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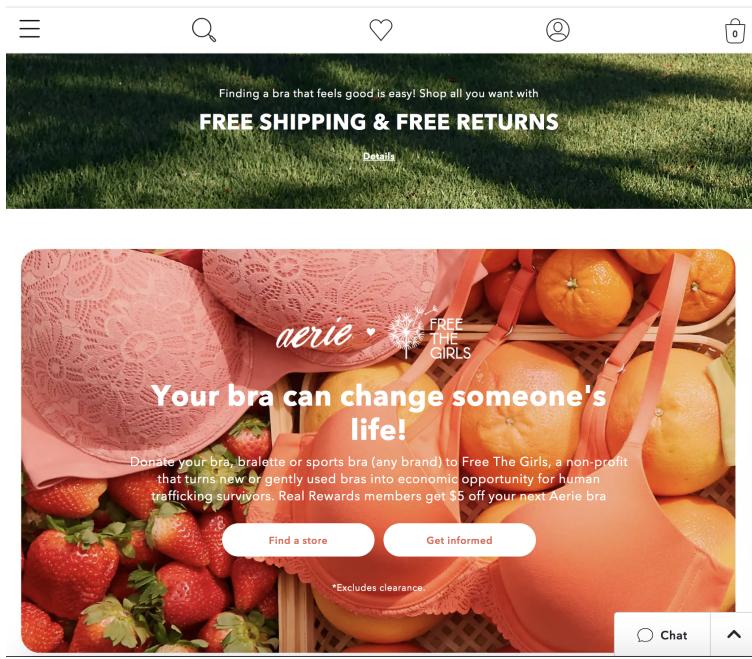
4/20/2022

CS 130 – HW01

I decided to analyze the [Aerie](#) website because it is a brand that prides itself on inclusivity in their clothing, and I wanted to see if this message was also mirrored in their online shopping experience.

### **Composition Analysis**

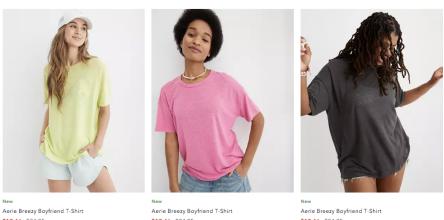
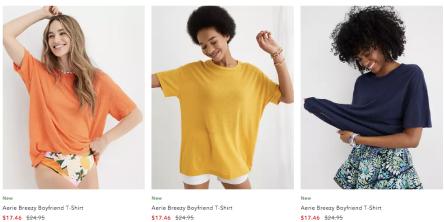
Aesthetically, the website seems to really emphasize their company values of acceptance, authenticity, happiness, and quality. These values are reflected in the images displayed of smiling and laughing women of different races, sizes and abilities in nice, high-quality apparel. Images, such as the one shown in Figure A, are repeated throughout the website and are emphasized through the dramatic contrast of their bright colors to the white background of the site. This draws the user's attention to these images and their messages, which are further contrasted with white words against a bright background, which reiterate the brand's values. They also place icons that clearly articulate their message in close proximity to these images, which helps the user understand the relationship between the clothing and the messages being conveyed (Figure B). The site is also extremely organized, as the clothing is displayed in an intentionally aligned grid (Figure C). The use of white space is extremely effective in creating borders around each product and its description to impose the principle of proximity and help the user identify which description goes with which product. Therefore, the design of the website makes the experience of shopping for clothes intuitive and exciting while clearly conveying the brand's values.



**Figure A.** The high contrast of brightly colored images against the website's white background draws the user's attention to these images and the feeling they elicit (likely joy, summer, happiness). Additionally, the contrast of the white text over the highly colorful images again draws the user's attention to read the message, which tend to reinforce the brand's values (ie. this example reinforces the values of inclusivity and quality).



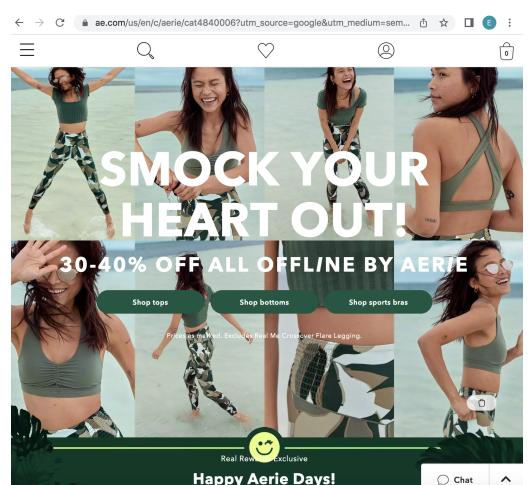
**Figure B.** This image conveys the diversity and inclusivity of Aerie's brand, as well as their prioritization of happiness. In close proximity to this image (with no whitespace separating them and the image), are little icons that reinforce their values of happiness (Icon A) and quality (Icon C). The close proximity of the icons to the image helps the user associate the clothing with these values.



