SEO KNOWLEDGE SHARING: INTERNATIONAL TARGETING

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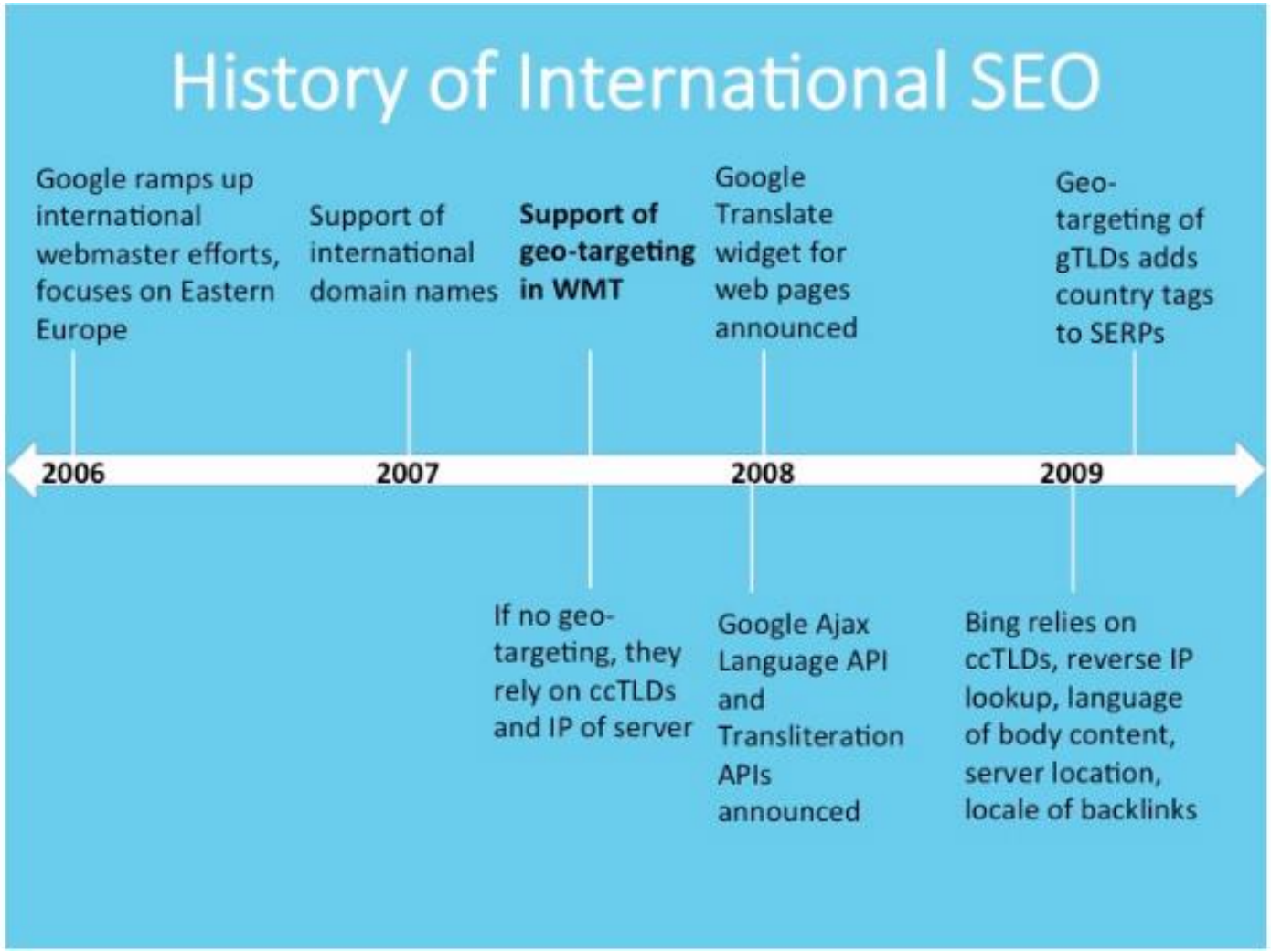
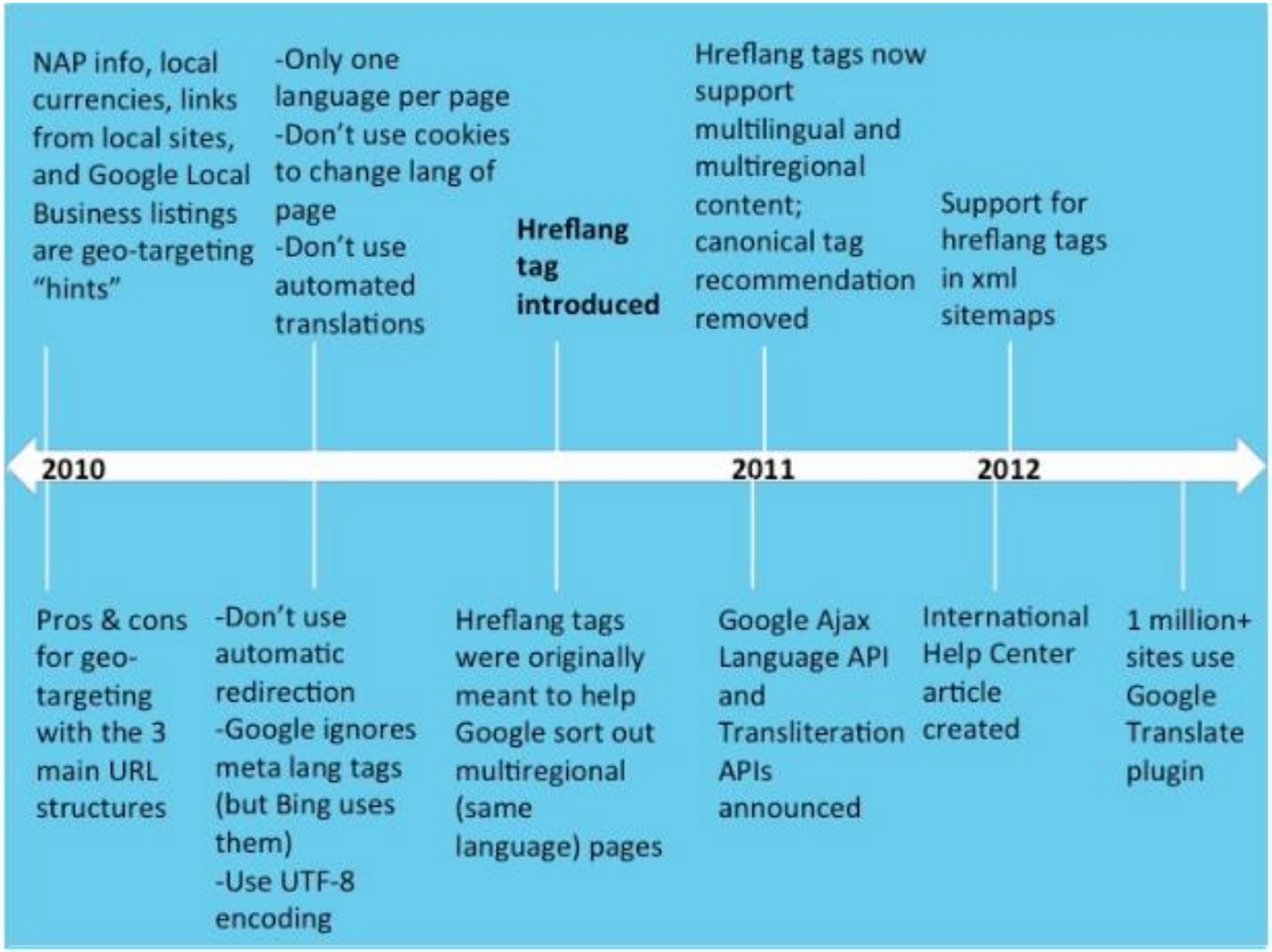
WHY IS INTERNATIONAL SEO SO CONFUSING?

