

SAMPLE CLA

An inside look at the process for our competitive landscape analysis.



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Our Method

Our CLAs begin by identifying a set of websites to include in our analysis. These sites are split into two groups: a peer group and an aspirational group.

For this example, we have decided to look at ecommerce sites selling fine leather goods. However, we have performed CLAs for tech businesses, manufacturers, and non-profits.



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Identifying the Set

We recommend at least twenty sites to get a large enough sample size for a CLA. We have done CLAs of over fifty websites, divided into multiple groupings.

While we divide these websites into “peer” and “aspirational” groups, *this is not a judgment on the quality of the businesses represented here*, but on the quality of the websites. Many of our clients come to us knowing their website needs help, which is why the CLA happens in the first place.

The purpose of a CLA is to **help a business’s online presence reflect the quality of their brand.**

For this sample study, we worked with a smaller group of only twelve sites.

FINAL CLA SELECTION

- Holtz Leather: holtzleather.com
- Colonel Littleton: colonellittleton.com
- Budd Leather: buddleather.com
- Saddleback Leather: saddlebackleather.com
- Will Leather Goods: www.willleathergoods.com
- Duvall Leatherworks: www.duvallleatherwork.com
- Frank Clegg: frankcleggleatherworks.com
- Ghurka: ghurka.com
- J. W. Hulme: jwhulmeco.com
- Portland Leather: portlandleathergoods.com
- Lifetime Leather: lifetimeleather.com
- Jack Georges: jackgeorges.com



Who makes the cut?

Generally, we begin our CLA with a list of known competitors provided by the client. Our client may also have some benchmarking examples that help direct us toward our aspirational set.

For this example, we searched for key terms related to “fine leather goods” and built our lists from the results.

To be in the same competitive sphere as our imaginary client, the businesses we chose had to have an ecommerce store selling hand-crafted leather goods in the price range of roughly \$100-1,000 USD.

We excluded both generic and luxury brands as not matching the target customer of our client.

Peer Group

- Holtz Leather
- Colonel Littleton
- Budd Leather
- Saddleback Leather
- Will Leather Goods
- Duvall Leatherworks



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- Colonel





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SHOP ALL WOMEN



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SITE WIDE

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DUVALL
LEATHERWORK



Fall Bags!

SHOP NOW »



Aspirational Group

- Frank Clegg
- Ghurka
- J. W. Hulme
- Portland Leather
- Lifetime Leather
- Jack Georges