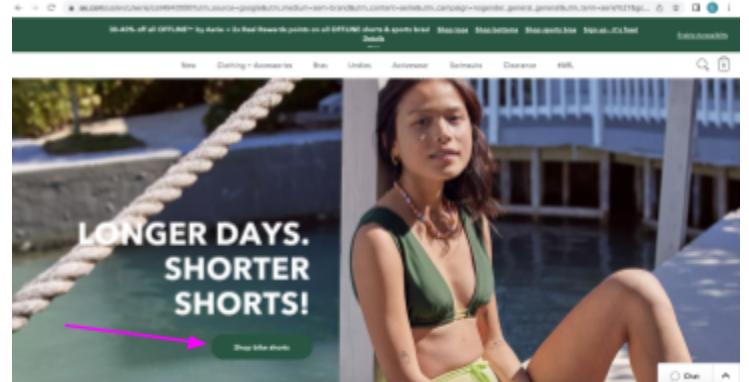
**Figure C.** Aerie displays their products in a grid formation using white-space to align the items into columns and rows. They also use proximity to demonstrate which price goes with which item.

While the clarity with which it conveys Aerie's brand values is one of the major strengths of this website, there are still some limitations to this website's design. First, most of the website's design relies on the use of color to enhance their messaging and the user's experience (Figure D). However, users who are colorblind would be unable to experience this aspect of the website and would thus lose much of the value of the design. In fact, some of the features of the website lack significant color contrast that is necessary for people with visual impairments to recognize (Figure E).

**Figure D.** The homepage of the website is almost entirely green, representing the summery collection they are launching. However, a user with color blindness would not recognize the summer indicators because they all rely on color.



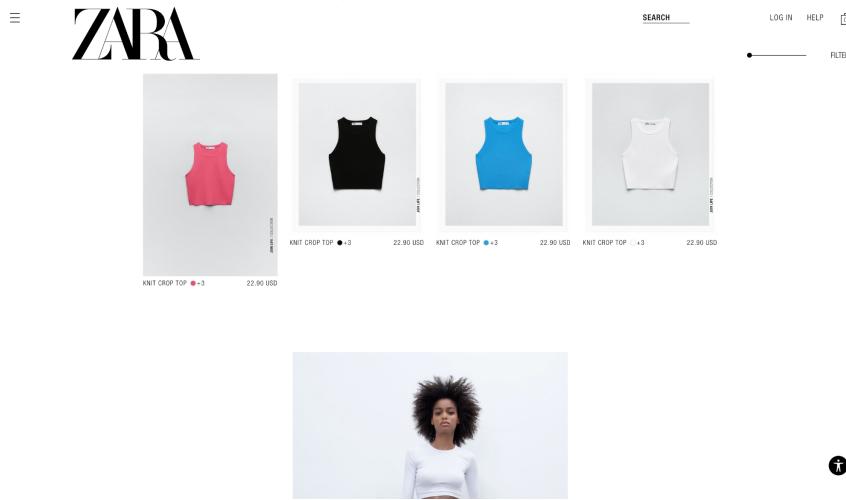
**Figure E.** The button stating “Shop Bike Shorts” is a very similar shade of green to the background. This lack of contrast would make it very difficult for users with visual impairments to see the button and know where to click.



Despite its limitations, Aerie has one of the strongest online shopping websites in terms of design. These strengths are made even clearer when it is compared to other popular online shopping sites like [Zara](#), which has an extremely confusing design that leads to an unpleasant user experience. As shown in Figure F, Zara’s design overutilizes white space in such a way that it ignores the principle of proximity and places related content very far apart, which makes browsing the products very confusing. They also disregard the principle of alignment and do not adhere to a consistent grid in their display of products like Aerie does, resulting in a disorganized appearance (Figure G). Therefore, in comparison to other websites like Zara, Aerie has a very strong design because it is organized, engaging, and clearly conveys the brand’s values

**Figure F.** These screenshots were taken under the “Basics” page of the Zara website. The large amount of white space between the first image and the first row of products places the related content in very far proximity from each other, making it difficult for the user to know if they are related or not.





