

Display ad best practices for marketing in email

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Introduction

Email is the most powerful marketing channel today. According to eMarketer, most consumers across the world prefer to hear from retailers via email – more than via social media and apps. But email is also a powerful media channel for advertisers looking to engage customers at every stage of the funnel.

Think about it. Email is an opt-in, subscriber-based channel that people already trust. On average, people spend up to five hours each day checking their work and personal emails.

You just have to reach this engaged audience with the right ads.

In this guide

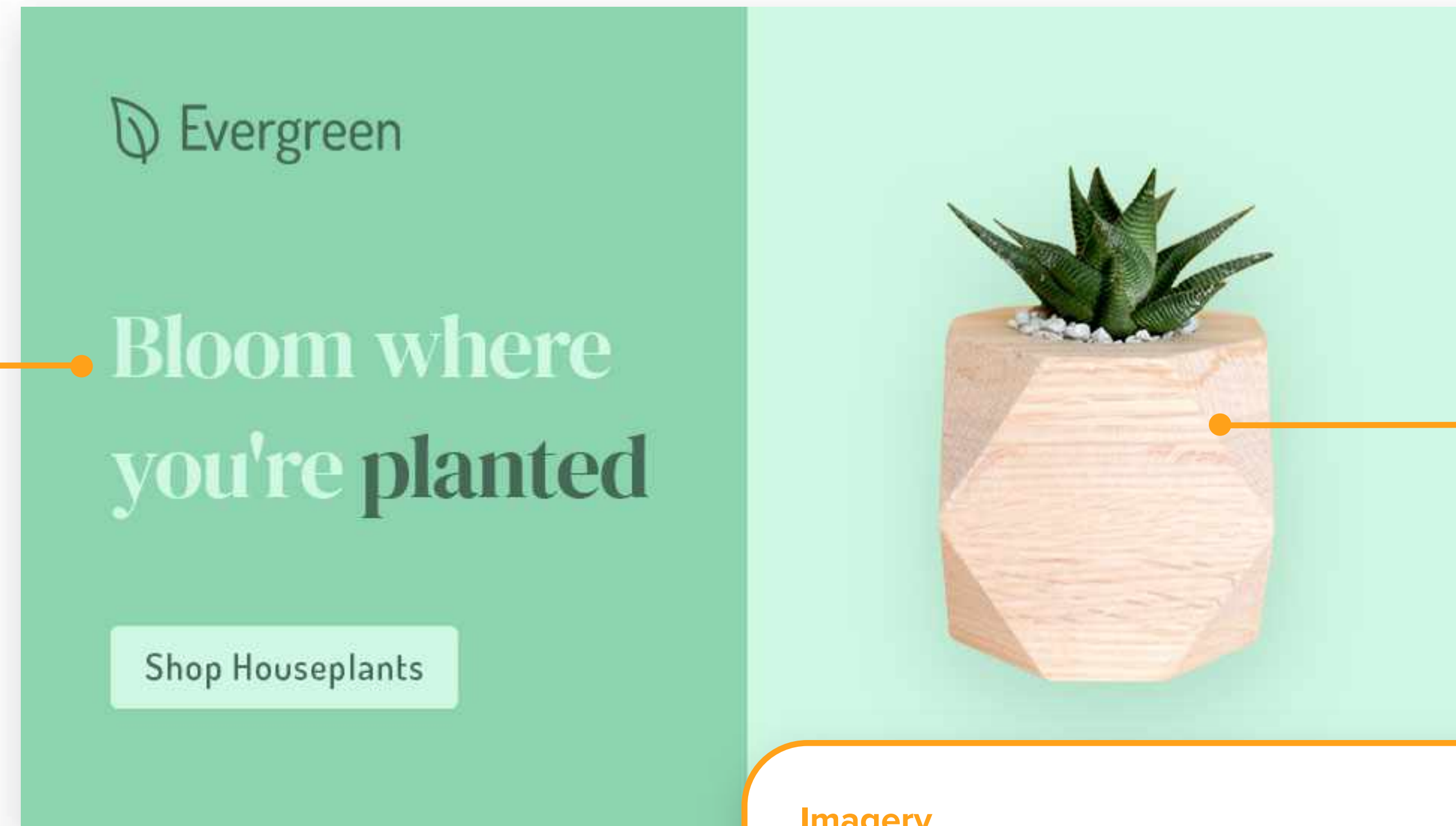
We'll show you how to build custom ad creative for engaging audiences at every stage of the funnel using a variety of campaign types, including:

- **Brand awareness**
- **Content marketing**
- **Lead generation**
- **Product purchases**
- **Seasonal marketing**

Let's get started.

Anatomy of a display ad

First, a quick dissection of a display ad to highlight exactly which elements are most important.



Copy

Keep it short and sweet. Good copy will capture attention, demonstrate value, and set expectations, all at a glance. (Sometimes, a glance is all you get.)

Run A/B tests with ad copy to see which messaging resonates with your audience.

Imagery

Use imagery that's simple, evocative, and unique to both your brand and the goal of the campaign.

Elegant product images can be great for purchase campaigns. But for a branding campaign, where the goal is to associate an emotion with your brand, a custom lifestyle image may be more appropriate.

Anatomy of a display ad



Logo

Brand recognition is essential for banner ads that perform. Keep your logo visible and complementary to the overall design.

Try to create a hierarchy between logo, copy, and call to action. The logo should be immediately noticeable without overpowering the other elements.

Call to action

Your calls to action should set clear expectations. Let people know what they're clicking into so when they land on the page, their expectations are met and they're more likely to take further action.

If you want readers to buy something, "Learn More" probably isn't as strong as "Shop Now." Test different copy to see what resonates with your audience.

Anatomy of a display ad

Font

Never underestimate the impact of a strong font choice on brand recognition or campaign performance. Consistency and legibility are key for creating immediate and long-lasting impressions.

Always keep your banner size in mind. What works for one size may not work for another, so adjust your copy layout and size as needed for optimal visibility.



Color

Use your palette in a way that establishes your brand, enhances messaging, and influences behavior.

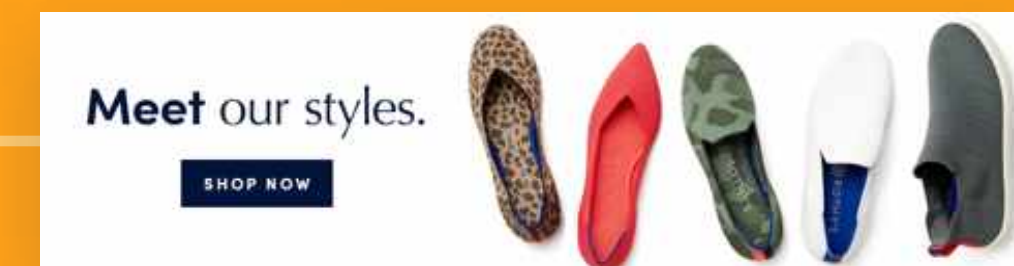
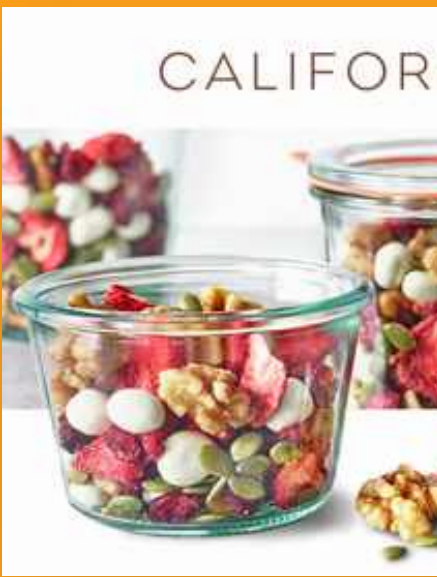
Bright colors are great for grabbing the eye. Reserve your brand's boldest shades for elements you most want your audience to notice, such as calls to action.

Animation

Using animated GIFs can be a great way to capture attention, but keep the movement subtle and short – otherwise, you could frustrate readers. Many brands see success animating only one design element, such as, the color of the product.

Remember to include the complete creative rendering in the first frame of the GIF, just in case the ad is served in an environment that doesn't support animation.

Brand awareness



Brand awareness

Brand awareness campaigns are a great vehicle for advertisers looking to increase recognition and recall, provide information, or spark an emotion about their brand or product. While brand awareness campaigns can be synonymous with reaching a wide audience, depending on your product, you may want to advertise to a specific audience that will relate the most to your message.

With brand awareness campaigns, you can drive high-quality traffic from emails to an informational web page. You can then gauge consumer interest and retarget those who engaged with your content.

When to use

There are three main use cases for brand awareness campaigns:

Entering a new market

For new brands trying to differentiate themselves from the competition, or are launching to a customer segment or geography that is unfamiliar with the brand.

Introducing a new line of business

Launching a new product, feature, or service will benefit greatly from a brand awareness campaign to drive growth even from your most loyal customers.

Selling a product that involves a longer purchase cycle

Many products, like cars or insurance, take more time and research before making a final purchase decision. Launching a brand awareness campaign will help educate consumers on the value of the product and drive to different landing pages or content.

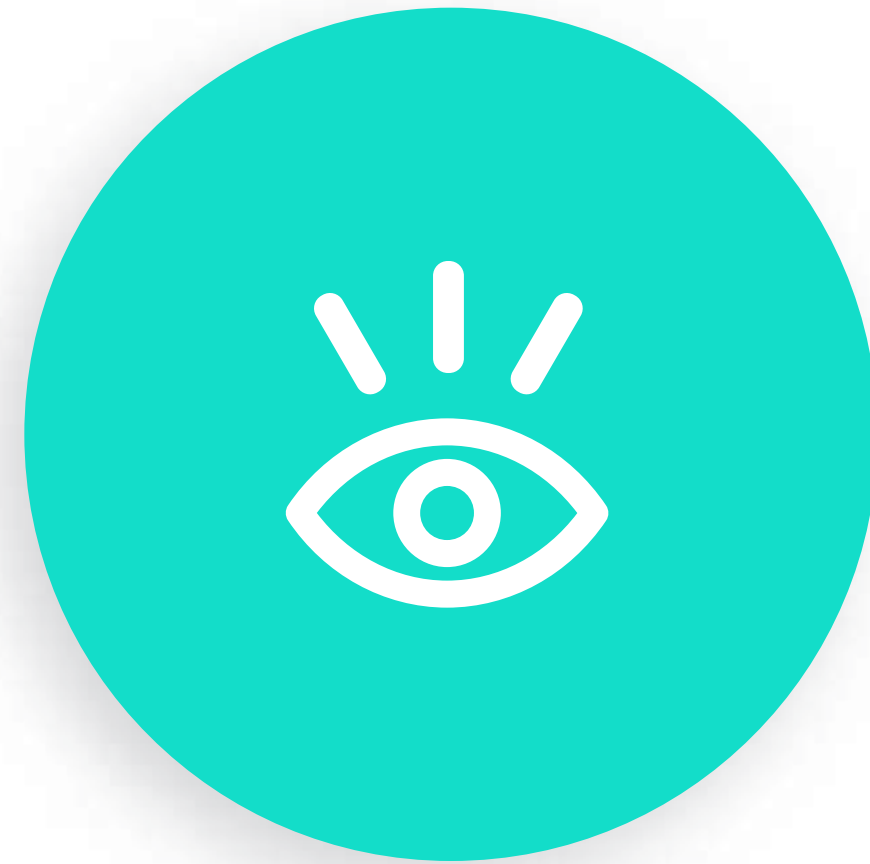
Creative callouts

Use these creative best practices for brand awareness campaigns.



