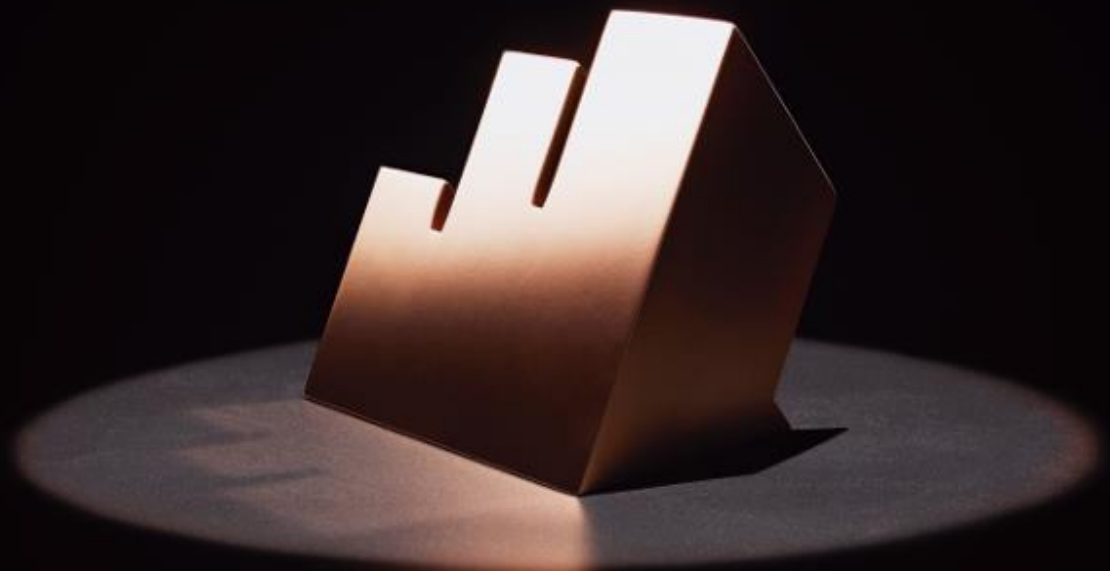




effieAwards
United Kingdom

2023 Effie Winner



Hello

We've pulled together some of the most interesting and inspiring 2023 cases to bring to life what an Effie award-winning entry looks like. We hope that they provide some helpful pointers for those of you tasked with writing submissions for this year's awards.

With a masterclass in taking home a trophy with work that isn't comms-based, here's one of last year's winners: ***Transforming H&M's business by placing search at the heart of the customer experience - H&M by Digitas*** (entered in the Sustained Success – Products category); an inspired approach to revolutionising H&M's online business. Bear in mind that only the Sustained Success categories require 3 years of data, so please don't be put off by the scale and range of this case!

For more information and advice to help you write your best entry and maximise your chances of winning visit [our Awards website](#).

If you have any questions at any stage of the entry process, please ask and we'll be happy to help. Just email effieuk@effie.org

We wish you all the best in this year's Effie Awards UK!

Effie UK



Executive Summary

The Challenge

H&M was not set up to win in a rapidly growing ecommerce market, putting its market share at risk.

The Insight

Search was a key digital battleground that H&M needed to win to survive the shift to ecommerce.

The Strategic Idea/build

Create a customer-centric digital shopfront putting customer search behaviour at the heart of the experience.

Bringing the Strategy to Life

We transformed H&M's online business by putting data at the heart of all decisions, powering a modern commerce engine.

The Results

H&M's new customer-centric online presence delivered £62M incremental organic revenue, with an ROI over 30:1 four years running.

Why is this entry an outstanding example of effective marketing in this Effie entry category? WARNING: This isn't your usual creative award submission. It isn't a story of a single big creative idea and execution. There's no memorable tagline here. No catchy jingle.

Instead, this is a story about transformation - about change from the inside. About the power of data and consumer analytics, and how they were harnessed to completely transform a business: its culture, processes, operations, and approach to a channel. About putting quantifiable insight at the centre of everything to deliver huge revenue and unimaginable ROI, securing H&M's place in digital commerce.

Section 1: Challenge, Context &



1A. Before your effort began, what state of the brand’s business and the overall category in which it competes? What was the strategic challenge for your business? Provide context on the degree of difficulty of this challenge. How did it change over the course of your effort?

H&M is a global giant, the second largest in worldwide high street fashion retail in 2018, with a 70-year history. But in a world where more and more clothes shopping was being done online, it was a brand in danger of being left behind by ‘digital natives’ like ASOS and Boohoo.

When we engaged with H&M in 2018, they’d only just started their digital transformation. As with many mature global retailers, high-street stores were still prioritised, and at the time digital represented a minority of H&M’s revenue. But online retail was growing exponentially.

This made H&M vulnerable. The fashion industry graveyard is littered with companies which failed to make the digital shift: Arcadia, Debenhams, Laura Ashley, Victoria's Secret - the list goes on.

The challenge for H&M

To secure their future, fashion retailers like H&M need to succeed in digital.

A key part of succeeding in digital is winning at Search. In a huge proportion of cases, Search is how the sales journey starts.

When you search for something online, you get two kinds of results. There are Paid Search listings that an advertiser paid to have put there. And there are Organic Search listings that are supplied, for free, by the algorithm.

H&M were spending heavily on Paid Search. It was often bringing them one-off fast-fashion customers who didn’t always return. It meant they had to keep on spending more to bring in the next batch. It was enormously expensive and not cost effective.

H&M’s digital-only rivals, meanwhile, unencumbered by legacy systems and physical stores, were focusing single-mindedly on digital success, had achieved organic visibility in ways that built their brands, cost them a fraction of what H&M were spending, and created a long-term snowball effect that didn’t dry up the moment investment was reduced.

H&M urgently needed to get better at SEO.

The degree of difficulty

Rival brands had been built from the ground up on SEO. H&M historically hadn’t invested in it and had only recently hired their first Head of SEO, who became the only internal SEO team member.

To win at SEO you need to factor in thousands of considerations, which must all come together in three core pieces:

- A digital platform technically optimised for search engines
- Content which helps search engines match customers' queries
- Be cited by other credible and relevant online sources

SEO is unique amongst media channels in that you can't deliver results in isolation. Although H&M's Head of SEO was onboard, we needed to:

- Completely overhaul site content, requiring many different stakeholders and multiple, data-driven approaches
- Convince existing PR and campaign teams to work in new ways to secure the right types of citations
- Persuade H&M's already stretched development team to provide substantial resources and prioritise our needs

These would be challenges for any business. But for a multinational retailer with 120,000 employees (2) and legacy systems and processes, it would be harder still because:

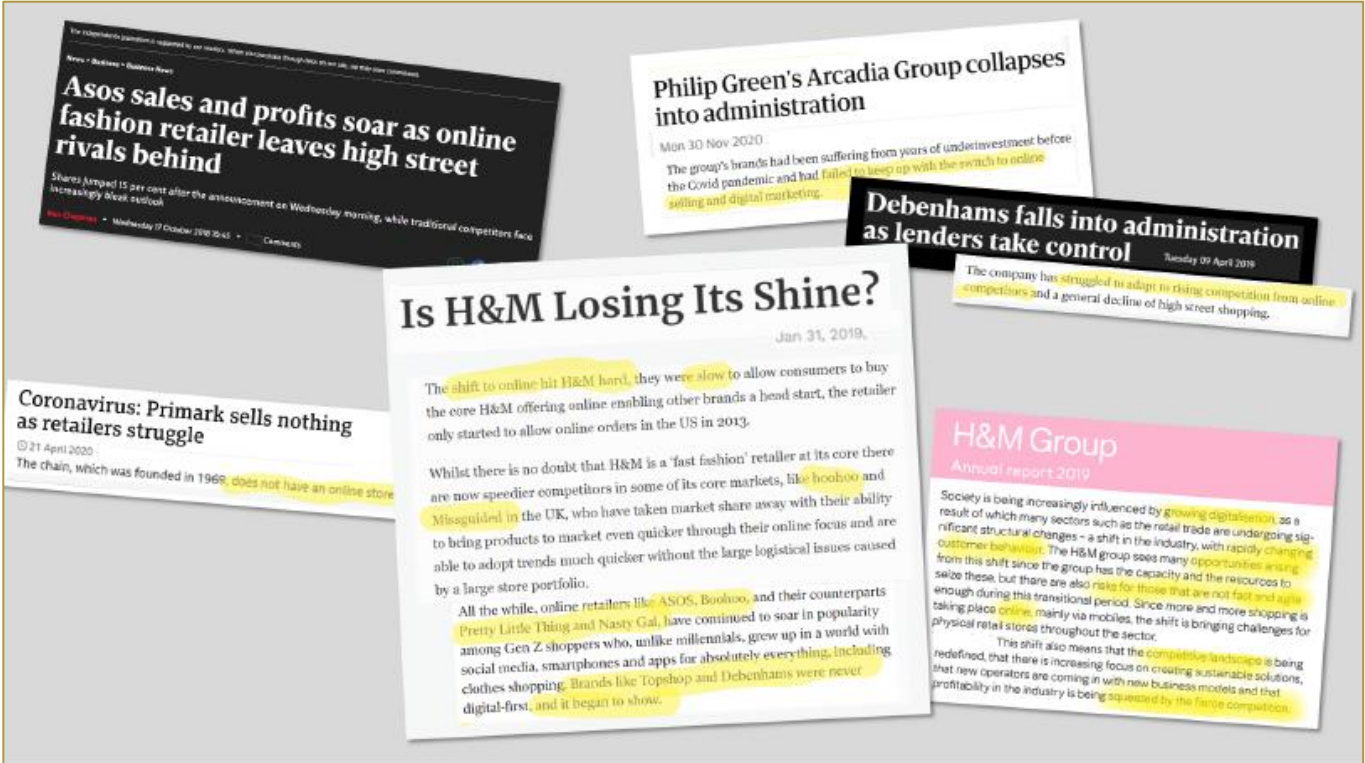
- Their digital shopfront mirrored the physical stores, missing digital search behaviours.
- Their PR and Campaign teams had never even met the SEO team
- All changes required business cases to secure development resource. H&M had struggled to illustrate the opportunity to secure the resource required
- Teams within H&M were siloed. There was no strategic view of how to collaborate to drive synergies for the digital age.

Each of these areas individually presented critical challenges. But we needed to make change happen, everywhere, all at once, if we were to deliver the step change that H&M needed to win in the rapidly growing online market.

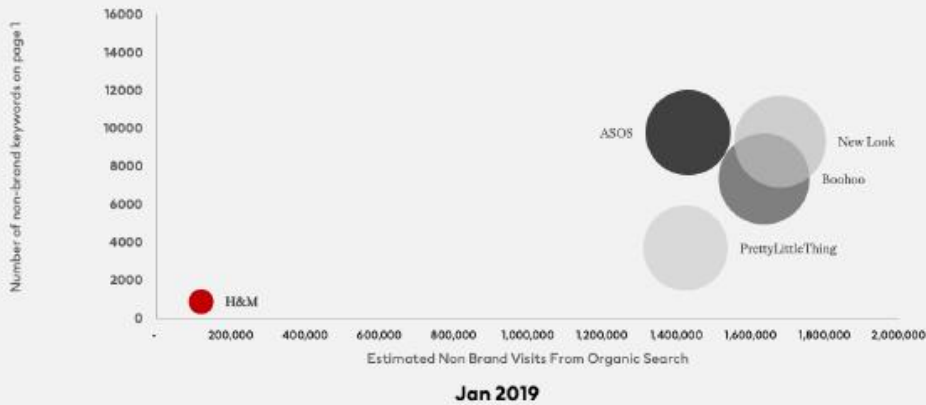
It was clear that a drastic change was urgently needed. Cultures needed to be transformed. Processes needed to be up-ended. Silos needed to be broken down.