**Figure G.** This screenshot demonstrates that Zara does not adhere to the design principle of alignment because the products are not placed in an aligned row like they are on Aerie's website (Figure C). This results in a disorganized appearance and makes browsing more confusing and effortful

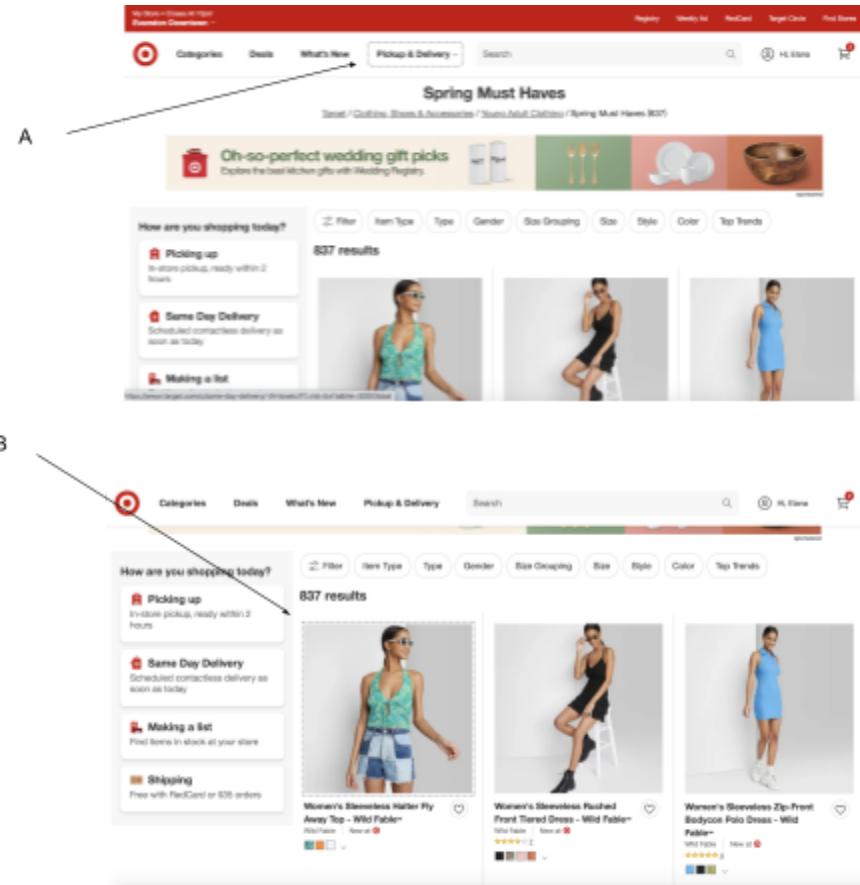
## Accessibility Analysis

The first test I conducted was not using my mouse and using only my keyboard to navigate the site. This is important for users whose ability may not permit them to use their mousepad and need to use their keyboard to navigate websites. It was rather straightforward to explore the different pages using the arrow, tab, and return keys. However, it was unclear as to how the user can select a specific product. I tried using the side arrows to browse the products, but I could not figure out how to hover over a specific item to then select it.

I then went to [Target's](#) website to compare their user experience compared to Aerie's. I found that the layout of their site was much more conducive to navigating with a keyboard because its hierarchical structure allowed me to easily see where my cursor was (Figure G). I was then able to easily determine when I was hovering over specific items and select them. Based on my experience with Target's website, I think Aerie can improve the accessibility of

their site by increasing the salience and contrast of the boxes that indicate what items are being hovered over when using the keyboard (Figure H).

**Figure G.** These screenshots were taken as I navigated Target's website with my keyboard. As shown by point A, the box surrounding the selected item is very obvious to the user. This then made it clear for me to recognize when my desired article of clothing was selected at point B.