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LEATHER BAGS

ACCESSORIES

NEW ARRIVALS

FRANK CLEGG

SINCE 1970

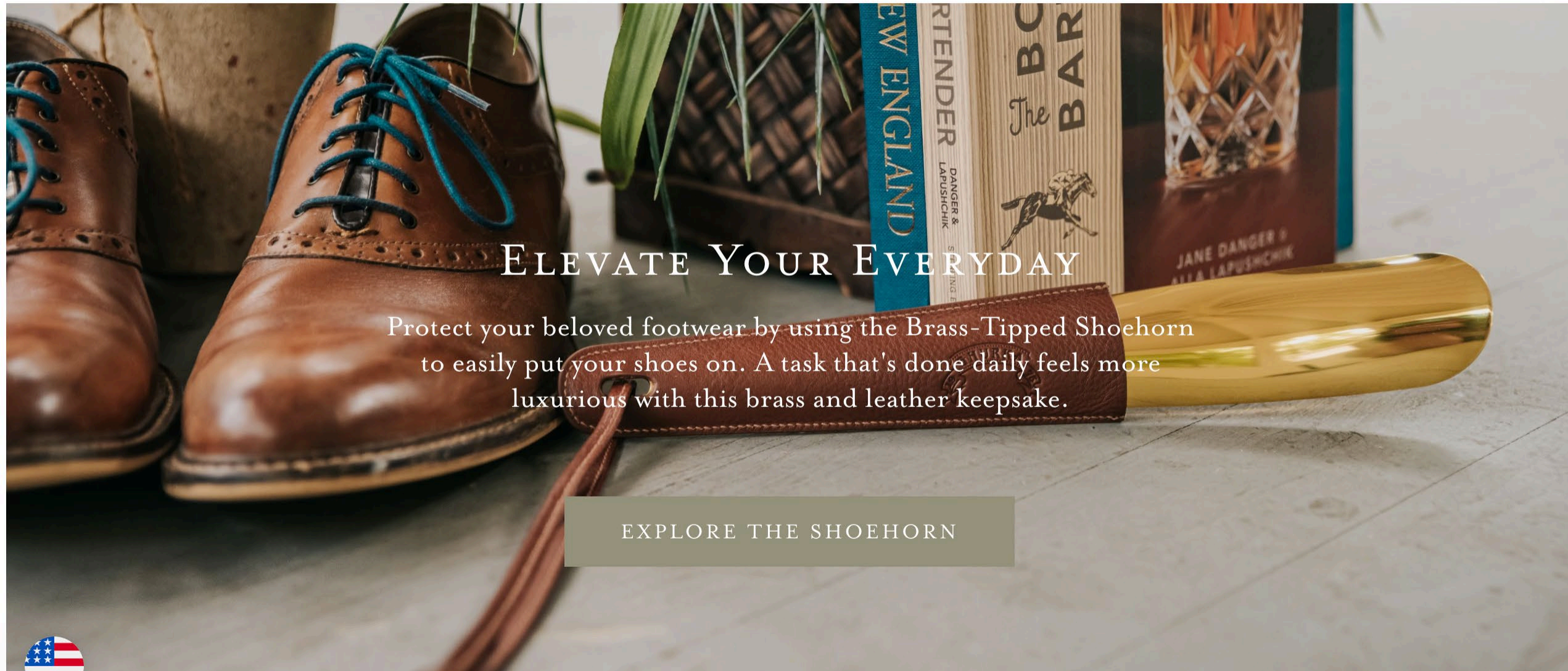
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J.W. HULME

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WOMEN

BUSINESS

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GIFTS

SALE

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SEARCH 



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Analysis

After selecting the competitive set, we create a list of traits to compare across each site.

We are looking for common features, trends, and outliers.



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What kind of CLA do you need?

Every business is different, and so is every CLA. Depending on our client's needs, we customize our CLA to look for specific factors. This might include:

- **Website analysis:** design trends, UX, calls-to-action, custom functionality.
- **Messaging analysis:** headlines, subheads, tag lines, elevator pitches, navigation.
- **Marketing analysis:** blog, social media, downloadable content, newsletters, personas.
- **Brand analysis:** messaging trends, logo style, brand colors.



Set Characteristics

For our sample study, we decided to run a branding and marketing analysis focusing on three general characteristics:

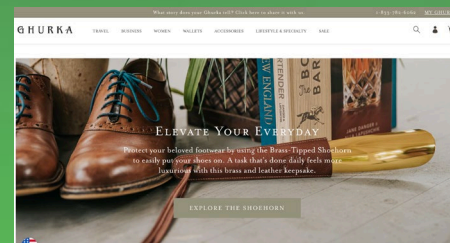
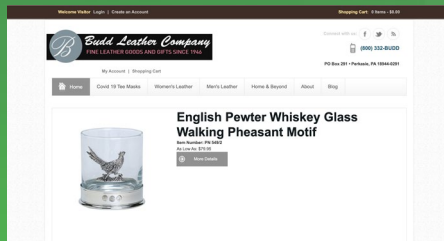
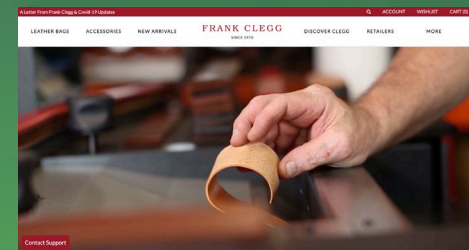
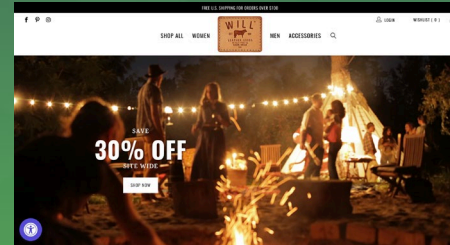
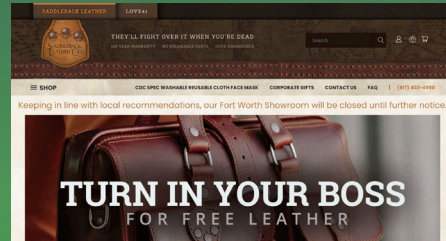
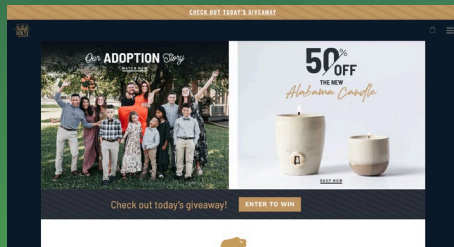
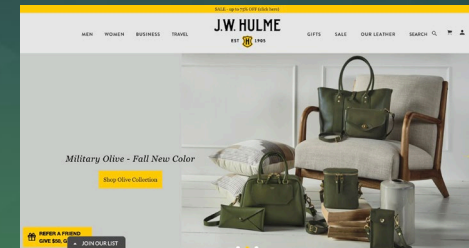
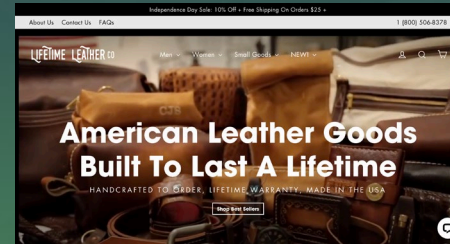
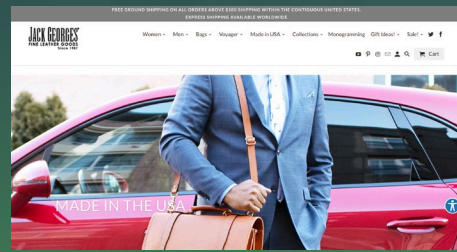
- **Navigation**
 - Style of navigation menu
 - Number of navigation items
 - Number of navigation menus
- **Color schemes**
 - Primary and secondary brand colors
- **Social media**
 - Which platforms are being used
 - How many platforms are being used

As we perform our analysis, we also kept an eye out for general UI/UX errors, as well as positive ideas that could be implemented on a client's site.

Brand Matrix

We begin by plotting the homepages on a graph that shows how they compare with each other. This helps visualize what we mean when we call one group “aspirational.”

Welcoming



Professional

Navigation

PEER GROUP

	Hidden Menu	# of Primary Nav Items	# of Nav Menues
Holtz Leather	✓	8	1
Colonel Littleton	✗	8	2
Budd Leather	✗	7	2
Saddleback Leather	✓	5	3
Will Leather Goods	✗	4	2
Duvall Leatherworks	✓	7	1

ASPIRATIONAL GROUP

Frank Clegg	✗	6	2
Ghurka	✗	7	1
J. W. Hulme	✗	8	1
Portland Leather	✗	4	2
Lifetime Leather	✗	4	2
Jack Georges	✗	9	1

Navigation

While it's subtle, we can already see a difference between how the peer and aspirational groups use navigation in three ways.

1. **Hidden navigation.**

Also known as hamburger menus, this navigation style is a major usability error for desktop users, as it removes important navigation items from view and obscures them behind an extra click. It can save space on mobile, but should otherwise be avoided. Half of the peer group had hidden navigation on their site, while none of the aspirational group did.

2. **Number of items in primary nav.**

On average, the peer group and aspirational group had about the same number of items in their primary navigation. The difference came in how they used them, which can be seen when we look at the number of navigation menus.