Today, we're going to show you how we transformed H&M in a world increasingly driven by online search... just in time for COVID to come along and upend ecommerce forever.

And we'll show you how we're continuing to scale today, tapping into the power of automation and neural networks.



H&M were being left behind by digitally native rivals and brands who had heavily invested in SEO



Source: AWR Cloud priority set of 35k non-brand product terms relevant to H&M's audience

- Y axis represents number of keywords ranking on page 1.
- X axis & size of bubble represent estimated non-brand traffic. Calculated using search volume (Google) & average click-through rate by ranking position (AWR Cloud CTR study) for each keyword.

1B. What were the Business, Marketing and Campaign/Activity objectives that you set to address your challenge? What were the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set against each objective? How did they change overtime? Provide specific numbers/percentages for each and benchmarks wherever possible.

Business Objective

Drive £39.6M incremental revenue from organic search over 4 years.

Rationale

We mapped out a plan of specific, realistic but ambitious actions that H&M would need to take each year to increase organic visibility and revenue.

We combined this with our opportunity analysis, and the agency worked with H&M to build a forecasting model to set revenue targets for annual growth between 2019 to 2022.

Taken together, the target was set at a combined figure of £39.6M UK incremental organic revenue across these four years.

These ambitious targets then became our business case for transformation - any let up in pace would mean missing both parties forecasts.

Measurement

Google Analytics 360 - organic sales performance.

Our forecasts consider wider factors outside of our control such as brand demand, to give a representative view of incremental SEO revenue.

Marketing Objective

- Increase non-brand Share of Search (i.e. Share of Voice in search).
- KPI: Number of target non-brand keywords ranking on page 1 of Google UK.

Rationale

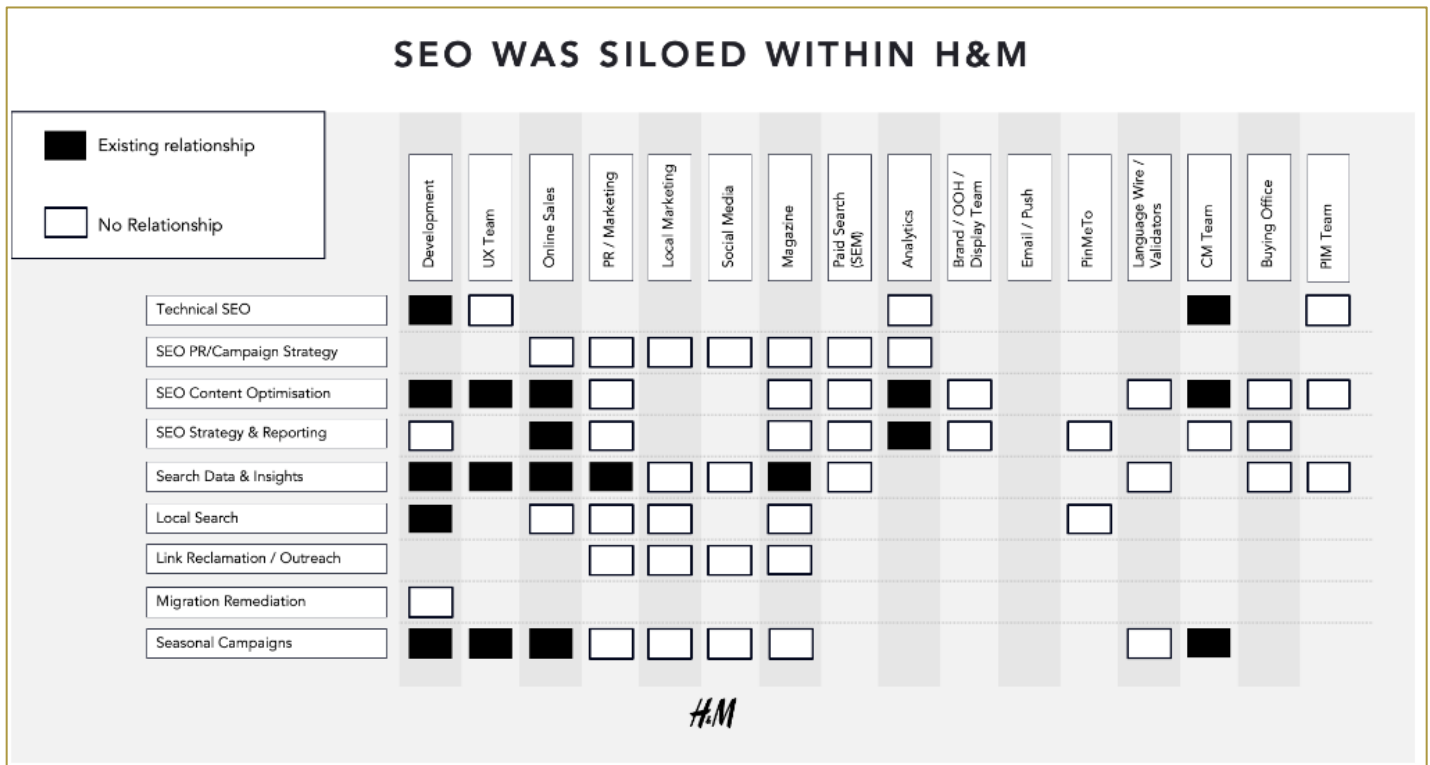
Most consumers are not searching for your brands, they're searching for a specific item like a tennis bracelet or green slip dress.

They're also notoriously impatient, so if your brand doesn't appear on the first page of Google, you've lost them to your competitors.

We know that over 90% of consumers don't go past the first page of search results ⁽⁶⁾ - if you don't rank on page 1, you're invisible to over 90% of consumers.

So if we wanted to have a storefront on the digital high street and make the most of all the digital footfall, we needed to be on page 1. Anything after that was like being on a dark uninviting side street

Benchmark: Close the gap in page 1 rankings with key competitors.



Measurement

- Volume of pages created per year.
- Tracking working relationships between SEO & Internal H&M teams.
- Number of new processes established and efficiency improvements.

Campaign Objective #2

To find new opportunities for H&M to create targeted pages to capture demand from customers searching for H&M products.

KPI: Number of new opportunities identified and search volume.

Rationale

Having fixed the disconnected teams and built an optimised production line able to build and launch new landing pages at a much faster pace, we then had to work out what pages to create!

And we needed to ensure that this new production line was constantly full of new opportunities - any pause in production was a missed opportunity to catch those customers who would otherwise go to H&M's competitors.

So, our next objective was to identify as many of the opportunities to create targeted landing pages as possible - to ensure that we would never have a break in production.

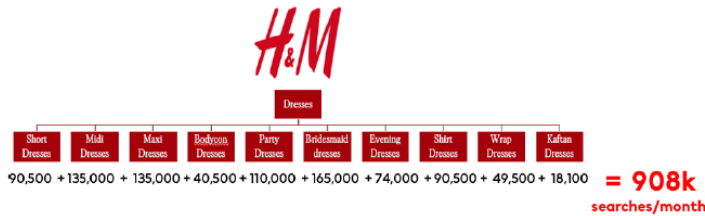
But we weren't satisfied with just optimising what H&M had - we went further and helped H&M to understand what products they were missing, enabling them to expand their product range based on our insights and reach more customers.

H&M was falling behind the digital native competition

Competitors like MISSGUIDED had far more targeted landing pages for different styles of dresses than H&M did, so they were capturing more search demand for dresses

We cast a wider net by broadening H&M's offering of navigational pages on site, providing customers with more choice and making H&M visible in search

2019



MISSGUIDED



2023

Dresses	135,000
Midi Dresses	135,000
Maxi Dresses	40,500
Mini Dresses	90,500
Shirt Dresses	49,500
Wrap Dresses	49,500
Linen Dresses	27,100
Beach Dresses	33,100
Puff Sleeve Dresses	14,800
Halter Neck Dresses	33,100
Sleeveless Dresses	3,600
Cut-Out Dresses	18,100
Cami & Slip Dresses	8,100
Knitted dresses	22,200
T-Shirt Dresses	60,500
Denim Dresses	40,500
Long Sleeve Dresses	49,500
Bodycon Dresses	60,500
Sequin Dresses	74,000
A-line	40,500
Jumper Dresses	74,000
Wedding Guest Dresses	22,200
Party Dresses	110,000
	550,000
	110,000

= 1.9 million searches/month

Measurement

- Number of opportunities identified & adding together the combined search volume from each of these opportunities.
- Secondary metric: Achieving product range expansion based on search insights.

Campaign Objective #3

Help more undecided consumers find and buy the items they are looking for from H&M, by building more targeted experiences matching their needs.

KPI: Number of target pages created.

Rationale

H&M didn't have a customer-centric online user experience compared to its digitally native competitors who had invested more heavily in SEO.

In the offline world, if a customer wants a 'long-sleeved white top', they walk into the store and find the rack of tops and browse to find a suitable product.

In the digital age, this won't cut it - we need to connect that consumer directly with a digital "rack" of products that matches their need - if they land on a generic, store-like navigational experience, this adds extra friction to the journey

and will result in consumers (often with little to no loyalty) leaving to find a store that is better organised and helps fulfil their need.

We need to ensure that the consumer lands on a page only showing long-sleeved white tops - so all they need to do is pick the style they like and check out.

Measurement

Tracked through our 'Living Gap Database', part of our data driven engine, which tracks progress of new page creation.

Data sources Section 1

1. Source: Tharawat Magazine & Wikipedia: H&M second largest international clothing retailer as of 2018 by revenue: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%26M#cite_note-10 & <https://www.tharawat-magazine.com/facts/top-5-largest-fashion-clothing-retailers-world/>
2. Source: H&M Group company reports
3. Source: Klarna Insights study (a partner of Statistia), May 2023 <https://ecommercedb.com/insigh...>
4. Source: H&M Internal Paid Search Cost Data
5. Source: AWR Cloud Non-Brand Keyword Ranking Data Set, Jan 2019 (see visual)
6. Source: AWR Cloud CTR Data, UK, excluding zero-click searches. <https://www.advancedwebranking...>
7. Source: Number of landing pages based on website crawl

Section 2: Strategy: Insights & Strategic Idea



2A. Define the target audience(s) you were trying to reach and explain why it was/they were relevant to the brand and the challenge. Did your audience evolve overtime? If so, describe how and why.

H&M has a very broad audience. Customers are male and female, young and old. Many come for the fashion for which the brand is famous. Others come for homewares, sportswear and beauty products, all of which are available on the H&M website.

If you had to generalise, you'd say that H&M's products are reasonably-priced overall. However, some of the brand's designer collaborations crossover into high-end fashion, and H&M customers come from across the income spectrum. They may buy the exact same things, but for very different reasons. Take a basic white T-shirt as an example. For some, that will be a staple. But equally, some luxury-oriented consumers come looking for an understated item to pair with designer garments costing many times more, to create a unique and personalised look.