Use strong colors

Catch the eye immediately to spark brand awareness and recognition.



Keep branding visible

Use your logo and brand color palette to establish a theme.



Use broad messaging

Evoke a general feeling instead of pushing sales.



Focus on large marquee sizes

Go for greater visibility with bigger ads.

How the pros do it

Sit back and pull some inspiration from these brand awareness campaigns.

Rothy's

Rothy's campaign wins with:

Simple concept

Clean and sleek design incorporates white space.

Clear messaging

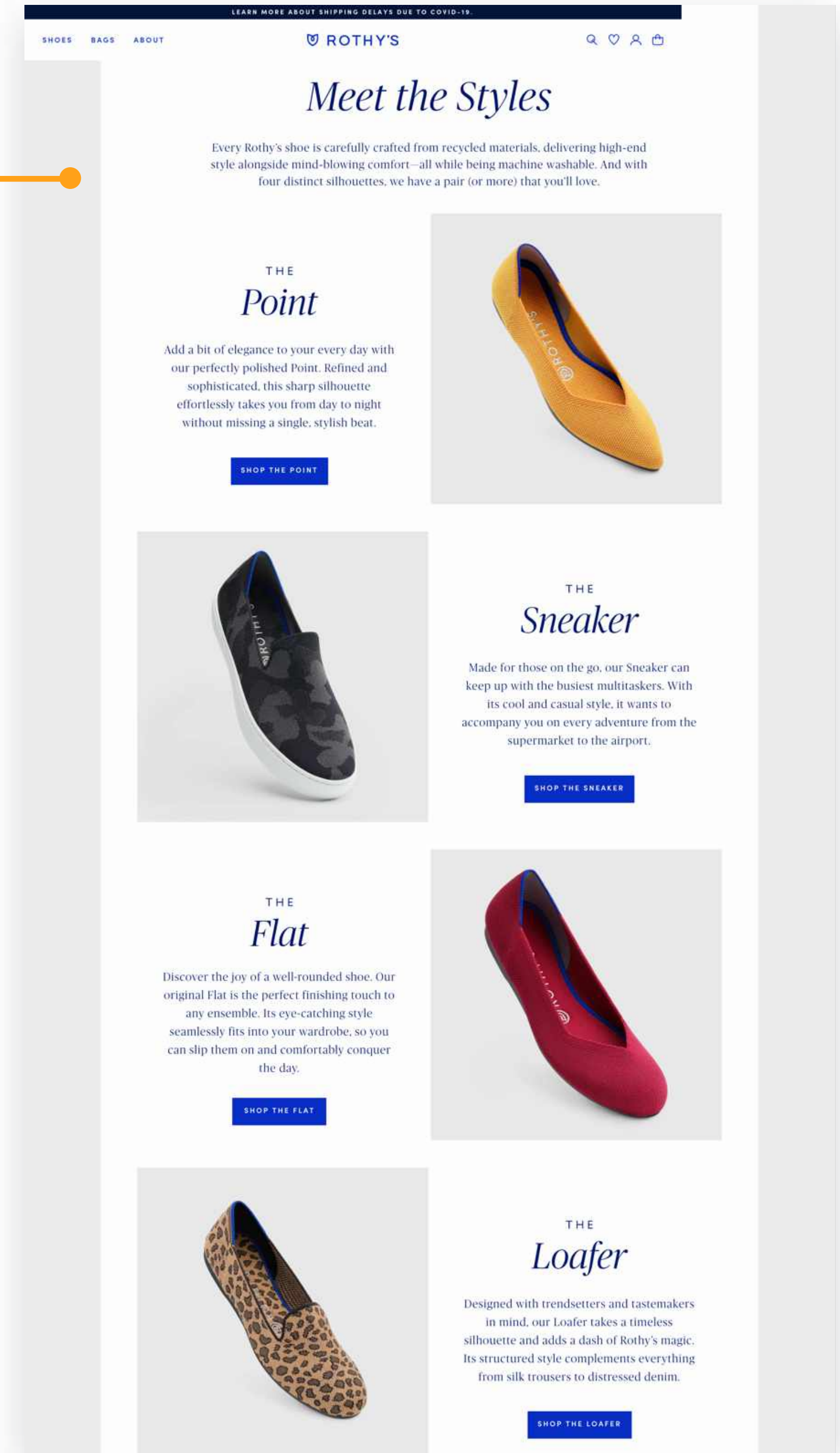
Copy is concise and uses the word "meet" to introduce the audience to the brand.

Visible branding

The insole with the Rothy's logo is a defining element of the shoe. These are on display and easily seen in the ad.

Cohesive landing page

The landing page matches both the look and messaging of the creative. It includes introductory messaging for each style of shoe and a call to action that drives visitors to the corresponding category pages, so each customer can find the right shoe for them.



California Walnuts

California Walnuts cracks brand awareness ads with:

Visible branding

The brand name and logo are prominent in the design and set against a white background to ensure legibility.

Simple concept

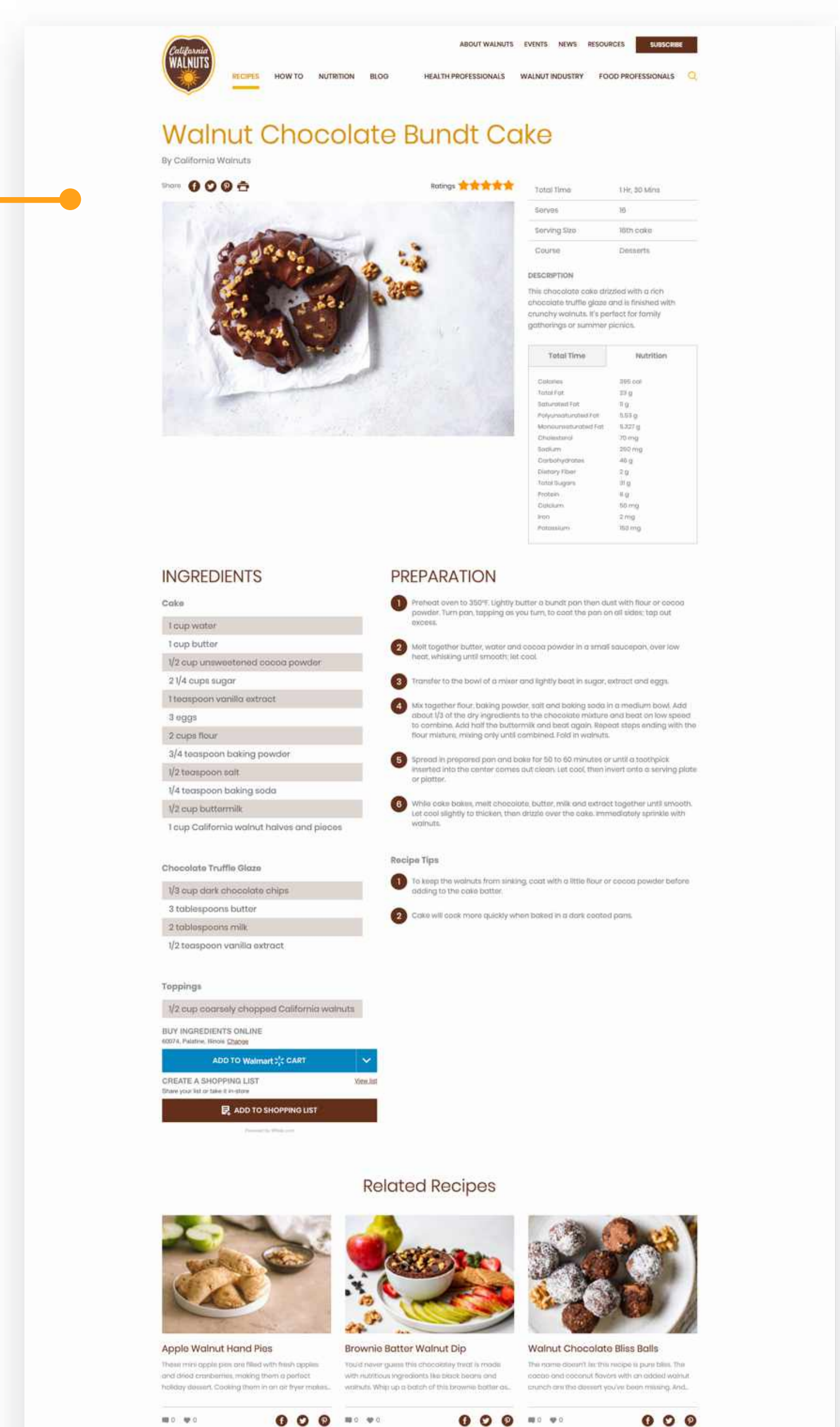
No over-complication here. The brand showcases an enticing photo of cake and urges viewers to learn the recipes.

Straightforward call to action

The call to action piques interest and sets expectations for what will be on the landing page.

Informational landing page

The landing page includes the full recipe for the cake along with other recipes that include walnuts, so visitors can continue browsing and getting to know the brand.



Chapman University

Chapman University makes the grade with:

Strong colors

The bold, branded red makes the ad pop against the other email content.

Visible branding

The logo is large and clear, yet it doesn't overpower the other ad elements.

Simple concept

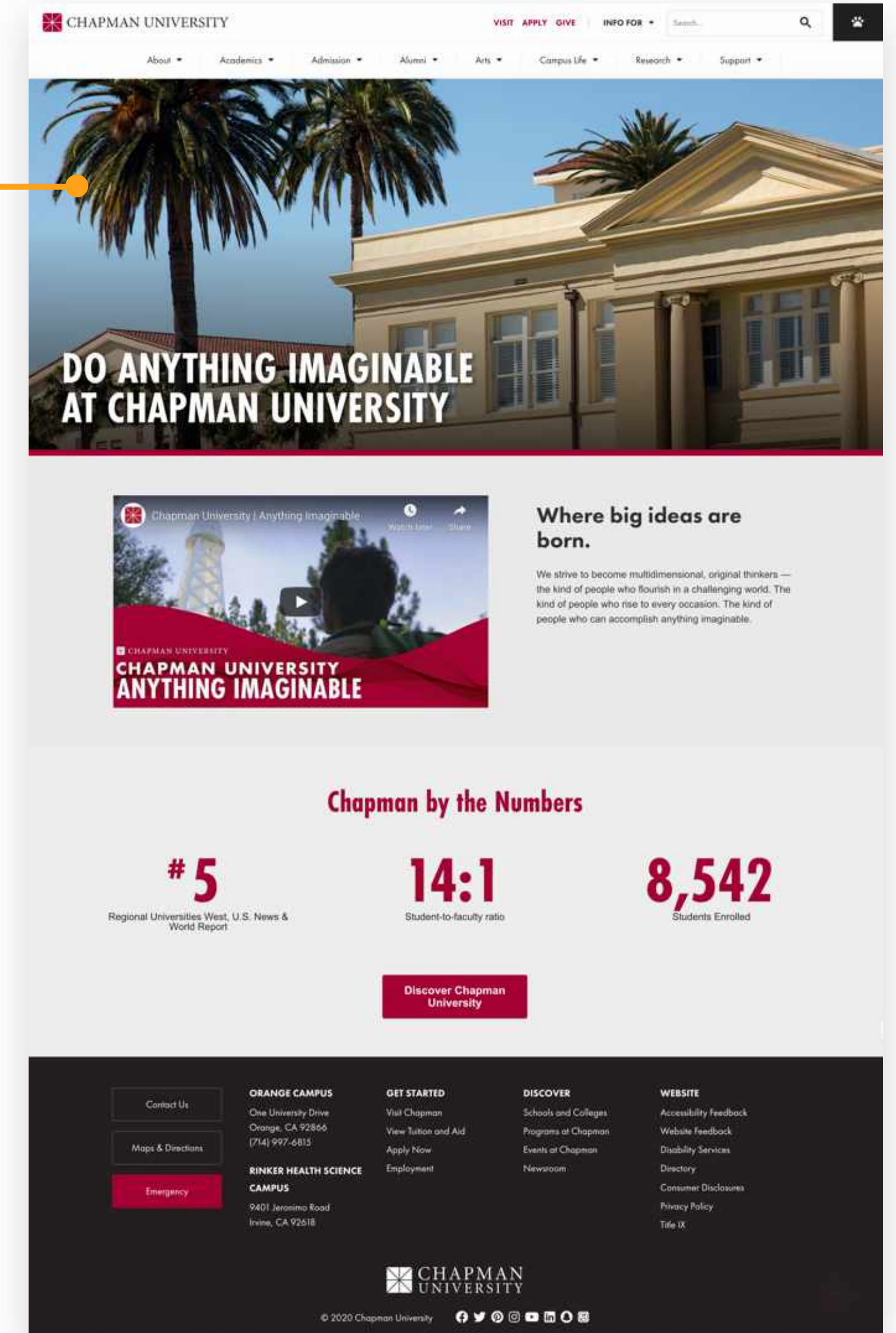
The display ad uses a lifestyle image to help showcase the student experience.