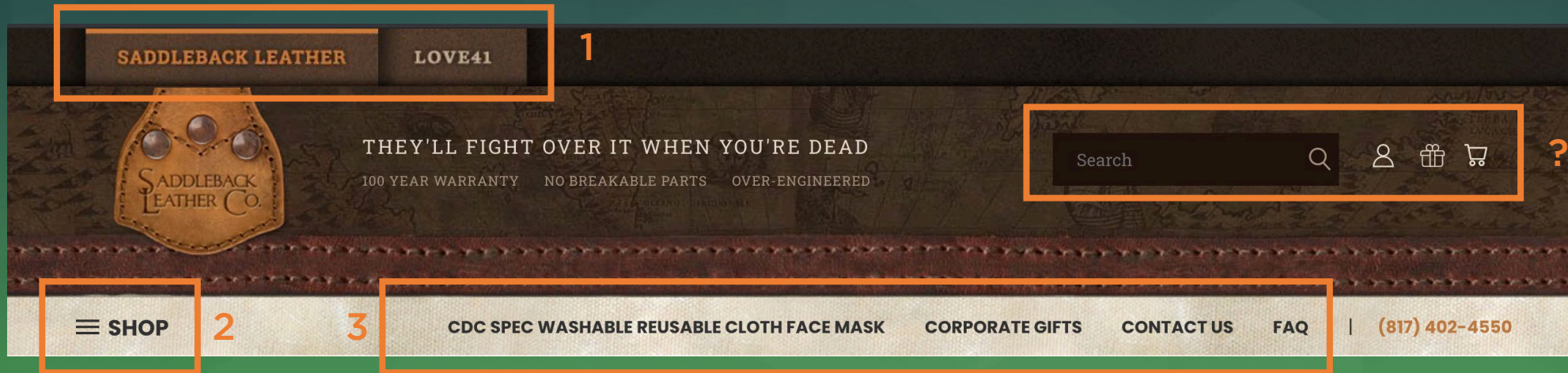
3. **Number of navigation menus.**

In the aspirational group, sites followed a pattern in how they arranged navigation: those with more than six nav items kept everything in one menu, while those with less than six items in their primary nav used a secondary nav for functional items such as account logins and the shopping cart.

(cont.)

Navigation

By contrast, the peer group used more navigation menus overall, had more nav items in those menus, and showed little rhyme or reason to how they split them apart, as can be seen in the example from Saddleback Leather:



Above we can see three separate menu items, not counting the icons next to the search bar, one of which (“Shop”) also uses hidden navigation. It’s unclear what many of these navigation items are, or why they have been split into separate menus. This is a good example of what *not* to do when arranging your navigation.

Navigation

PEER GROUP

Holtz Leather	Men, Women, Home & Office, Hats, World of HL, Corporate, Our Story, About Us
Colonel Littleton	Shop, What's New, Gift Guides, American Alligator, Private Stock, Last Chance Sale
Budd Leather	Home, Covid 19 Tee Masks, Women's Leather, Men's Leather, Home & Beyond, About, Blog
Saddleback Leather	CDC Spec Washable Reusable Cloth Face Mask, Corporate Gifts, Contact Us, FAQ
Will Leather Goods	Shop All, Women, Men, Accessories
Duvall Leatherworks	Home, Shop, Services, Duvall Blog, About, Contact, Cart/Checkout

Navigation

ASPIRATIONAL GROUP

Frank Clegg	Leather Bags, Accessories, New Arrivals, Discover Clegg, Retailers, More
Ghurka	Travel, Business, Women, Wallets, Accessories, Lifestyle & Specialty, Sale
J. W. Hulme	Home, Covid 19 Tee Masks, Women's Leather, Men's Leather, Home & Beyond, About, Blog
Portland Leather	Women, Men, Small Goods, Almost Perfect Sale
Lifetime Leather	Men, Women, Small Goods, New
Jack Georges	Women, Men, Bags, Voyager, Made in USA, Collections, Monogramming, Gift Ideas, Sale

Navigation Items

PEER GROUP

xxxxx Our Story, Our Story, About Us, About, About
xxxx Gift Guides, Corporate Gifts, Corporate Gifts, Corporate
xxxx Home & Office, Home & Beyond, Home, Home
xxx Men, Men's Leather, Men
xxx Women, Women's Leather, Women
xxx Shop, Shop, Shop All
xx Blog, Duvall Blog
xx Covid 19 Tee Masks, CDC ... Cloth Face Mask
xx Contact Us, Contact
x Hats
x Accessories
x American Alligator
x Cart/Checkout
x FAQ
x Last Chance Sale
x Private Stock
x Services
x What's New
x World of HL

