

Redesigning the Harper's Bazaar Website

Introduction

In my Studio Project 2, I set out to redesign the Harper's Bazaar website. As someone who appreciates clear and well-thought-out design, I found the website's current layout lacking in organization and ease of use. The Harper's Bazaar site, while rich in content, lacked a sense of structure that could make browsing a seamless and enjoyable experience. This case study delves into the reasons behind my decision to undertake this redesign, and the thought process driving my new design choices.

Motivation for Redesign

I chose to redesign the Harper's Bazaar website because I felt the current design didn't do justice to the amazing content it offers. As someone who enjoys exploring fashion and lifestyle articles, I found the site challenging to navigate and visually overwhelming.

One of the biggest issues was the way articles were arranged. Most articles appeared as clickable images with some text, but there was no clear order or structure. This made it hard to figure out where one section ended and another began. The lack of consistency in how article metadata—like author names, dates, and categories—was displayed made the site feel unorganized and harder to follow.

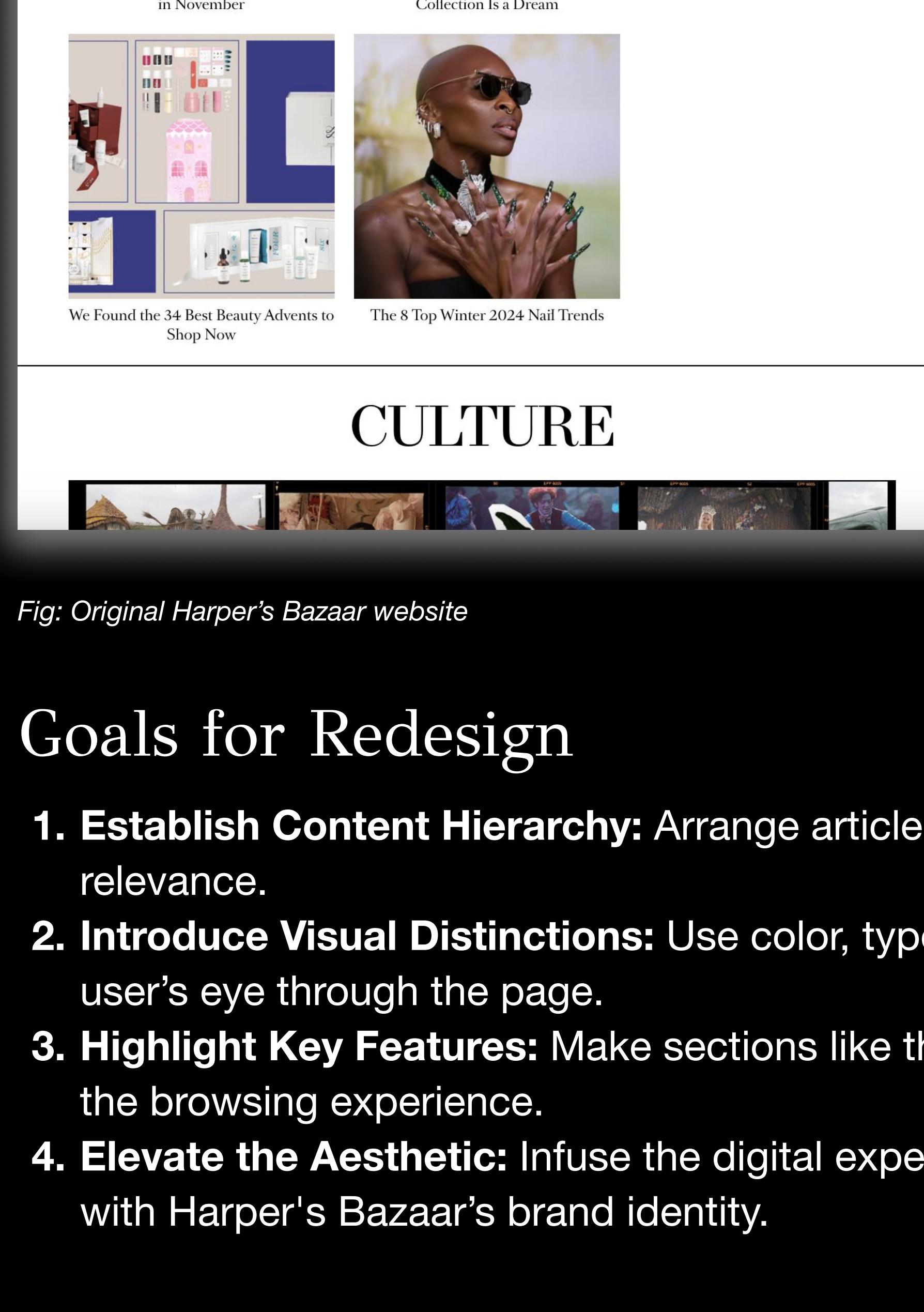


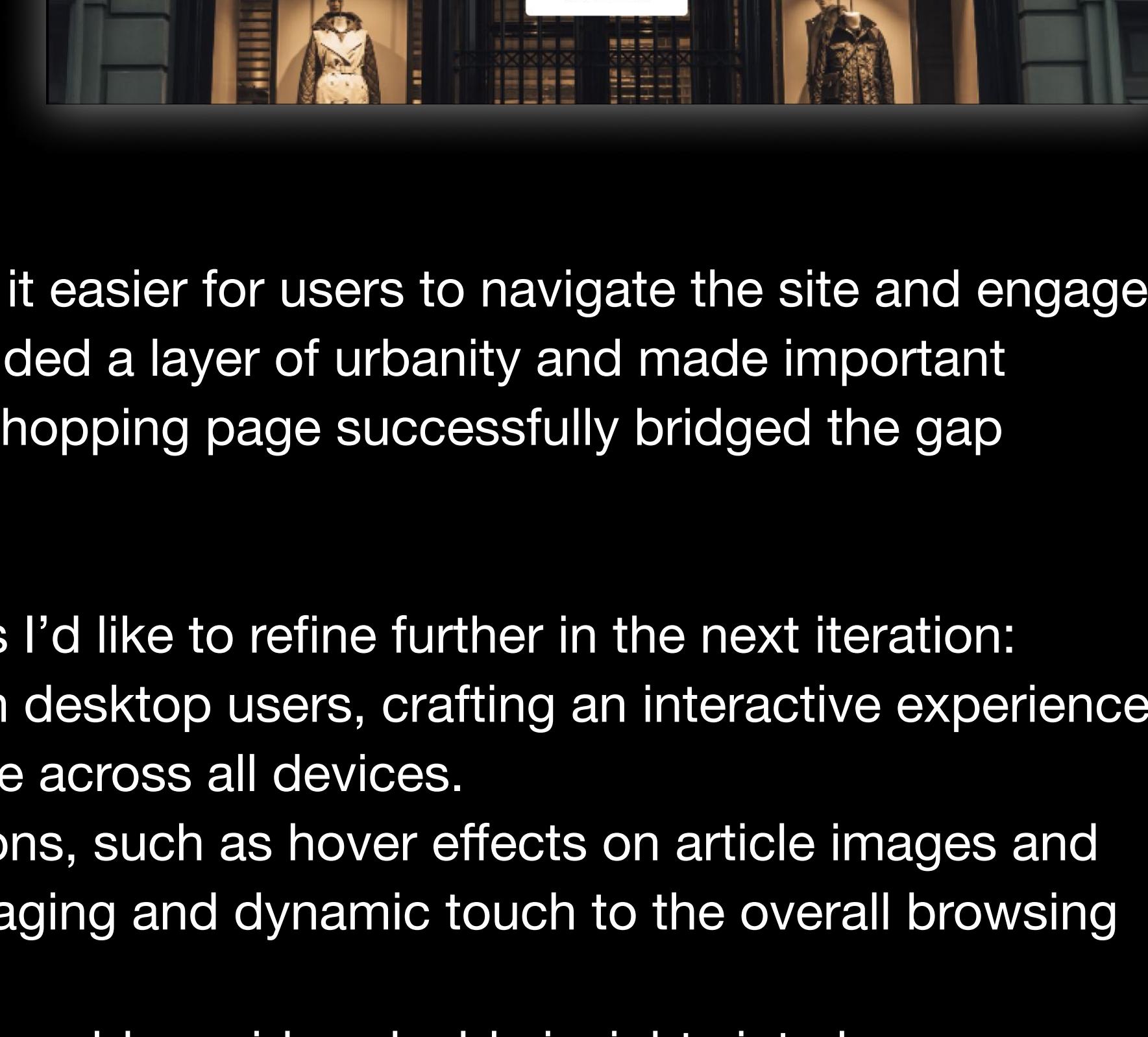
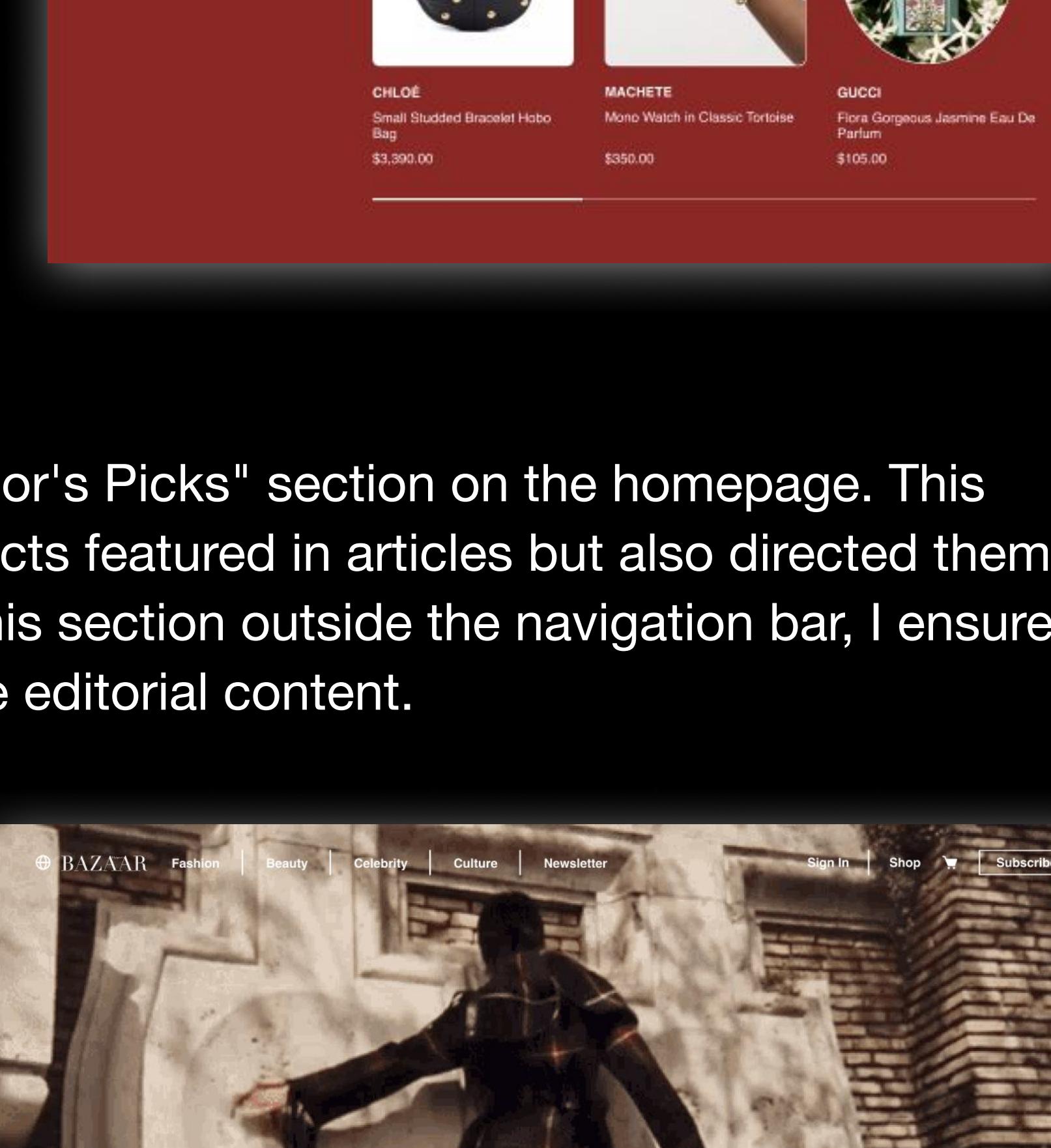
Fig: Original Harper's Bazaar website

