

MHDO©

● COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

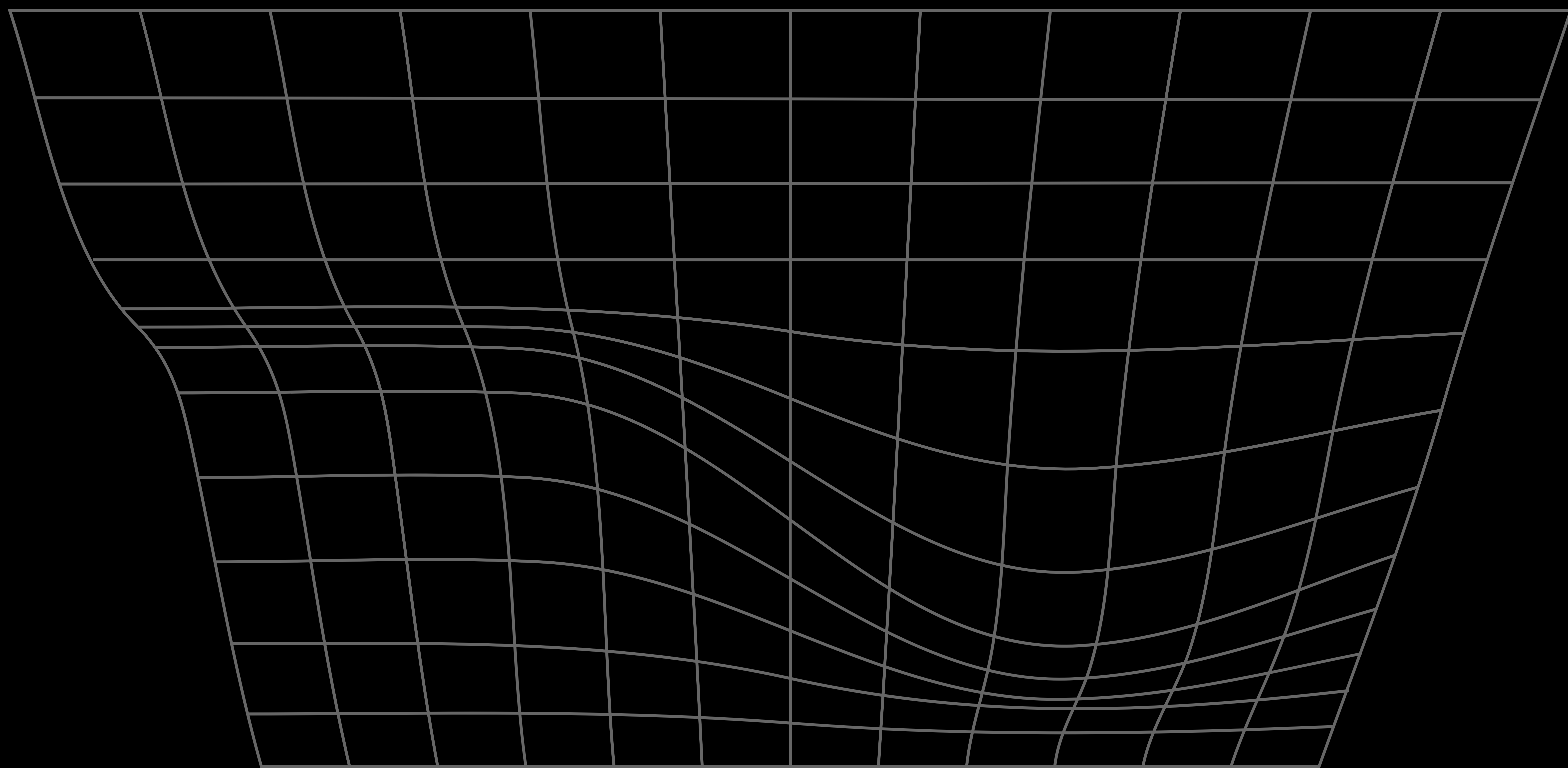


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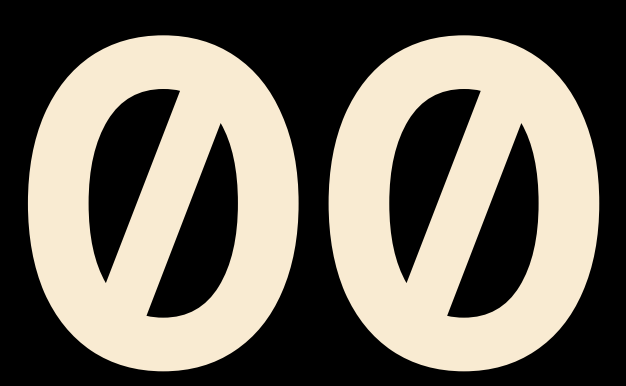
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INTRODUCTION

Greetings

We're Max Hofert Design. We help startups create and launch brands that provide long-term growth.

Our approach to branding

Design without strategy is guessing. We're not in the business of guessing.

Before a group of creative thinkers can apply design-led business solutions, they must first understand and guide the businesses they are working with, and the complex problems they are tasked to solve.

This is where brand strategy enters the building. It's the mandatory foundational process that steers successful design, ultimately driving revenue. This is where we meet with key stakeholders to workshop critical pieces of the business to align leaders on groundwork of their company, as well as current and future business goals.

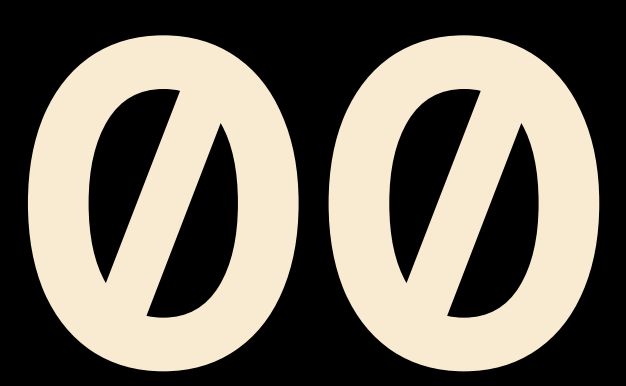
Through this process we help companies become brands. It's our job to translate their founding vision into tangible and actionable communication, or to help brands undergo transformative strategic changes in their business. Together we workshop their core values, mission, competitive landscape, brand positioning, brand personality, key audiences, voice, and messaging.

We place significant emphasis around brand positioning and believe the majority of transformative branding starts with radical differentiation. Going where others are too afraid to go. Uncharted territory. That's where the magic happens.

With a highly differentiated brand, you're no longer competing within the safe zone of your category. You are uniquely you, and you have entered a different playing field. One that leads not follows. This requires bravery and trust, but with that, you are rewarded with lower customer acquisition costs, lower marketing and advertising spend, and more organic growth.

Simply put, you're not trying to force people to give a shit about you, they just naturally do. That is brand.

We're on a 6-foot deep mission to lay boring brands to rest. This framework is the first step. People no longer buy products, they buy a feeling. Let's make it a really powerful one.



INTRODUCTION

Business is hard, hopefully this makes it just a tad easier

We put together this framework to help startups and business leaders better understand who they are competing with. It helps provide a micro and macro look at their business as a whole, and how it relates to others in the same arena.

This competitive analysis is one piece of our brand strategy process. We hope it helps you gain clarity so you can make bold and brave brand moves, or let us push you into pain and discomfort to be 10x better. ☺

What is a competitive analysis?

A competitive analysis is a key piece in the research phase of ideation, brand strategy, design, and how they all come together to drive revenue for your business. It looks at all of the key players within your industry, collecting all of your research in one organized place so you can make calculated and informed business decisions.

Why are they important?

When starting a business or reevaluating your strategy on a current business, you must have a deep understanding of the competitive landscape you are entering. It should guide a variety of significant decisions, and most importantly, it helps you position your brand and product in the area of greatest opportunity. The further you differentiate from your competitors in the space, the easier it is to stand out, and the less competition you have. Be uniquely you and radically differentiate, your success depends on it.

How do I use the framework?

Use this PDF in tandem with your favorite workshopping or note-taking software. Any app or software that allows you to capture screenshots and bucket with copy / research notes will work wonderfully. Our favorite is Figma, but Miro, Notion, Google Docs, etc. all work great. Run through each page and gather all of the necessary information on all of your competitors. If you aren't aware of who your competitors are, you'll need to do some research to figure out who the key players are in your space. Think about immediate competition as well as future competition that will surface as you grow.