ASPIRATIONAL GROUP

xxxxx Women, Women, Women, Women, Women
xxxx Men, Men, Men, Men
xxxx Sale, Sale, Sale, Almost Perfect Sale
xxxx Accessories, Accessories, Small Goods, Small Goods
xxx Travel, Travel, Voyager
xx Bags, Leather Bags
xx Business, Business
xx Gift Ideas, Gifts
xx New, New Arrivals
x Collections
x Discover Clegg
x Lifestyle & Specialty
x Made in USA
x Monograming
x More
x Our Leather
x Retailers
x Search
x Wallets



















Navigation Items

Again, the peer and aspirational groups show marked differences in their primary navigation:



















- “About” was the most common nav item for the peer group, appearing on 5/6 websites, but this item didn’t appear anywhere in the aspirational group, except for maybe “Our Leather.”
- The aspirational group was faster to use their navigation to divide visitors by gender.
- The peer group used top level navigation to direct visitors toward home and office purchases, as well as gifts.
- The aspirational group was more product-oriented, focusing on **what** they had to offer rather than **why** a person might want to buy it.
- Overall, this made the aspirational group more consumer focused, with their most common items (women, men, sale, small goods/accessories, travel, bags) directing visitors toward gendered goods, sales, or specific products.

Brand Colors

PEER GROUP

Holtz Leather			
Colonel Littleton			
Budd Leather			
Saddleback Leather			
Will Leather Goods			
Duvall Leatherworks			

ASPIRATIONAL GROUP

Frank Clegg			
Ghurka			
J. W. Hulme			
Portland Leather			
Lifetime Leather			
Jack Georges			



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Brand Colors



Once again, the peer and aspirational groups diverge significantly in their choice of brand colors. While the peer group sticks uniformly to browns and tans, the aspirational group trends lighter, with some sites using only blacks, whites and neutrals. However, the sites that do use color do so effectively, turning to bright warm colors rather than tans and browns.

The aspirational set also uses full splash imagery more heavily than the peer group, which compensates for the neutral brand colors. Whereas the aspirational group used leather in their imagery, the peer group tried to use leather as a texture.

Social Media

PEER GROUP

- Holtz Leather
- Colonel Littleton
- Budd Leather
- Saddleback Leather
- Will Leather Goods
- Duvall Leatherworks



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✓

ASPIRATIONAL GROUP

- Frank Clegg
- Ghurka
- J. W. Hulme
- Portland Leather
- Lifetime Leather
- Jack Georges

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Social Media

The peer group had many more social icons than the aspirational group, and these included a wider range of platforms. This is probably because the peer group are using social media widgets without taking the time to optimize them or think about what platforms they should actually be on. This is more common on sites using generic templates rather than templates custom-built for ecommerce.

The aspirational group has taken a more selective approach, as can be seen by the social platforms where they appear. Every member of the aspirational set is on both Facebook and Instagram, and all but one are on Pinterest—and only two members of the aspirational set appear on platforms beyond these core three.

While we didn't run an analysis of actual social usage during this analysis, if we were to run one, we should expect to see the aspirational set making more effective use of the channels where they appear.

Conclusions

A summary of our findings, recommendations,
and next steps.



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Summary

From our analysis, we observed the following:

- The aspirational group uses menu structure more efficiently to direct visitors toward products.
- In choosing brand colors, the peer group was doggedly literal, opting for browns, tans, and leather textures. The aspirational group kept a warm color palette and incorporated leather through imagery.
- In social, the peer group chose a scattershot approach, appearing across a range of platforms without much rhyme or reason. Meanwhile, the aspirational group was selective, choosing platforms that matched their brands.



Does your business need a CLA?

A competitive landscape analysis offers valuable insights into competitor behavior, design trends, and marketing behavior.

We recommend them to our clients when they are beginning a major brand overhaul, when they are preparing for a major site redesign, or any time they need to take a peek at their competition.

As a flexible research tool, we can expand our scope to look at any number of websites, or to analyze any site feature you need.

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