- Geo-targeting issues
- Difficult to implement
- Different Guidelines
- Hreflang Issues
- Unfriendly technics
- Rapid changes

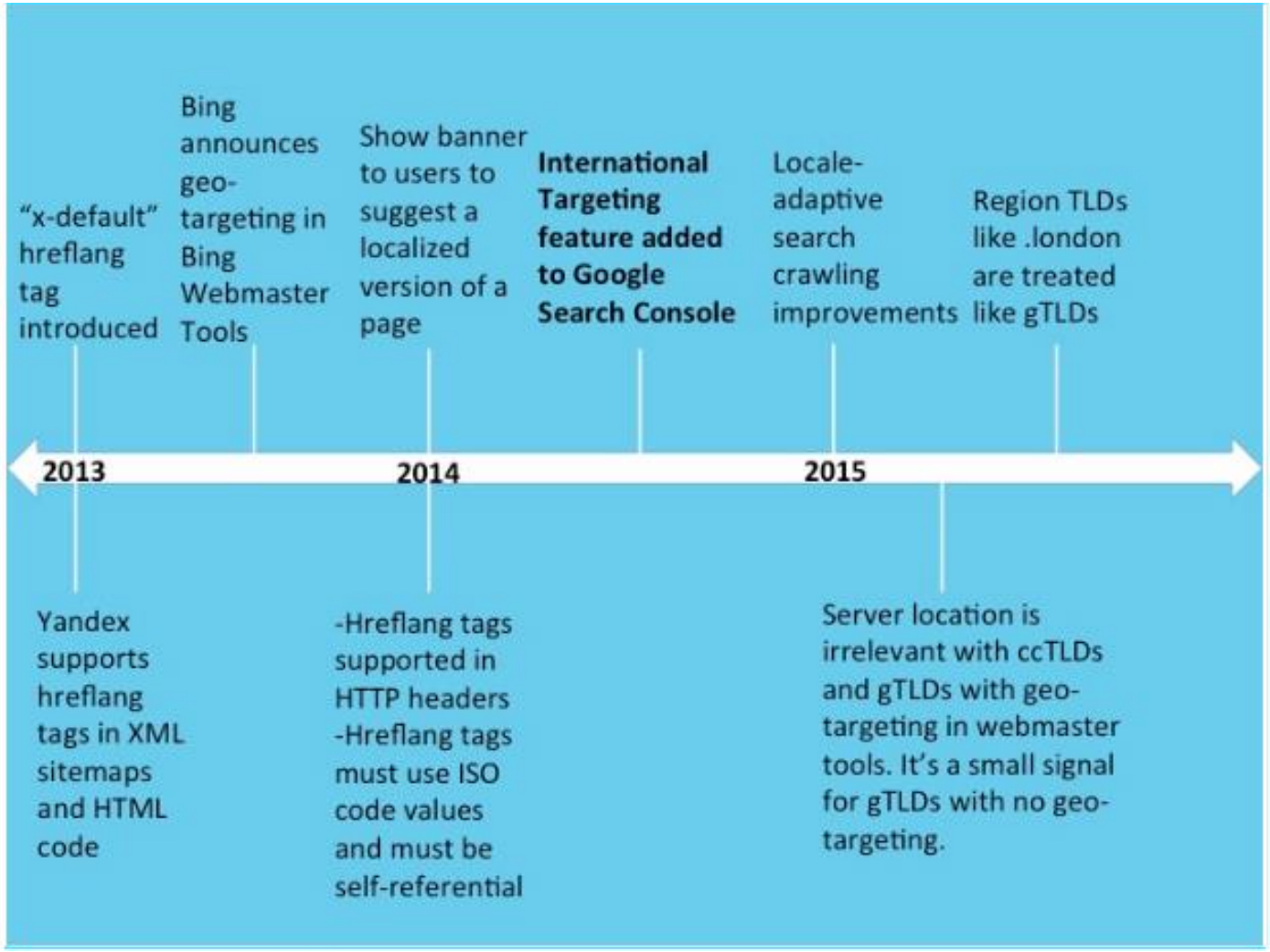
A LITTLE HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL SEO