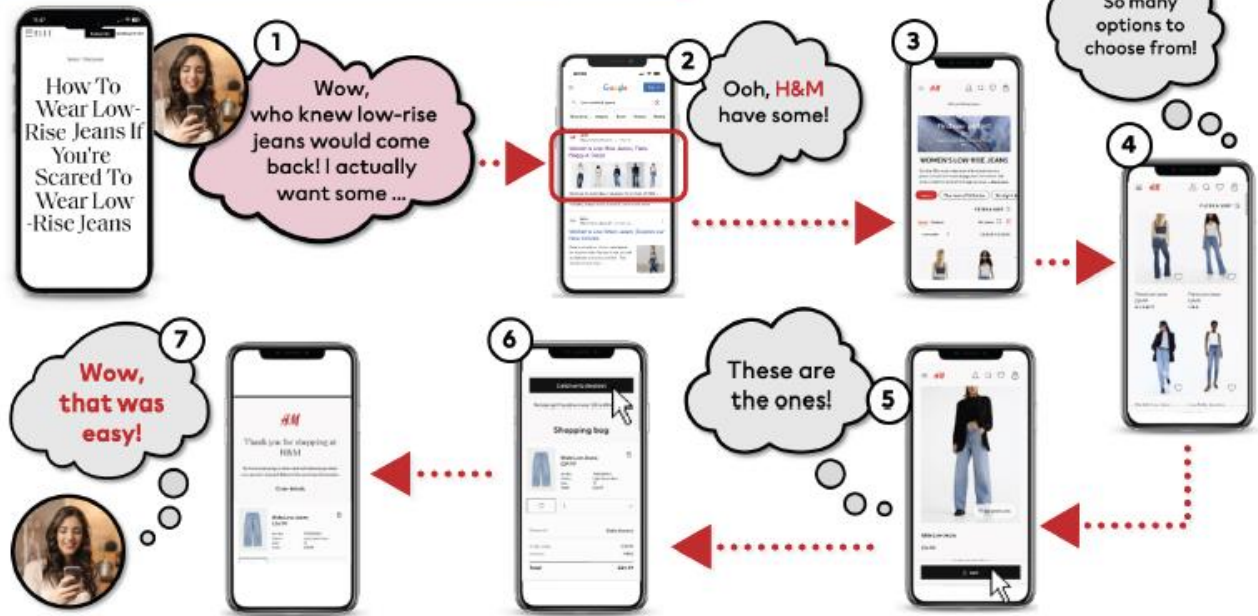
Within the marketing and advertising industry generally there are two ways in which targeting is commonly done. One way is to find the common characteristics that unite widely differing groups of consumers. The other way is to segment audiences, typically by demographics or psychographics.

But neither of those ways were right or feasible for this project, or achievable in the world of SEO. So instead we took a different approach altogether. We looked at it through the other end of the telescope. Rather than starting with the person and working our way to the product, we took as our starting point the products people were searching for and the specific needs they were expressing, through their search behaviour, at the exact moment they were doing it.

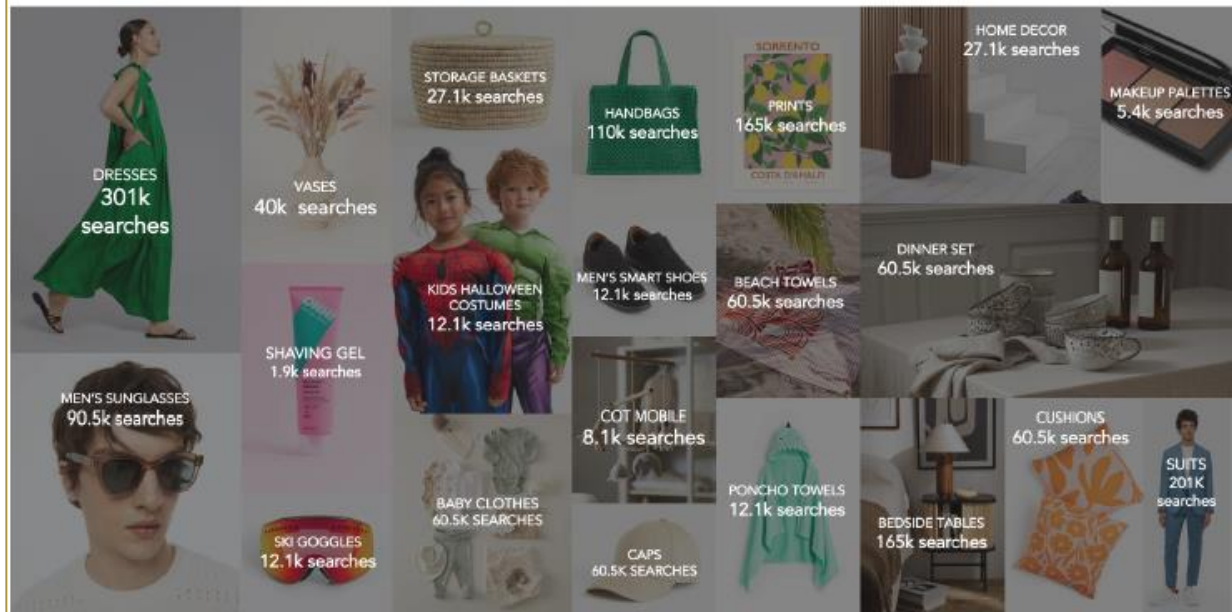
By harnessing SEO, we were then able to make H&M visible for those searches, with a landing page full of products which were directly relevant to that customer's need, right there and then. We didn't need to guess from a customer's demographics that they might be interested in a floral shirt - we knew that they were interested, at that very moment, and we were able to directly respond to their query by providing the relevant page and products on site.

This contextual targeting at enormous scale resulted in thousands of different micro-audiences each receiving the exact product that they were looking for at their point of need.

The ecommerce customer journey



TARGETING AUDIENCES IN THE "I WANT TO BUY MOMENT"



2B. Explain the thinking that led you to your insight(s). Some insights come from research, data, and analytics. Others come from inspiration. Describe your insight(s) here. Did your insight(s) evolve over the course of your activity?

Through internal audits and external research we discovered that as for many big, established 'bricks and mortar' retail brands, H&M's digital evolution was being blocked by massive complexity and disconnection, both within the organisation and in understanding consumers' multifaceted needs.

The agency started in 2018 by getting deep under the hood of H&M's business, with an extensive brand immersion exercise in collaboration with H&M to map out the key parts of their complex organisation, how it fitted together, and what the pain points were, to identify where the bottlenecks to growth would be.

We identified that many critical teams in H&M were disconnected, working in silos and without considering the impact of their work on organic search performance. Furthermore, we identified numerous processes which were slow and cumbersome, hampering H&M's ability to grow.

Our SEO team then undertook a massive in-depth SEO keyword research exercise to understand what their customers wanted to find across all of their diverse product ranges - everything from clothing, shoes and accessories for casual occasions to sportswear, formal apparel, trend pieces, staple basics and more for women, men, kids and babies of all ages, as well as a large range of beauty products and home décor for your bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, garden and more.

We identified tens of thousands of relevant keywords representing hundreds of millions of individual customer searches. By comparing the content gaps not covered by H&M with their existing sales data for each product area, we identified where the customer was not able to find H&M. We then used this to estimate the revenue potential of each and every missed opportunity - and the combined potential was worth millions.

Lastly, we undertook extensive SEO audits of H&M's current site across all of the key pillars of SEO - from our tech specialists looking at the platform's code to areas where their existing content wasn't customer-centric for search, to places where their campaigns were missing additional opportunities to drive more engagement and authority for their site, and everything in between.

We would also need to stay on top of trends, with a dizzying array of entirely new styles of clothing being invented on a constant basis, and new fashion trends coming and going. However, our data showed that although many consumers shop for the latest trends, there are huge numbers of consumers who look for product trends from previous years. We would need to win for both sets of customers.

We now had a compelling business case to put this at the top of the client's agenda, and a detailed picture of all the different areas where things weren't working - now we needed a plan.

2C. What was the strategic idea or build followed from your insights that enabled you to pivot from challenge to solution for your brand and customer? If the strategic idea or build developed over the course of your activity (3 years +) tell us how

If the blockage to H&M's digital evolution was complexity and disconnection, the answer lay in simplicity and connection.

When it comes to search, the needs of the consumers and businesses involved are very simple and deeply interconnected. Customers want to find exactly what they're looking for straightaway. Google wants them to find it. H&M wants to be front and centre when Google suggests to the consumer what brands to visit to buy the product they are looking for.

Our strategy showed H&M what a bespoke customer-centric digital user experience would look like if it put this real customer search behaviour at its heart.

Like a high-end car or a computer, the output would be effortless, uncomplicated and designed around user needs.

Under the bonnet, however, the engineering that went into it needed to be advanced and highly technical.

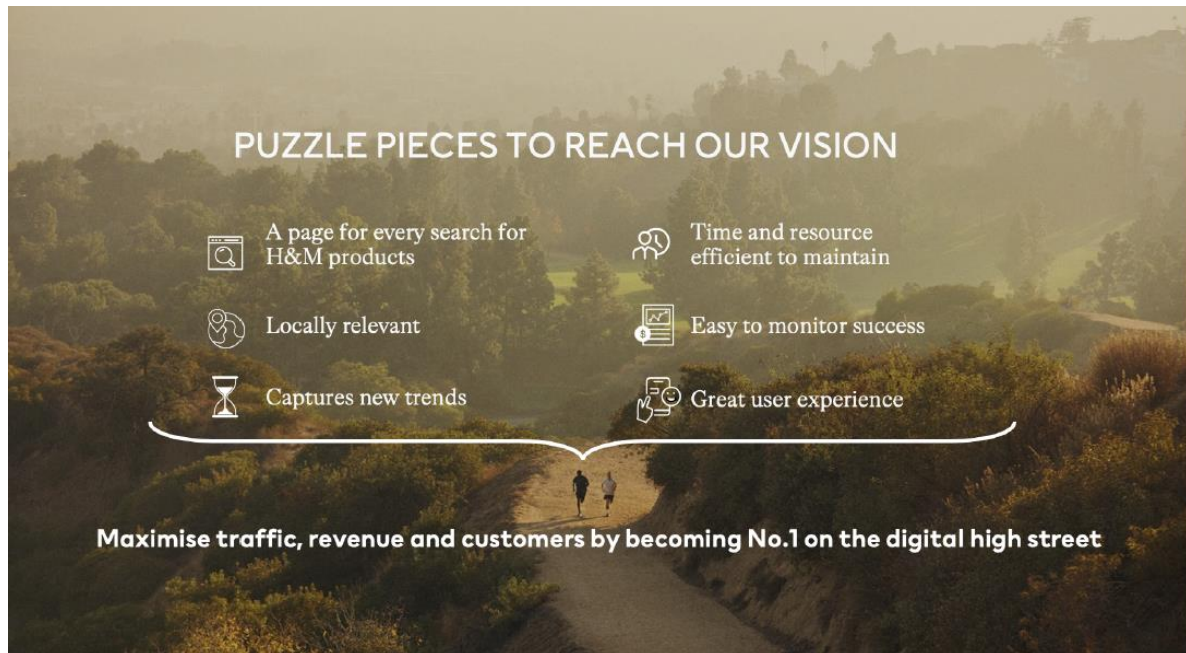
H&M needed a page for every possible search opportunity. In a physical store, you only have limited space for different products and you might not be able to stock each of those products in every size and colour that every customer might want. But in the digital world, there's no limit.

And their new digital shopfront would need to handle long-term growth of up to 30x in size, whilst making sure that Google could find all of these pages and customers would find H&M when they searched.

It would need to provide data-led feedback loops to enable continuous improvement. H&M was tracking a few hundred keywords - we would need a solution that would let us track 100 times more terms, but flexible enough to quickly spot any performance issues across their huge product range.

The many thousands of pages needed to fit together to form a neatly organised digital shopfront that offered consumers a good experience to navigate around, offering stimulation and inspiration for those seeking the latest look while providing ease and reassurance for those seeking a specific piece or an old favourite.

And everything would evolve over time, to meet changing consumer needs.



Data sources Section 2

1. Source: H&M internal campaign information. See also summary from Vogue: <https://www.vogue.com/article/...>
2. Source: Internal H&M data
3. Source: Google keyword planner data combined with H&M Analytics Data.
4. Source: 'Gap Analysis' data vs initial site size of Product Listing Pages (PLPs) from site crawl
5. Source: Keyword research (Google Keyword Planner data) vs. previous reporting solution

**Section 3:
Bringing the
Strategy &
Idea to Life**



3A. Describe the key elements of your plan that activated your strategy. Outline any components that were active in the effort e.g. CRM programme, customer experience, pricing changes as well as promotions and communications. If the balance of these elements shifted over the period of your effort, outline how and why.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) was THE key element of our plan. We took SEO from a peripheral, passive-engagement, nice-to-have element of the marketing mix and gave it a starring role, leading the entire end-to-end ecommerce content process and orchestrating all relevant teams inside H&M.

