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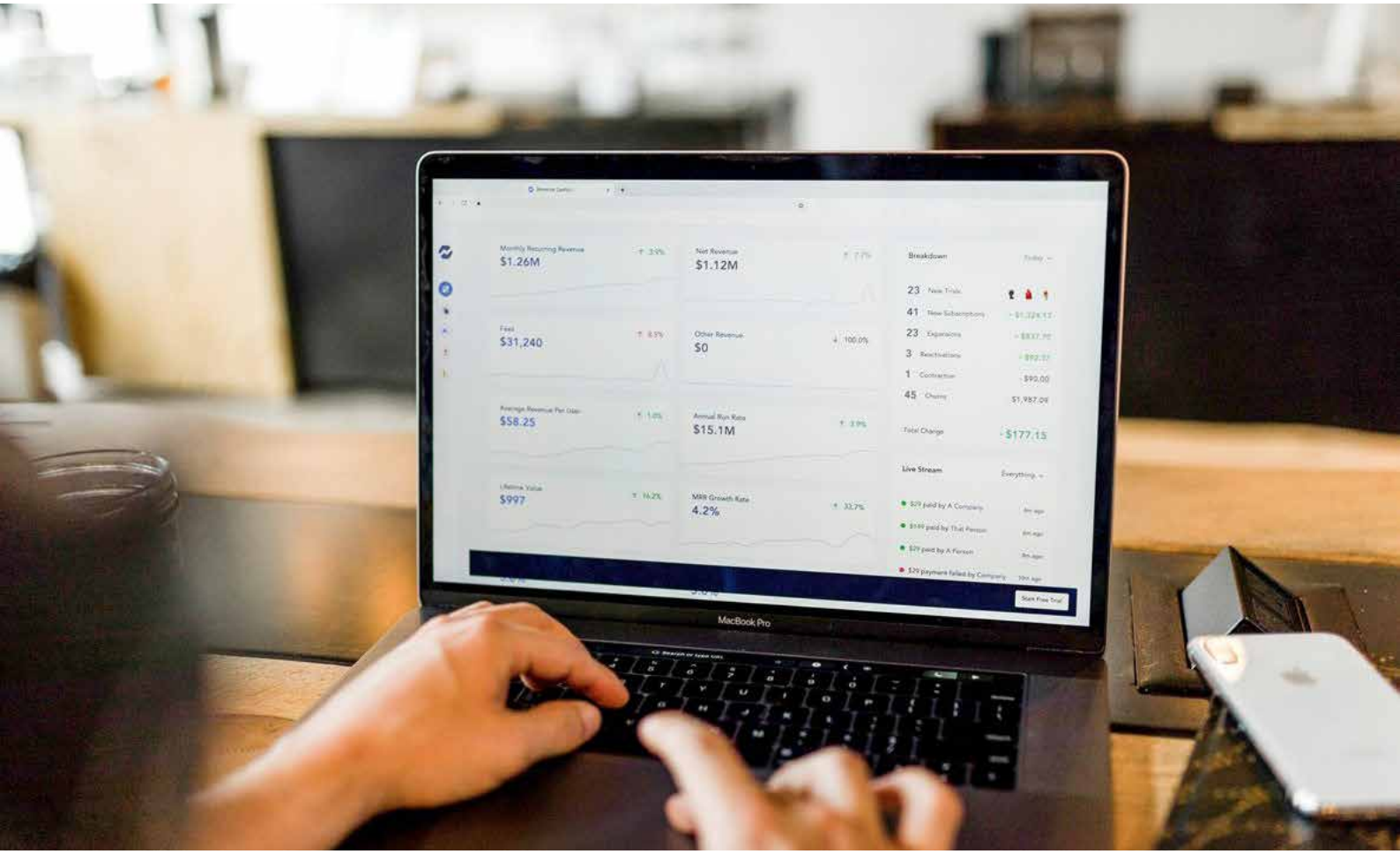


Case Study

# Taking a regional eCommerce platform to global markets

Our client was an outdoor and sports apparel brand which had launched five years ago, with physical stores in 7 major US cities and an eCommerce store serving (mainly) the North American market.