Part 1: Brand Identity

A brand's identity is the culmination of all things it does from a strategic and visual perspective. It's the guts. It's how the founder's vision is translated strategically and visually to the audience that cares most.

Overview

Synopsis

Logo

Typography

Color Palette

Graphic assets

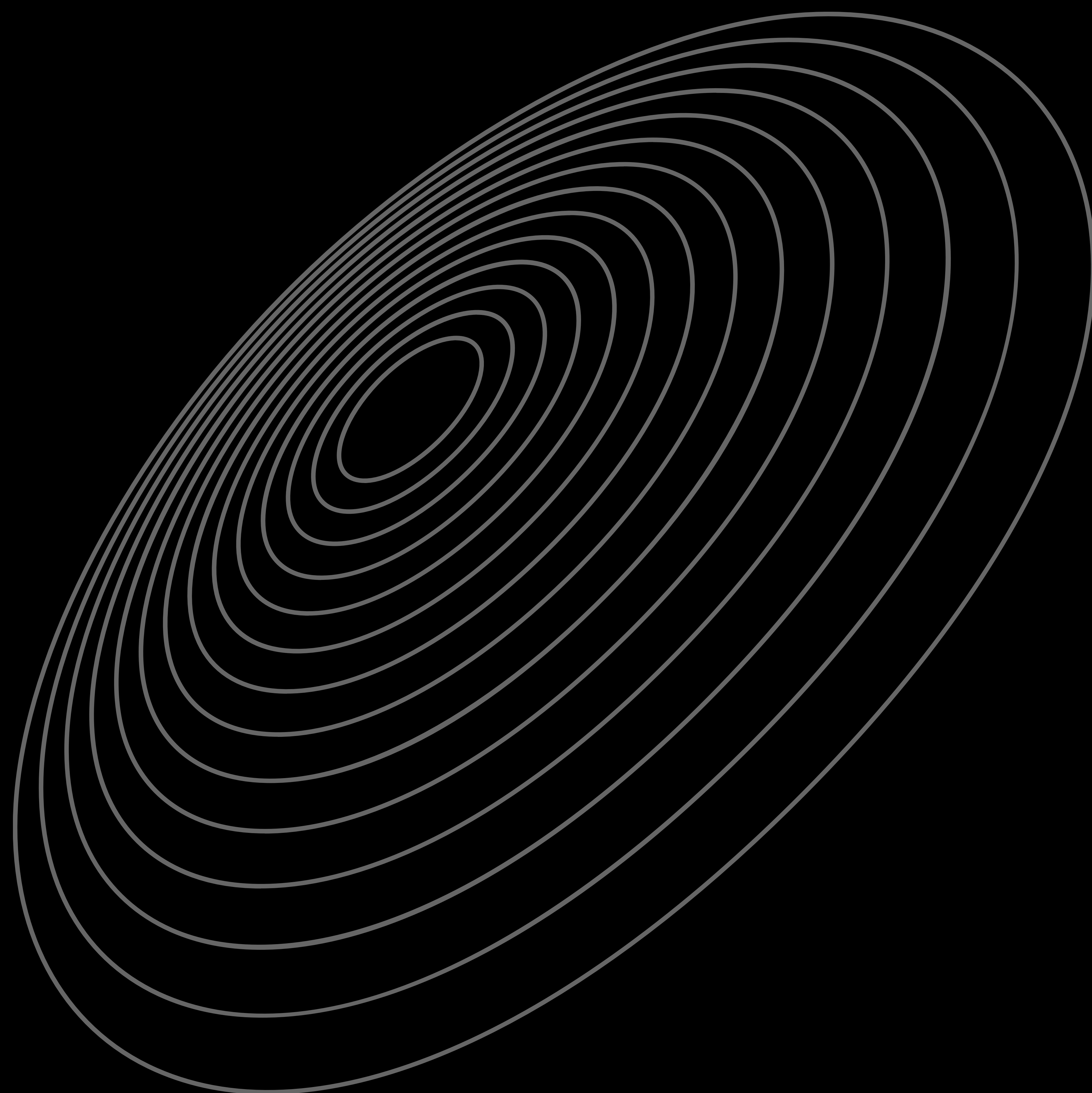
Photography

Motion

Voice and tone

Website

Packaging



● SYNOPSIS

Action

The synopsis section should be used as a summary of each competitor as you begin to dive into their website and other brand communications. Touch on their founding story, any purpose-driven causes they support, how big their team is, how they make you feel as you get to know them, and so on. This first piece is meant to be the touchy-feeley gut instinct summary section for each competitor.

Usage Example

Competitor 1

Max Hofert Design

Max Hofert is a 32-year old hellraiser residing in Boulder, Colorado. He is 10 years sober and has been skateboarding for 29 years, 5 of which he was sponsored by Vans. He started Max Hofert Design after working at several advertising agencies and design studios in Boulder. He always wanted to do his own thing, so he did, and never looked back. His branding studio helps startups create and launch brands that provide long-term growth. Serving clients in various industries, they stand by their 6-foot deep mission to lay boring brands to rest. The triumphantly boast the tagline “Where Boring Dies” and lean heavily into it.

GUT FEELING: EXPENSIVE, WANT TO HANGOUT WITH THEM
FOCUS: SMALL & MEDIUM-SIZE FUNDED STARTUP BUSINESSES
GEOGRAPHY: WORLDWIDE, BABY
WEBSITE LINK: [MAXHOFERTDESIGN.COM](https://maxhofertdesign.com)

Action

Find an image of each of your competitors logos and screenshot them. It works best to find images on plain backgrounds. The primary logo is the logo they use most often. For example - the iconic FedEx logo. The symbol / mark is going to be the icon-based version of their logo, like the Nike Swoosh. Yeeeeee.

Usage Example

Competitor 1


Max Hofert Design

PRIMARY LOGO



Max Hofert Design

SYMBOL / MARK



MHD©

● TYPOGRAPHY

Action

Collect screenshots for each competitor documenting the fonts they use throughout their website. The headline font is what they will use for larger display/headline copy, and the secondary font is used for support copy, such as subheadings and body copy. Shoutout to all my Papyrus lovers.

Usage Example

Competitor 1

Max Hofert Design

HEADLINE FONT

Be remarkable,
or be forgotten.

SECONDARY FONT

We're on a 6-foot deep mission to lay boring brands to rest. We help startups create and launch brands that provide long-term growth.

● COLOR PALETTE

Action

What colors do your competitors use throughout their brand? Colors play a massive role in the overall tone / feeling a brand creates, so we want to know who's using which colors, and how they are using them. Color is an important piece of differentiation within a design system, and it needs to be well-thought-out and applied with sophistication. For this exercise, it's ideal to create a stack of the competitors colors (like in the example to the right) and then add other screenshots of the color palette within the brands executions. Use images from their website, but also collect images on Pinterest, etc. for packaging, ads, social, and other marketing touchpoints outside of the website.

Usage Example

Competitor 1

Max Hofert Design



● GRAPHIC ASSETS

Action

In the graphic assets section you will want to gather images of the design elements that your competitors use within their visual identity. This can be patterns, textures, illustrations, icons, 3D, etc. Graphic assets are any visual storytelling assets beyond the logo, color palette, and typography.