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**Filter + Sort** 939 items

Size	+
Color	+

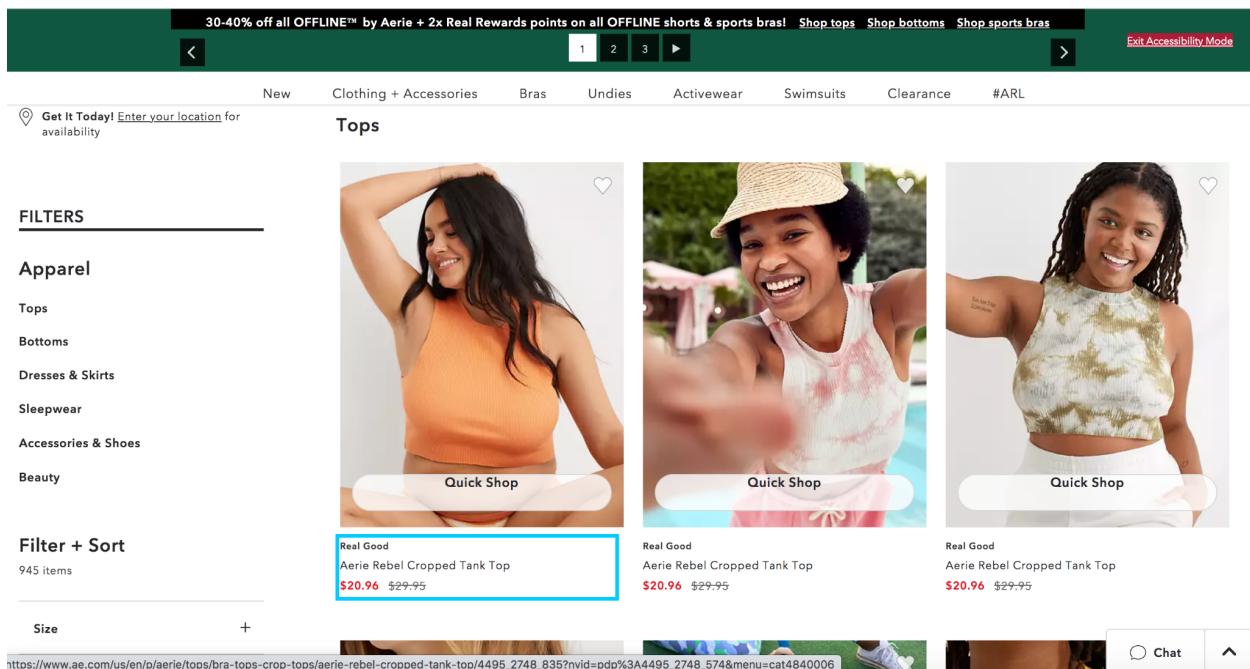
**New + Real Good** Aerie Cropped Wrapback T-Shirt \$34.95

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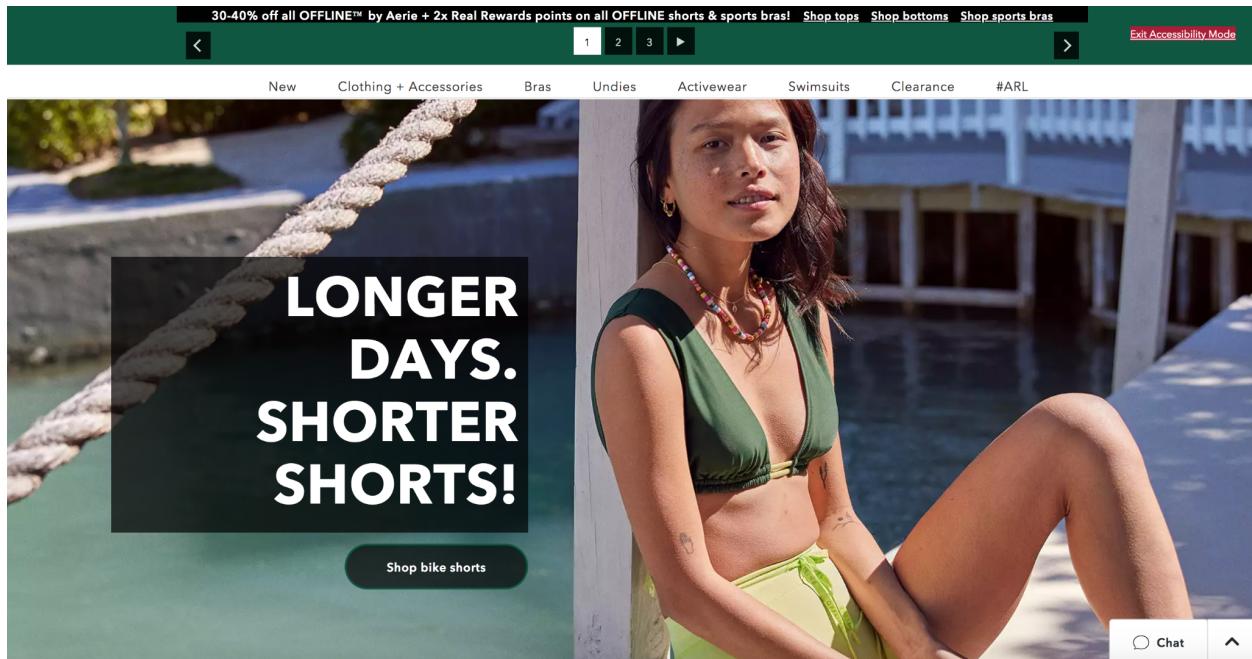
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**Figure H.** In this screenshot, I was technically hovering over the first item (orange shirt) with my keyboard controls, but there is no indication of this. This lack of emphasis and contrast on the selected item made navigating the site with a keyboard much more confusing and less accessible.

