Brand Credibility Through Web Design
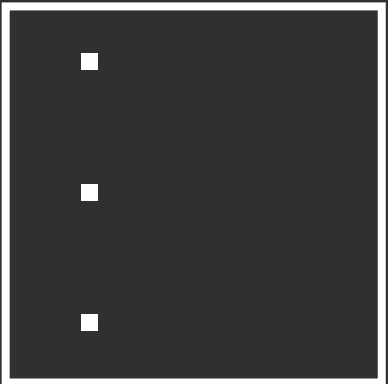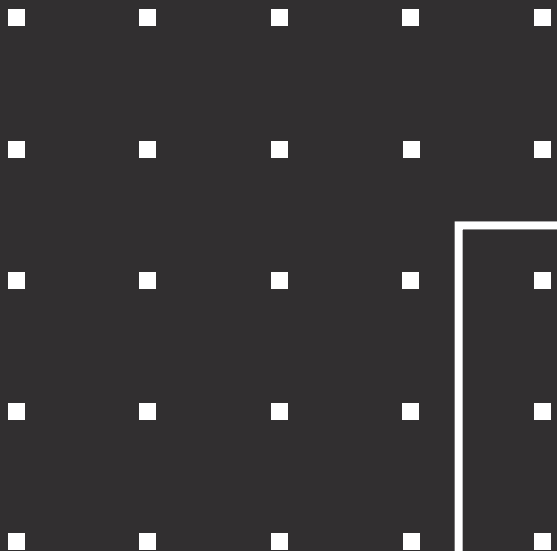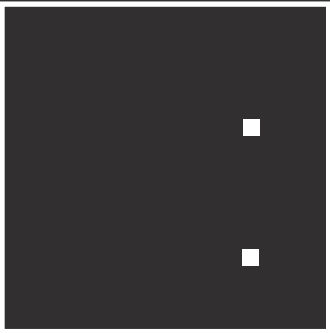
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Senior Project - Fall 2022

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About Me

Hi! I'm Katie Clode and I'm a 4th year Graphic Communication major concentrating in User Experience/User Interface. I am passionate about learning about web design and photography.

Abstract

Business websites act as a first impression of the brand that users rely on as an indicator of the company's credibility. Therefore, it is crucial to implement an appealing design with straightforward navigation. However, for small businesses or freelancers, good web design is hard to achieve without a web designer. Small businesses rely heavily on e-commerce and digital advertising but are more likely to lack the resource and knowledge to develop a good website. Cristina Ruales Co is a personal brand belonging to an independent designer who uses her website to market and sell her products and services. The current brand website is confusing, cluttered, and full of outdated information and content. In this project, I will explore how web design can be used to add credibility to a company and redesign the website accordingly. The goal of this project is to improve users' perception of the brand to attract new customers and increase business.
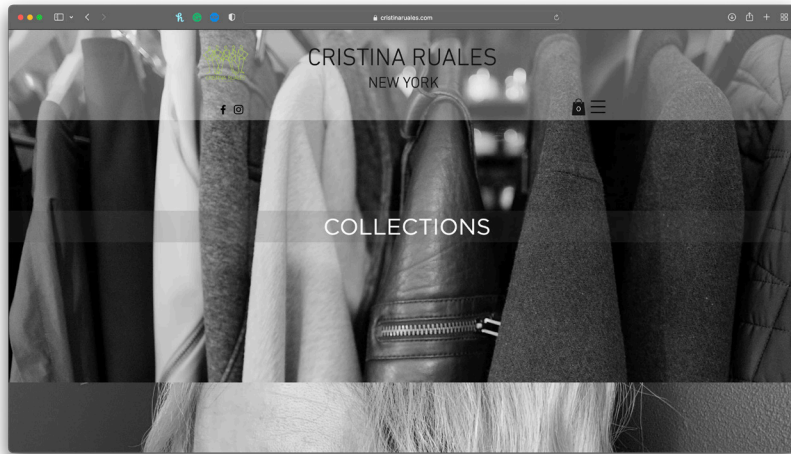
Problem Statement