Usage Example

Competitor 1

Max Hofert Design



**WHERE
BORING
DIES'©**

● PHOTO & MOTION

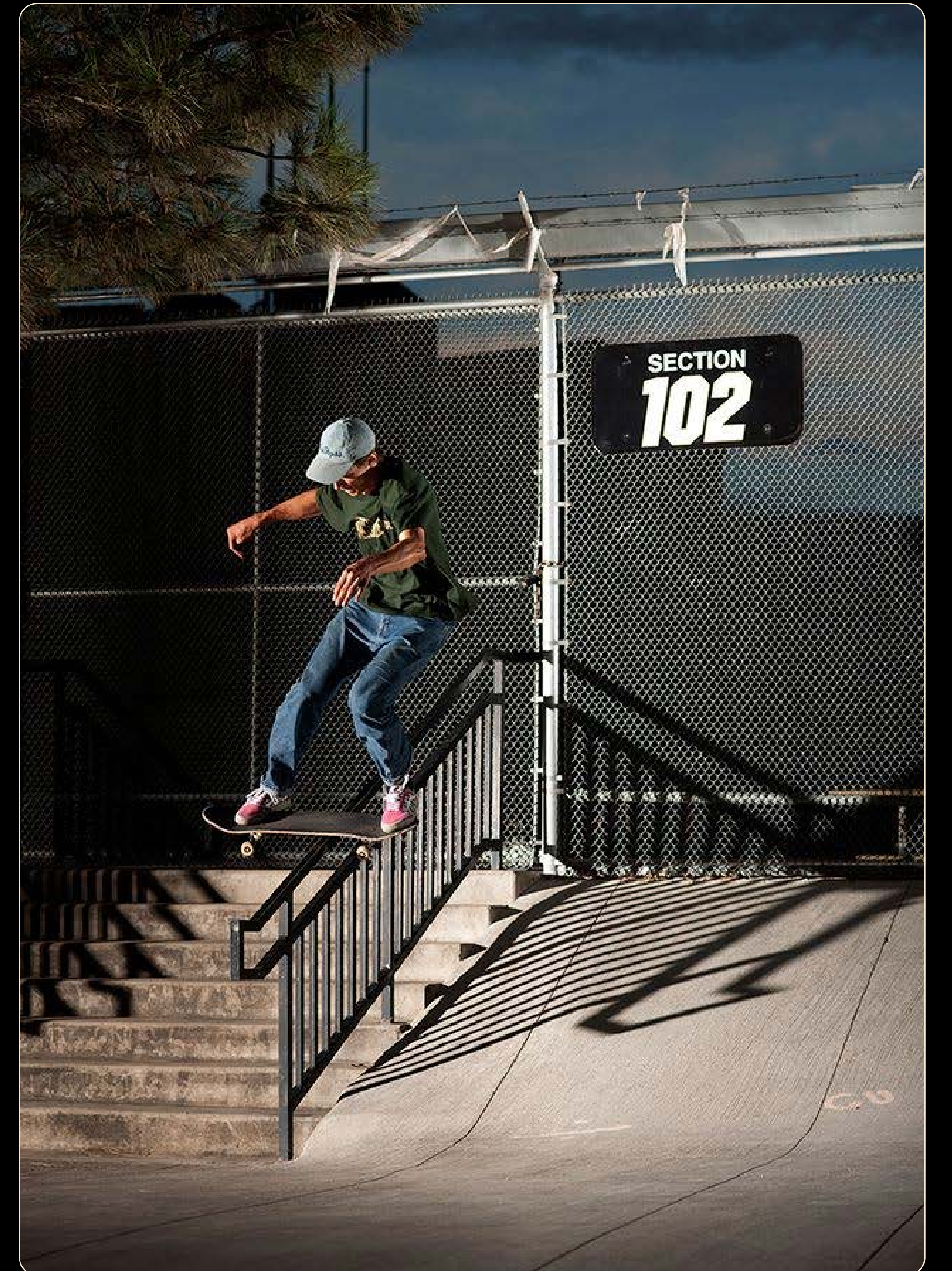
Action

The photo and motion piece focuses on photography, animation, and videography. The main realm of this stuff is on your competitors website. What is the style of the photography your competitors are using? Is it dark and moody? Light and bright? Human-focused, or product-focused? Do they even have photography? Next, look at any animation they might be using and collect screenshots. Lastly, do they use video on their site? If so, what is the usage case? Screenshot the style of the video and note what the purpose is. Disclaimer: we have no contractual promotional agreement with pepperoni. 🍕

Usage Example

Competitor 1

Max Hofert Design



● VOICE & TONE

Action

Voice and tone is a crucial piece of branding that is often overlooked. Your voice is how you sound / talk to your audience. What's your personality that shines through your communication? Your audience should feel like they are interacting with a human, not a bot. Make it fun, make it interesting, and make it an experience. It plays a big part in how customers perceive and trust your brand. Within voice there is tone. Your tone is how your voice slightly shifts depending on the situation or audience segment you are speaking to, but it always remains true to your voice. Take notes on the style of communication your competitors use when speaking to their audience. It's a golden area for you to differentiate within.

Usage Example

Competitor 1

Max Hofert Design

Looking at their copy on social media and on their website, MHD communicates from a place of superior knowledge in branding, but with a dark arts twist. The encounters leave you wondering if they are actually a branding studio, or a front for the occult.