After discovering this problem, I noticed that Aerie does have an “Accessibility Mode” on its website that promotes many of the principles discussed in our accessibility lecture. In fact, it even accounts for the problems aforementioned. As shown in Figure I, it increases the contrast of the selected item by enclosing it in a bright blue box, which makes navigating the page with a keyboard much clearer. Accessibility mode also creates more contrasts between background images and their captions by distinguishing the text with more contrasting colors (Figure J).

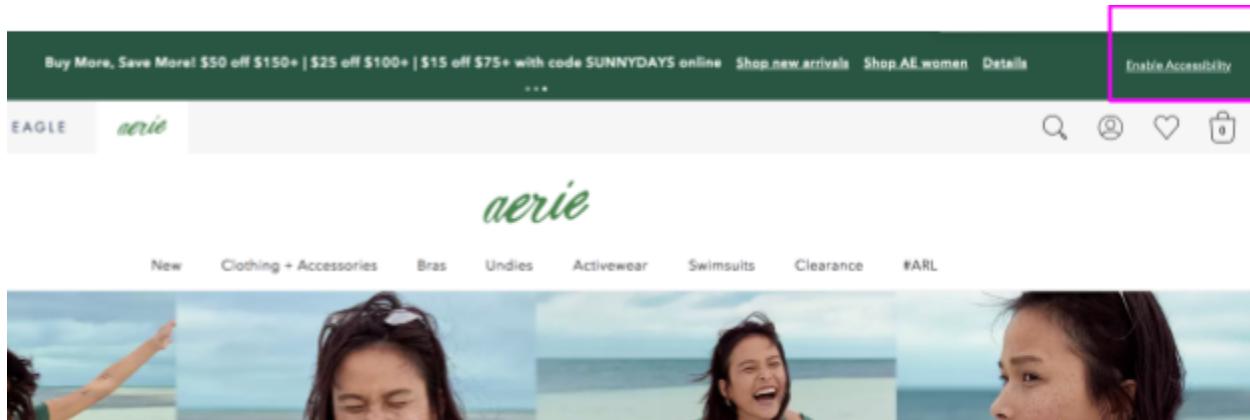


**Figure I.** In this screenshot, I was navigating through the site using my keyboard in Accessibility Mode. The first product is currently selected and emphasized with a bright blue box that is of large proportion compared to the text. This increases the accessibility of the page by helping the user navigate the site and recognize what elements are selected more easily than in the alternative mode (Figure H).



**Figure J.** In contrast to Figure E, the homepage in Accessibility Mode increases the contrast between the text and button from the image by making the background color of the text block black. This emphasizes the text and increases their readability.

Including an accessibility mode that incorporates more accessible principles of design, especially heightening the contrast of images and their captions as well as increasing the emphasis placed on various functions, allows Aerie's website to be used by a much broader range of users. My one critique of this feature is that the button to turn it on is displayed in a very small font, which could be difficult for some users to find (Figure K). I would therefore make this feature more salient by increasing the font size and/or bolding the words to increase the contrast between it and the rest of the page.



**Figure K.** As shown by the pink box, the “Enable Accessibility” feature is extremely small and might be difficult for users with visual impairments or other disabilities to find. I would therefore recommend that Aerie make this feature more noticeable by increasing the contrast between it and the background (i.e. bolding the letters) and emphasizing the text more by making the font larger.