
INTRODUCTION

As international trade becomes more interdependent, Canadian companies have begun to extend their markets and employ new methods to export their products. One of the most successful and fastest growing means of selling goods is through the United States mail order catalogue industry. The geographic proximity of the U.S. to Canada makes a catalogue marketing venture a great opportunity for growth for small Canadian firms. Direct shipments to the catalogue house's warehouse give Canadian manufacturers access to a market of more than 250 million U.S. consumers.

North American lifestyles of the 1990s have become more hurried, often leaving less time for leisure activities. For today's consumer, being able to contemplate purchases without leaving home is no longer a luxury; for the Canadian manufacturer it is an opportunity not to be missed. The Canadian manufacturer or supplier can seize this opportunity and fit into virtually any niche within the U.S. marketplace. Selling your product through a U.S. mail order catalogue provides many benefits, such as having a "professional" market your product, and eliminating the need for a U.S. site of operations.

In 1992, over one half of the adult population in the United States (55.2%) ordered merchandise by mail or telephone. In the past decade, the total percentage of Americans shopping direct increased by 77%, while the growth in population was 16.2%. With this purchasing power, the opportunities presented by exporting through the U.S. mail order catalogue industry are well worth investigating.

As with all new ventures, it is important to take time to introduce yourself and your product to potential buyers. In the mail order catalogue industry, the catalogue houses are, in effect, your consumers. The process of locating and establishing the mail order catalogue most suited to your product differs from the traditional method of promoting your product. This guide has been created to help Canadian manufacturers introduce their products to the highly dynamic U.S. mail order catalogue industry. If you have the ability to export, selling through mail order catalogues can enhance your exporting endeavours.