

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

To strengthen Canada's position as an exporting nation, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade distributes publications to exporters, academics, researchers and other clients. Of the more than 2,000 titles produced, publications include country fact sheets, export sourcing directories, market opportunity reviews, industry sector profiles and guidelines for exporting. A major dissemination point is the Department's InfoCentre, which distributes publications by mail and through an interactive facsimile service called FaxLink. The InfoCentre is also in the process of developing an electronic bulletin board service for information dissemination.

To assess the effectiveness of the documents and the services provided by the InfoCentre in meeting client needs, the Department commissioned a survey of clients who have received select departmental publications (either through the InfoCentre or via direct distribution).

1.2 Objectives

The specific objectives of the research were to:

- evaluate the effectiveness of distribution and service delivery;
- determine the impact of the documents on users' export activities;
- describe readership behaviour and use of the documents;
- determine the extent to which the publications meet the needs of recipients;
- evaluate clients' perceptions of InfoCentre service; and
- assess recipients' willingness to pay for the documents.

1.3 Approach

The approach involved a telephone survey of 765 recipients of 12 publications in March, 1995 (see Appendix A for questionnaire).

The sample was drawn from distribution lists provided by the Department. Survey respondents were asked whether they recalled receiving publications that had been disseminated to them. Respondents were further screened by asking them whether they used the publication(s) they received. Reasons for non-use and identifying characteristics were obtained from those who did not use the publication, while those who used the publications provided information on format, content and service delivery. A breakdown of the sample by publication is provided in Table 1, *opposite page 2*.