Goals for Redesign

- Establish Content Hierarchy:** Arrange articles and metadata in a way that reflects their importance, recency, and relevance.
- Introduce Visual Distinctions:** Use color, typography, and layout variations to break up sections and guide the user's eye through the page.
- Highlight Key Features:** Make sections like the shopping page more prominent and integrate them naturally into the browsing experience.
- Elevate the Aesthetic:** Infuse the digital experience with the timelessness, minimalism, and elegance associated with Harper's Bazaar's brand identity.

Approach

- Redefining the Color Palette**
 - To address the monotony, I introduced a new color palette inspired by the bold, elegant design of Harper's Bazaar magazine covers. The black and white base was complemented with a deep, brick-red accent. This accent color was used sparingly to highlight important elements like the footer, call-to-action buttons, and the "Editor's Picks" section, providing a subtle yet striking contrast.
- Structuring Articles with Intent**
 - Instead of limiting images to uniform squares, I introduced varied shapes, like curved edges and asymmetrical layouts, to add visual interest.
 - I avoided overloading sections by placing only the most recent and relevant articles at the top and introducing a "Show More" button to display additional content. This prevented information overload and gave users a sense of control over their browsing.
- Highlighting Shopping with "Editor's Picks"**
 - To make the shopping page more visible, I integrated an "Editor's Picks" section on the homepage. This curated section not only informed users about trending products featured in articles but also directed them to the shopping page in a natural, engaging way. By surfacing this section outside the navigation bar, I ensured the shopping experience became a seamless extension of the editorial content.
- Enhancing the Hero Section**
 - The original hero section featured a static image and article. I replaced this with a dynamic GIF featuring the Harper's Bazaar logo. This choice was inspired by the idea of making the homepage feel alive and reflective of the magazine's vibrant identity. The logo captures attention and immediately sets the tone for the browsing experience.
- Category-Based Shopping Page**
 - Drawing inspiration from the CHANEL website, I restructured the shopping page into categories like "Clothing," "Shoes," and "Fragrances." This prevented users from feeling overwhelmed by too many options at once and created a more curated, deliberate browsing experience. Clicking on a category allows users to explore similar items, mirroring the sophistication of boutique shopping.



Reflection

- Successful Outcomes**
 - The new layout created a clearer content hierarchy, making it easier for users to navigate the site and engage with its content. The introduction of the brick-red accent added a layer of urbanity and made important elements stand out. The "Editor's Picks" and restructured shopping page successfully bridged the gap between editorial content and e-commerce.
- Areas for Improvement**
 - While the project was successful overall, there are elements I'd like to refine further in the next iteration:
 - Mobile Optimization:** Although my redesign focused on desktop users, crafting an interactive experience for mobile users ensures that the design remains intuitive across all devices.
 - Interactive Enhancements:** Introducing subtle animations, such as hover effects on article images and smooth transitions between sections, could add an engaging and dynamic touch to the overall browsing experience.
 - User-Centered Refinements:** Conducting user testing would provide valuable insights into how users navigate certain features. These findings would guide further refinements to enhance functionality and user satisfaction.

Conclusion

- This redesign was an opportunity to bring Harper's Bazaar's digital presence in line with its editorial prestige. By fixing important usability issues, making thoughtful design choices, and taking inspiration from other high-end platforms, I was able to create a more engaging and visually appealing website. While there's always room to improve, this project has been a great opportunity to explore how design can enhance user experience and reflect a brand's identity.