ISO 3166. Domains under the classification ".com.mx" can have their server and ISP anywhere in the world. Other classifications (.edu.mx, net.mx, and gov.mx) may have their ISP overseas but the organization or institution must have a local office in Mexico.

The registration fee is U.S. \$35 per year. If you want to make your application in English, check for NIC Mexico representatives in the U.S. since the online registration process is only offered in Spanish: <http://www.nic.mx>

NIC México also provides the information services and registry for .MX as well as the assignment of IP addresses, and the maintenance of the databases respective of each resource.

Advertising in Search Engines in Mexico

Search engine optimization (SEO) focuses on creating web pages that are easy for potential customers to find through search engines. The key to SEO is good page structure and organization of content that the audience will understand. Search engine optimization has become more and more complex now that search engines are improving their algorithms, making the process of re-indexing updated web sites more time consuming in order to be ranked in the first listings of search engines. Therefore, a company must balance usability (the quality of a user's experience when they interact with a website), professional appearance, business goals, and advertising in search engines to create a site that is easy for potential customers to find and use.

U.S. firms looking to increase the exposure of their websites in Mexico should consider advertising through popular Mexican search engines. Currently 84% of all Mexicans who access the web use a search engine, second in popularity only to e-mail, and 99% use search tools to find what they are looking for. This practice, commonly known as Search Engine Marketing, is a cost-effective method used to position a company's products or services in the first listing of a search engines' results in the "Sponsored Sites" section. When a user does a search using a keyword, the supplier's advertisement will appear at the beginning of the results page. When the user or potential client clicks on the advertisement, he/she will be sent to the supplier's web site, those generating high quality traffic for the advertiser.

Below is a brief description of the most popular search engines offering advertising services in Mexico:

1. Google México

- Advertising Programs:

Google Mexico runs [AdWords](#), a service that lists sponsored links at the right side of the results page. Sometimes, depending on the relevance of that particular link, it might appear at the top of the list. A company can design its advertisements, and choose its keywords so that when another company searches for a certain keyword, they will land on the advertisement.

Sponsored links are also listed on [Terra.com](#), [Ask.com](#), and [Clarín.com](#), among others.

- Subscription Process:

To register, a company selects its target language and geographical location (even local and regional targeting is available for small businesses), enters its relevant contact and web page information, chooses the key words responding to relevant search results, and selects the currency and the Cost Per Click (CPC) price. This means that a company pays only if people click on their advertisements. Companies can choose to receive a monthly bill or open a pre-paid account.

- Important Features:

AdWords offers both a support page with general help topics and an e-mail address for more specific concerns. Web link listing is not only based on CPC, but also on the amount of traffic the link receives.

- **Cost Calculation:**

Google AdWords allows the company to set the price of the CPC, and the daily and monthly amounts the company wishes to spend on the link. There is no minimum amount, but a higher CPC will result in a higher listing.

2. Yahoo! México

- **Advertising Programs:**

Yahoo! México runs [Yahoo! Search Marketing](#), a service that lists a company's web page at the top of relevant search results in the "Resultados Patrocinados" or sponsored links section.

- **Subscription Process:**

To register, a company enters its relevant contact and web page information, chooses the relevant key words, opens an account with Yahoo! Search Marketing and pays through a bank deposit, Visa, MasterCard or other accepted credit card.

- **Important Features:**

Yahoo! Search Marketing offers a monthly report that summarizes the Internet traffic that the company's link has received. Daily or weekly reports are also an option. Yahoo! Search Marketing offers a help page and e-mail address for support issues and concerns.

- **Cost Calculation:**

Yahoo! Search Marketing charges its clients each time their link is accessed, taking the money from a pre-paid account opened upon registration. Yahoo! Search Marketing clients deposit money into their accounts as needed, depending on their CPC and the Internet traffic their link receives.

3. Prodigy / MSN

- **Advertising Programs:**

Prodigy / MSN runs [Windows Live Search](#), a service that lists Sponsored links according to specific keywords. A company designs its advertisements, and buys its keywords so that when another company searches for a certain keyword, they will land on the advertisement.