We overhauled the page production process. We vastly reduced the lead-time to get pages live. We improved the quality of content and tailored it better to consumer search behaviour.

We developed business cases and drove enhancements to content scripting processes, enabling content rollout at scale, reducing the internal resource required by H&M and dramatically cutting implementation time.

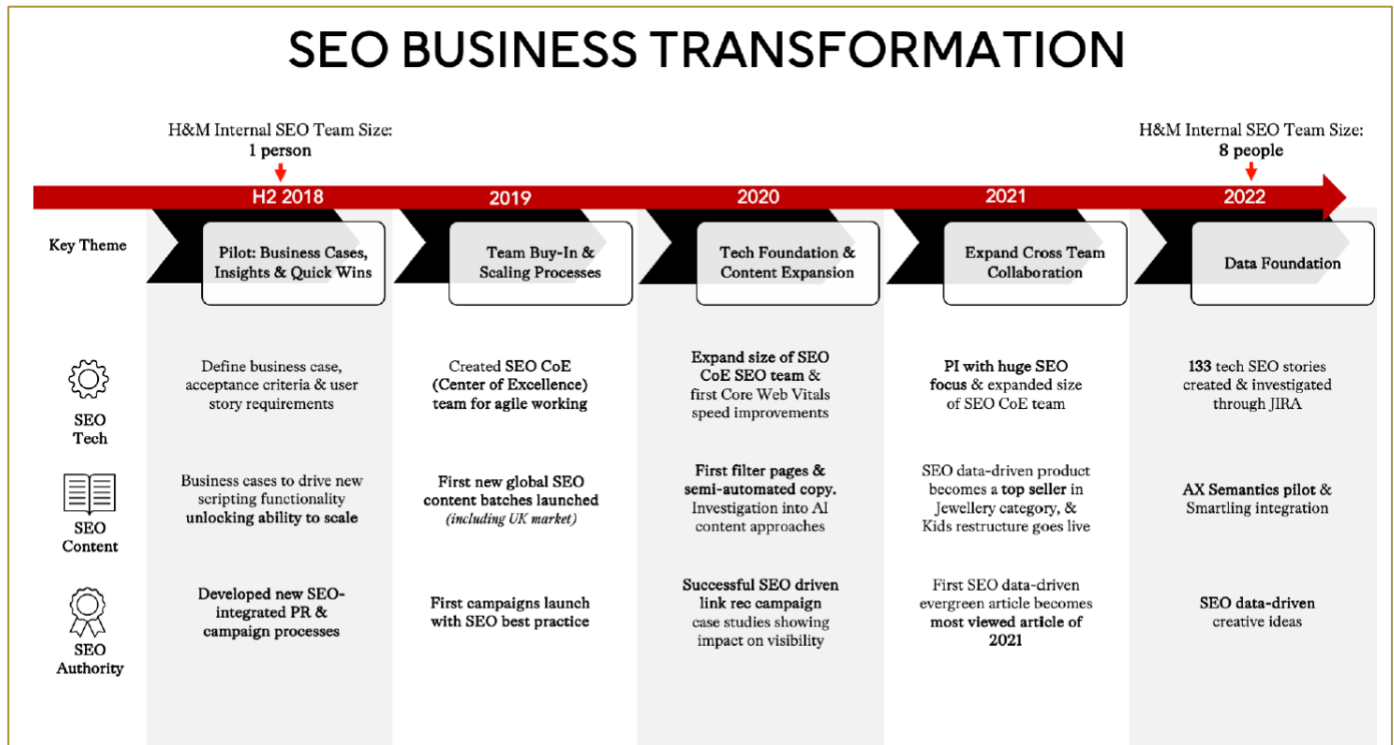
We sped up post-launch validation, allowing H&M to check newly launched content health within minutes instead of using time-consuming manual checks, and for ongoing checks we introduced new content monitoring tools, processes and workflows to ensure that website content actually improved even as we vastly scaled up the size of the site.

All of this resulted in more pages rolling out more quickly, capturing more traffic and driving more sales.

Creating new landing pages alone was not enough to win - we also needed to ensure that search engines could find them, and that the site was fast and responsive. So the agency embedded its SEO team directly into the client's development workstreams, taking ownership of delivering key technical improvements.

And for Google to value the H&M website, they needed to acquire relevant links from authoritative publications. But their PR team had never even met SEO. So we secured buy-in from one of the largest and most experienced PR teams in the industry (to illustrate, H&M has a 24/7 PR hotline) embedding SEO insights throughout the process.

The agency helped H&M to make the case to expand its internal SEO team to provide connectors inside the business who could collaborate with the huge number of internal stakeholders, and streamline lines of communication. The agency and client teams have grown together as we continue to prove the SEO value driven, and we have developed an incredibly close working relationship, functioning as a single joined-up SEO team.



3B. Outline the key building blocks of the creative executions for your main marketing vehicles e.g. endline, call-to-actions and format choices etc.

As we said upfront, this isn't a typical Effie entry. There isn't a snappy endline or a memorable call-to-action. So the building blocks aren't what you might expect.

Our programme used data on consumer online fashion search behaviour to drive business effectiveness through SEO. And we did it all at an incredible scale and pace.

The key building blocks of our campaign were the thousands of new landing pages we created to capture the millions of searches that H&M was missing out on.

And in a dynamic online world that's constantly evolving, we needed a flywheel delivering continuous growth and scale. To achieve that, we needed everyone at the agency and at H&M to play their part.

At the heart of all of this we built a data-driven engine, bringing a bespoke suite of tools, processes, tracking capabilities and feedback loops, to put insight and its mastery at everyone's fingertips.

The key starting point was our 'Gap Analysis', which gave H&M the business case it needed. It has evolved substantially over the years, and now forms our 'Living Gap Database'.

We brought our strategy to our target market by completely rebuilding H&M's digital shopfront around the principles of customer-centricity.

But with so many pages needing to be created and optimised, we worked according to a triage process, prioritising amongst the many thousands of pages according to their urgency and the amount of time and effort involved. The aim was to secure the biggest, quickest wins first.

After that we then moved out to the pages and sections needing to be built from scratch or completely overhauled (like the Kids and Baby section, which didn't match the way parents actually search for children's clothing).

Scaling Up

As we added more pages, we saw that one of the biggest challenges would be the cost of manually hand-crafting copy for thousands of pages. The deeper we went, the lower the search opportunity for each page⁽¹⁵⁾, and the lower the potential return.

However, the combined opportunity was enormous, as were the pitfalls of poor quality content.

To illustrate the potential for things to go wrong, imagine automating text for a page selling men's shirts in black. There was a risk of simple templates scrambling words to something like "black men's shirts."

We needed to create pages at scale whilst maintaining quality.

In mid-2021, after researching different approaches, including GPT models, we picked an innovative data-to-text tool called AX Semantics, capable of generating hundreds of optimised pages at the click of a button whilst maintaining Tone of Voice and content quality.

Rather than jumping on the generative AI bandwagon, we spotted the critical use case for machine learning and AI, leveraging neural networks for key language components whilst achieving superior quality control compared with LLMs such as ChatGPT. And we've laid a foundation for future automated testing of copy variations at a scale hitherto unimaginable.

Supporting Buying Teams

Using search data to choose which products should be created is something most SEO agencies only dream of, especially for large established brands such as H&M.

We've actually done it.

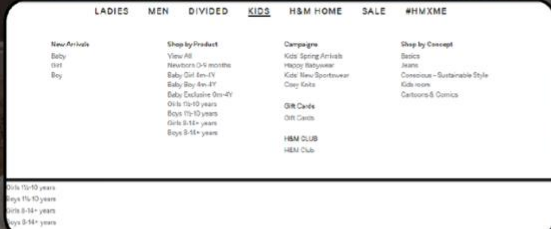
First, we identified where H&M had insufficient stock, guiding Buying teams to expand their product range and enabling us to create a landing page to achieve visibility for those products.

We also spotted top searched opportunities where H&M didn't have any products at all, enabling H&M to broaden its product range to new lines based on customer demand that they were not previously able to see.

UK Kids & Baby Restructure

The H&M Kids website was not customer centric.

The navigation was sparse, confusing, and did not match how parents search for clothes for children.



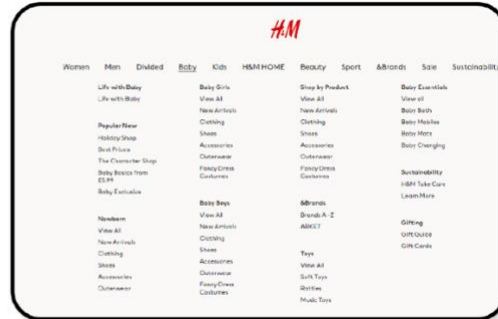
Example insight
Only 7% of UK parents search by age & size

Sources: Google search data, UK market

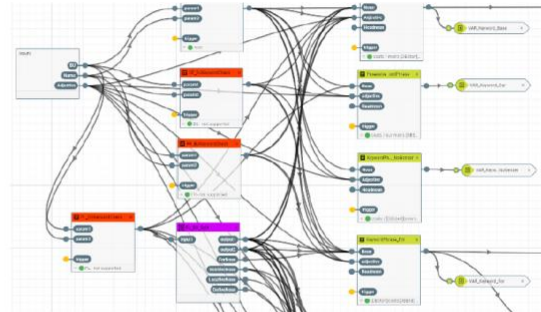
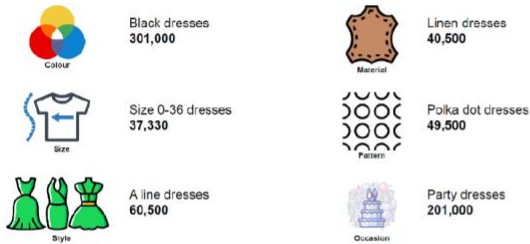
H&M entrusted the agency's SEO team to completely restructure the Kids department to match consumer search behaviour

We designed a new streamlined customer-centric digital experience for Kids & Baby that aligned with how parents shop

We created and optimised 625 pages, and launched the new experience in 2021



UNLOCKING THE LONG TAIL - CONTENT AUTOMATION TO DELIVER SCALE



As we added more pages, we saw that one of the biggest challenges would be the cost of manually hand-crafting copy for thousands of pages.

The deeper we went, the lower the search opportunity for each page, and the lower the individual return. But the overall opportunity is huge.




Manual approaches would not work to deliver the scale required

We solved this using an innovative data-to-text approach, capable of generating hundreds of pages at the click of a button.

Our pilot has launched over 600 new pages using automated approaches alone, showing that we can produce optimised content whilst maintaining Tone of Voice and content quality.

Our solution unlocks huge cost efficiencies, accelerating future growth

SOME OF THE INITIAL PRODUCT GAPS WE IDENTIFIED

LADIES	MENS	HOME
		
tennis bracelets	leather jacket mens	outdoor rug
22.2k searches / month	9.9k searches / month	22.2k searches / month

3D. If relevant, include and explain any important changes to the creative work, channel plans and spend as part of your campaign optimisation over the course of your activity (3 years+).

In 2020 we made significant changes to optimise our creative work and channel plans.

The sudden arrival of covid-19 early in that year had a huge impact on H&M's business and on the fashion industry generally.

The complete shuttering of all of the brand's retail stores meant that ecommerce went from being just one small piece of H&M's overall sales mix to the ONLY sales channel. As a bricks-and-mortar brand, H&M was hugely exposed.

We sprang into action. Just three days after the UK's first national lockdown happened, we proactively delivered an extensive market impact analysis, presenting and analysing data about emerging new search trends and listing concrete actions to take.

If customers were no longer going out, they weren't going to be buying "going-out dresses." Loungewear, on the other hand, was going to be the 'new black'. We rapidly pivoted building out content for trending areas to capture this new demand.