Straightforward call to action

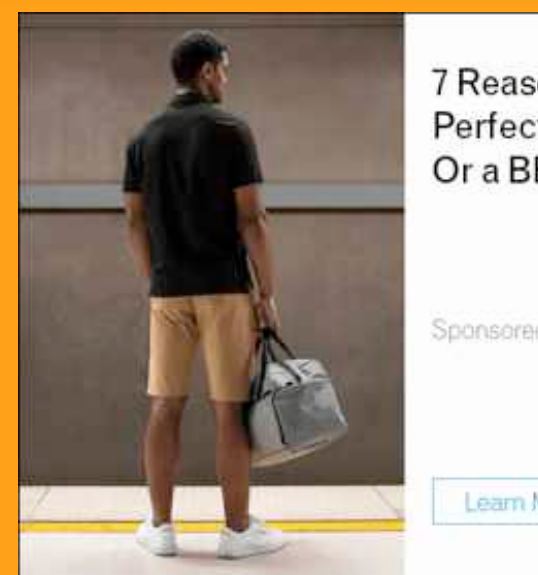
"Discover Chapman" sets expectations to learn more about the university on the landing page.

Engaging landing page

The landing page includes a video that gives prospective students a solid overview of the university and its offerings.



Content marketing



Content marketing

Content marketing campaigns go beyond brand awareness to teach consumers more about your product, mission, and community.

With content marketing campaigns, you can invite people to read an article or informative landing page that peels back the layers of your brand further. Content marketing ads also fit natively into the email environment, matching the surrounding content, which might include organic links to blog posts and website content.

When to use

Popular use cases for content marketing campaigns include:

Promoting an article or ebook

If you have an entertaining or informative piece of content to share with your audience, you can deliver it to them through email ads.

Educating people about how to use your product

Have a product with a bit of a learning curve, or just some helpful tips to share? You can educate your audience with content marketing ads.

Creative callouts

Try these creative best practices for content marketing campaigns.



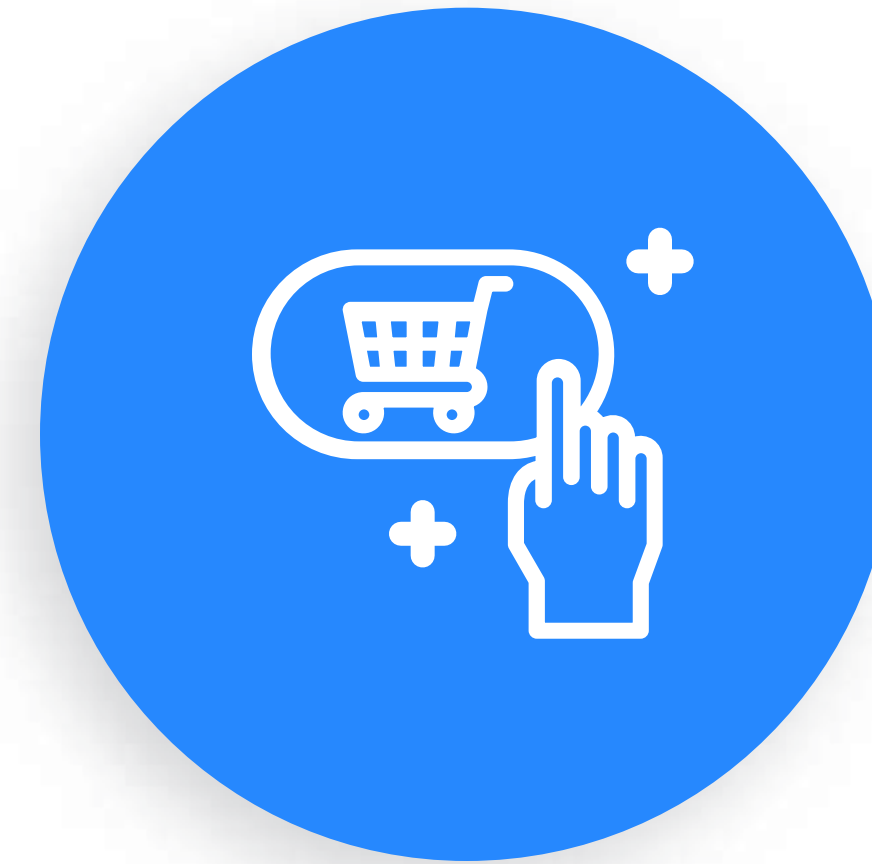
Match the call to action with your goal

Use phrases like "Learn More" and "Read More."



Create cohesion between the ad and landing page

The landing page content should match your ad creative, yielding a seamless and intuitive experience.



Include a "Buy Now" button on the landing page

Engagement shouldn't stop once people read your content. Keep visitors interested by including calls to action for making purchases on your website.

How the pros do it

Take notes from these content marketing campaigns done right.

Public Rec

Public Rec nails content marketing with:

Simple concept

This native design looks similar to other content in the newsletter environment, fitting into the consumer experience.

Clear messaging

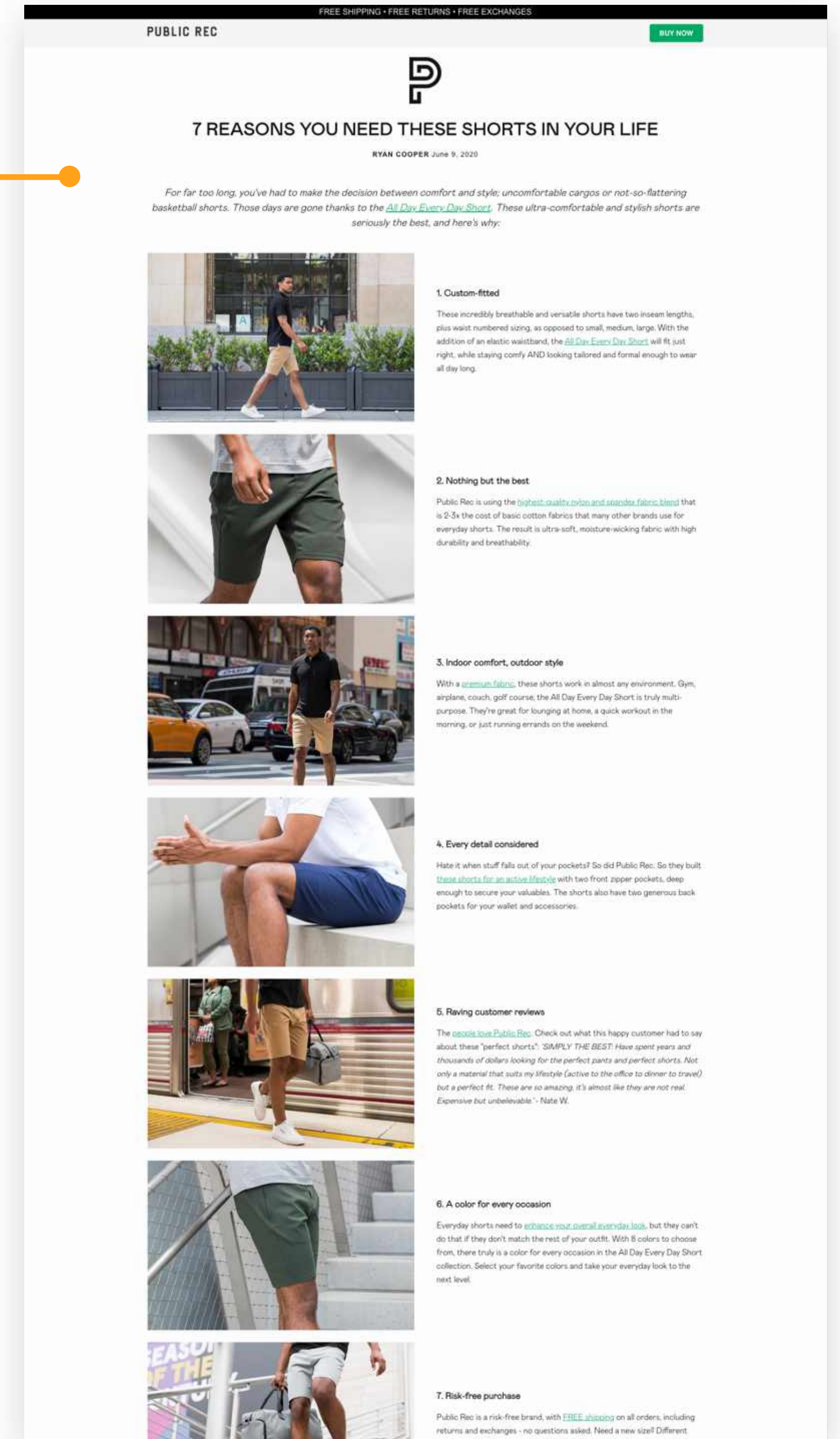
The "7 reasons why" angle piques curiosity in newsletter readers and teases the landing page content.

Straightforward call to action

The call to action sets clear expectations for learning more by clicking through to the website.

Informative landing page

The landing page delivers by highlighting the product features and benefits. It also includes multiple calls to action that drive visitors to the product page for conversion.



Quip

Quip offers an engaging content marketing campaign with:

Visible branding

The product, brand colors, and bold logo pop to ensure brand recognition.

