AutoParts Online Content Discovery

RESEARCH, CONTENT AUDIT & COMPETITIVE ASSESSMENT

January 2021

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01 OVERVIEW

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Today's agenda

1. Overview
2. Research
   - Stakeholder interviews
   - Store walk
3. Content audit
   - Content audit overview
   - Content audit findings, insights & opportunities:
   - Template-specific findings
   - Social findings
4. Competitive assessment (in progress)
   - Core competitors (Advance Auto Parts, AutoZone, Halford's, Amazon, Firestone)
   - Adjacent Sites (Crutchfield, The Home Depot)
   - Other sites of interest (Patagonia, Microcenter, Ace Hardware)
5. Content and experience vision for AutoParts Online
6. Next steps

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WHY WE'RE HERE

Purpose:

To review the content audit and research to date

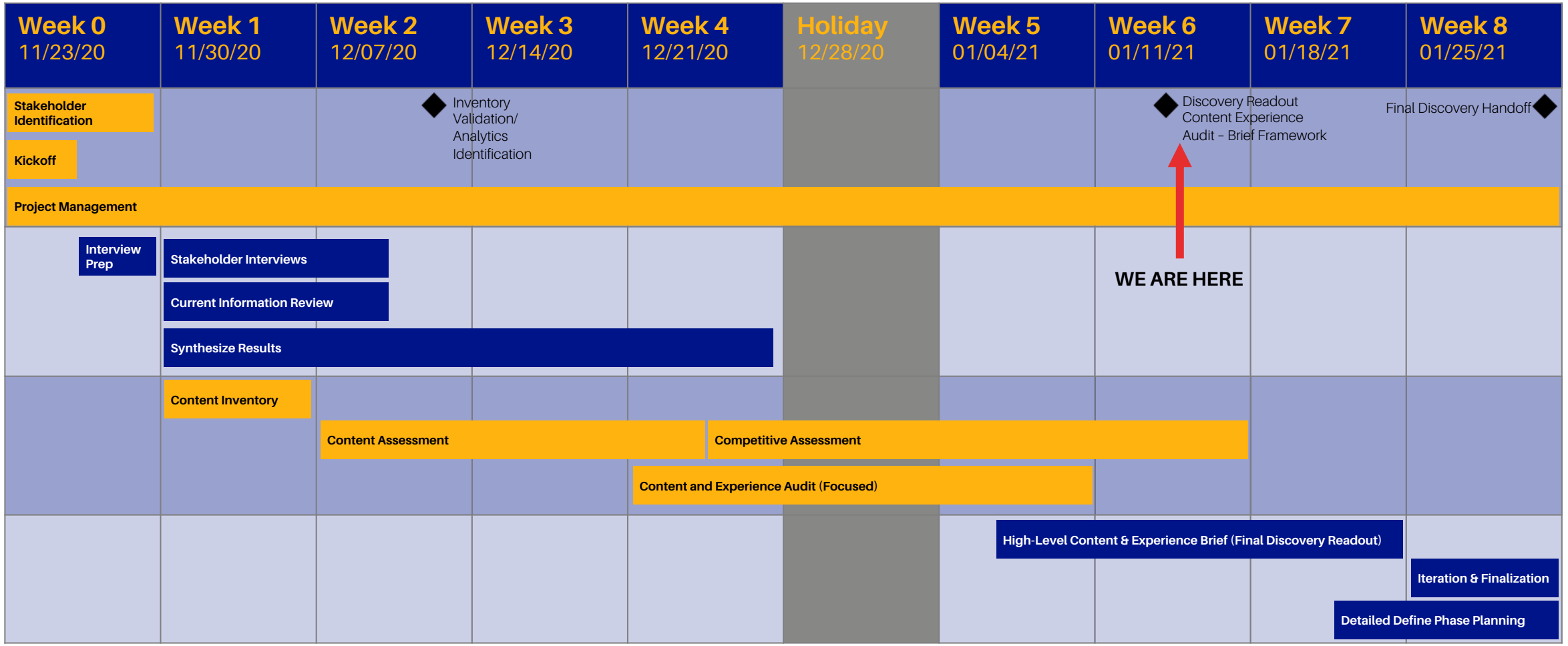
Objectives:

- To describe the approach taken
- To understand the deliverable
- To provide feedback on the approach and deliverable
- Review key numbers
- Review insights and opportunities

Deliverable:

Alignment on next steps and questions that need to be addressed. Identify approach to key stakeholder meetings

High-level plan & progress



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02 RESEARCH

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STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

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Who we interviewed

Retail & Merchandising

- CR
- BB

Marketing & Blog

- MS
- ES
- BM

Catalog & Digital

- JB
- MB
- TM
- RM

AutoCare

- JE

Analytics & Data

- JA
- VC
- IH
- SN

Common

- BL
- CS

In Store

- PC(Store Manager)



17 Stakeholders Interviewed

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What we heard

AutoParts Online hasn't had a lot of focus from the business. Content for engagement and content for SEO has been lacking.

Have been focused on B2B. We Need to internally identify an approach and a model to talk to a retail customer

We want to bring AutoParts Know How to life online. We need to extend the brand digitally and use as a differentiator moving forward

There is room for romance copy, features, and benefits. Many parts don't have anything.

AutoParts has one catalog that feeds both audiences. Pricing fed from different systems. All the content comes from the catalog.

For content, we are beholden to supplier. We have some reviews, but approvals don't go through B2C

Make it clean and simple as necessary rather than pleasure shopping

Unless category team knows about it, it's difficult to update the content

Tagging is a problem—it's over-tagged. >2000 tags across the site

We need to internalize our own content, copywriting, SEO

Can't have A+ content since it is beholden to supplier—they permit some review, but they own attributes. Images and features and benefits

There is room for romance copy, features, and benefits. Many parts don't have anything.

Tagging is a problem—it's over-tagged. >2000 tags across the site

Content is so far behind the competition. It's not set up to optimize findability, etc., to engage with customer. It Feels too corporate rather than a retail site

"I thought you weren't going to buy anything." *"But I couldn't resist."*

We need to integrate our know-how content better

Suppliers enter content in an online portal (100 some tasks then run it through category managers for approval.

There is so much content that we are under leveraging. Need to inspect it for purpose.

We need better content, better images

Add romance language on top of the A+ content initiative of 250 words of readable and optimized content

There is so much content that we are under leveraging. Need to inspect it for purpose.

We want to come across as an expert partner working with you. Knowledge sharers. We have a passion for cars.

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What we heard – key themes

- We are beholden to suppliers for all product content with very little opportunity to review and edit the content to add “romance” or a brand voice
- No one person or group “owns” the content and experience of the site
- The blog offers a useful blueprint for instilling a review process and metadata tagging strategy (once the tags are winnowed)
- We need to create more A+ plus content along with branded and “romance” content to introduce it, which will require review of materials provided by suppliers
- We’re looking to make the transition between online and in store more seamless

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Retail & merchandising

- Facilitators:
- Stakeholders:

Success

- **Top-line sales is the key KPI**. Digital analytics are part of this. We want one or two key metrics. **We need a real shock factor that we are behind.**
- Retail is only 20% but **room to grow**. The differences between shop and wholesale disconnect around price, where there is also geographic variation

Content & Experience Objectives

- **To be best in class.** We need to internalize our own content, copywriting, SEO, etc.
- Pricing really impacts the SEO to get into the funnel and lacks content for engagement. DIY show me how, etc.
- Two big themes: **Search doesn't work**. **Content is very far behind** out competition
- **Site feels too corporate**, while we want to have the same experience in store and online—bringing retail buzz to auto parts

Branding

- **AutoParts Know How is the core of our marketing campaign**. True professional help morphing into solutions. We need to ring that life on NOL (video content)
- **Make it clean and simple** as it is necessity shopping rather than pleasure

Structure & sourcing

- **We are beholden to suppliers for content**, with very little 2C review. Need to internally identify an approach and a model to talk to a retail customer
- **Digital team has operated separately from the business unit**, regardless of audience—B2B and B2C, and NOL hasn't had a lot of focus from the business
- Content for **engagement** and content for **SEO have been lacking**

Audiences

- NOL has three audiences: retail customer, wholesale through portal, store teams, and each has subsegments (e.g.,DIY + DIFM. **Need to internally identify an approach and a model to talk to a retail customer through** AutoParts Know How, like in our stores
- **We can't have A+ because we can't control it**, with only a little review—they permit some review. Suppliers own attributes. There is much room for "romance" copy and features and benefits. Many parts don't have anything. Unless a category team knows about it, it's difficult to upgrade

Other Challenges

- Technology and culture needs a paradigm shift. **Customers only come to the site when they have to** because their car is broken
- **We have a problem with SEO cannibalization** due to proliferation of sites (AutoPartsbrakes.com, AutoPartsfilters.com, etc.)

