LEVERAGING MACHINE TRANSLATION WITHOUT SACRIFICING PERFORMANCE FOR PRINTEMPS.COM:

Website Localisation & SEO

PRINTEMPS

Printemps.com came to us seeking help with their entry into the UK market. They were looking for an agency that could not only deliver content at scale and at speed, but also reflect their tone-of-voice and elevated, but inclusive positioning in a way that would achieve cut-through in this crowded and highly developed e-commerce market.

Locaria was able to evidence many years of expert service to several notable luxury brands and e-tailers. In particular our Performance Linguistics™ proposition, which blends deep SEO knowledge with advanced local language content production technology, was seen as a huge value-add. Many other brands localise their sites and then apply SEO principles in a second wave. This increases cost, delays organic growth and can result in a highly inconsistent customer journey and brand experience. By blending creative talent with data-driven localisation expertise, we were able to get the client live at speed without sacrificing performance.

The results:

- Successful new market entry and ongoing collaboration

- Established domain authority

- Reduced cost by using an integrated SEO and localisation service

- Inclusive luxury tone of voice to support competitive positioning

- Consistent, smooth and fluent customer journey

- Seamless CMS integration and content workflow

DETAILS

The Challenge

Printemps.com already had a mature online offering in France and wanted to localise their site for the UK market, ready for a launch in early 2020. They wanted to know how their competitors structured their products and content, to ensure a competitive offering that would also perform from a search perspective. They also wanted an agile team that could localise a large volume of both editorial and product copy in a short space of time, allowing maximum editorial freedom to finesse the content to the last moment. Additionally, they wanted to make sure the localisation was optimised so that the content would be highly relevant to user intent, drive organic traffic and deliver a consistent customer journey. Lastly, the client had a strongly inclusive and ethical tone to their French content and wished that to be reflected in the English, while respecting British cultural nuances.

The Approach

Using Performance Linguistics™ and a bespoke content delivery method enabled by our Locate platform, we applied a blended SEO and localisation approach. There were several stages to our engagement:

1.   Background Research: tailoring, not reinventing the wheel

To address the competitive element, we ran an arborescence exercise, analysing the structures of competitor English language websites to see what they put as their flagship products on their website. We then cross-referenced this with the client's current offer to see if there were any terms or structure from competitors that we could reuse. This meant we could be both quick to market and competitive. We looked at the static navigation menu i.e. "Mens", "Womens" anything that would be fixed on the homepage, any landing page and the sub-navigation i.e. each category and subcategory. Then, in order to curate which terms were the most relevant to the customer and within Printemps' existing offer, we did in-language keyword research. We looked at search volume and relevancy in English, rather than being driven by a direct translation of the French.

An example of one challenge we overcame was to have the same navigation pattern as on the French e-commerce website. To do so, we carried out keyword research for related search terms and narrowed them down to the closest translation to the French term "mixte". We extended the keyword research to long-tail keywords as in queries combining several search terms i.e. "gender-neutral fashion", "gender-neutral tops", "unisex clothing" and "unisex fashion" to capture better the user search intent.

In addition, we were keen to help the client to access the UK opportunity, but also keep the door open to US traffic, while sticking to the budget. Ideally the full site would have been localised into both UK English and US English, but as the budget did not allow for this and the UK was the priority, the team made tactical changes and additions to the UK English content to make it more accessible to US visitors. Examples of this were adding US sizing to products and selecting the US English term "sneakers" over "trainers", which allowed for search volumes in both markets.

2. Agreeing creative parameters: SEO-led terminology and tone-of-voice

We married SEO best practice with equally rigorous linguistic and localisation expertise. Following localisation best practice, we created a detailed English style guide and agreed it with the client. We ensured that the keyword research was reflected in the style guide, providing client-side brand guardians with the data to decide whether to use one word or another and what impact that was likely to have on the organic performance.

For example, our Content Analysts did thorough research about different terminology to make sure all the terms were correctly used with all the nuances they may imply so that the website was not accused of "virtue signalling" or similar, while also considering the visibility implications from the keyword research around these terms. This led to clear agreements about some terminology such as "non-binary", "unisex", "gender-neutral", among other key terms.

Locaria knows that it is important to protect brands, but that when it comes to localisation, where one word in French may be translated into many others in English, it is important that those choices are made in the full knowledge of the potential impact on visibility and relevancy. This can only be achieved by a specialised team who are both experts in localisation and also SEO best practice.

We then leveraged our multilingual intelligent content platform Locate, to set these terminology parameters and optimise content delivery efficiency and marketing effectiveness.

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The keywords and terminology gathered in the first phase were built into a bespoke website localisation termbase for the client. A termbase is a database of accepted terminology that is built into localisation workflows, ensuring linguists adhere to certain words when localising content. In practice, this termbase is part of our Multilingual Intelligent Content Platform workflows so linguists are automatically prompted to follow it, and QA flags are issued when deviations occur. This was fundamental not only to translate content at speed, but also to enhance the user experience throughout the whole customer journey and maintain consistency. Our technology was applied across a variety of content delivery methodologies, including localisation, transcreation, machine translation, post editing and quality assurance.