CHARACTERISTICS: AUTHORITATIVE, HUMOROUS, MYSTERIOUS, IRREVERENT, IMAGINATIVE, ETHEREAL

WEBSITE

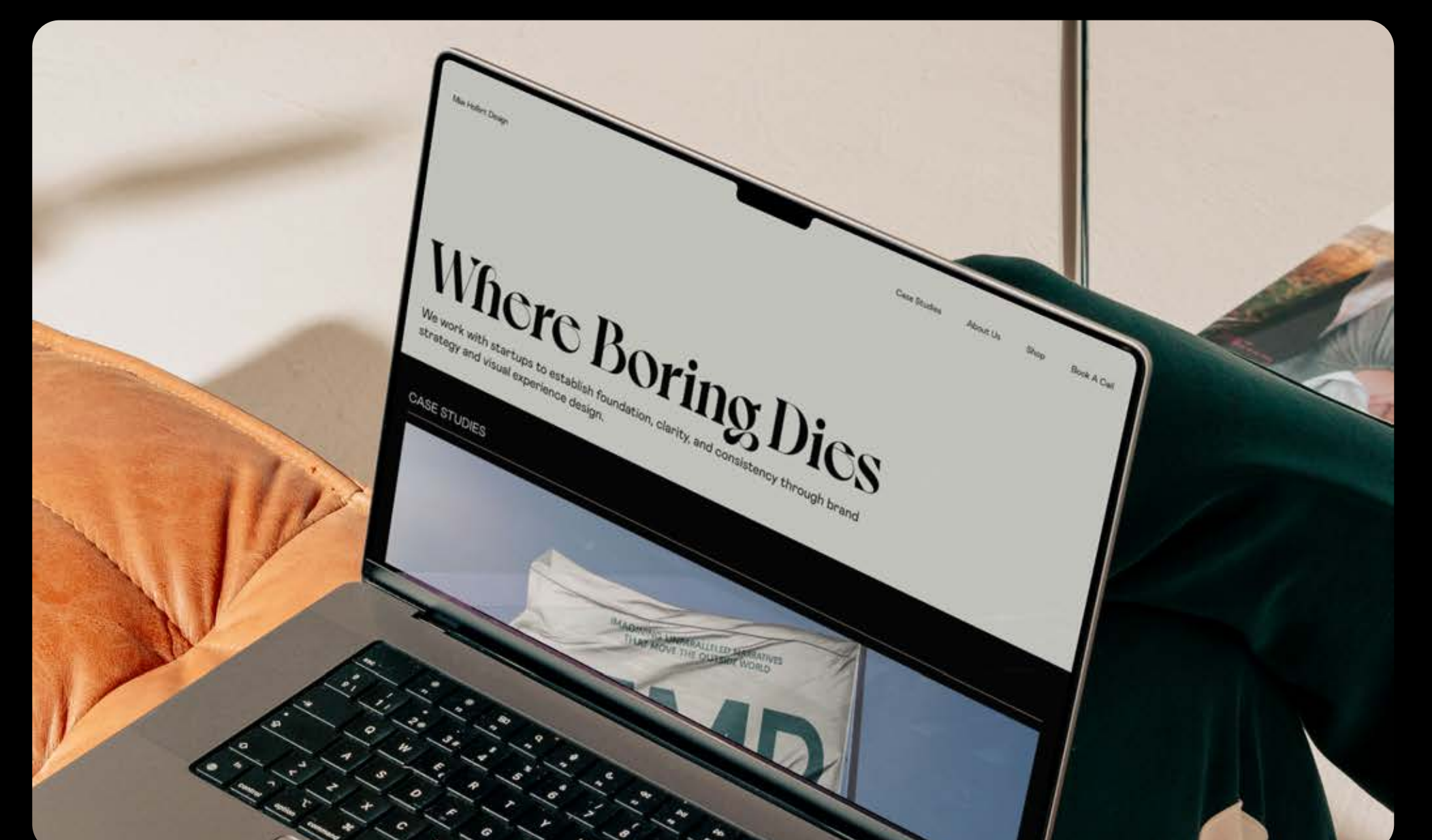