Having conducted detailed market analysis, our client wanted to localize its eCommerce platform to target new markets in Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Contacting Alpha in early 2020, the client needed to have fully functional localized sites up and running by March. Dedicating a multidisciplinary team of specialists to the project, Alpha was ready to meet the challenge.

**ALPHA LTD**
St Andrew's House
St Andrew's Road
Cambridge CB4 1DL
United Kingdom

@thisisalphalive

**thisisalpha.com**

## Assessing the landscape

The first stage in any eCommerce localization project involves analysis and assessment. In partnership with our client, our team conducted a detailed review of the client's existing eCommerce platform, noting its strengths and weaknesses in terms of usability, brand identify, SEO, market penetration and profitability.

In turn, this led to the development of a localization strategy for the target markets and the creation of a project plan to localize territory-specific eCommerce sites for China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Germany, France and the UK..

## Multi-region eCommerce localization: cultural relevance

There are many aspects to rolling out an eCommerce launch in multiple territories, which is why a global localization provider such as Alpha is well positioned to meet the challenge.

Drawing on the client's own market research, we helped to refine product selection for each of the key markets to ensure maximum cultural relevance and seasonal appropriateness.

Based on market intelligence and long-term growth strategies, we secured top-level localized domain names for our client in each target market. These would be resourced by a content management system and eCommerce platform that could serve multiple localized sites. Allowing for local hosting, greater customization options and faster download times, using country-specific top-level domain names was the optimal solution to meet our client's goals.

Based on the design guidelines, we created six sites which were brand aligned but allowed for customization within each territory.

For launch, 300+ product descriptions were localized for each of the six localized sites. This was more than a case of simple word-for-word translation. The tone-of-voice of this brand's product descriptions meant we need to use our in-house transcreators to adapt creative, idiomatic language that expressed the energy and vitality of the brand in a new cultural setting.

Content, of course, involves more than just words. Our in-country experts advised on the appropriateness of visual elements of the eCommerce sites. In particular, we advised our client on guidelines to commission photography which would meet culturally appropriate dress standards in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.

## Getting technical

In the eCommerce world, effective search engine optimization (SEO) is at the heart of every successful site. Based on our client's keywords for its site, we conducted keyword analysis in each target market to find the most relevant trending keywords and phrases – very often, these are not straightforward word-for-word translations of the original terms.

Creating a list of target keywords for each market allowed our linguists to create natural, flowing content that ranked highly in local searches. Our content creators paid special attention to use of keywords in titles, headings and metadata. They also focused on keyword density, ensuring that pages are not "overloaded" with keywords in ways that lower rankings in search engines. Special attention was also paid to navigation. For example, because German typically uses up to one third more characters than English, we needed to adapt certain navigation terms to ensure menus stayed within the boundaries of the design layout. For Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, the challenge for our design and content team was to ensure that the navigation and content worked seamlessly reading in Arabic from right to left.

Of course, our client was planning to launch new products in different markets on a continuous basis. That required the development of a full localization system that streamlined the workflows and ensured maximum effectiveness. To achieve this, Alpha's Solutions Architects and Tools Team created a series of content connectors that would ensure a seamless flow from content creation, through to our translation management systems and onto the eCommerce platforms while retaining full quality assurance at all stages.

## The results

Prior to launch, Alpha conducted full linguistic quality assurance and functional quality assurance audits to ensure both content and functionality were optimal. This included rigorous testing in different browsers and ensuring the sites worked optimally on mobile platforms. Two months after launch, our client has reported better-than-target sales figures in five out of six new markets (the other market hit its sales target). Other key analytics have also met or exceeded client targets, including the number of website visitors, total number of transactions and total store visits.

Alpha maintains a long-term contract to provide localization services for our client and discussions are ongoing for localizing eCommerce sites for five new target markets.

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