Then, when things opened up, we led the charge on post-lockdown trends. The resurgence of partying. The pent-up demand for weddings⁽¹⁹⁾.

Dynamic Re-Optimisation

We were rolling out new pages at a rapid pace. But we weren't content just to launch and move on. We wanted to ensure that what we'd created was working as well as it should.

So when we identified any pages that underperformed or any areas where we were overtaken by a competitor, we reacted quickly. We used our data-driven engine to identify key drops. Then we refreshed our content with new optimisation to push them back towards page one.


Pivoting to secure visibility for lockdown trends



Our extensive analysis identified numerous changes in buying patterns due to lockdown

We rapidly changed focus to optimising for these trends

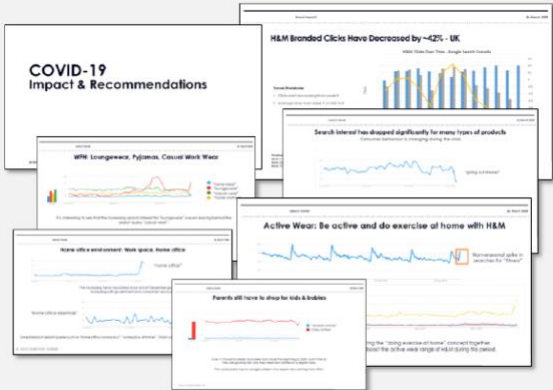
... and responding when the world opened back up

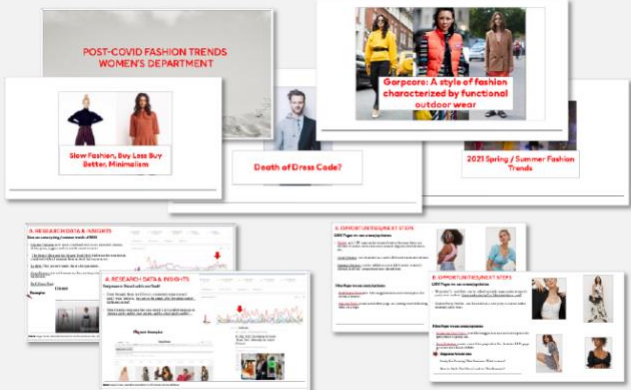


When everyone could all go out again, consumers wanted to look their best!

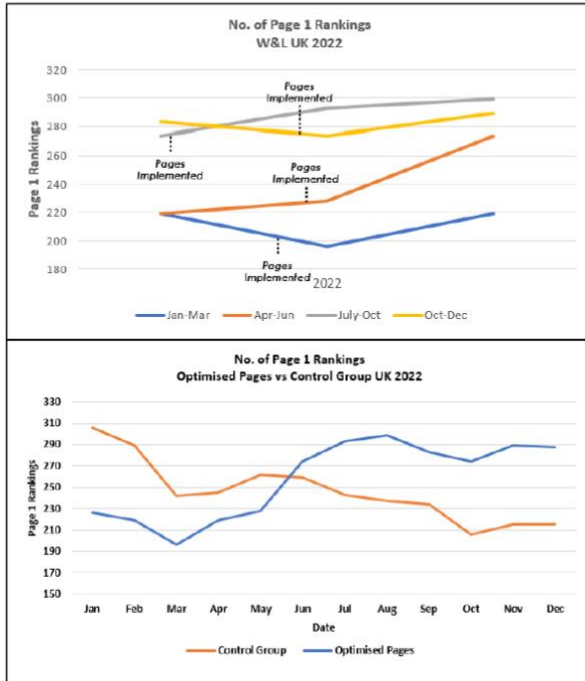
We spotted emerging post-lockdown trends, and switched our focus to catch the rising demand

The 'new normal' trends identified included functional outdoor, basics, new dress code, garden parties, and more





Dynamic Re-optimisation Drove 10% Increase In Page 1 Keywords during 2022



- By conducting monthly monitoring of pages, we prioritized content and promptly identified drops in rankings and visibility.
- In response, we took proactive measures to identify key pages that required improvements and optimized their content to enhance rankings.
- The first chart illustrates the locations of these drops and showcases the outcomes of our optimization efforts as we consistently enhanced on-page copy and content throughout 2022.
- The second chart and yearly view demonstrate the difference in control pages that were not optimized during the same period, highlighting the positive changes we made.

+10%

Increase in keywords ranking on page 1

+33%

Incremental uplift in average positions

+£244K

In estimated incremental revenue

+136K

In estimated incremental traffic

Key Visual



1. Source: H&M Agency Brand Immersion
2. Source: Google search data combined with SEO content gap analysis
3. Source: Google search data
4. Source: Inherent limitation in large language models such as ChatGPT due to output being based on randomly chosen statistical probabilities
5. Source: Google search data combined with product gap analysis
6. Source: CNBC report about impact on store closures on H&M, March 2020 <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/20/hm-closures/index.html>
7. Source: YouGov Daily email bulletin, 14 June 2021

Section 4: Results

4A. Over the course of your activity (3 years +), how do you know it worked? Explain, with category context, why these results are significant for the brand's business. Results must relate back to your specific audience, objectives, and KPIs.

The results were astonishing.

Working with H&M we set out to drive a total of £39.6M of incremental UK revenue from organic search⁽²⁰⁾ over just four years (2019-2022).

It was an incredibly aggressive target.

Yet we smashed it.

We drove an enormous £62M of incremental SEO revenue over the four year period. That's a 56% over delivery on target.

We achieved this by nothing less than total transformation. Everywhere. All at once. We broke down silos. We restructured and reorchestrated teams to work together. We improved or streamlined 35 different business processes

When we started out, H&M's production pipeline for creating high-value targeted landing pages was slow and cumbersome. We are now rolling out new pages nearly twenty times faster.

We identified over 19,000 opportunities to create new targeted landing pages, and so made sure that the production pipeline never ran dry. And we did this not only for products which H&M sold, but for products they could sell, by expanding their range into new territories. One of our recommended new products ended up becoming a top seller in its category.

And we've now tapped into the power of automation, to allow us to scale up even faster.

The end result is a transformed customer experience that truly reflects what the audience was looking for. H&M's online shopfront is finally fit for the digital age and no longer a replica of its high-street stores. No matter what fashion consumers search for, H&M has a rack of products to match, giving customers exactly what they want.

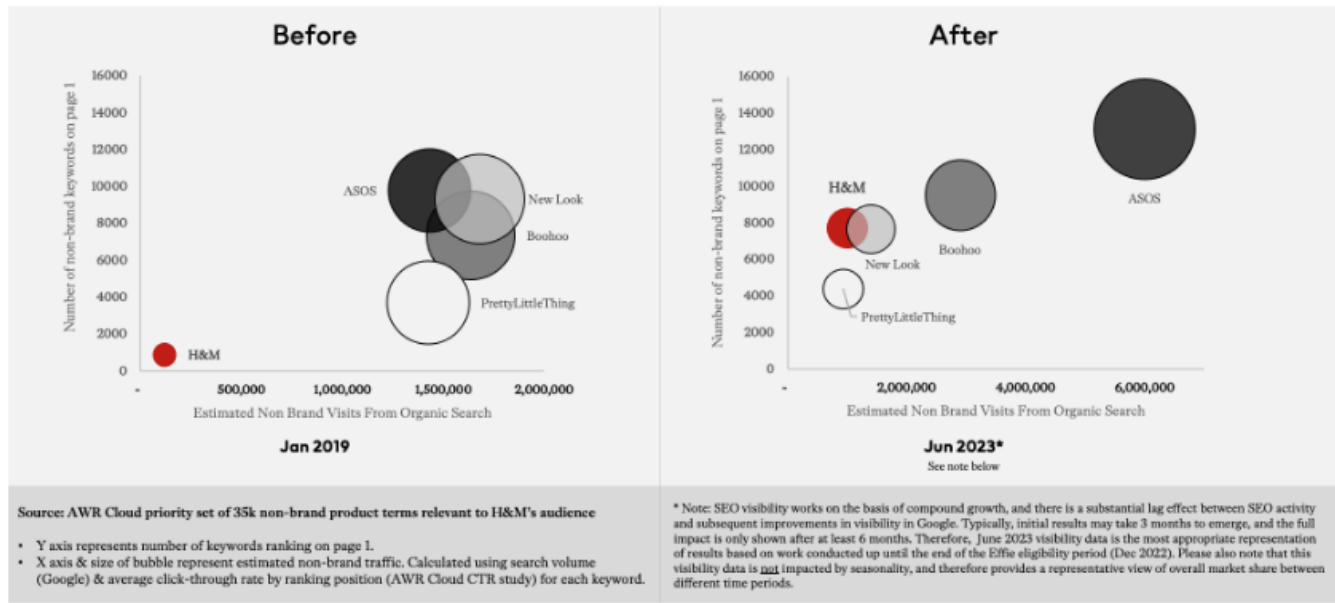
In recognition, Google has rewarded H&M by driving them to the first page for customer searches, achieving a staggering 518% increase in the number of target non-brand terms ranking on page 1⁽²⁵⁾. H&M's visibility in Google increased faster than its key UK competitors, including ASOS, Boohoo, PrettyLittleThing and New Look.

So whatever product consumers searched for - a white long-sleeved top, some high-waisted trousers, an oversized chunky knit cardigan - H&M's online shopfront was front and centre, accessible with a single click and offering a frictionless experience to buy.

And we've delivered exceptional business returns. The UK effort was part of a global programme which drove 30:1 ROI. The ROI for the UK portion is estimated to significantly exceed this⁽²⁷⁾.

Now that's Effectiveness for the modern age.

H&M has now reached the same league as the 2019 search market leaders, and has seen the highest sustained growth in page 1 rankings during this period



Business Objective

Drive £39.6M incremental revenue from organic search over 4 years.

List result

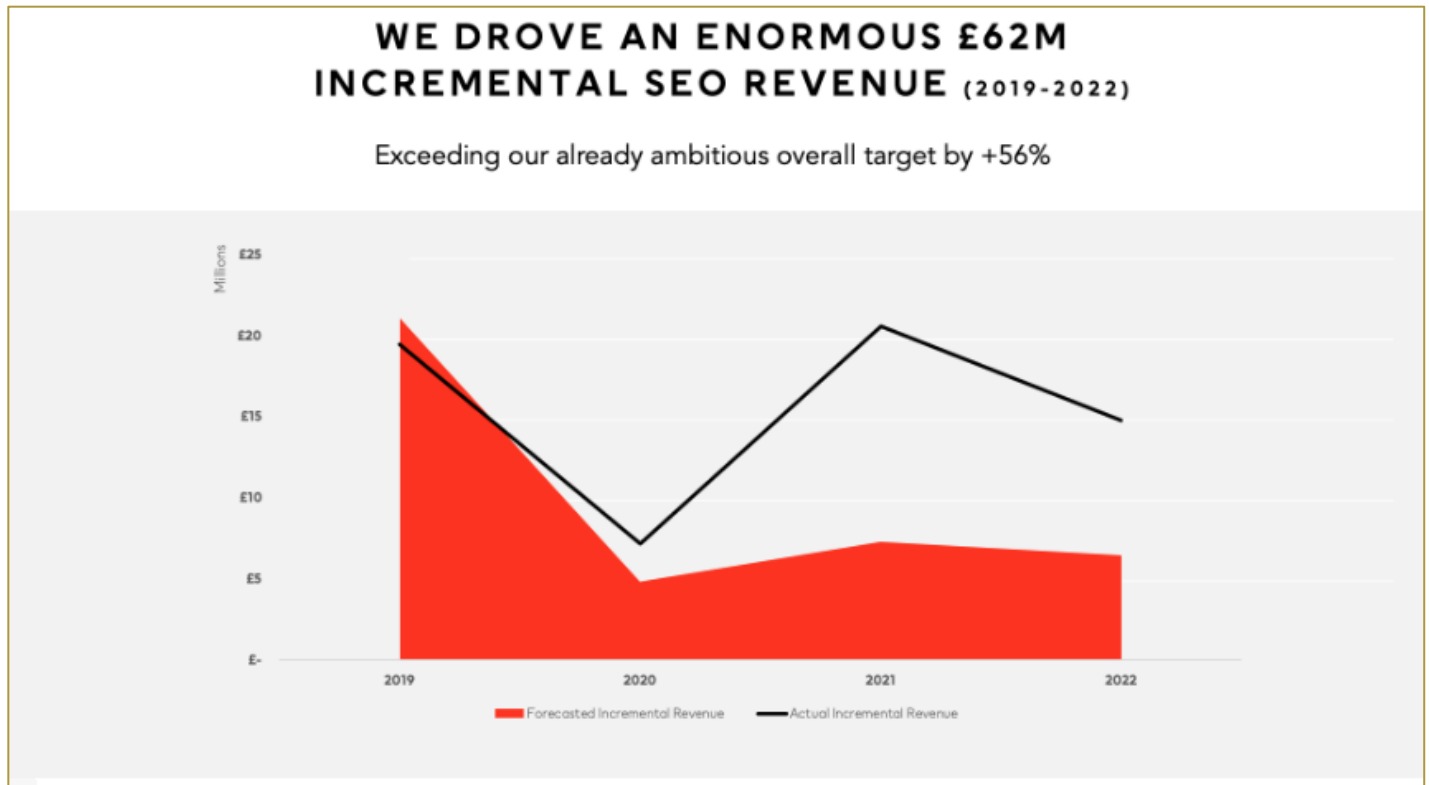
We drove an enormous £62M incremental SEO revenue between 2019 and 2022, exceeding our already ambitious overall target by 56%.