A LITTLE HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL SEO



A LITTLE HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL SEO



HOW TO DEAL WITH IT?

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SITE STRUCTURE

ccTDL
example.ie

Pros:
- Clear geotargeting
- Server location irrelevant
- Easy separation of sites

Cons:
- Expensive (can have limited availability)
- Separate Domain Authority

Sub-Directories
example.com/de/

Pros:
- Easy to set up
- Consolidating domain authority
- Low maintenance (same host)

Cons:
- Provides weak geo-localization signals
- Single server location
-

Sub-Domains
de.example.com

Pros:
- Easy to set up
- Can use Search Console geotargeting
- Allows different server locations
- Easy separation of sites

Cons:
- Users might not recognize geotargeting from the URL alone (is "de" the language or country?)
- Lost of domain authority

SITE STRUCTURE - DONTS

URL parameters

site.com?loc=de

Cons:

- Expensive (can have limited availability)
- URL-based segmentation difficult
- Users might not recognize geotargeting from the URL alone
- Geotargeting in Search Console is not possible)

IP-Delivery

Cons:

- Could cause cloaking
- Affect loading time
- Data can be overrated

INTERNATIONAL FACTORS

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CONTENT

Content Factors:

Body Content
Specific KWs usage
Localised Metadata
Localised Navigation labels
Headings
Image Names
Localized HTML sitemaps
Translated URLs
Local UX

Don’t use automated translation

Links + NAP

Links + NAP:
links from local ccTLDs pointing to your localized content

info such as telephone numbers, currencies, addresses in schema markup, and Google My Business profiles