Simple concept

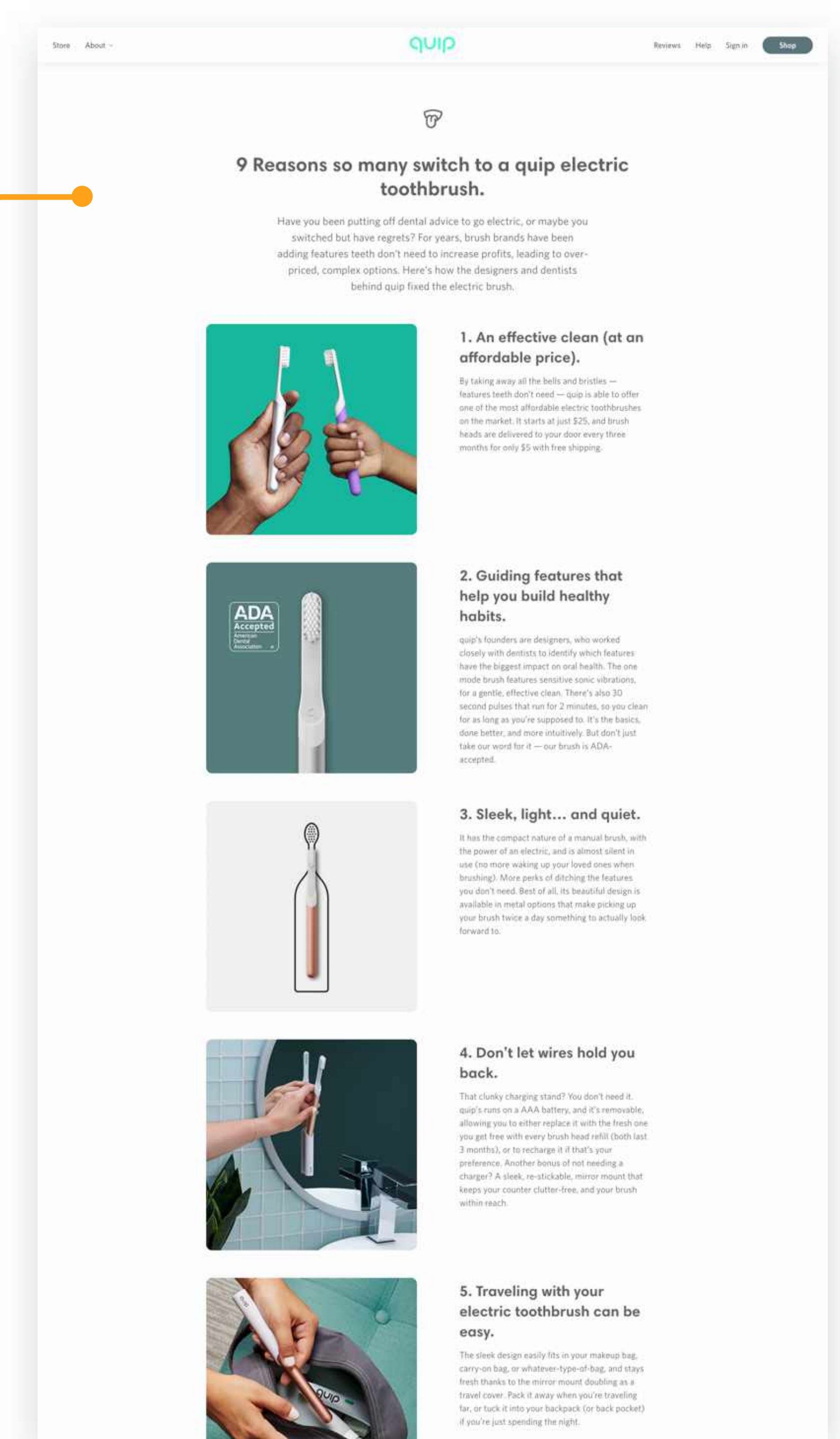
Quip used a GIF but kept the motion simple by animating only one element – the color of the toothbrush. The result is an eye-catching but not overwhelming visual.

Clear messaging

The copy and call to action set clear expectations for what's to come on the landing page.

Cohesive landing page

The landing page photos all match the ad color scheme, tying the campaign design together.



Flamingo

Flamingo passes with flying colors by using:

Simple concept

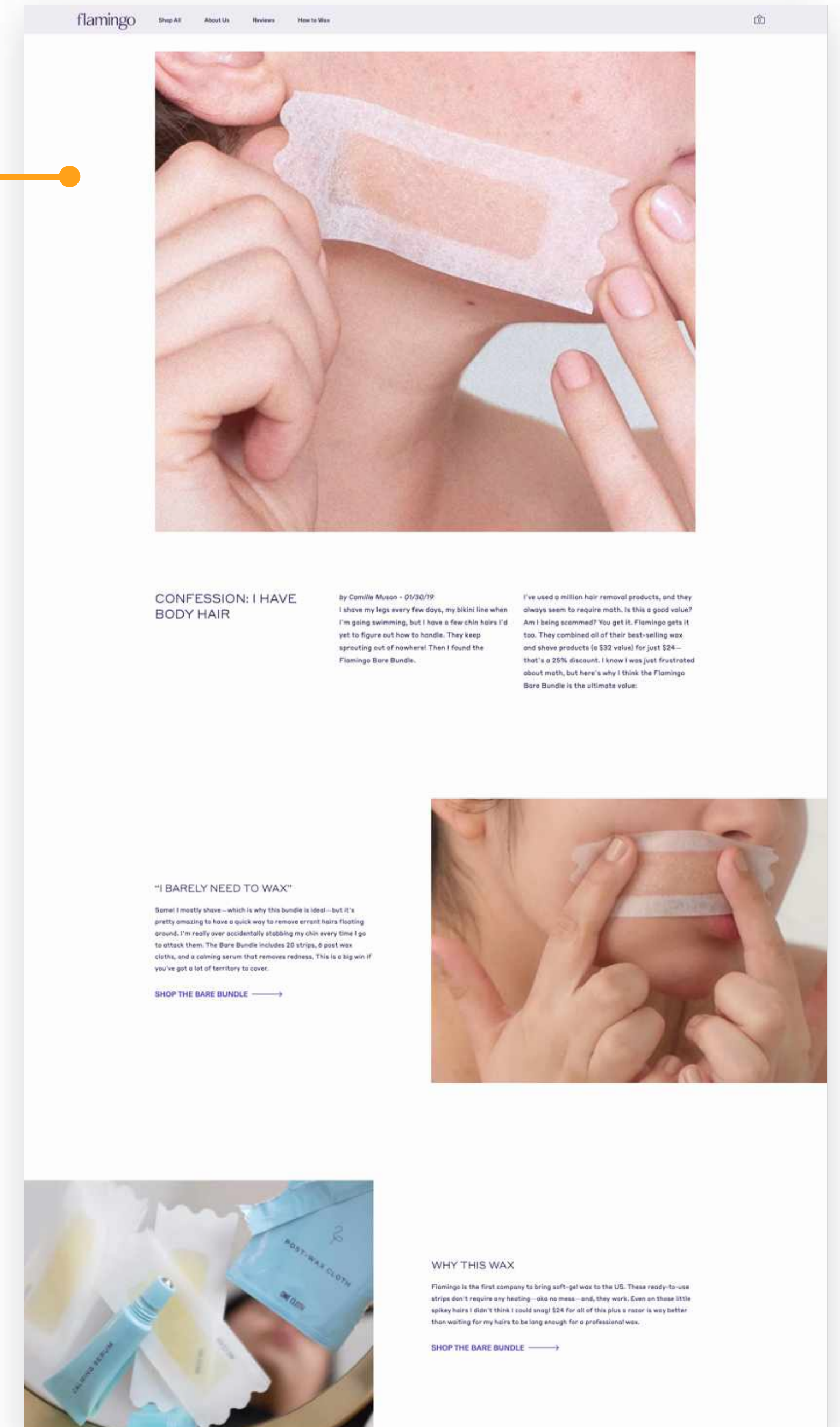
This creative uses the empty space in a full-frame lifestyle photo to create a clean design.

Strong colors

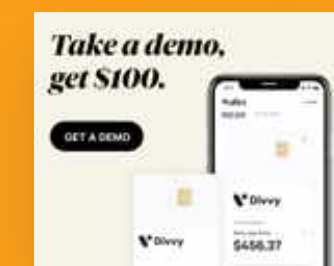
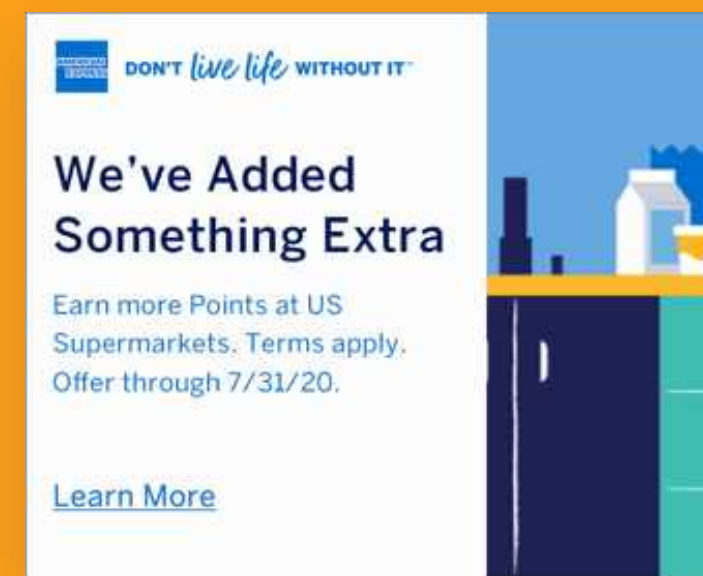
The branded purple pops against the light background to make the call to action and ad copy stand out.

Sleek landing page

The landing page takes the form of a blog post, even kicking off with an author's name. The sleek and modern design also help the content stand out from other retailers' campaigns.



Lead generation



Lead generation

Consumers aren't always ready to make a purchase when they're first introduced to your brand. That's where lead generation campaigns come in.

These campaigns can help you get people into the top of the funnel and collect contact information, such as an email address or phone number. You can then use that information to continue to engage them using ad retargeting or email marketing in order to drive purchases. You just need to offer something valuable in return, such as an email newsletter, downloadable content, or free trial.

When to use

There are several popular use cases for lead generation campaigns, including:

Growing your email newsletter audience

Email advertising is a great channel for acquiring email addresses, since you're reaching active subscribers and readers.

Selling a high-priced or long-funnel product

By having an intermediary goal, like account creation through email signup, you can optimize towards these actions and easily assess the backend success with a set Lifetime Value model.

Acquiring leads through a sweepstakes

Collecting email addresses or phone numbers in exchange for a chance to win certain prizes.

Driving leads for a call center

Accelerate the sales cycle by connecting customers directly to people that can answer questions, qualify buyers, and follow up with further information.

Creative callouts

Use these creative best practices for lead generation campaigns.



Showcase value

Make sure your creative highlights the value you'll deliver in exchange for the consumer's information.



Keep it simple

Stick to the point – delivering value and gathering information. Don't distract with too many creative elements.



Have a dedicated landing page

Fill it with a user-friendly email signup form, or even try a full-page takeover or enticing lightbox.



Make signing up the first step

This effectively captures the email so you can optimize accordingly and launch remarketing campaigns to continue engaging the consumer.

Lead generation

How the pros do it

Follow the lead of these brands' lead-generation campaigns.