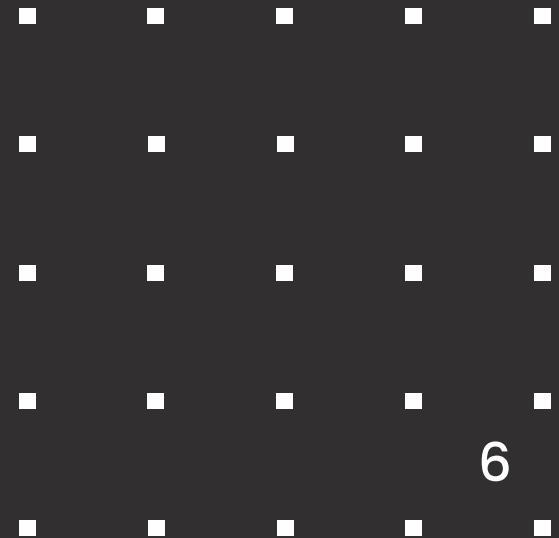The current website has poor navigation and lacks a clean aesthetic which makes the brand appear to be less credible and therefore less appealing to consumers
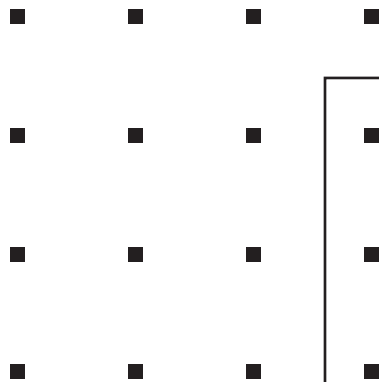
Timeline

Week 1	Research
Week 2	Sketching
Week 3	Wireframing
Week 4-6	Implementing Design
Week 7	Final Design
Week 8	Focus Group
Week 9	Analyze Results