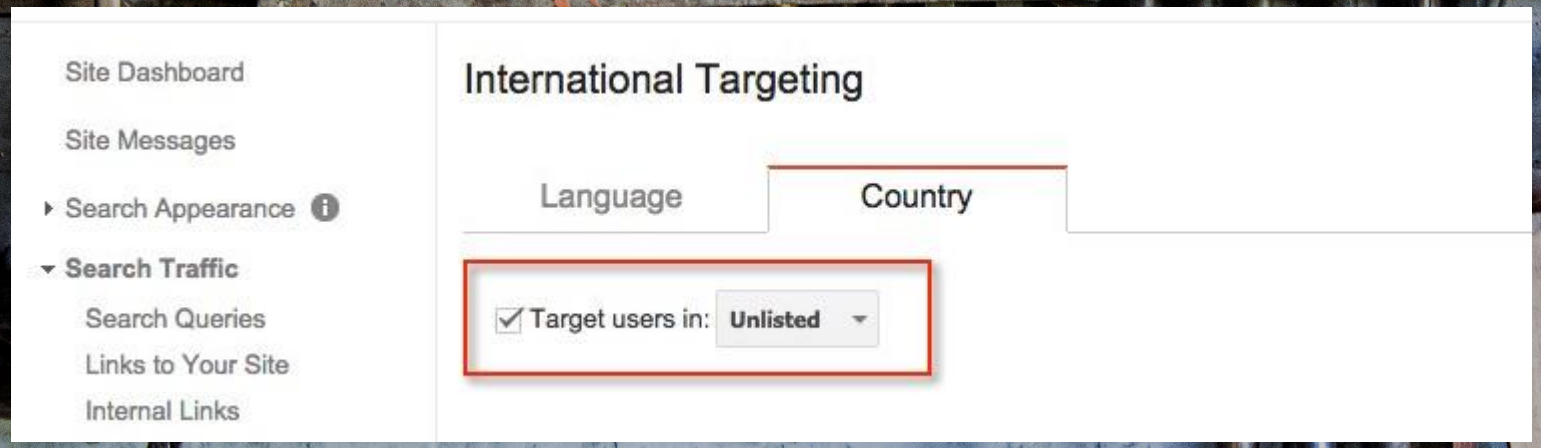
Server Location

Social Signals*

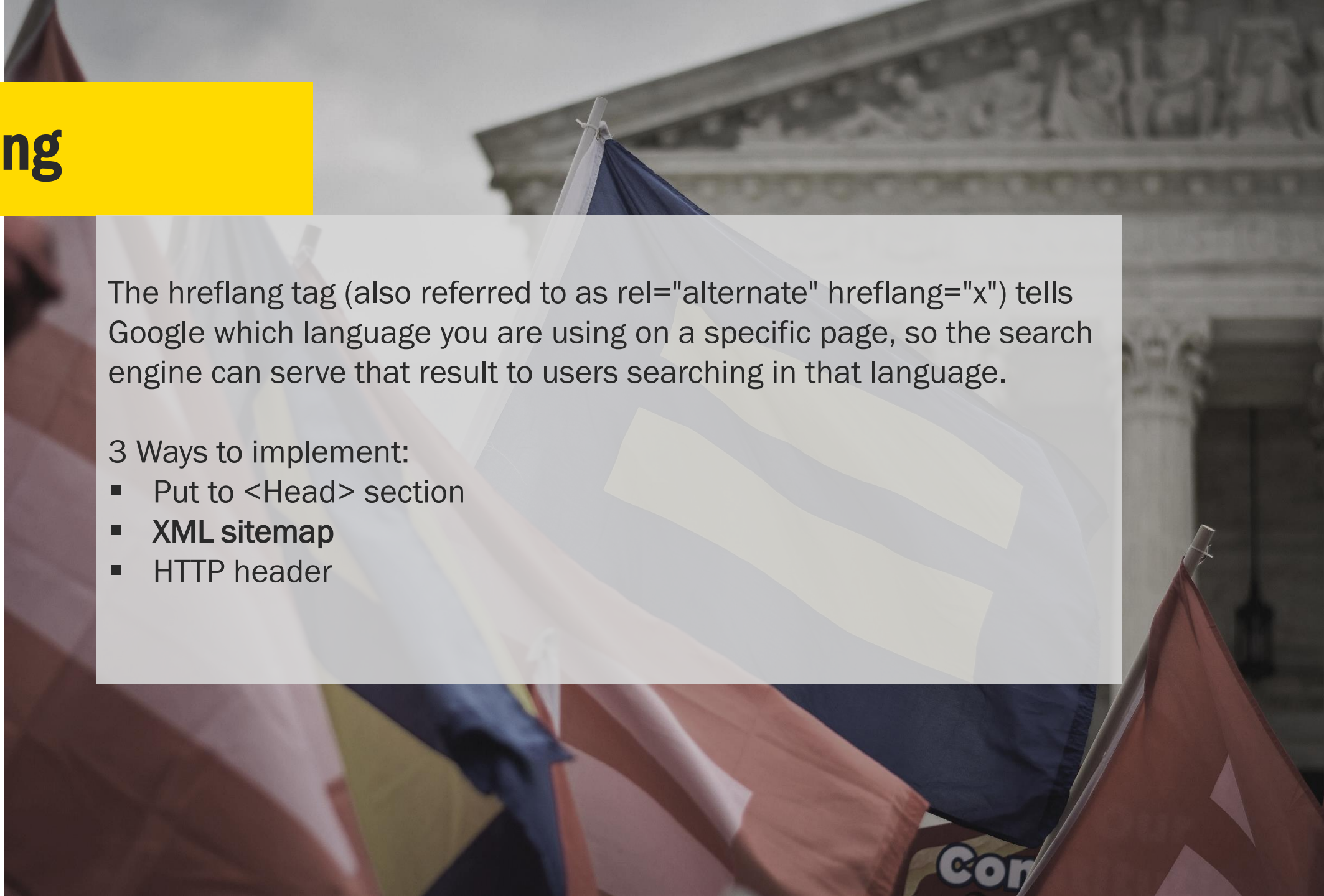
Webmaster Tools

Goolge Search Console - g.co/searchconsole
Yandex Webmaster - https://webmaster.yandex.com/
Baidu Webmaster Tools - http://zhanzhang.baidu.com/
Bing Webmaster Tools - http://www.bing.com/toolbox/webmaster