Context

Each year, we collaborated extensively with H&M teams and business controllers to identify what the result would be if H&M did not invest in SEO. We then mapped out an ambitious plan of action and forecast the incremental value it could drive. Our total target for the UK was £39.6M incremental organic revenue across all four years.

We smashed these already incredibly ambitious forecasts, exceeding them by 56%.

We would argue that this was a stunning achievement, considering that H&M was so far behind their competitors in the marketplace - they were starting from ground zero. And of course, the market is not static, it's dynamic - it's not as though ASOS or Boohoo were standing still.



Marketing Objective

Increase non-brand Share of Search (i.e. Share of Voice in search).

KPI: Number of target non-brand keywords ranking on page 1 of Google UK.

List result

H&M saw a staggering increase of +518% growth in non-brand keywords ranking on page 1 of Google UK, giving them prime position on the digital high street.

Context

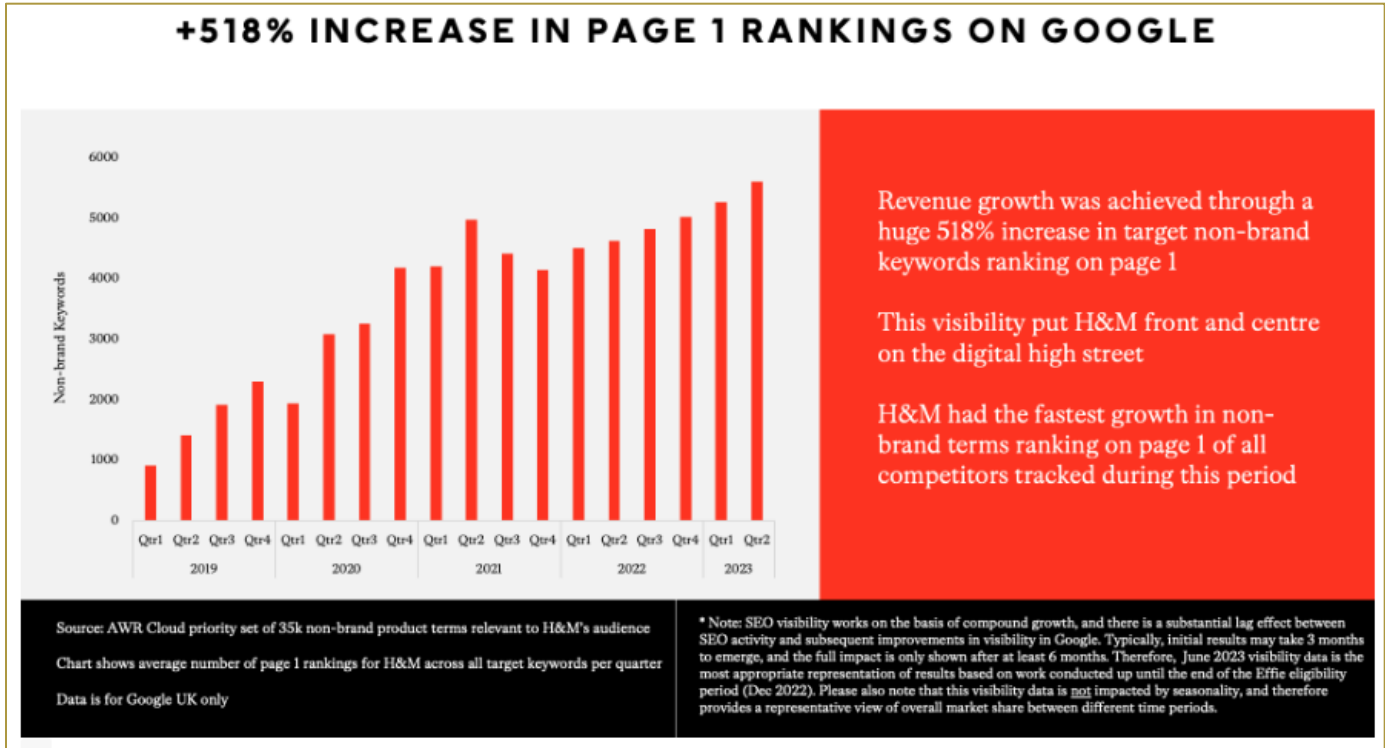
Our data driven engine tracks visibility across an extensive keyword set of over 35k high priority non-branded product keywords which customers were searching for. This is the digital high street where H&M needed to be visible to capture consumer demand and drive sales.

When we first started tracking in January 2019, H&M only ranked on page 1 for 915 of their target keywords.

By the end of 2022, H&M's targeted product listing pages ranked on the digital high street for over 5,100 key terms, representing a 518% increase in page 1 rankings over this period.

SEO takes time to have an impact, and the pages launched in 2022 directly impacted visibility in H1 2023.

So the work delivered in 2022 has continued to increase its impact, with almost 5,700 keywords on page 1 as of June 2023, representing a staggering +518% increase since work began!



Campaign Objective #1

Business transformation:

- Improve speed of new page creation
- Break down silos by increasing number of teams with an established working relationship with SEO
- Improve efficiency through new business processes

List result

Pages are now rolled out 20x faster⁽²²⁾, while also increasing quality.

Developed 35 new SEO driven business processes.⁽³⁸⁾

Context

Our programme significantly accelerated H&M's digital transformation.

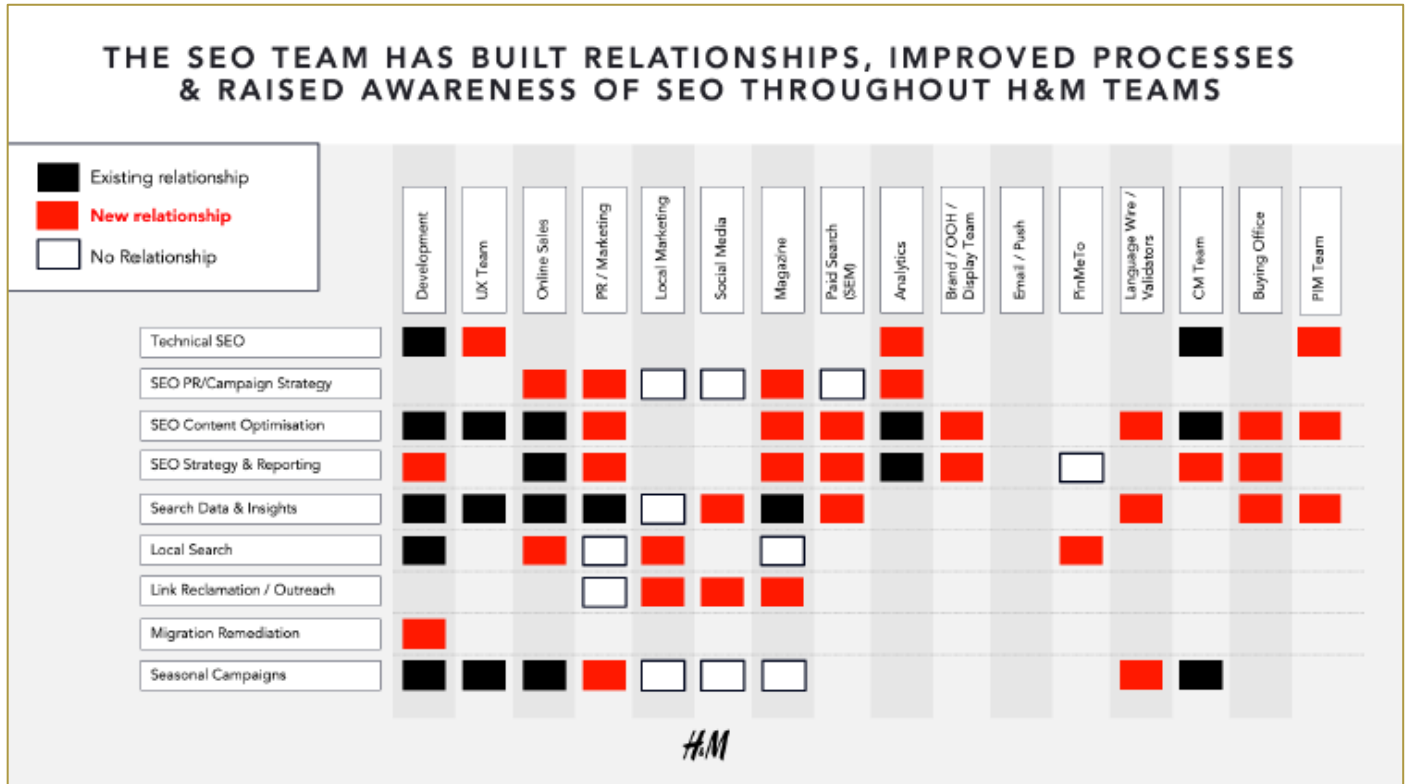
In 2018, H&M took 10 weeks to write, optimise, validate, build, launch and test 10 new UK landing pages, through a labour-intensive manual process.

We're now delivering 75 optimised pages per batch in just FOUR WEEKS. At the same time we're improving the quality of the copy and the level of optimisation.

We broke down internal silos, establishing connections between SEO and 9+ internal teams where no previous relationship existed, and strengthened collaboration with a further 6 teams.

Along the way we introduced 35 new business processes. One example is our new scripting improvements, which mean that manual work that previously took days can now be done in minutes.

And we're not stopping there - the automation we developed in 2022 has now given us the ability to create hundreds more bespoke pages at the click of a button.

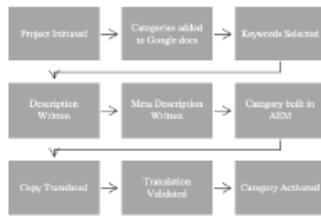


20X INCREASE IN SPEED OF ROLLING OUT NEW PAGES

In 2018, H&M's process to launch new landing pages was a slow, labour intensive manual process.

We optimised every stage of the production process, increasing the speed to roll out new targeted landing pages by almost 20x - whilst at the same time improving the quality of the copy and level of optimisation.

Before x10 pages in 10 Weeks



After x75 pages in 4 Weeks



H&M

Campaign Objective #2

To find new opportunities for H&M to create targeted pages to capture demand from customers searching for H&M products.