Inspiration & Research

Based on my research, an important factor to good web design is the similarities in appearance and structure to sites that users are familiar with using (Lidwell et al., 2010, p. 154). My next step was to visit other brands' websites within the fashion industry. I familiarized myself with their aesthetics and navigation in order to understand what the audience's expectations would likely be when visiting the current website. From this, I found that the weaknesses of the current design were its lack of menus and buttons for navigation and its disorganized, busy design. Most websites belonging to other fashion or designer brands used top menu bars, whitespace, and Grotesk typefaces.
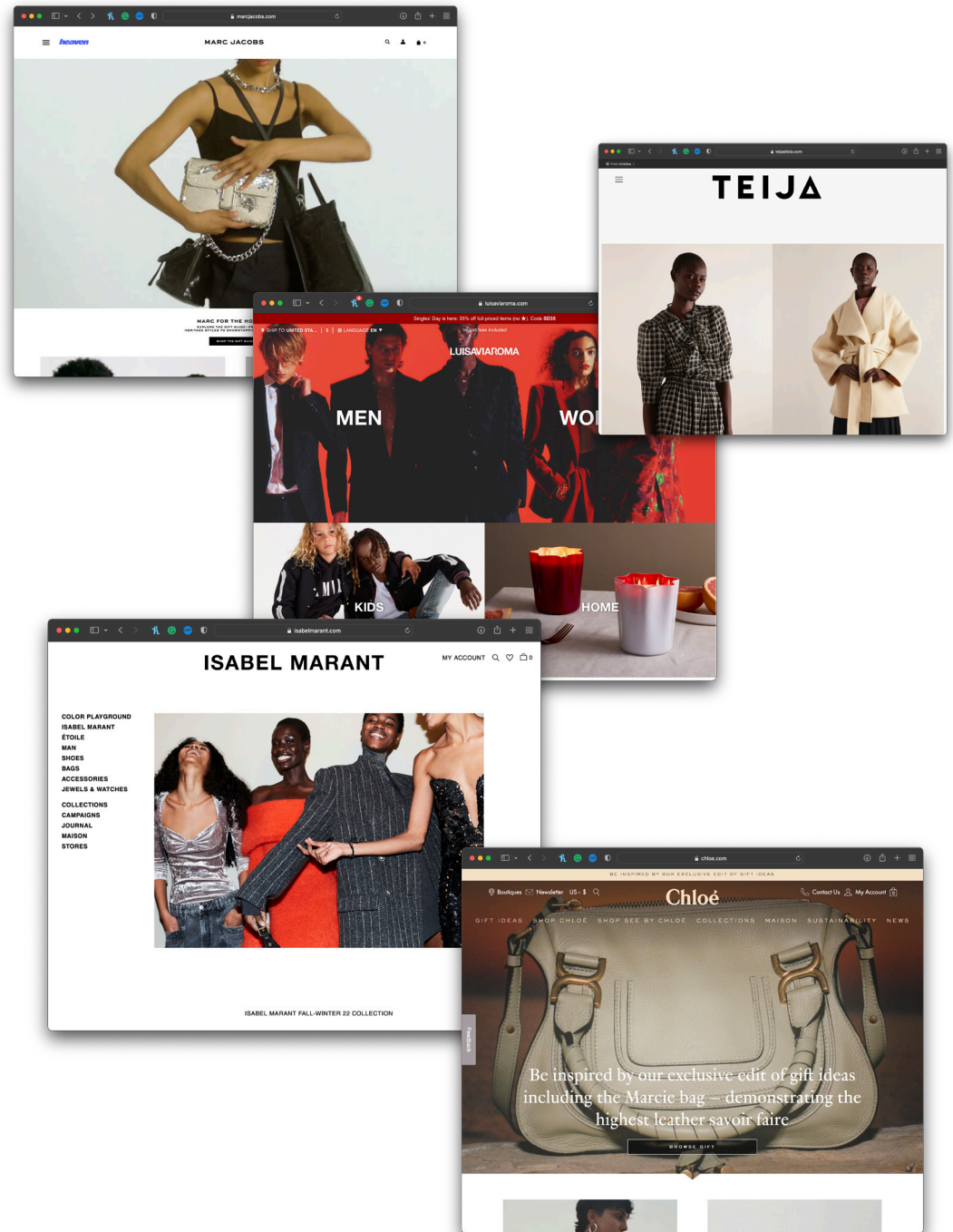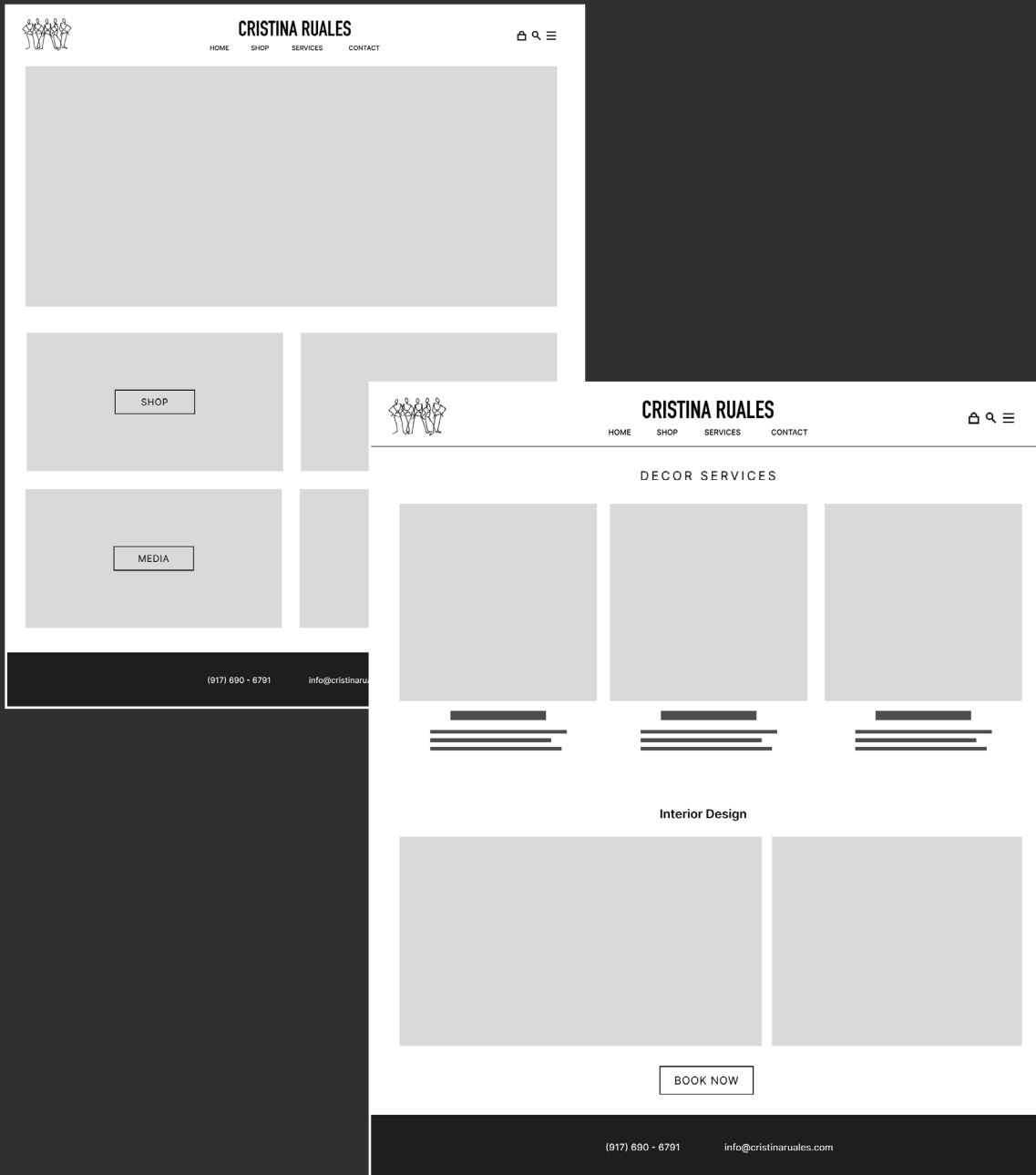
Wireframes