Bing&Baidu is still using Meta-language



Hreflang

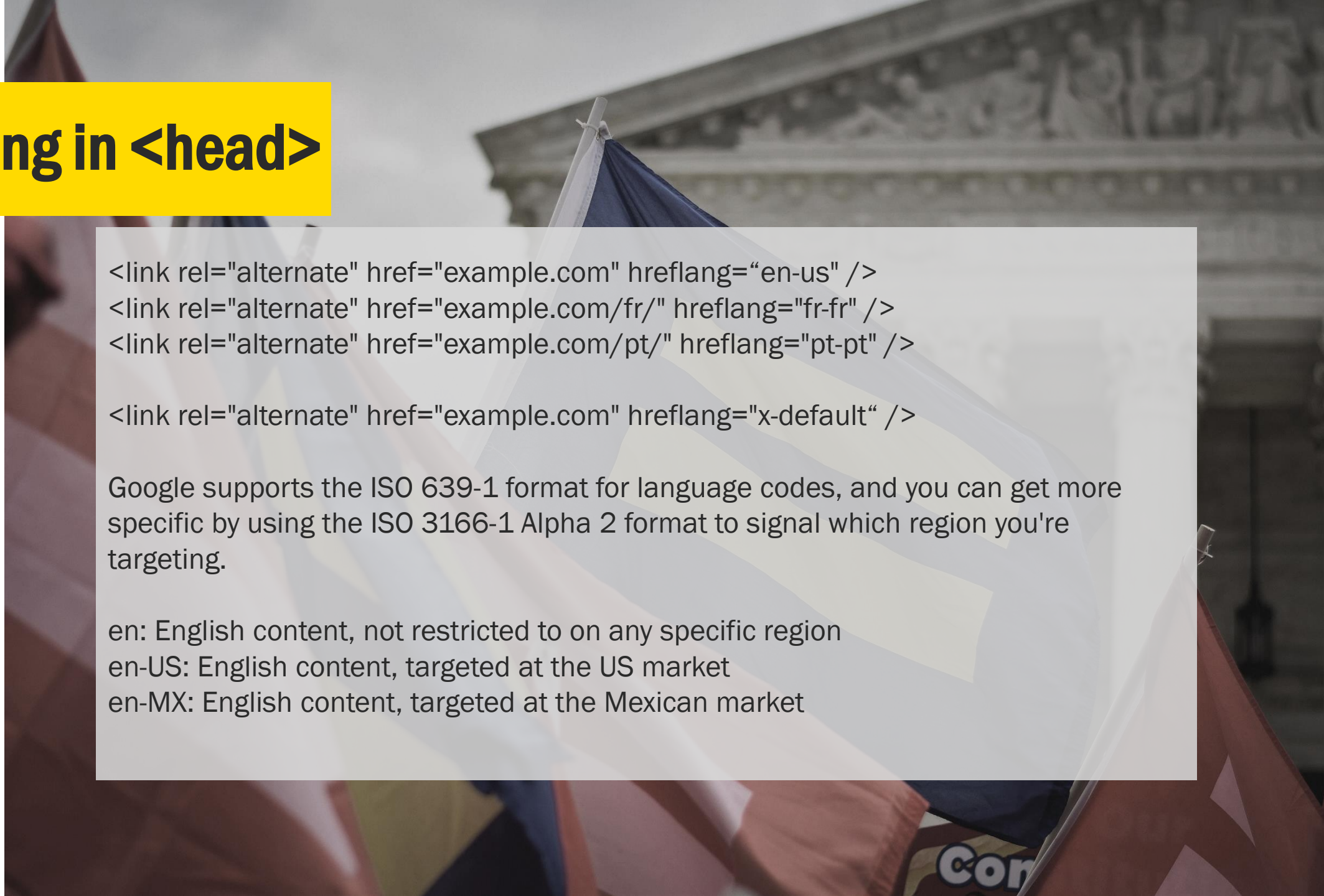


The hreflang tag (also referred to as rel="alternate" hreflang="x") tells Google which language you are using on a specific page, so the search engine can serve that result to users searching in that language.

3 Ways to implement:

- Put to <Head> section
- **XML sitemap**
- HTTP header

Hreflang in <head>



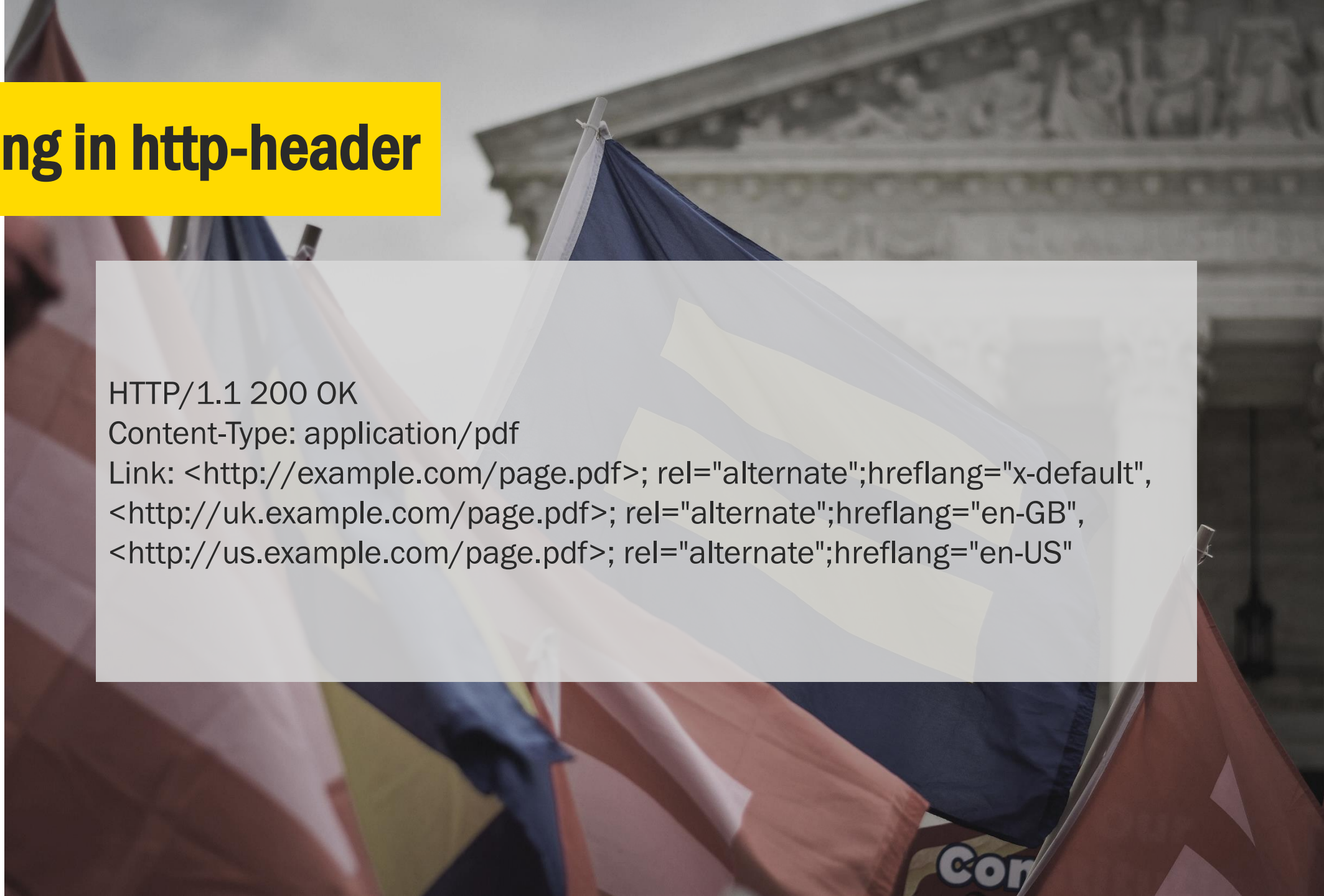
```
<link rel="alternate" href="example.com" hreflang=“en-us" />
<link rel="alternate" href="example.com/fr/" hreflang="fr-fr" />
<link rel="alternate" href="example.com/pt/" hreflang="pt-pt" />

<link rel="alternate" href="example.com" hreflang="x-default“ />
```