- **Subscription Process:**

To register your company contact Francisco Javier Altamarino, Service Manager, via email at francisco@prodigymsn.com. You will be asked to make a deposit by credit card. After receipt of the deposit by Prodigy / MSN, your Sponsored link will appear in the Windows Live Search engine.

- **Important Features:**

Windows Live Search offers personalized help from the manager in charge of this service in Mexico. He can be reached at 5081-6747.

- **Cost Calculation:**

Windows Live Search allows the company to set the price of the CPC, with a minimum of \$.50 MXP per click. You must re-activate your advertisement once your account reaches zero.

Limitations and Recommendations

U.S. Government Best Practices on [Web Content Management](http://webcontent.gov) (webcontent.gov) states that websites must provide easy access, be written in plain language, have consistent navigation, have a search engine, use standard metadata, provide access to documents in appropriate file formats and provide appropriate access to data. Organizations must inform audiences of website major re-design changes.

Here are some recommendations that can be applied not only to the Spanish version of your website but to any international and domestic website.

1. Analyzing internal search data.

Find out the words your visitors are typing into your internal search engine. Make sure the words they use are the same words and labels you use on your site. The most requested items should be easily accessible on your homepage. Understanding how users search, what keywords and engines they use, and how they respond to content within the context of their search is important to the success of your site. By looking at how users find your site, you can learn so much more about customer intent and perspective than you can by looking at a user's path out of context.

2. Improve your audience experience.

According to U.S. government research, 60% of the time people cannot find the information they seek on web sites. Conducting usability testing and customer satisfaction reviews allows you to get evidence-based data that identifies what you need to improve your site. When re-designing your website, focus on critical tasks that your audience wants to do rather than on missing pieces of information. Think of the entire process. This effort will result in satisfied clients who find what they are looking for. E-mails, phone calls, letters, operator reports, and other contacts with the public could be used as well for this purpose. Website design and content writing should be based on the ever-changing audiences' needs; for this reason, testing and analysis should be an ongoing effort.

3. Measure your success.

An effective website strikes a balance between user and business goals. Like any other marketing effort, is necessary to test, analyze statistics, and conduct customer service surveys and usability studies to measure results and make adjustments, especially when doing advertising search engine campaigns. Besides allowing you to make profit, a website should satisfy user needs and make sure that your customers complete what they came to your website for. Traditionally, site analytics were based in terms of hits and visitors but they are not useful to let you know if your customers' performance goals are really meaningful. Now, metrics experts agree that having a task-driven website is essential. Therefore, web metrics need to be task-oriented too. For instance, you might put emphasis on examining the top-visited pages in your web site.

4. Web-related decision making.

A working group should be formed to support web content managers' decision making (a web content manager is one who writes, edits, manages, and forms strategic plans for the content of websites). The group should focus on researching and formulating recommendations for new content or changes in information, and identifying resources and opportunities to make your website more client-focused and navigation-friendly. Raising the quality and effectiveness of your website is a permanent process that should involve all members of your organization.

5. Hiring outsourcing services.

It might be in the best interests of for your company to hire an outsourcing advisory service that has expertise in specific areas, including usability, information architecture, library science, depository libraries, records management, e-Marketing strategies, program management and web analytics.

Resources and Contacts:

Andrew Lipsman
Senior Analyst
ComScore, Inc.
<http://www.comscore.com>

Bianca W. Loew
General Director
Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB Mexico)
<http://www.iabmexico.com>

Enrique Bustamante
General Director
Mexican Internet Association (AMIPCI - Asociación Mexicana de Internet, A. C.)
www.amipci.org.mx

Alejandra Lagunes
Sales Manager
Google Mexico
<http://www.google.com.mx>

Yahoo Mexico
<http://mx.yahoo.com.mx>

Jorge Pedrero
Marketing Manager
Prodigy MSN
<http://prodigy.msn.com>

Ernesto Heberto Bojórquez
Sales Manager
Network Information Center México (NIC Mexico)
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