3. Activation: leveraging a bespoke CMS integration and localisation planning

For seamless and efficient ongoing collaboration, we built a custom connector which watches a specific section of the client's CMS so that, as soon as new content is published, it is automatically extracted and sent to Locate. Locate then calculates volumes and internal deadlines, and distributes the content smartly to our pool of content specialists, alongside brand guidelines, tone of voice documentation, glossary and previously delivered localisations for reference. Localised content is subsequently presented back in the right location on the site, corresponding to the correct product, page etc.
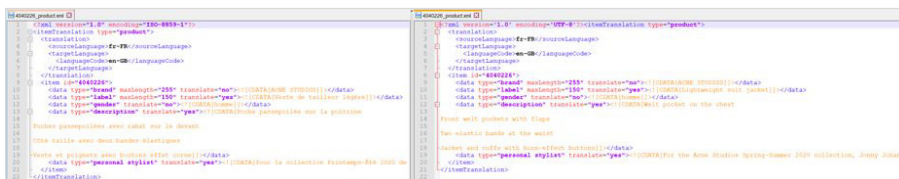
Locaria's Content Analysts used our localisation planning approach to select the optimal methodology to deliver content at speed, depending on the commercial purpose of the content. For example, ahead of launch, we used a human localisation and review process to deliver 70,000 words of editorial and blog content in 6 weeks, but used machine translation with post editing to deliver 143,000 words of product copy in 3 weeks.
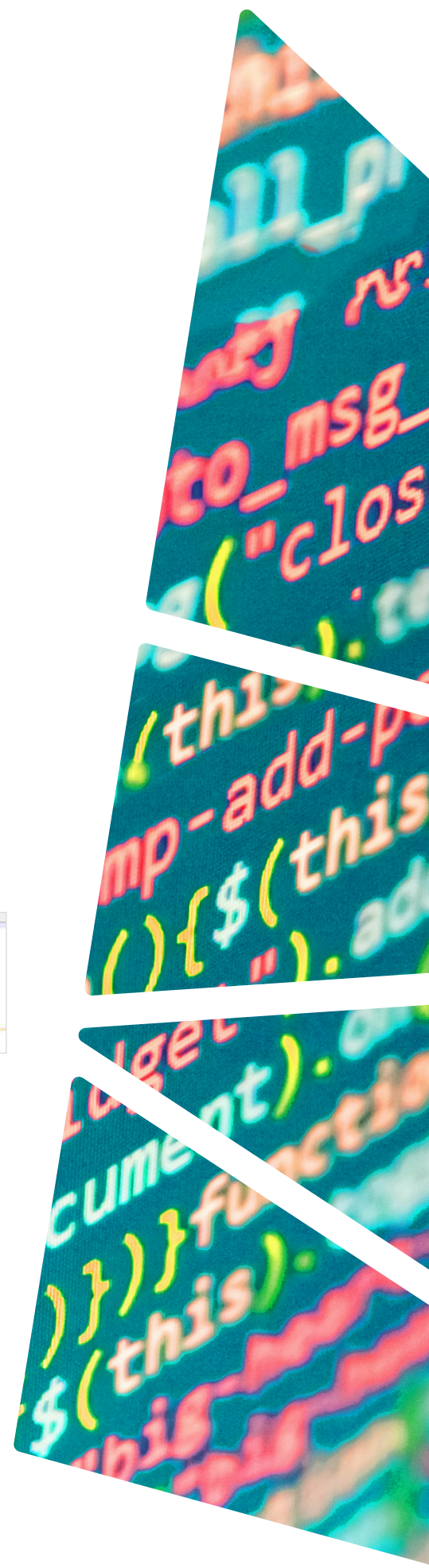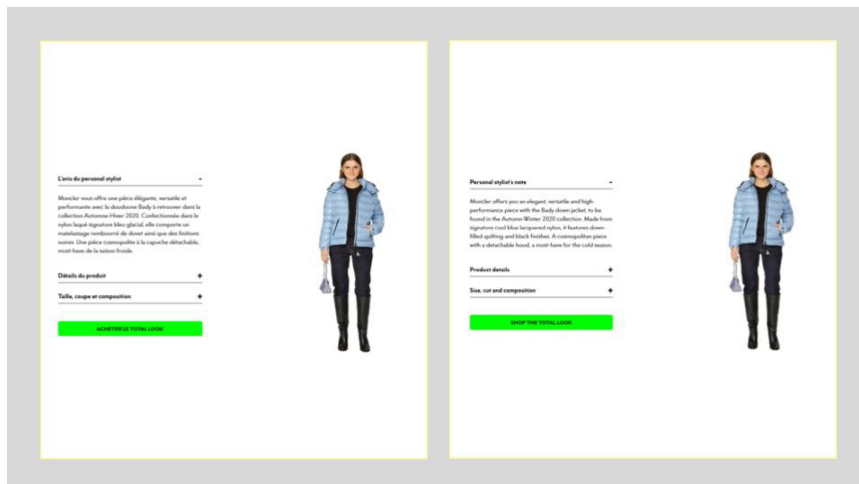
In the three weeks following the website launch, we were able to deliver 675,000 words, all SEO-optimised and respecting the client's brand and tone-of-voice. We were able to leverage our network of digital marketing localisation experts to scale up and down quickly, while using machine translation where appropriate to keep budgets under control.

Summary & Results

2020 has been a challenging and competitive year for online retailers. In addition, the finalisation of Brexit has also provided a disincentive to consumers to shop with overseas brands. However, through an expertly combined SEO and localisation approach, Printemps.com has been able to:

- Gain market share and continue to grow in the UK

- Develop a consistent customer journey

- Establish domain authority

- Keep costs down and avoid re-work by using a single agency for both SEO and localisation

- Save time and expedite the launch by using SEO data to guide content decisions and resolve branding and tone-of-voice issues