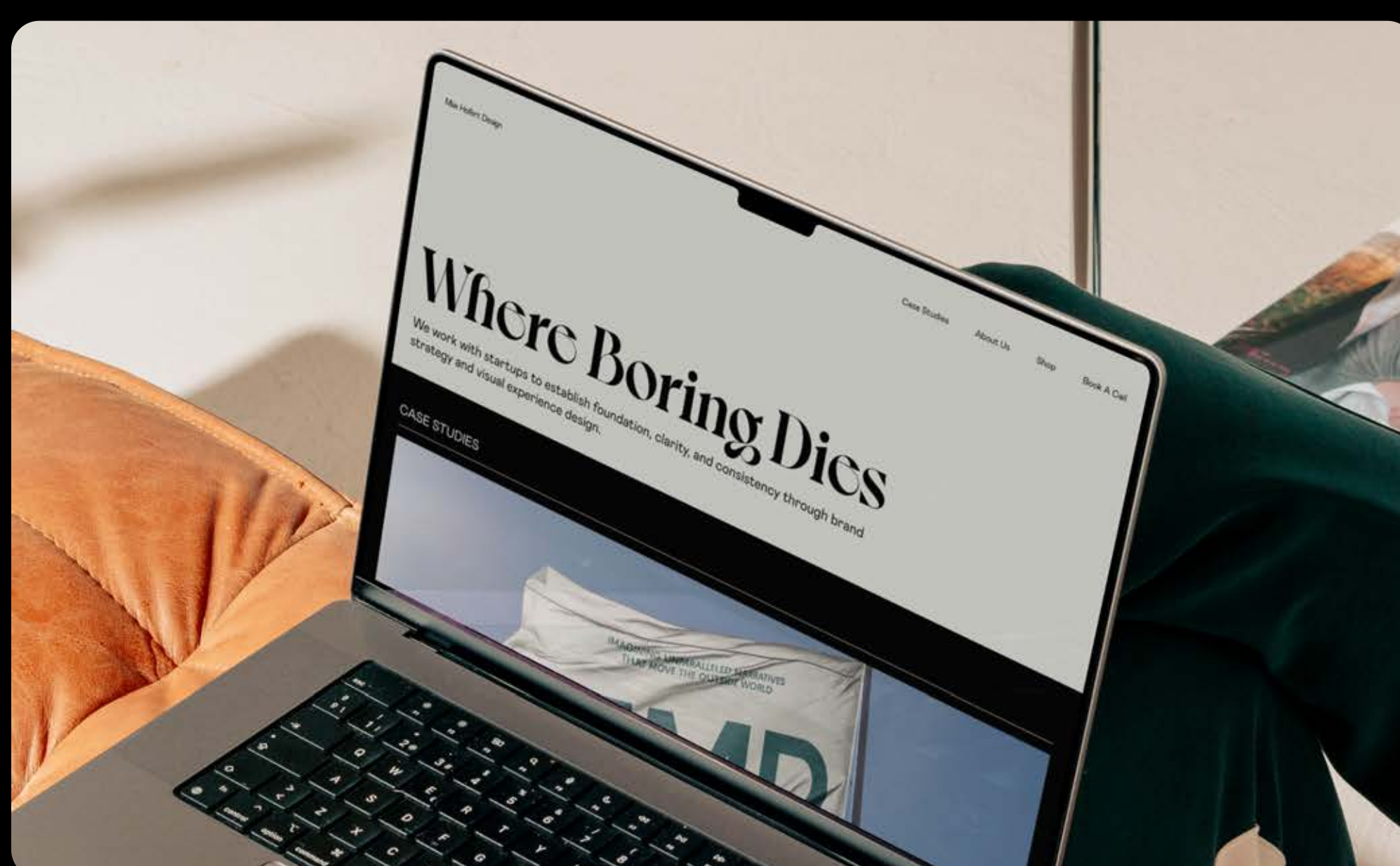
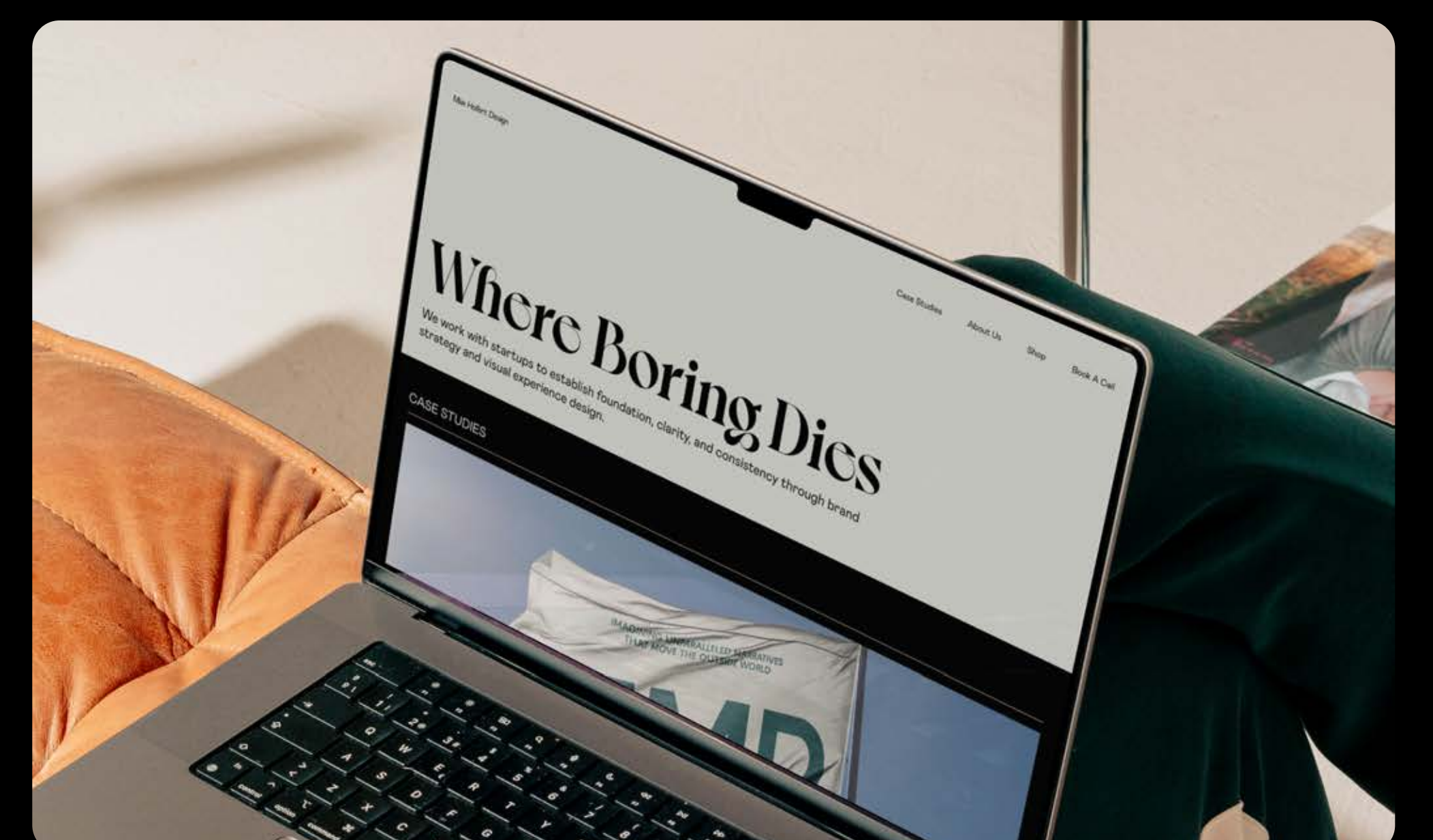
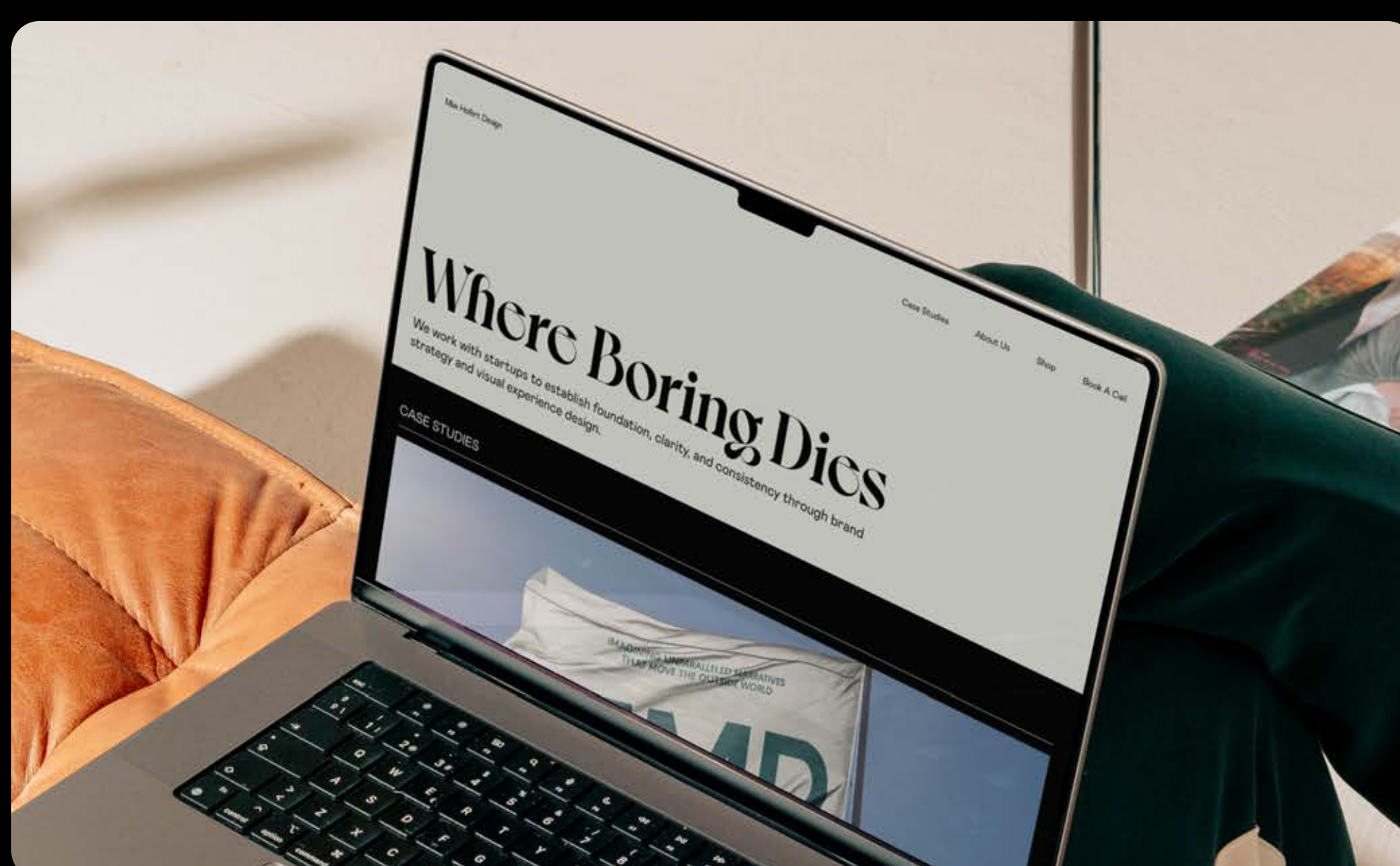
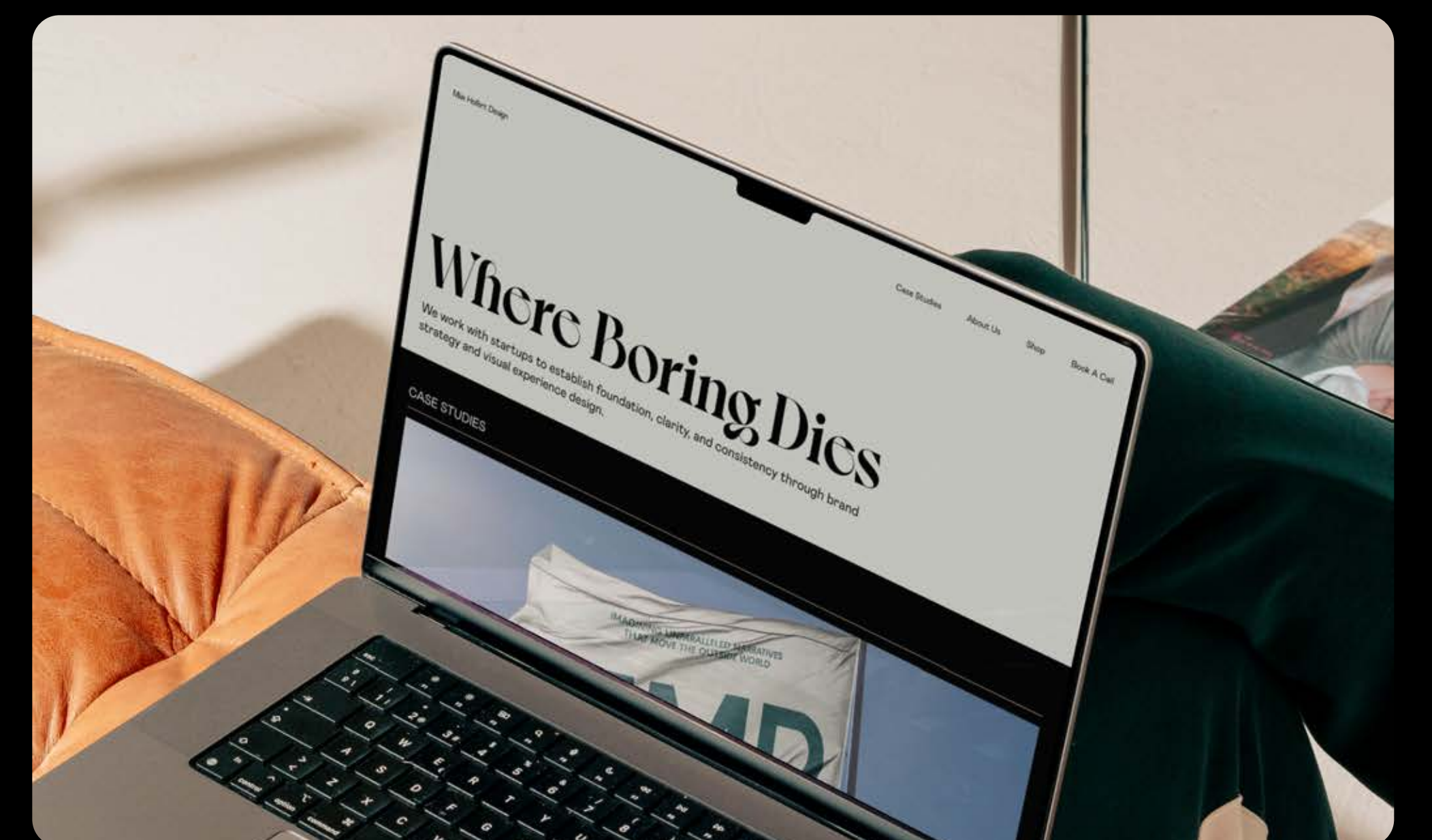