Google supports the ISO 639-1 format for language codes, and you can get more specific by using the ISO 3166-1 Alpha 2 format to signal which region you're targeting.

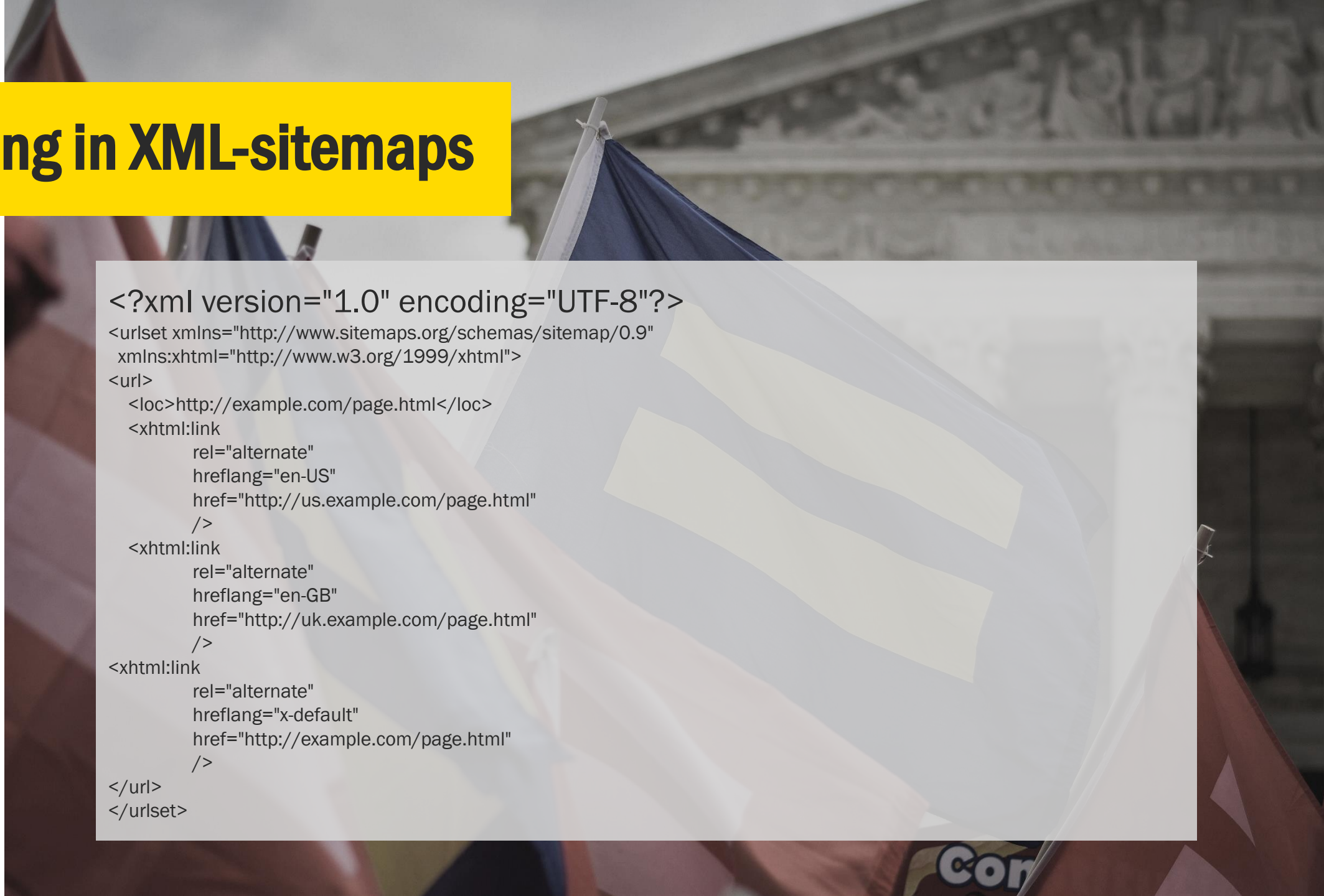
en: English content, not restricted to on any specific region
en-US: English content, targeted at the US market
en-MX: English content, targeted at the Mexican market