KPI: Number of new opportunities identified and search volume.

List result

We identified over 19,000 new landing page creation opportunities.

This gave us the opportunity to capture over 217 million more non-brand searches per month.

Context

Our data-driven engine approach continuously identifies opportunities to create new optimised landing pages. To date we've identified over 19,000, with the ability to represent over 217 million monthly searches that H&M was previously unable to target.

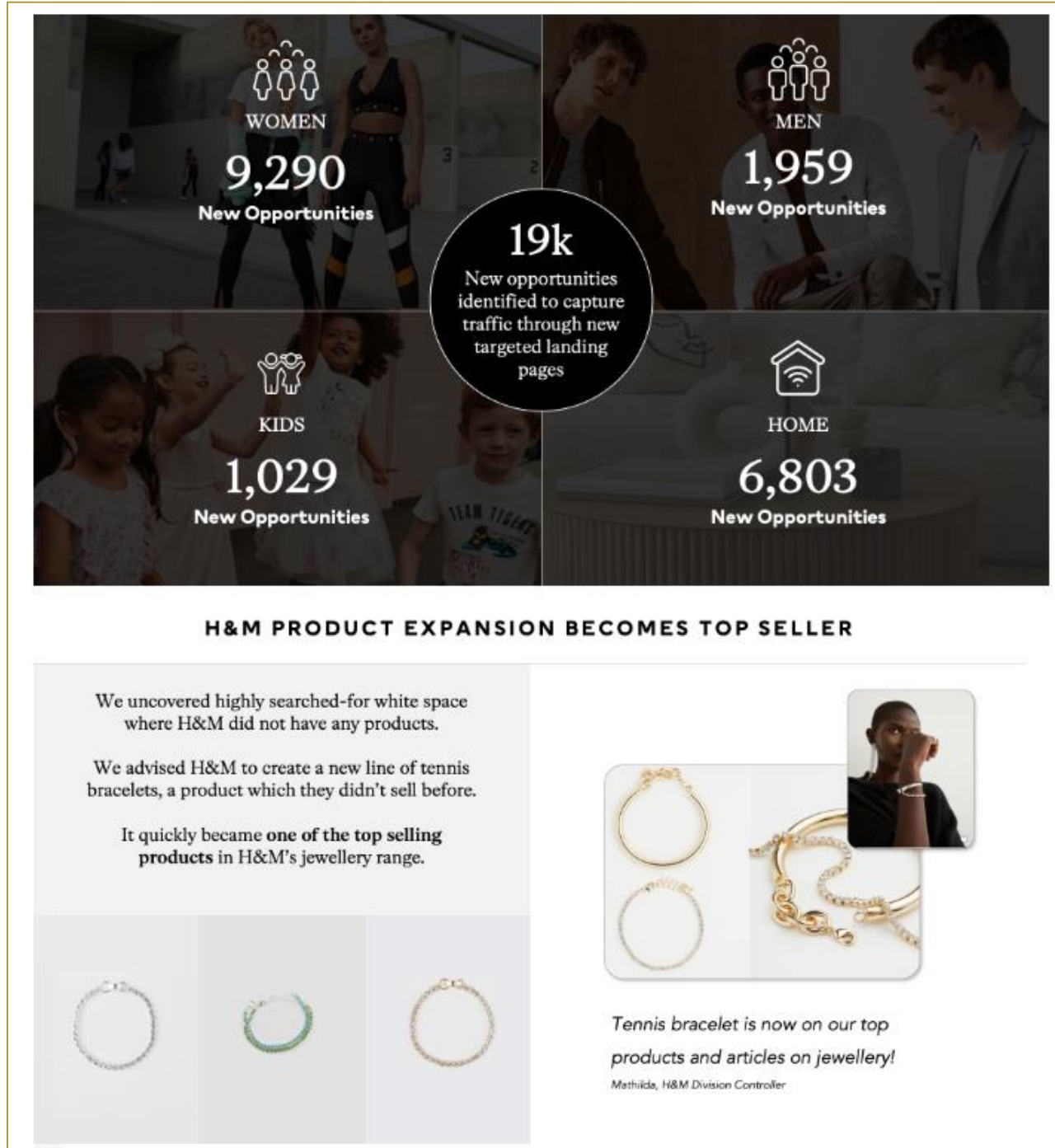
By the time you read this we will have identified many thousands more opportunities to capture many millions more searches.

As a result, we've been able to run our landing-page production line at maximum capacity throughout the entire period, avoiding breaks which would have slowed down progress.

And we went further.

It wasn't enough for us to identify opportunities to appear for customers for products which H&M already had.

We've spotted highly searched-for white space where H&M didn't previously have any products. H&M has designed and bought in entirely new product lines based on our data and insights. One example is H&M's popular new line of tennis bracelets, which was created on our recommendation.



Campaign Objective #3

Help more undecided consumers find and buy the items they are looking for from H&M, by building more targeted experiences matching their needs.

KPI: Number of target pages created.

List result

To date we have created over 3,000 customer-centric targeted ecommerce landing pages live on H&M UK, an increase of +423%⁽³¹⁾. The numbers continue to grow.

Context

When we started, H&M’s online presence consisted of just 700 pages, many of which were poorly optimised.

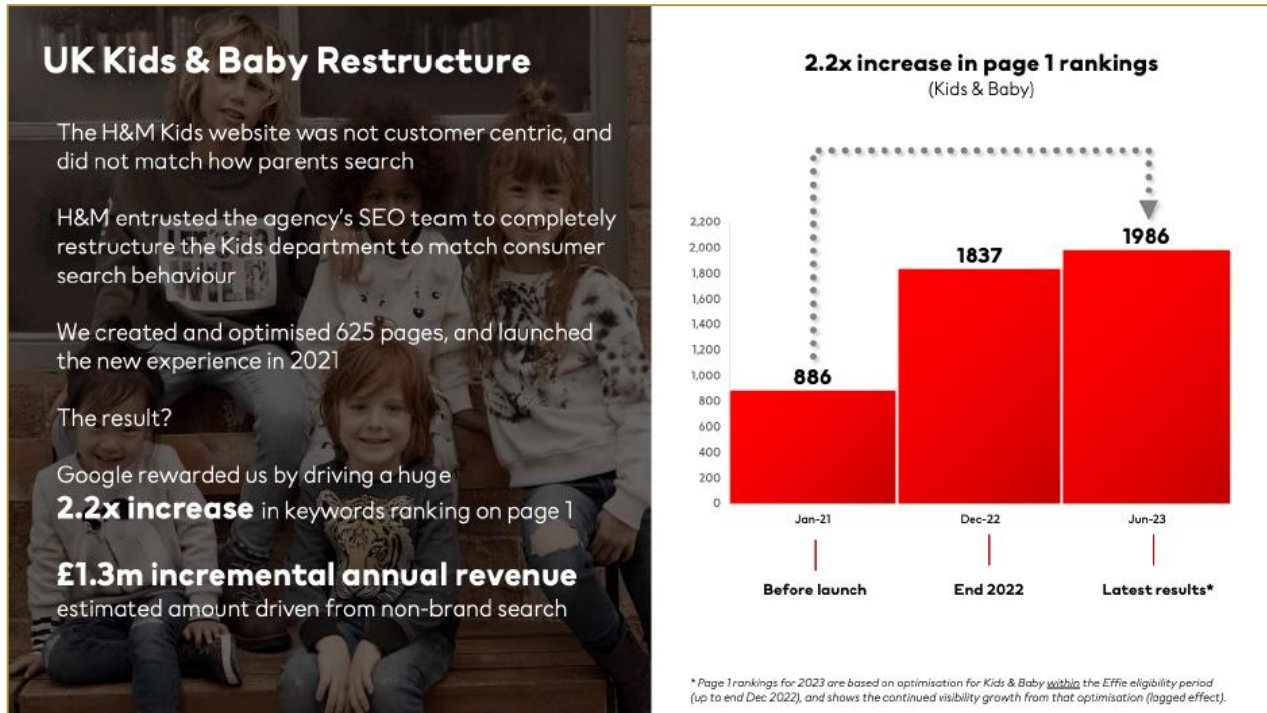
We increased that to an enormous 3,709 unique landing pages, each targeting a unique micro audience in the exact moment of their customer journey when they were in-market to buy. Our Kids & Baby restructure was a whopping 625 targeted pages alone!

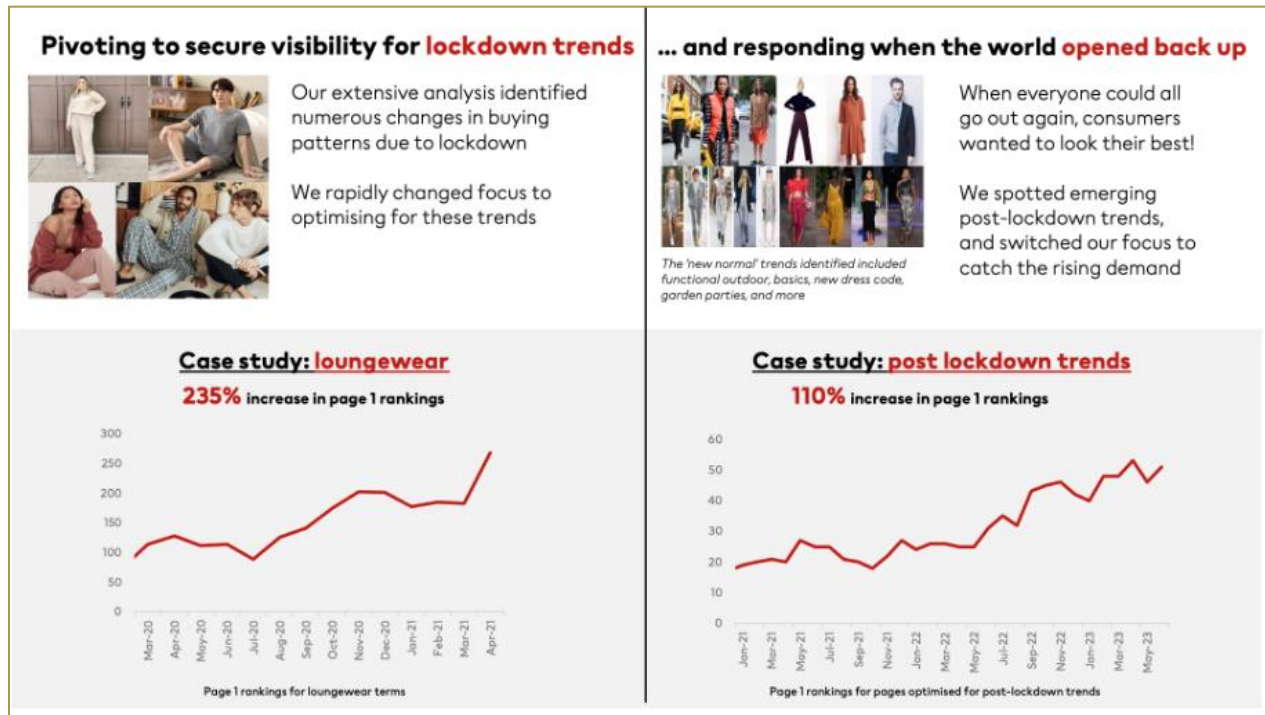
Reaching this target would have been impossible without complete transformation. It required a genuine ‘one team’ culture, blending H&M business experts with agency specialists.

It was a team that didn’t settle for incremental improvements - H&M entrusted SEO to rebuild entire departments from the ground up to match consumer needs.

And when covid threatened H&M’s business, we rapidly rolled out over 30+ targeted pages at an accelerated timescale, generating sales at a critical time.

H&M’s digital experience now truly matches what its customers want. And we’re still running. Fast.





Additional Results

Technical SEO

Optimising the technical platform is a key but undervalued component for SEO success.