After gathering my research and reference websites, I began an outline of the new website structure and started sketching ideas for possible layouts. After getting approval from the client, I began creating wireframes of the different pages using Figma. The proposed designs consider the aspects that many other sites in the fashion industry share that I noted when searching for references. I utilized thicker font weights and whitespace to resemble the aesthetics of those sites and allow for the overall design to be cleaner and simpler to view. To create a similar navigation system, I decided to use a menu bar in the header and call-to-action buttons on the home page to optimize usability.
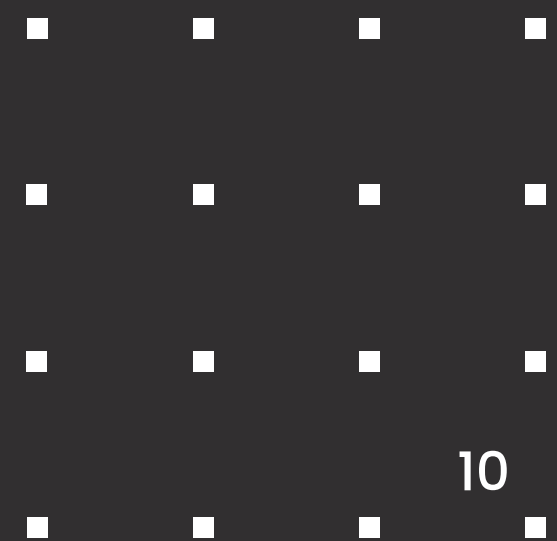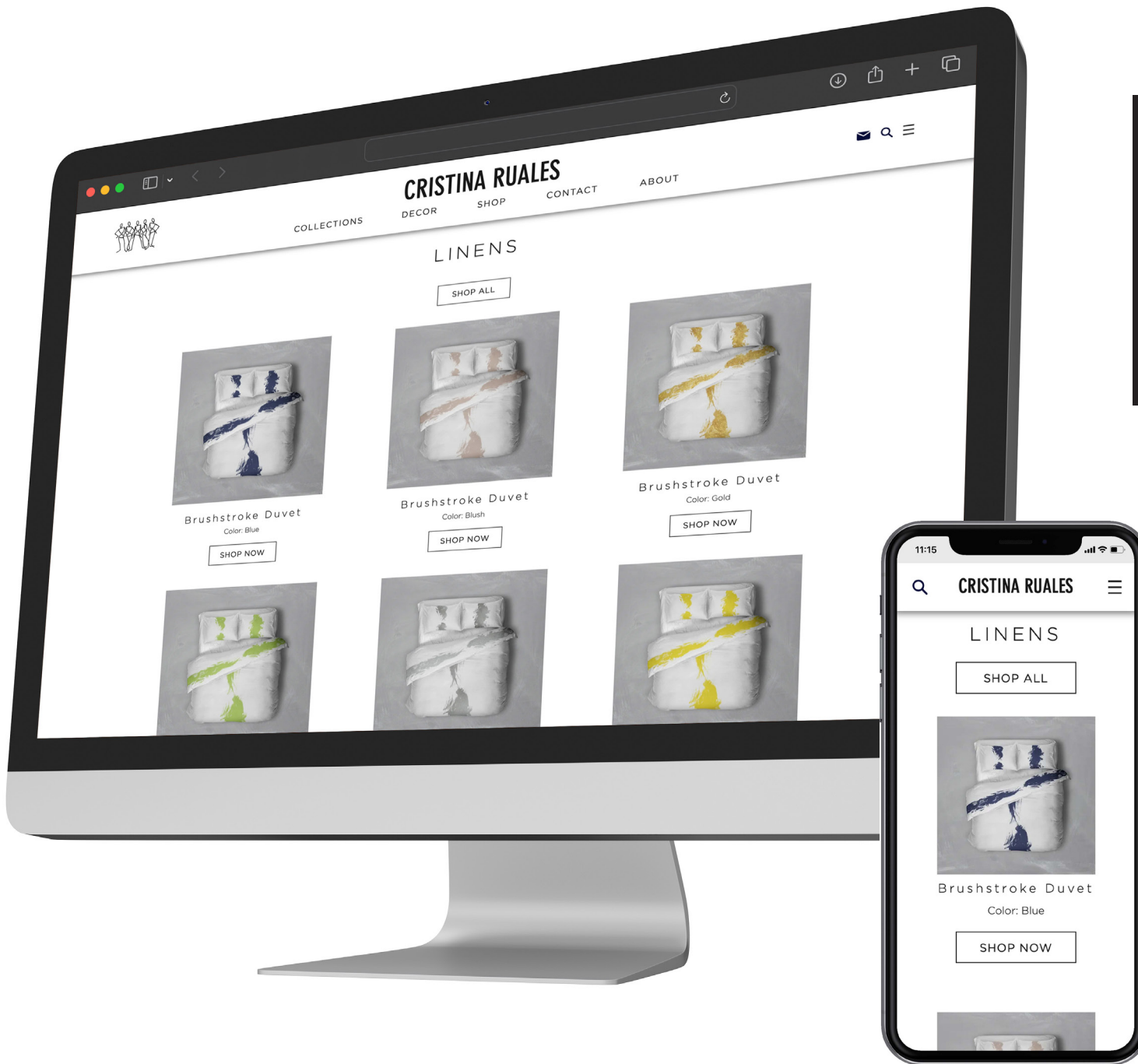
Final Design