Hreflang in http-header



```
HTTP/1.1 200 OK
Content-Type: application/pdf
Link: <http://example.com/page.pdf>; rel="alternate";hreflang="x-default",
<http://uk.example.com/page.pdf>; rel="alternate";hreflang="en-GB",
<http://us.example.com/page.pdf>; rel="alternate";hreflang="en-US"
```

Hreflang in XML-sitemaps



```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<urlset xmlns="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9"
 xmlns:xhtml="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml">
<url>
   <loc>http://example.com/page.html</loc>
   <xhtml:link
              rel="alternate"
              hreflang="en-US"
              href="http://us.example.com/page.html"
              />
   <xhtml:link
              rel="alternate"
              hreflang="en-GB"
              href="http://uk.example.com/page.html"
              />
<xhtml:link
              rel="alternate"
              hreflang="x-default"
              href="http://example.com/page.html"
              />
</url>
</urlset>
```

Hreflang Common Issues

No self reference used

Not using absolute URLs

Link to URLs with non-200 HTTP status code

Invalid syntax in country and language code annotations

Conflicting multiple hreflang definitions

Conflicting hreflang and Google SC definitions

Incomplete hreflang URL set - no return tags

Example:
http://example.com - hreflang definitions link to fr.example.com, es.example.com and ca.example.com.
http://ca.example.com - hreflang definitions link to es.example.com and ca.example.com.

Get all website URLs together

1. Crawl the website in Screaming Frog
2. Pull all pages viewed from Google Analytics over the last year
3. Get indexed Urls with an advanced Google query like *site:www.wella.com*
4. Clean data: standardise lowercase URLs if possible, http or https, remove URL tagging, remove faulty syntax and 404s, then de-duplicate
5. Keep everything in one tab with all markets on columns
    a) Remove the from each URL
    b) Since all URLs are in English, highlight duplicate entries for the whole table
    c) Order entries by colour, meaning duplicates are on top
    d) Manually put the remaining Urls in correspondence between markets (same URL across different markets, some rows will be empty)
    e) Fill in the empty spaces with the default location appropriate for that URL, like a category, subcategory or homepage
6. Put the URLs back together by adding the https://www.wella.com/professional/country-language/ prefix
7. Split URLs for each market in different tabs

Get all website URLs together

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1	en-uk	en-us	de-de	gr-gr	it-it	es-es	nl-nl	fr-fr	pt-br	ru-ru	en-en	
2	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/2016-awards	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
3	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/ahead-of-the-curve	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
4	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/angelic-warriors-vivienne-westwood-aw16	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
5	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/a-stitch-in-timeless	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
6	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/autumn-winter-2015-collection	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
7	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/barcelona-social-club	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
8	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/behind-the-light	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
9	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/best-blondes-competition	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
10	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/best-blondes-winners	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
11	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/blonde-is-a-way-of-life	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
12	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/blurred-lines-acne-studios-aw16	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
13	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/broken-perfection-vivienne-westwood-man-aw16	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
14	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/casting-influence	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
15	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/couture-color-for-all	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
16	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/couture-color-on-the-catwalk	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
17	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/couture-color-yiqin-yin-ss16	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
18	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/creative-landscape	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
19	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/creative-simplicity	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
20	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/creativity-uncharted	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
21	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/distilled-collection	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
22	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/dream-weaver	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
23	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/earthly-article	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
24	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/eimi-at-the-oscars	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
25	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/eimi-on-tv	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	
26	http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/blog-page/eimis-style-alphabet	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://ww	http://www.wella	

Add Hreflang to XML Sitemap

1. Create the local country XML sitemap with hreflang tags in, for one market only
2. Use an online tool to create the XML sitemap (alternative tool here)
3. Make sure you use the correct language standards, preferably from ISO 6391-1
4. Don’t forget to add the x-default value, which in most cases serves as a catch-all for the international (non-territory specific) area of the website
5. Each unique URL has only one set of hreflang tags. De-duplicate the main URL entries based on your current target market URL list. I don’t want my RU sitemap to contain multiple entries for the same URL.
6. Redo the above for all markets