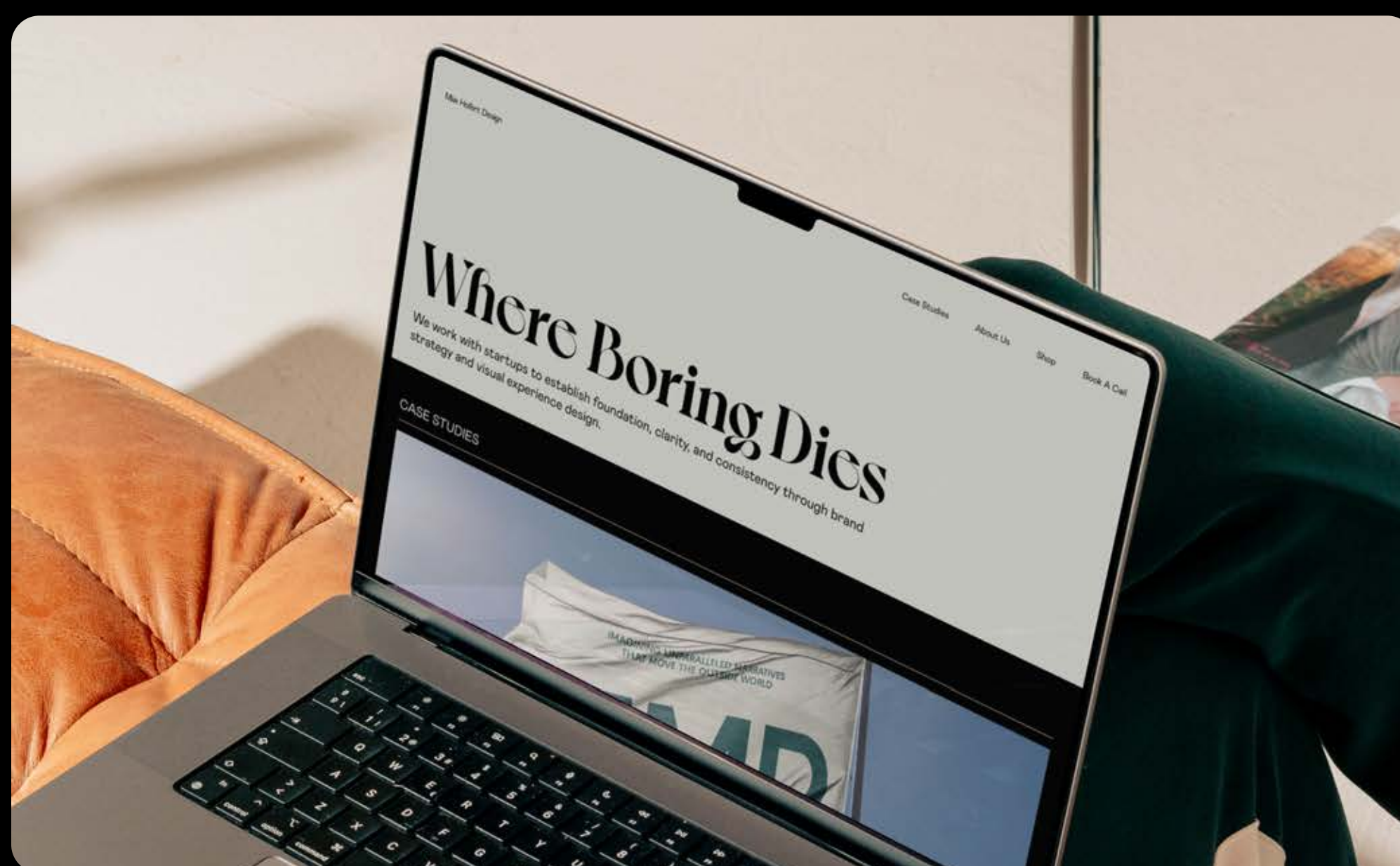
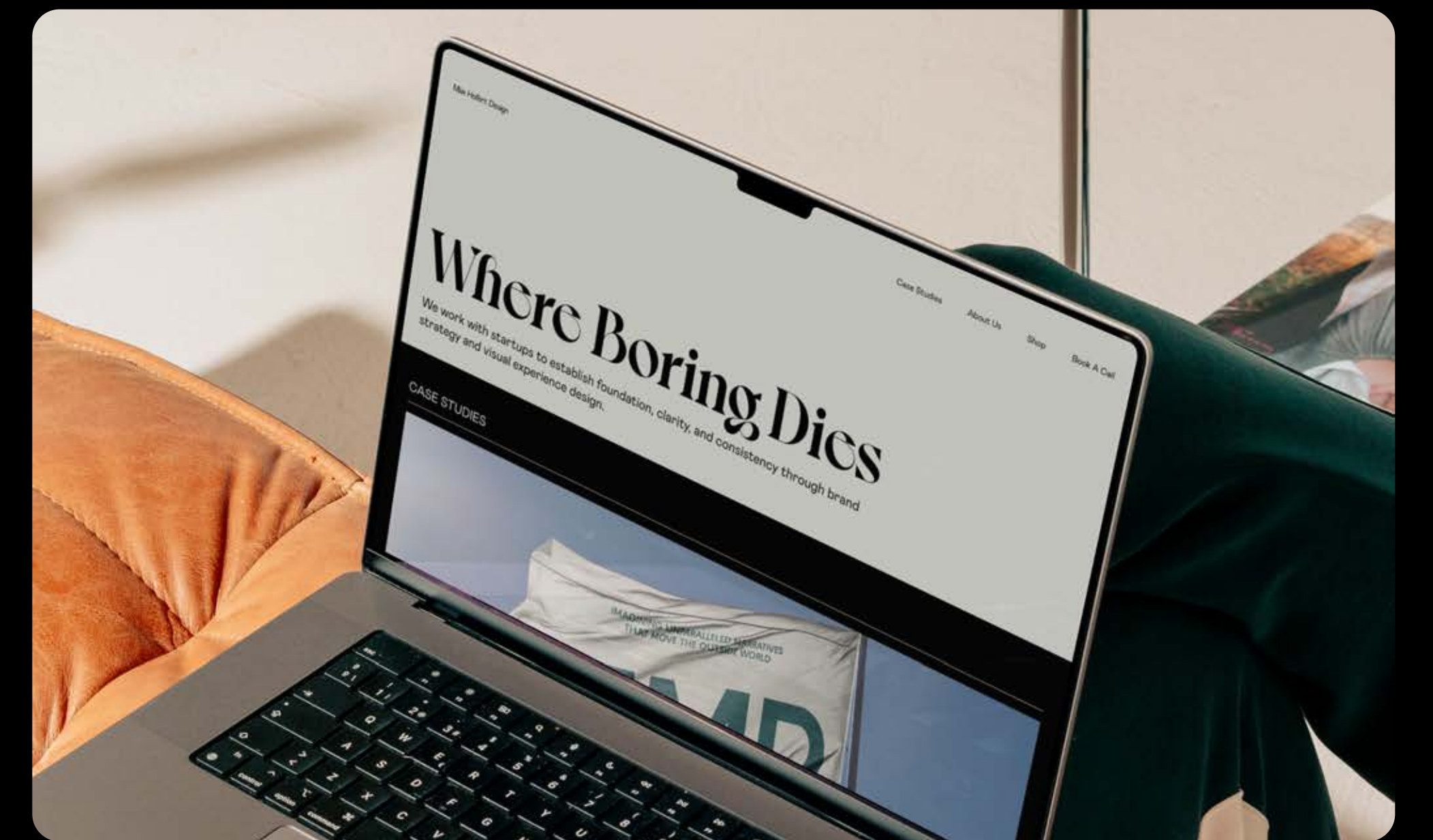
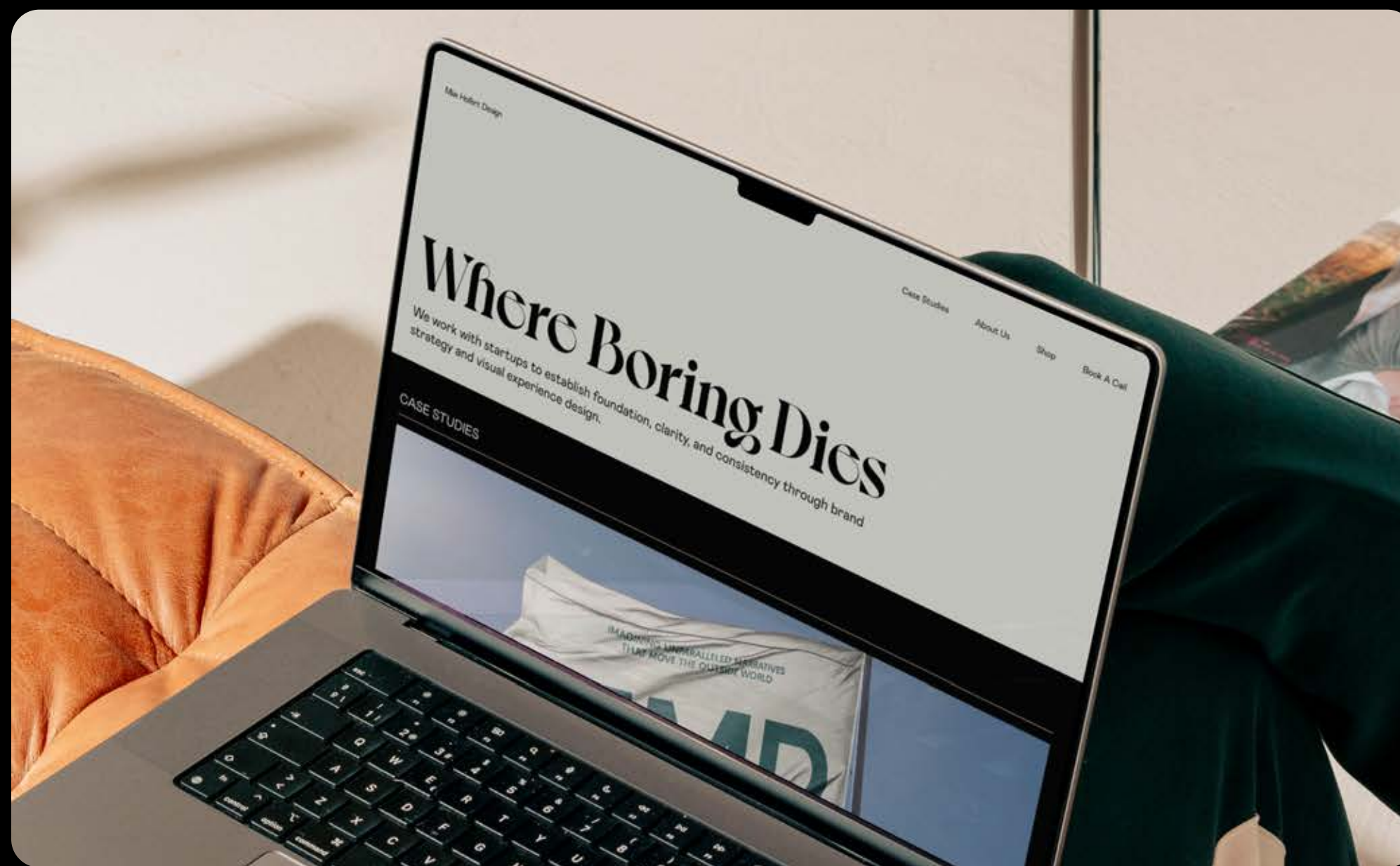
Action