Before we started, H&M barely picked up SEO requirements. With the inspiration of our data-driven business cases, H&M have now established an entire development team just to build SEO requirements! As a result, we have launched over 70 new technical SEO enhancements per year.

One set of enhancements drove a 314% increase in pages passing Google's Cumulative Layout Shift metric, preventing pages from jumping around when loaded. It improved both Google Core Web Vitals scores and the customer experience.

We also introduced technical SEO safeguarding, ensuring no code changes go live without vetting for SEO visibility risk.

SEO x PR

We conducted workshops to train H&M's PR teams, securing the integration of SEO into existing campaign processes. SEO is now a crucial consideration in campaigns, from initial concepting to outreach and retirement. Overall, these strategies amplified the impact of H&M's already inspiring creative campaigns.

The result was an increase in the authority of value-driving links to H&M's UK site generated by campaigns by +48% during 2021 and +24% during 2022.

Long form content

Using customer search behaviour, seasonality, and trends, the agency created H&M’s first-ever SEO data-driven Magazine article. This targeted piece of long-form content became H&M’s most widely read article of 2021/2022, ranking #1 for the most-searched keywords “sweater vest” and “knit vests”.



Driving Technical SEO Delivery At Scale

Before our engagement, SEO requirements were split across different development teams, each with their own priorities and OKRs.

The Agency played a pivotal role in the creation of the SEO CoE (Centre of Excellence).

This new team of developers is dedicated to SEO, working closely with the Agency to prioritise and drive key fixes to increase visibility, and has increased H&M’s capacity to implement SEO fixes.

We are one of the most successful teams at securing dev resource, using insights from our data-driven engine to power our business cases, and have launched over 70 technical SEO stories per year.

Not afraid to challenge

The Agency secured a complex development story which had been blocked for three years by both educating and challenging H&M’s development partner.

We reduced the developer’s estimate of effort to fix the issue from over **500 man days of effort to just 25**. This enhancement is now live.

2021 Technical Wins

Key Technical Wins

- Core Web Vitals CLS fixes implemented
- SEO Filter Page links live on PDPs globally
- Apache Clean-up/Remediation Redirects live in Akamai
- Technical SEO Health Dashboard created
- Lighthouse Reporting using CI

314%
INCREASE IN SESSIONS THAT PASS THE COMPLEXIVE LAYOUT SHIFT ASSESSMENT

x111
TECHNICAL SEO ISSUES CAPTURED AND REPORTED THROUGH THE TECHNICAL TRACKS

x44
ACTIVE & COMPLETE CORE WEB VITALS SCORES

x66
REWRITING POLICIES CREATED/REPARAMETERIZED BY REWRITE ENGINE FOR CRAWL

2022 Technical Wins

Key Technical Wins

- New Country Selector functionality launched
- XML Sitemaps loading performance improvements
- SEO Filter Page links in faceted navigation
- Free-Farm campaigns crawl budget fixes
- Hreflang for filter pages solution

133
TECHNICAL SEO STORIES CREATED AND INVESTIGATED THROUGH JIRA

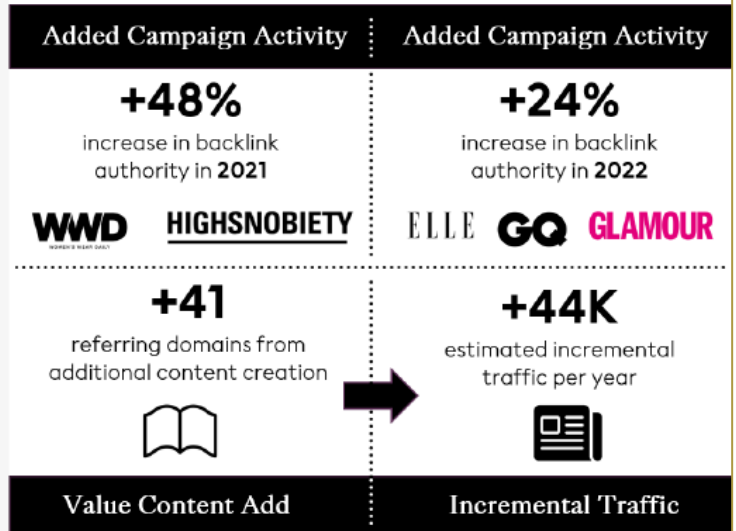
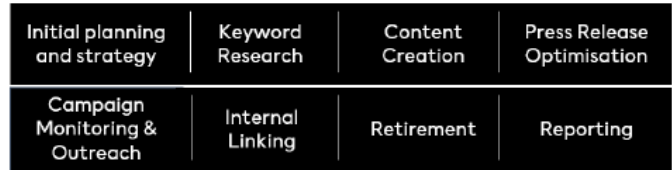
94%
DECREASE IN ISSUE VULN IN XML SITEMAPS

1
NEW COUNTRY SELECTOR SOLUTION

90%
REDUCTION IN FREE FORM CRAWL ERROR COUNTING ERRORS

Ensuring SEO is a key consideration at every stage of the campaign lifecycle..

- SEO was disconnected from PR and Campaigns
- We played a crucial role in identifying collaboration opportunities and integrating SEO throughout the campaign lifecycle, working with both global and local PR teams,
- We employed a campaign monitoring and outreach strategy at a local level, and targeted high-value sites beyond traditional fashion by identifying publications with high SEO value
- We created magazine content that complemented campaigns and secured additional coverage and visibility
- Provided strategies to press release optimisation
- And streamlined campaign retirement with internal teams to preserve SEO value



HOW TO WEAR A SWEATERVEST

6 Sweater Vest Outfit Ideas & Styling Tips for Spring Summer

We created the first-ever SEO-driven article for the Magazine, achieving exceptional results, making it the most widely read content piece of 2021. This success also created further collaboration between the SEO and content teams, laying the foundation for future SEO-led activity.

Created an article & new 'sweater vest' category page

Trend is consistent each year

High search volume terms

Most viewed article from 2021/22

172K
Page views



4B. Marketing rarely works in isolation. Outside of your effort, what else in the marketplace could have affected the results of this case - positive or negative?

- No other factors

Explain the influence (or lack of influence) of the factors you selected.

This isn't your average Effie entry - many common marketing factors have little relevance in measuring uplift from non-brand SEO.

The agency worked with H&M specialists and business control to develop an advanced data-driven annual forecasting model. Case studies were regularly undertaken for projects to isolate the impact of SEO and to improve forecasting. Factors considered included:

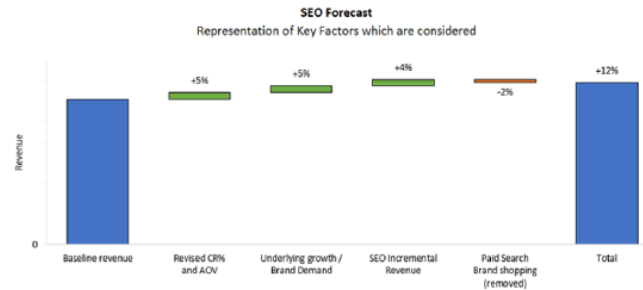
- Other marketing efforts - brand search demand used to measure impact of brand awareness, isolating any impact on organic performance.
- Paid search cannibalisation - bidding data factored in to remove cannibalisation impact on non-brand traffic.
- Competitors - page 1 ranking is a zero sum game - if you get to page 1, someone else has to drop out.
- Seasonality - previous years' trends used to forecast ahead. Additionally, keyword visibility is unaffected by seasonal factors, and therefore provides a representative share of voice metric at any point of time.
- Covid - significant changes to search demand were validated by numerous data sources, including brand search demand and Google Mobility data to isolate their impact.
- Tracking issues - organic measured against other channels to isolate any impact on measurement.
- Conversion Rate / AOV - used forecasts from H&M based on planned internal changes.

FORECASTING INCREMENTALITY

H&M business control signs off annual forecasts based on an agreed model:

- 1) Previous year's data is used as the starting baseline
- 2) Adjustments made based on:
 - Underlying / Natural growth (Demand)
 - Conversion Rate (CR%)
 - Average Order Value (AOV)
 - Other Factors
- 3) Forecast incremental SEO contribution
 - Each individual activity is measured to estimate the specific growth it would drive. The combined impact is then added to the forecast.
 - Individual activity forecasts are based on a combination of previous case studies and a number of other considerations
- 4) Cannibalisation
 - Paid search activity is forecast, and the cannibalisation which is forecast is deducted from the overall forecast

This comprehensive model provides a robust approach to measuring real incrementality



Technical Definitions

Underlying / Natural growth(Demand): Google search data is used to understand search demand trends for the brand, which is then used to forecast future demand.

Conversion Rate (CR%): This indicates how well traffic converts to a sale on site. Forecasts include existing data as well as changes predicted by H&M based on their internal team data.

Average Order Value (AOV): The average spend of a customer sale. Forecasts include existing data as well as changes predicted by H&M based on their internal team data.

Other Factors: A number of other factors were considered in each individual year's forecast, such as covid related adjustments to adjusting historic data to account for past tracking issues.

Paid Search Activity: Paid search includes paid ads which are on search engines. Any changes to paid search bidding strategies are considered. For instance, an increase in paid brand search traffic can cannibalise organic traffic, resulting in a decrease in organic traffic without any change in organic position. This is factored in.

USING MOBILITY DATA TO UNDERSTAND AND STORE FOOTFALL DURING CHANGING COVID RESTRICTIONS

Forecasting the impact that the covid restrictions were having on online sales was difficult, due to regularly changing rules throughout the period.

When customers did not feel safe shopping in store, online demand would increase. And when store footfall increased, online demand would decrease.

We needed to measure whether consumers were returning to the high street to predict the impact on online demand.

However, H&M's store footfall data was not readily available.

The agency identified the opportunity to use Google Mobility Data, a brand new data set provided by Google that provided anonymised customer density in shopping areas, to get these insights faster.



Following this recommendation, the agency and H&M undertook separate analysis comparing mobility data with brand search demand, a key metric use to measure online interest in the brand. Further analysis showed that store traffic was also strongly correlated with mobility data. Insights and data blurred as this is sensitive information.

The strong correlation that both teams were able to show between the data sets enabled us to better measure the level of impact that changing covid restrictions was having on organic traffic and revenue, enabling us to get a clearer reflection of incremental revenue from SEO activity alone.

Data sources Section 4

1. Forecasting model (see visual for 4B)
2. Forecasting model vs. actuals from H&M Analytics

3. Number of pages created divided by time period to deliver, before vs. after
4. Google search data combined with SEO content gap analysis
5. Internal H&M information
6. AWR Cloud Non-Brand Keyword Ranking Data Set (see visual)
7. AWR Cloud Non-Brand Keyword Ranking Data Set - growth vs. Jan 2019
8. (Due to confidentiality reasons we cannot reveal the UK's contribution to the overall number, but what we can say is that it's been estimated by H&M that the UK's contribution to this ROI significantly exceeded the global return of 30:1 which H&M has estimated for the overall programme)
9. H&M internal information
10. H&M internal estimate
11. See section 3C
12. Number of landing pages based on website crawl
13. (H&M internal information)
14. Google Core Web Vitals tools pre vs post implementation
15. (Calculation combining data from tools Ahrefs & Majestic)
16. H&M Analytics
17. (AWR Cloud Target Non-Brand Keywords)
18. Brand search demand (Google search data), Paid Search (data from H&M), seasonality (H&M Analytics & Google search data), tracking issues (H&M analytics team), Conversion Rate / AOV (H&M Analytics), mobility data (Google), store footfall data (H&M internal data). Search volumes based on annual average to remove seasonality. Ranking data (AWR) Product Listing Page performance. See visual for more information.
19. Source: List of processes compiled by H&M and agency, validated by H&M
20. Source: H&M SEO Relationship Matrix, status as of end Dec 2022

Contact Effie

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR ENTRY

For any questions regarding the entry process, materials, categories, rules, etc., contact: effieuk@effie.org .

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