Implementation & post checks

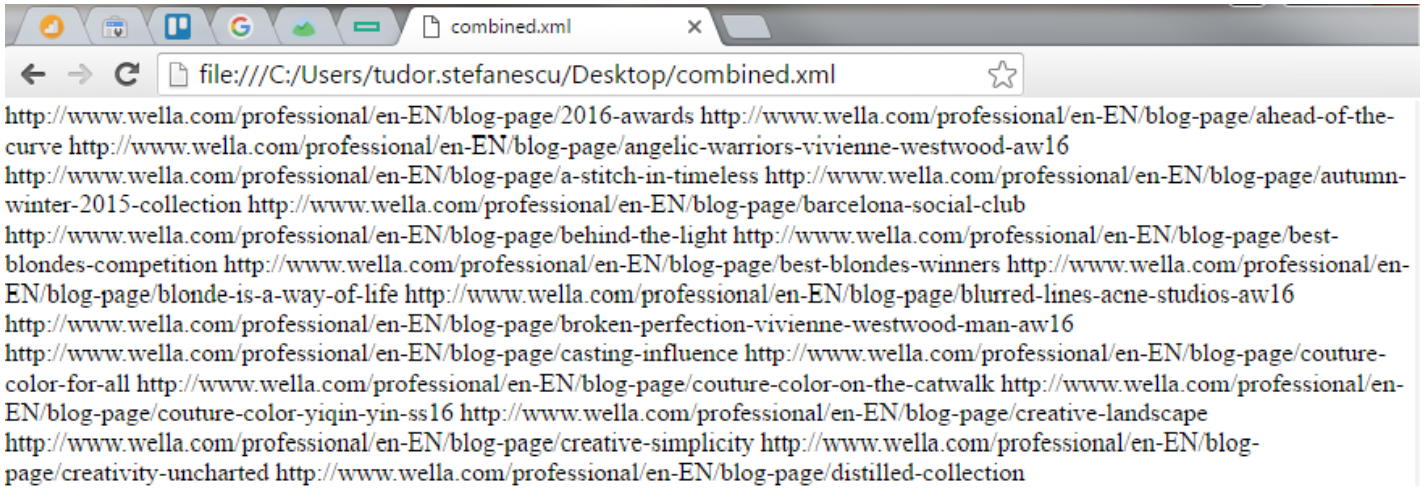
1. Combine all files into one single sitemap (copy paste will do)
2. Use a professional text viewer like Notepad++ to actually see the hreflang tags in the XML file. Otherwise you are unlikely to see them and may be sending in faulty files for implementation
3. Create a new robots.txt file with the agreed sitemap locations
4. Let the technical team know to upload both the sitemaps and the new robot.txt file to the website
5. Go to Search Console and manually submit the sitemap locations
6. Check for errors, after one day. Some errors are to be expected, but keep them below 15%. Resubmit otherwise.

Error	Number of errors ▼	
'x-default' - no return tags (sitemaps)	338	»
'nl-nl' - no return tags (sitemaps)	302	»
'gr-gr' - unknown language code (sitemaps)	141	»
'en-en' - unknown language code (sitemaps)	141	»
'jp' - unknown language code (sitemaps)	77	»

Final result

Wella Sitemap_files.zip

Browsers don’t display hreflang code




```
20976   <url>
20977       <loc>http://www.wella.com/professional/es-ES/products/color/color-id/discover</loc>
20978       <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="es-es" href="http://www.wella.com/professional/es-ES/products/color/color-id/discover" />
20979       <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="en-gb" href="http://www.wella.com/professional/en-UK/products/color/color-id/discover" />
20980       <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="en-us" href="http://www.wella.com/professional/en-US/products/color/color-id/discover" />
20981       <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="de-de" href="http://www.wella.com/professional/de-DE/products/color/color-id/discover" />
20982       <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="el-gr" href="http://www.wella.com/professional/gr-GR/products/color/color-id/discover" />
20983       <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="it-it" href="http://www.wella.com/professional/it-IT/products/color/color-id/discover" />
20984       <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="nl-nl" href="http://www.wella.com/professional/nl-NL/products/color/color-id/discover" />
20985       <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="fr-fr" href="http://www.wella.com/professional/fr-FR/products/color/color-id/discover" />
20986       <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="pt-br" href="http://www.wella.com/professional/pt-BR/products/color/color-id/discover" />
20987       <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="ru-ru" href="http://www.wella.com/professional/ru-RU/products/color/color-id/discover" />
20988       <xhtml:link rel="alternate" hreflang="x-default" href="http://www.wella.com/professional/en-EN/products/color/color-id/discover" />
20989   </url>
```

Gillette Case Study

UK Traffic Growth

CA Traffic Growth

UK traffic drop in US

Implemented For:

http://gillette.co.uk/en-gb
http://gillette.com/en-us
http://gillette.ca/en-ca

Source File

DESSERT

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Tools

Hrelfang Generators

http://www.aleydasolis.com/en/international-seo-tools/hreflang-tags-generator

https://www.sistrix.com/hreflang-guide/hreflang-generator

Hrelfang Sitemaps Generator

http://www.themediaflow.com/tool_hreflang.php

Validators

https://app.hreflang.org/

http://www.technicalseo.info/seo-tools/hreflang

http://hreflang.ninja/ - page level

Case Studies:

https://nerdydata.com

To See International SERP:

https://www.google.fr/search?q=voitures&hl=fr&adtest=on&ip=0.0.0.0&source_ip=0.0.0.0

Yandex Metrica

Heatmap Example

About the Tool

https://metrica.yandex.com/welcome/

Demo Account

https://metrica.yandex.com/dashboard?id=29761725

- Available in ENGLISH
- Free
- Up to 1000000 hits per day for counter for free
- Up to 120 000 hits per day for User Behaviour analysis
- Can be implemented via Tag manager and work with Google, Bing whatever
- Support Available

THE END

THANK YOU

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