Use this section as a place to gather a plethora of screenshots of your competitors website. The more the better. You can even connect them with thumbtacks and yarn and cover your bedroom wall for extra intensity.

Usage Example

Competitor 1

Max Hofert Design



● PACKAGING

Action

If you are a CPG founder, packaging design plays a huge role in sales, and I'm sure you understand the complexities of shelf presence. Use this section as a mugshot wall for your competitors product line. You'll want to have every competitors package design / product line in one spot so you can begin to look for areas of opportunity.

Pro Tip: When developing packaging designs, it's very important to place the most emphasis on your brand / logo on the front of pack. This is the only instance you will hear us say "make the logo bigger." Especially early on, every ounce of brand recognition and equity you gain counts. If you focus on highlighting product benefits or flavors on front of pack, that will be what your users remember, not your brand. If you searched "ginger kombucha" you'd get thousands of results to weed through unsuccessfully, likely pulling your hairs from your head. In contrast, if you searched "Health-Ade" you'd be on their site within seconds. Products are short-lived and are always copied by your competitors. Brands can outlive their founders.

Usage Example

Competitor 1

Max Hofert Design



YOU MADE IT HALF WAY



GREAT JOB! ● GREAT JOB!

GREAT JOB! ● GREAT JOB!

GREAT JOB! ● GREAT JOB!

Part 2: Executions

The second piece of this framework looks at how all of the pieces from the brand identity are translated into outward-facing efforts across sales, marketing, and advertising initiatives.

Overview

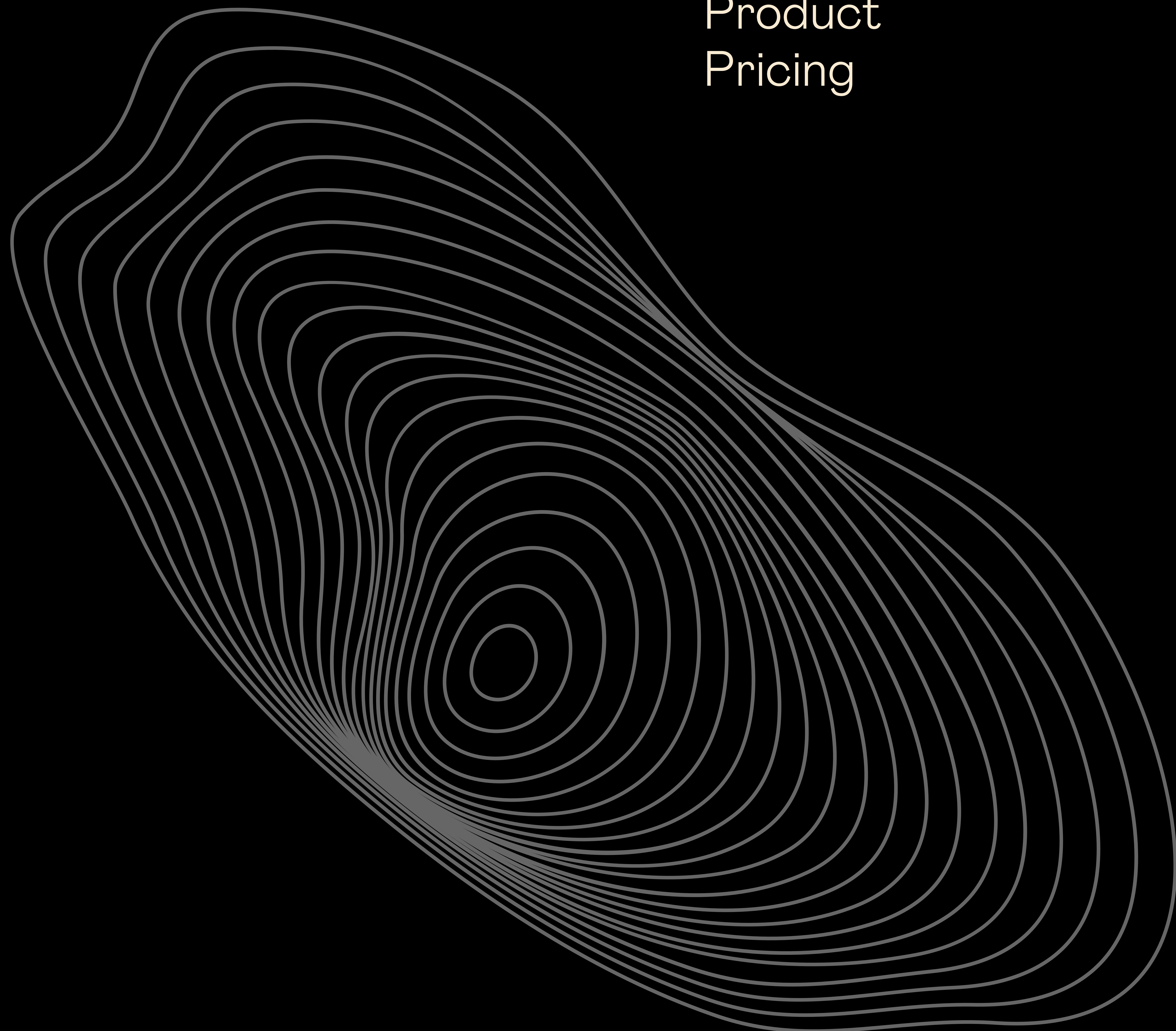
SEO

Social Media

Customer Experience

Product

Pricing



Action

Google search your competitors and see what their SEO angle / search term rankings are. This will help you gain information around their marketing strategy. For the best results, we'd recommend using a free version of Semrush or Ahrefs for the most accurate results with this type of research.

Usage Example

Competitor 1

Max Hofert Design

Focuses on brand strategy and brand identity messaging geared towards startups. They are not currently posting blog articles, but they have said many times they will start publishing them soon. I'm not sure I believe them. They have good search results for social media content. It looks like they do a bit of paid search, but nothing to write home about.

FOCUS: BRANDING FOR STARTUPS

PAID SEARCH? YES

ORGANIC BLOG CONTENT: NO

● SOCIAL MEDIA

Action

Time for some creepin'. Dive into the social media accounts of your competitors and take notes. Pay attention to the type of content they are posting, their messaging, tone, etc. Does their audience engage with their content? A brands social media accounts can provide a linear perspective on what your competition has been doing.