The Farmer's Dog

The Farmer's Dog fetches leads with:

Clear messaging

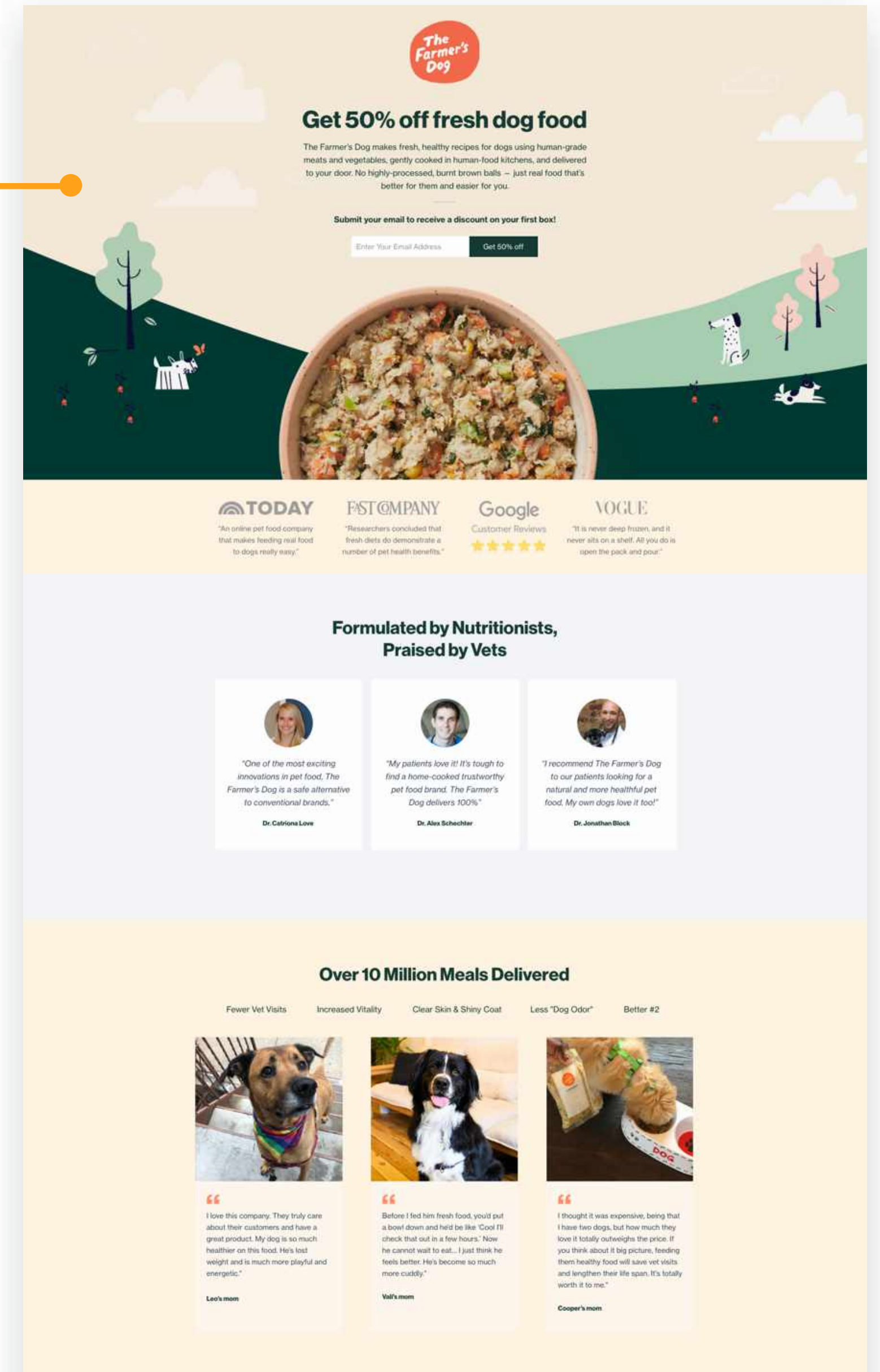
You can't get much clearer than "Fresh dog food, delivered." Just four words were needed to get their message across. It even follows with a quick joke underneath for a lighthearted touch.

Straightforward call to action

The call to action sets clear expectations that you'll receive a deal by clicking through.

Communicative landing page

The landing page leads with an email capture form and reiterates the value of entering your email address in the headline and button copy. The page also highlights testimonials from both vets and customers (with cute dog photos included).



Gilt Groupe

Gilt Groupe offers lead-worthy value with:

Simple concept

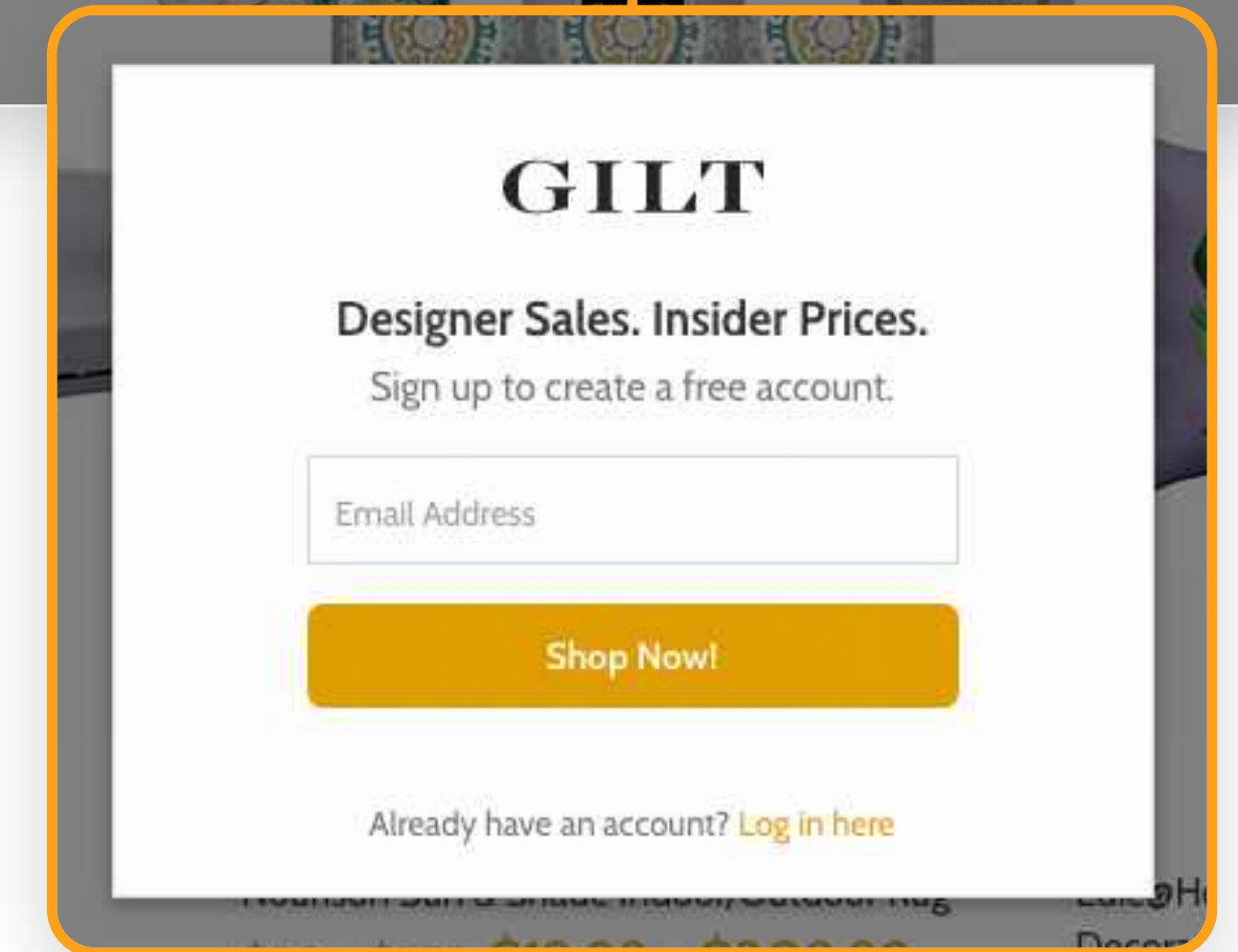
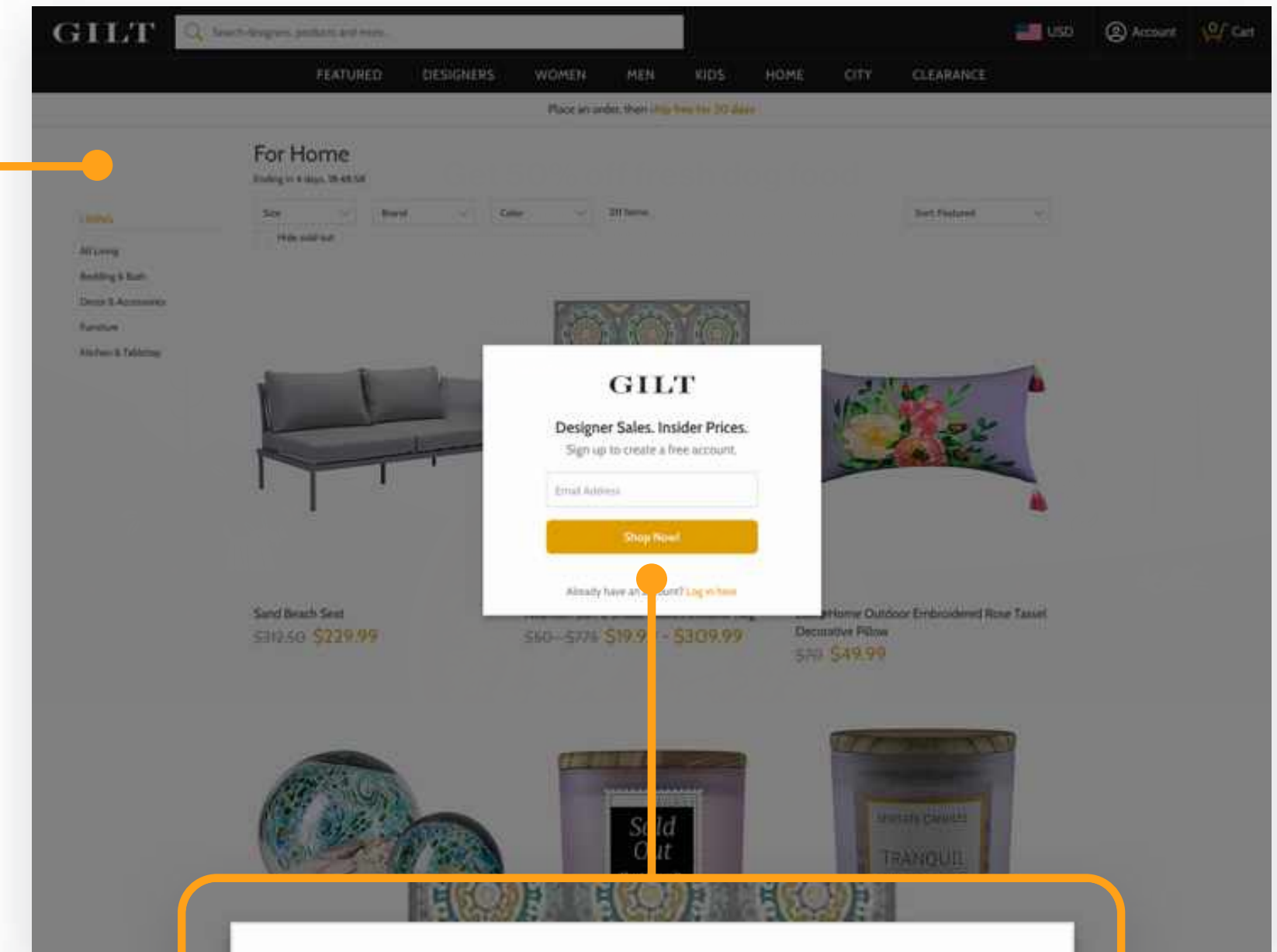
This minimal design gets just the important information across while having a luxury look and feel.