After receiving approval from the client, I began building the design on Wix.com. The structure of the site was expanded as the design progressed and aesthetic changes were made due to client feedback.
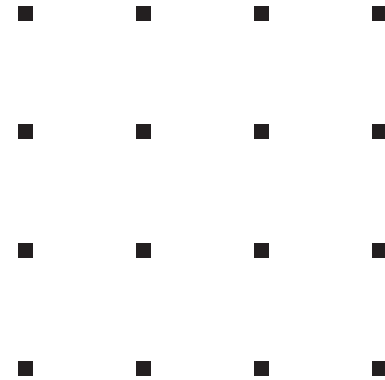
Focus Group

I asked a focus group several questions after exploring both the old and new websites. Based on these answers, participants found that the **navigation was easier**, and the **design was cleaner** on the new site. They claimed that the new design made the brand appear to be **more credible** and that they preferred to shop from the brand using the new website. Participants noted that the simplified and organized design of the new site was one of the main reasons it was preferable over the old site. This allowed users to browse and understand what products and services were offered as well as receive a better sense of what the brand was.

Results

Based on the results of the focus group, my website design effectively improved users' perception of a business and its credibility. Web design can have a significant impact on consumers' perception of a business which can be used to a brand's benefit as shown through this project. The result produced by this process successfully accomplishes this project's goal and will be used in place of the old website. These findings can help other small businesses and those with no web design training learn how to craft a credible website.
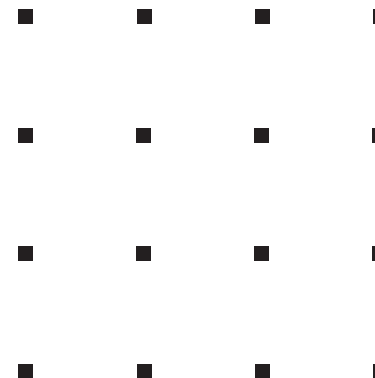
Reflection

This project had a successful outcome; however, I was met with limitations during the design process. I had to work within the brand guidelines and the guidance of the brand owner. Because of this, more design decisions could have been considered that were not able to be explored. In addition, I could only design based on the capabilities of Wix.com and the available features. This process may have a greater effect if given more freedom. Using another website-building platform with fewer limitations or coding the website would likely allow more potential for the design.

This project can be further developed to help small businesses and freelancers with creating or improving their websites. My findings and process can be used to create a guide for brands to follow in order to create a website design that optimizes the perception of trustworthiness. Further testing could also be done to determine if the business's sales have improved after implementing the new website. The ultimate goal of improving users' perception of the brand's credibility is to increase profits. Therefore, if the sales generated from the new site could be compared to that of the old site, the difference could be calculated and investigated further.

Sources

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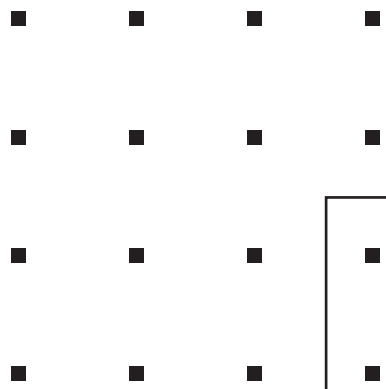
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Thank You!