

Neilson ensures optimum website performance at peak following re-platform ... all with a little help from SciVisum

For specialist ski, beach and sail tour operator Neilson, an efficient, responsive website is key to converting browsers into buyers. And, while managing performance is a year-round priority, ensuring customers experience optimum performance during the high-traffic challenges of peak booking seasons is simply non-negotiable. Thanks to some collaborative planning with the testing and monitoring experts at SciVisum, Neilson was able to deliver a hassle-free online experience throughout, even following a recent platform shift.



Neilson's reputation for offering the very best in premium ski and snowboard holidays is second-to-none. The company's website is a mine of information, advice and booking options for ski aficionados and it's essential that the website provides the consistent customer experience that Neilson customers value so highly.

"Travel is a tricky online proposition. The volume of search and personalisation options is enormous, yet customers rightly expect a swift and efficient browsing and booking experience 24/7," comments Richard Scales, Neilson's Delivery Manager.

Challenge

Peak performance following re-platform

With a new website and platform recently implemented, there was added pressure on the tech team to ensure the site would comfortably handle traffic ahead of their new year peak.

Going back to basics

SciVisum have provided Neilson with synthetic monitoring services to ensure maximum journey availability and speed for a number of years, Neilson's move to Drupal (v8) platform presented the need for load testing.

"Already having confidence in SciVisum's synthetic monitoring service and knowing we'd get the same realistic metrics for load testing, we felt they'd be a good fit, especially as they already understood our site and systems," explains Richard.

With peak booking season just around the corner, it was essential that everyone had confidence in the site's ability to handle the expected increase in traffic without adversely impacting the customer experience.

Neilson's Delivery Manager, Richard Scales, knew that there was no room for error once the post-Christmas stampede was underway. Having a particularly complex site with a number of APIs for accessing the reservation engine and snow forecast data amongst others, meant an intelligent load testing solution was necessary, to identify any customer impacting issues before the new site went live.



"When we took the decision to re-platform, we knew that we'd be introducing a new content management system that was architecturally very different from what we'd had previously and would therefore need to invest in a sophisticated level of load testing before going live," explains Richard.

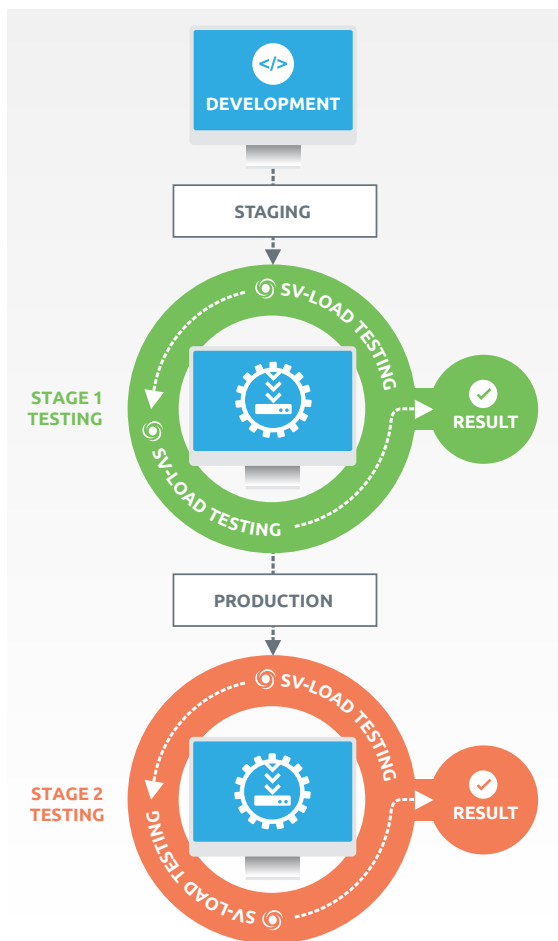
"We particularly appreciated the proactive support SciVisum were already delivering and knew this would be an important component of the load testing process."

The Solution

Keeping it real

SciVisum's SV-Load testing service is modelled on the most realistic traffic profile for each client, testing a mixture of journeys including drop-off ratios. Every load test model is created using genuine visitor behaviour data and designed to measure speed, availability and consistency of journeys across the website at peak. SciVisum journeys make intelligent choices from page content as real customers would essential for testing the complexity of Neilson's site.

Richard was keen to initiate load testing during staging, thereby ensuring the reservations system would be reliable during high-traffic periods before going live. A two-stage process was developed, testing both prior to and after launch of the new site, with capacity tested to 25% above expected peak traffic.



The Results

Nailing the issues that impact performance

Load testing can often reveal performance issues that require a significant site review; for Neilson, however, the results were more reassuring than worrisome.

Testing proved that the site would stand up to traffic levels beyond the predicted peak and identified the point at which performance began degrading. There had been some concerns that resort landing pages might fail under the strain of peak-period traffic, but the testing process resulted in only minor tweaks to optimise performance – mainly reducing the number of API calls and optimising embedded video on specific pages to increase load speeds.

This not only highlights the benefits of taking a measured and professional approach to site building, but also the advantages of using a load-testing solution that flags only those issues that impact end user performance – for instance, picking up pinch points that slow the user journey – enabling tech to focus its resources more effectively.

“SciVisum’s diligence and expertise gave us the confidence that the new website would comfortably handle peak traffic without impacting the experience of our customers and also enabled us to make improvements to page delivery speeds.”

It’s just as important to know how, when and why a site might fall down as it is to prove that it can stand up and perform under pressure.

Progress through partnership

Neilson's successful collaboration with SciVisum through synthetic performance monitoring led to the extension of this relationship into load testing. For Richard, the ability to commission an independent, fully managed solution that gets to the heart of performance problems without disrupting existing protocols was a huge factor in the decision-making process.

"Our decision to re-platform meant that we urgently needed to test and re-test our site to ensure performance under peak traffic. SciVisum's load-test solution enabled us to quickly resolve performance issues and, ultimately, deliver a robust website that customers tell us they love. SciVisum have

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"We particularly like the project management and proactive support provided by SciVisum. Having a fully managed service enabled us to focus on completing site development while SciVisum took care of the load testing."



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If you would like to schedule a free consultation regarding your website performance concerns, learn more about our performance testing services or arrange a free trial then please contact us.

About SciVisum

Measuring realistic user experience for peak digital performance

SciVisum's cloud-based website performance monitoring and load testing services provide unparalleled insight into your customers' digital experience by behaving exactly as end users would. A unique combination of realism – delivered by an intelligent test engine, and expert human insight provides the most accurate, actionable data enabling you to take control of today's performance challenges.

For over ten years, SciVisum has helped leading UK brands such as Transport for London, Cineworld, Dixons Carphone, Channel 4 and Debenhams optimise user experience and deliver peak performance.



WEBSITE
MONITORING



MOBILE
MONITORING



LOAD
TESTING



PERFORMANCE
OPTIMISATION