Clear messaging

The copy and call to action set clear expectations for the shopping experience that awaits on the landing page.

Instructive landing page

The landing page opens with a lightbox prompting the user to create an account in order to "Shop Now!"



Divvy

Divvy delivers its lead-generation campaign with:

Clear messaging

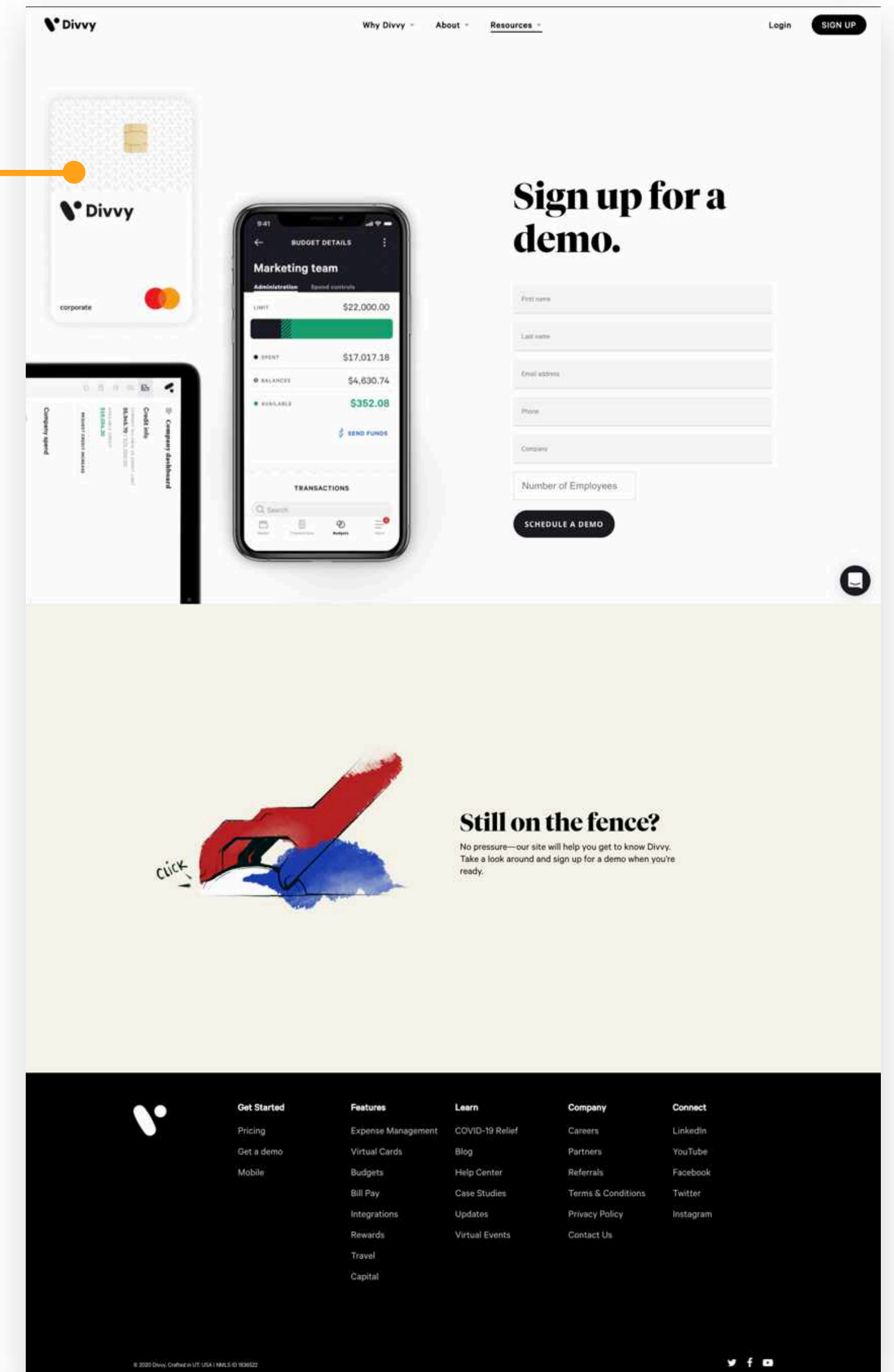
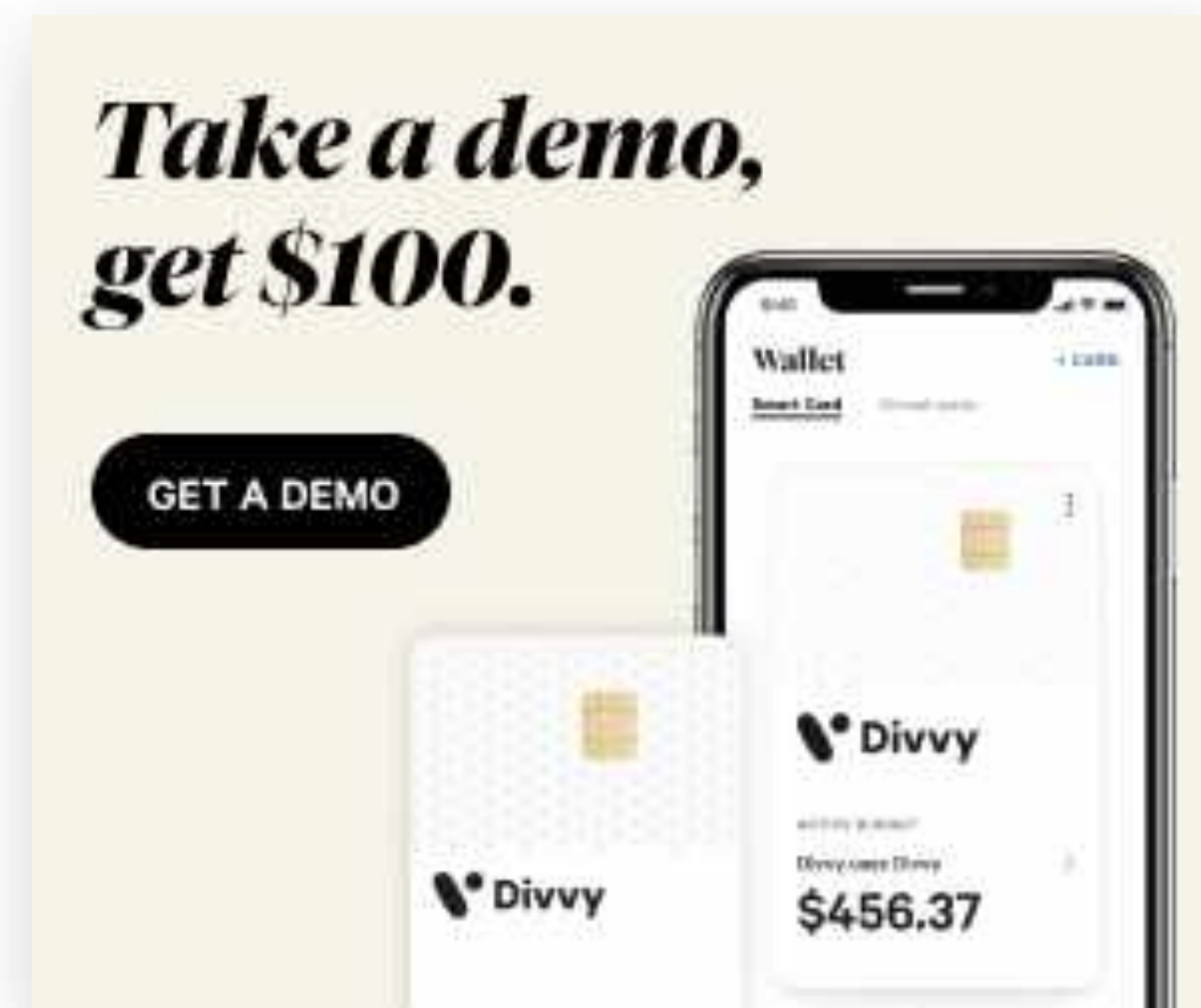
The headline clearly showcases the value of signing up for a demo with the opportunity to earn \$100. Breaking the headline into two short lines is also easier to read and more attention-grabbing.

Straightforward call to action

The call to action follows up on the headline's promise, inviting readers to click through and sign up to learn more about their offer.

Sleek landing page

The landing page features a simple email capture form set against white space, giving it a sleek, user-friendly feel.



Product Purchase

BRIGHT BALANCE
3-IN-1 CLEANSER

★★★★★

"MY SKIN LITERALLY LOOKED BRIGHTER AND CLEARER IN JUST 2 DAYS."
- nichole

SHOP NOW

thrive
causemetics

Detailed description: This advertisement features a teal background. On the right, a white tube of 'bright balance 3-IN-1 CLEANSER' is shown with a dollop of orange cleanser being dispensed. The text on the left includes a five-star rating, a testimonial from 'nichole', and a 'SHOP NOW' button. The brand name 'thrive causemetics' is in the bottom right corner.

INTRODUCING
New Woven

SHOP NOW

Detailed description: The advertisement shows a pair of brown woven loafers resting on a wooden crate against a light blue background. A dark blue 'SHOP NOW' button is positioned at the bottom right.

flamingo

Should an 8-pack of blades really cost \$32?
We don't think so.

TRY FLAMINGO

Detailed description: A pink and silver razor is shown against a light pink background. The text includes the brand name 'flamingo', a question about the value of an 8-pack of blades, a testimonial, and a 'TRY FLAMINGO' button.

allbirds

SHOP WOOL RUNNERS

Detailed description: A pair of dark grey wool runners is shown against a light blue background. The brand name 'allbirds' is at the top, and 'SHOP WOOL RUNNERS' is at the bottom.

VUORI

THE SOFTEST PANTS ON THE PLANET

SHOP PANTO PANT

Detailed description: The advertisement features a dark background with a pair of pants. The text includes the brand name 'VUORI', a claim 'THE SOFTEST PANTS ON THE PLANET', and a 'SHOP PANTO PANT' button.

allbirds

SHOP WOOL RUNNERS

Detailed description: A pair of orange wool runners is shown against a light blue background. A hand cursor is pointing at the shoe. The brand name 'allbirds' is on the left, and 'SHOP WOOL RUNNERS' is on the right.

flamingo

Designed for your bikini line,

SHOP FLAMINGO

Detailed description: A white bikini line shaver is shown against a white background. The text includes the brand name 'flamingo', a description 'Designed for your bikini line,', and a 'SHOP FLAMINGO' button.

VUORI

ONE SHORT. EVERY SPORT.

SHOP KORE SHORT

Detailed description: A pair of dark shorts is shown next to a person in athletic wear. The text includes the brand name 'VUORI', a slogan 'ONE SHORT. EVERY SPORT.', and a 'SHOP KORE SHORT' button.