Pro Tip: Subscribe to all of your competitors email lists. This is one of the best ways to see what angle they are currently working in their marketing strategy. When everyone else in the industry is zigging, that's your sign to zag. Bring a fresh perspective and add value in a way that your competitors are lacking.

Usage Example

Competitor 1

Max Hofert Design

IG HANDLE: [@MAX.HOFERT.DESIGN](#)

IG FOLLOWERS: 13k

LI HANDLE: [MAX-HOFERT](#)

LI FOLLOWERS: 3,900

On Instagram they show work - lots of it. They have refrained from creating educational content for Instagram. They often share anti-war content and promote peace. They listen to The Grateful Dead and share their content as well. They honestly seem like dirty hippies.

On LinkedIn, the founder posts a lot of long-form educational brand strategy and design content, generally focused around startups and startup growth. He also seems like a dirty hippie.

● CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Action

Get uncomfortable, this part is important. Open a chatbot, call customer service, fill out a web form with questions about a competitors product. All of these interactions will give you a glimpse under the hood of your competitors brand. Were they quick to respond? What was their tone? Was it a real human, or a droid that sends you to the same FAQ article 47 times? Take notes on what you liked and did not like, and come up with your own solution that will best serve your audience.

Usage Example

Competitor 1

Max Hofert Design

HOW DID YOU CONNECT? PHONE, WEB FORM

RESPONSE TIME: 12 MINUTES, 4 HOURS

BOT OR HUMAN? HUMAN

TONE: FRIENDLY, WARM, HELPFUL

I called and submitted a web form, and both methods had helpful outcomes from a real-life human being. Blimey! They were able to quickly answer the questions I came up with and let me know to reach out again if any other questions arise. The fast response time and person-to-person communication makes all the difference in a frustrating time.

● PRODUCT

Action

Research and note details for your competitors entire product/ services line. For SaaS or other tech offerings, research the software and differences in packages / value. For CPG and retail, you'll want to do the same, analyzing form factors, sizing/ portions, etc. Once you have a detailed list of all of your competitors and the low-down on their products, you'll be able to see patterns, areas of overlap, and untapped opportunities for you to pounce on faster than a cat lapping chain lightning. 🐈

Pro Tip: Go to the product pages on your competitors website and read their customer reviews. What are people stoked on? Do those things, but much better. What are they complaining about? Are there any patterns? You can use these friction points as firepower for your product, knowing that there's a need for improvement.

Usage Example

Competitor 1

Max Hofert Design

PRODUCT: DEATH JUICE
QUANTITY: 12 PACK CASE
PRODUCTS IN LINE: 3
CUSTOMER REVIEWS? YES

Ingredients: Blood, sweat, tears, organic cane sugar, carbonated holy water, caffeine, gasoline, nopal cactus, 1/3 cups antifreeze, calendula flower.

Flavors: NDA

● PRICING

Action

Use this page to organize your competitors offerings and the price / pricing structures associated with them. You'll want to figure out your sweet spot within the market and price accordingly. There's definitely psychology at play with pricing, but it's important that your pricing is aligned with your brand positioning, which is a crucial piece of brand strategy that we place a heavy emphasis on further down the line in the process.

Pro Tip: Pay attention to discounts your competitors offer. Do they frequently offer discounts? Brands that are constantly pumping discounts make their product seem like a low-value commodity. Tread lightly so you don't cannibalize your product. Offering little or no discounts communicates a premium high-value offering. Perception is real.

Usage Example

Competitor 1

Max Hofert Design

FREQUENCY: PER SINGLE PURCHASE

SUBSCRIPTION OPTION? YES

DISCOUNT THROUGH SUBSCRIPTION: 30% OFF

OTHER DISCOUNTS PROMOTED ON SITE? NO


It looks like Death Juice comes in 12 packs and single cans. If you buy a 12 pack you save \$0.50 per can. They have an option to subscribe to receive these deadly cases every month, which saves you 30% off on your entire order. Seems like a (killer 😊) deal.

PRICING:

\$20 per case

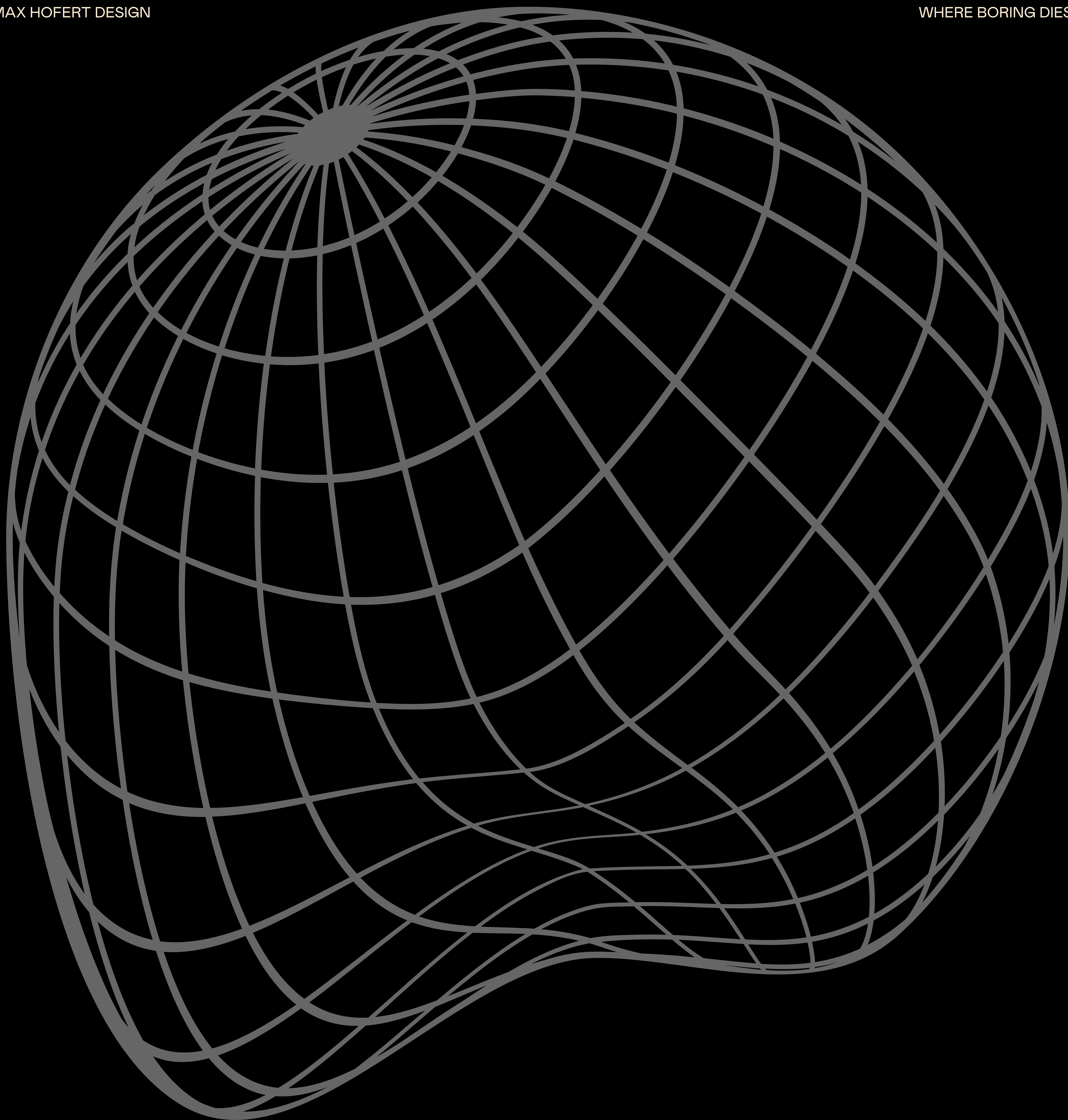
\$4 per can

Well looky there, you made it pal

Thanks a lot for checking out our framework. We hope it helps you successfully audit your competitive landscape, and better position your brand for success. If you found this valuable and need a hand with brand strategy and visual identity, give us a shout — it's our bread n' butter. Mmmmm, butter. 

CLIENTS WE'VE HAD THE PLEASURE OF WORKING WITH

Adidas, Crocs, Lyft, Justin's Nut Butter, Copper Mountain, Odwalla, Burton Snowboards, Inspire Clean Energy, Life Time Fitness, Salvo Health, University of Colorado, Live Nation



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