



CARIFORUM-EU EPA

A Partnership that Counts



Doing Business in Europe in the Post Covid Era

Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) seeking to do business in the EU using the EPA need to be aware of the marketplace trends in order to position their enterprises to respond. According to the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI) of the Netherlands, in its report entitled “How SMEs from developing economies can prepare their export business for (post)corona trends in Europe”, buyers often select products based on research undertaken on online platforms and the requirements they have for suppliers are much higher on many fronts than before. To meet the new environment, suppliers in developing countries need to review aspects of their business.

The experience trend

Experience is an element on which many retailers have tried to distinguish themselves. According to the CBI, due to Covid -19, the importance of providing a physical customer experience shifted to a digital one. Optimizing digital engagement became extremely important for retailers in order to be able to keep the connection with the customer. The “customer journey” increasingly takes place online. The report states that European customers, especially millennials, go online to get inspired, to find specific products and to make a purchase. It also notes that this trend is likely to continue in the future. This offers challenges and opportunities for SMEs as more market players are expected to go along with this digital trend.

What does it mean and what can an SME do

The experience trend applies to suppliers who sell directly to consumers and those who sell their products via retailers to the European customer. The whole process to get the product from supplier to the end user will take place in an increasingly digital way. For instance, when retailers are looking for new suppliers or when they want to gain insight into the product range. By necessity, digital ways of working has resulted in a certain degree of convenience and efficiency and it is expected that this trend will increase in the future.

SMEs need to be ready for this digital engagement in the form of e-commerce, digital marketing and communication. Being digitally present is increasingly a requirement to be seen as a potential supplier

for the European market. SMEs must be visible and ensure that they can be found online. SMEs must be familiar with the important trade fairs to connect with retailers or if they wish to sell directly to the final customer. Knowing the most important sales channels for their target markets in Europe and how to promote their products or services on social media are critical. Integrating storytelling and sustainable and social practices into digital marketing through photos and videos is especially important for conveying the experience element to the professional millennial market.

Economic Partnership Agreement Unit, CARIFORUM Directorate