BRIGHT BALANCE
3-IN-1 CLEANSER

★★★★★

"MY SKIN LITERALLY LOOKED BRIGHTER AND CLEARER IN JUST 2 DAYS."
- nichole

Detailed description: This is a smaller version of the Bright Balance advertisement, featuring the product tube, a five-star rating, a testimonial, and a 'SHOP NOW' button.

NORDSTROM
rack

Halogen
Surplice Cap Sleeve Blouse (Regular & Petite)

\$49.00 **\$18.73**

SHOP NOW

Free shipping over \$49. Easy in-store returns

Detailed description: A woman is wearing a dark grey blouse. The text includes the Nordstrom Rack logo, the brand name 'Halogen', the product name, the original price '\$49.00', the sale price '\$18.73', a 'SHOP NOW' button, and a note about free shipping and returns.

PUBLIC REC

The Comfort of Home.
ALL DAY EVERY DAY PANT

SHOP NOW

Detailed description: A pair of dark pants is shown against a white background. The text includes the brand name 'PUBLIC REC', a slogan 'The Comfort of Home. ALL DAY EVERY DAY PANT', and a 'SHOP NOW' button.

Product Purchase

Here's where you start launching ads to drive sales and maximize ROAS. Since we're at the end of the funnel, and you've distinguished your serious decision-makers from your casual browsers, it's important to spend your budget wisely.

You want to leverage your first-party data from your website, mobile app, and your CRM list to target only those who are most likely to convert.

When to use

Product purchase campaigns are most helpful for:

Driving first-time purchases

Reach target audiences with products and offers that are most relevant to their interests.

Retargeting website visitors

Stay top-of-mind and keep promoting your products to consumers who've previously visited your site or provided their information.

Correcting cart abandonment

The journey isn't over if the cart is still full. Give consumers a friendly nudge and drive them to complete that purchase.

Up-selling and cross-selling

Keep generating revenue from past purchasers by providing more product options that suit their needs.

Re-engaging lapsed customers

Looking at those who haven't purchased from you in a while, retarget them with a special offer to come back.

Creative callouts

Keep driving purchases with these creative tips:



Use simple concepts

Many brands see higher conversions when they remove unnecessary design elements.



Lead with a sleek product photo

Ads with these to-the-point visuals perform better than those with general lifestyle photos.



Optimize across devices

Make the path to conversion quick and easy with a mobile-friendly landing page.

How the pros do it

Check out how these brands created a clear path to purchase.

Allbirds

Allbirds made product purchase ads a breeze with:

Simple concept

A solid background, sleek logo, product photo, and clear call to action make this ad easy on the eyes. Even the fun illustration is kept minimal to fit right in.

Bold colors

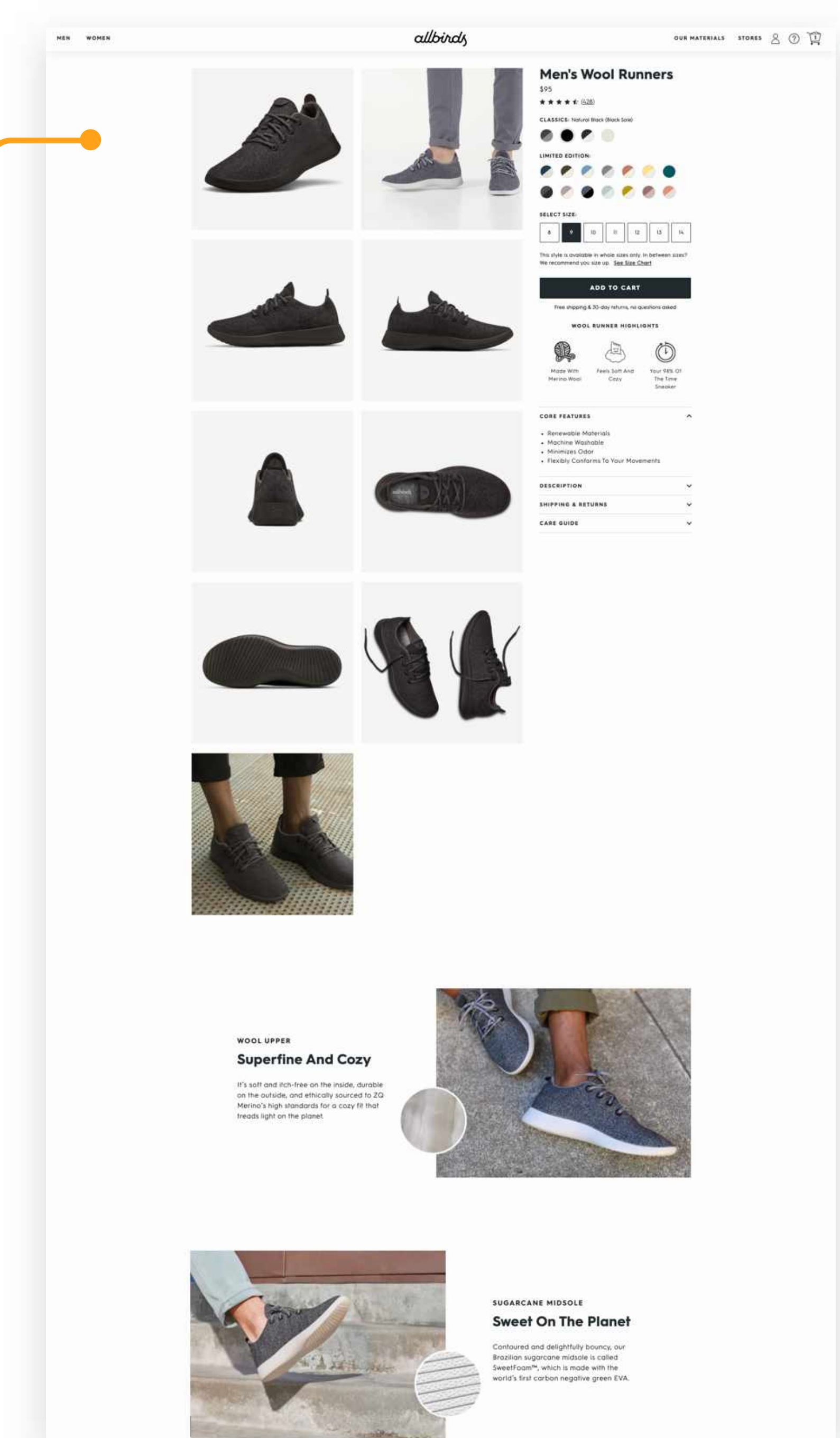
Strong but complementary colors make this creative pop out amongst its surrounding email content.

Straightforward call to action

The call to action drives consumers to click by calling out the specific product shown in the ad.

Informative landing page

The landing page highlights basic product features above the fold, and dives deeper below with further benefits and customer reviews.



Thrive Causemetics

Thrive Causemetics drives sales with:

Strong colors

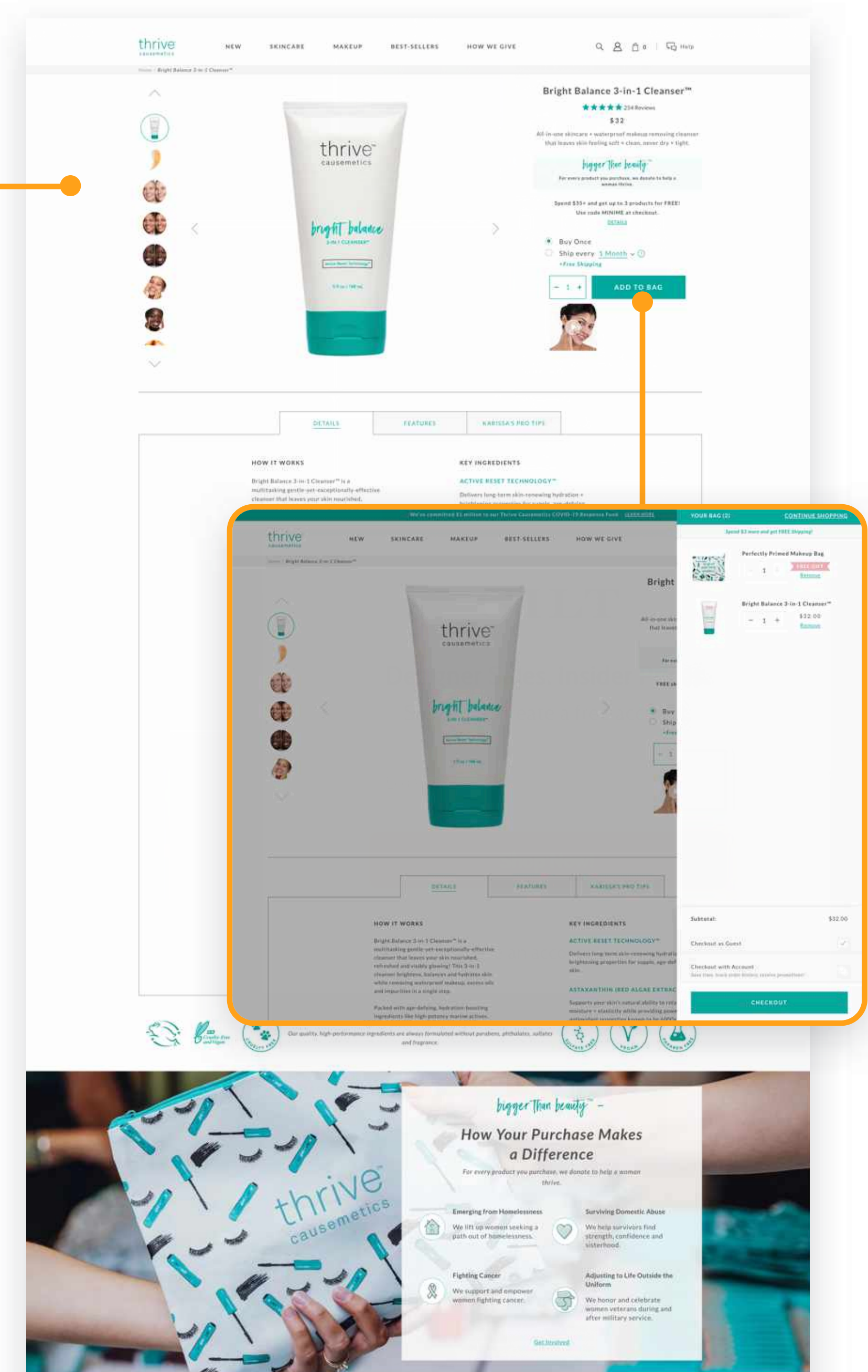
The bright teal background makes the creative pop out amongst email content.

Clear messaging

Leveraging customer reviews and quotes is a smart tactic for building trust and interest among buyers.

User-friendly landing page

The landing page directly matches the product shown in the creative. And once you hit "Add To Bag," a lightbox appears showing your cart, offering a free gift, and providing the option to check out right away.



Nordstrom Rack

Nordstrom Rack generates conversions with:

Dynamic Product Ads

Once a shopper had visited the Nordstrom Rack website, they leveraged dynamic product ads to retarget those folks with personalized ads featuring products they had shown an interest in purchasing.

Enticing offers

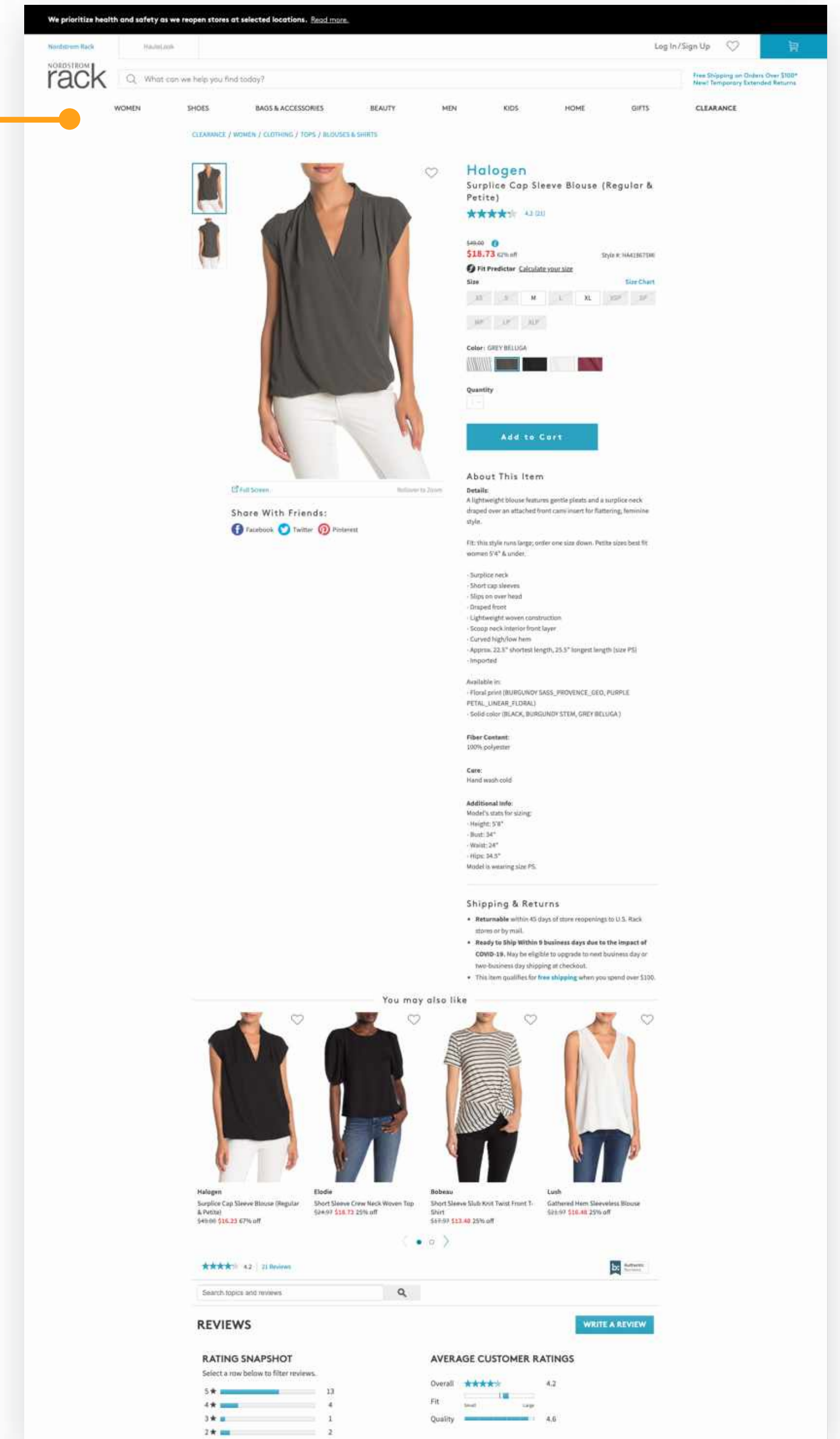
The ad clearly displays a discounted price, alongside the original price, and an offer for free shipping on orders over \$100.

Visible branding

A large logo sparks brand recognition among those who've already engaged with Nordstrom Rack.

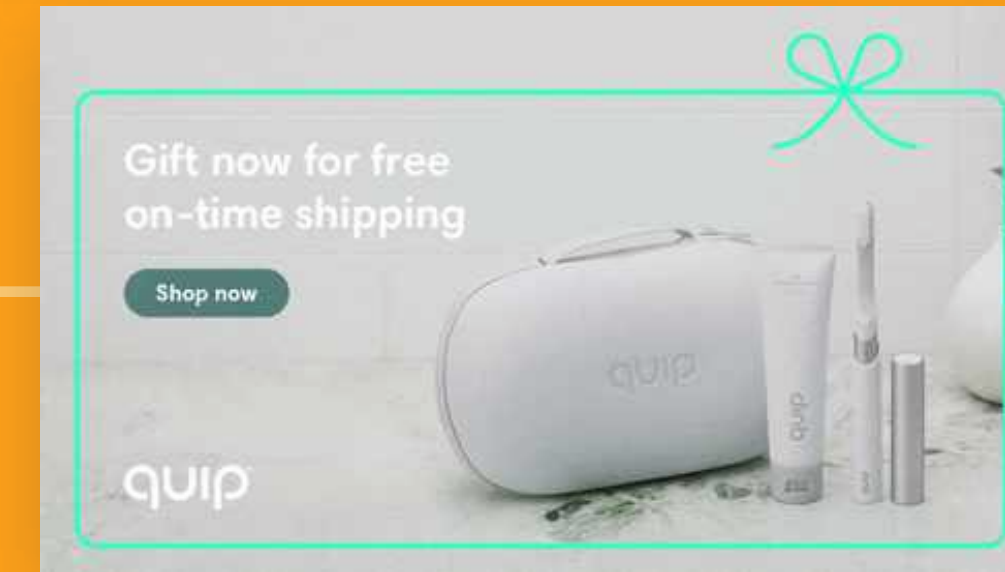
Straightforward call to action

"Shop Now" is much clearer than "Learn More" or "Browse Options." It clearly invites customers to find the right product and complete their purchase.



Display ad best practices for marketing in email

Seasonal marketing



Seasonal marketing

During that time of year when your products are most popular and your customers are actively in the holiday shopping mode, you want to be ready with eye-catching ads – especially if competitors will be ramping up their outreach too.

That's where seasonal marketing campaigns come in to help you capture the emotional spirit of the season, drive performance, and win market share.

When to use

Seasonal marketing opportunities vary for each brand and industry, but popular use cases include:

Driving holiday sales

Inspire gift buyers during the winter holidays, or launch themed campaigns for festive celebrations like Halloween, Valentine's Day, and Easter.

Reaching back-to-school shoppers

Generate revenue as families and students prepare to start a new school year.

Promoting summertime deals

Share special offers for products people love to use during the warmer months or on vacation.

And remember, regardless of the industry or season, leveraging your first-party data can be a powerful way to find new customers using Lookalike Audiences, or to re-engage current and past customers using Custom Audiences.

Creative callouts

Spice up your seasonal marketing campaigns with these creative best practices.



Use customized messaging

Write copy that addresses specific holiday interests, trends, and needs.



Capture spirit of the season

Use imagery that illustrates seasonal activities and settings.



Build a seasonal landing page

Make sure the page matches your seasonal ad creative for a more intuitive customer experience.

How the pros do it

Peek into the playbooks of these seasonal marketing successes.

Ross-Simons

Ross-Simons masters Mother's Day marketing with:

Simple concept

From the clean product photography to the concise line of copy, Ross-Simons kept this creative to the bare essentials.

Clear messaging

"Matched sets for mom and her little girl" hooks in shoppers looking for a special, two-part gift.

Eye-catching imagery

Showcasing the large and small heart-shaped jewelry captures the spirit of Mother's Day.



Lovepop

Lovepop sweetens its Valentine's Day ads with:

Simple concept

Each design is built around a single product, joined by eye-catching graphics and illustrations.

Clear messaging

The witty, lighthearted copy captures the romantic and playful spirit of the holiday.

Strong colors

Valentine's Day-themed colors complement the brand color palette and enhance the messaging.



Manscaped

Manscaped drives Black Friday sales with:

Mobile optimization

The large, bold text highlighting the sale translates on all devices and makes the ad pop.

Clear messaging

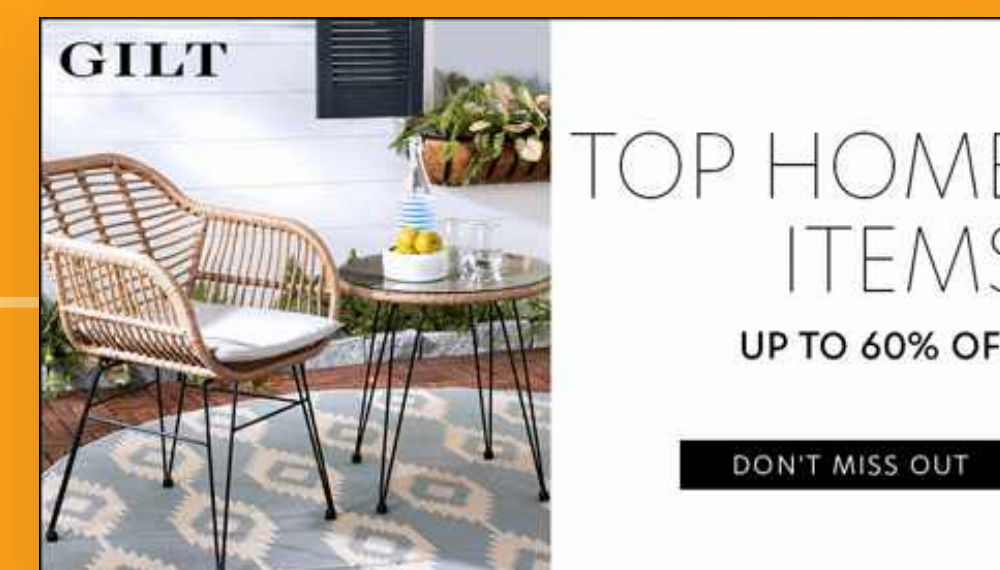
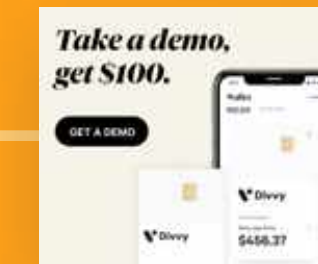
The ad copy showcases the core promotional offer for 25% off purchases across the entire website.

Strong colors

A bold, black-and-red color scheme draws attention to the ad and the playful call to action, "Get Manscaped."



Key takeaways



Key takeaways

Remember that email is just the vehicle by which your ad is being served. Sure, it can get you to your audience, but once you're there, you need to deliver with the right ad creative.

Here's a cheat sheet of six creative best practices for designing simple ads that clearly set expectations and inspire action.

1. Keep it simple

It's always better to A/B test several simple creative concepts rather than one with many ideas packed in.

4. Use straightforward calls to action

Let people know what they're clicking into, so that when they land on the page, they're ready to take action.

2. Choose strong colors

Choose a color palette that establishes your brand, enhances the messaging, and influences behavior.

5. Incorporate clear messaging

Keep it short and to the point. It needs to capture attention, demonstrate value, and set expectations.

3. Keep branding visible

Keep your logo visible and complementary to the overall design.

6. Optimize across devices

55% of LiveIntent impressions are served on mobile, so optimize your ads for viewing on various devices.



Want to learn how LiveIntent
can help power profitable
growth for your brand?

[See our advertiser solutions](#)