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Marketing & blog

- Facilitators:
- Stakeholders:

Goals

- With KPIs in the works, we need **to think about lengths and commitment**. How do we gauge new consumer expectations? Even in the last 8 months
- **Integrate blog first** to engage higher up in the funnel and increase returning visiting. We want to be more than the search result. Want to be destination, but without pushing content down their throat, but we need to **resist the danger of a hard sell** with this content
- Customers **want all the touch points to be seamless**—online and in store
- Elevating that know how for enhanced credibility

Sourcing, Review & Creation

- Work closely with product managers to figure out how to sell products, like a marketing arm. **Learn about it, then go buy it**
- **Bog content is reviewed**—with a rigorous process
- We used to plan out content by month: **now days per a week**, a few weeks out.
- We **weigh everything against product**. Use sales sheets from to create content: answer questions you embarrassed to ask anyone but Google

Audiences

- Key audiences are DIY, DIFM, repair shop. We are **shifting from technicians talking to technicians** to tech talking to public, especially. DIFM, up and comers (wipers/oil), and advanced DIY (skilled)

Content Experience

- **95% of our content text with a handful of infographics. No diagrams or schematics**
- No Video on our own (reused from the YouTube channels—build around that or integrate as appropriate), but YouTube already has a wealth of this
- We have good step-by-step procedural content
- Over-tagging of content is a problem(>2,000 tags across the site). Filters are used 40 times. **Related content module is now contextually based**. No structured taxonomy governance.? We don't use the same taxonomy as the catalog.

Know How Messaging

- We try to be neutral as a conservative company—**no recommendations**
- Audiences are DIY and automotive repair; we strive for a 5th grade reading level. We sell to **blue collar, fishing, hunting guys, working folks**
- We say know how, **but not know it all** (Since we've been tagged with being intimidating in the past)
- We want to be **an expert PARTNER working with you—knowledge sharers that have a passion for cars**
- Regardless of channel, **we want Know How to take front and center**

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Catalog & digital

- Facilitators:
- Stakeholders:

Success

- Our primary measure is SEO traffic garnered. The overall goal is revenue. There's a nascent/future desire to **measure engagement with content and increased conversion stemming from this** "know how" or educational content. Today, is traffic generation. Will stay as such, with secondary driving increased confidence and awareness.
- **Conversion is the key KPI**. We look for product to speak to consumer and speak AutoParts with its value proposition woven in.
- Only 20% of sales are retail, so most of our dollars are targeted for commercial. We don't do much for awareness. We want to bring AutoParts Know How to life online. Need to extend the brand digitally and use as a differentiator moving forward **in a cost-effective way**
- We grossly underserve the market with NOL. Much smaller operations do better. We want to out rank competitors for these: 200 and 500k sales target
- We need to push **more data** into the experience. Missing keywords is an opportunity
- We need to use web for customer acquisition. B2C site is a good bridge for that: having a hard to find versus a normal part

Creation & Sourcing

- **We get what we get in text**, but we are strict with images. Fitment data is strict too. Attributes were the wild west until recently. Now we list of values, smart sheets, but we still need to work on this
- Vendors have limited budgets and AutoParts has been hard to work with—bad QA process. **They do the bare minimum to keep us off their backs**. A lot of change has happened to make it easier to do business with us

Content Experience

- Individual product content, applications, images—need to look at all of it and make a cultural shift happen. AutoParts hasn't authored data. We don't have a voice of AutoParts.
- We will be creating or own content starting in January. In the first 6 months, we'll look at top 100 types of parts, adding "romance" language on top of A+ content (**250 words of readable and optimized content**). For example: these brake pads great for stopping, not dust. A paragraph or two is all we need. AutoParts has you covered
- We use two types of video: the product type (why this is great). How to do hard jobs, put it through the AutoParts Know How lens—both mechanic and DIY.
- NOL doesn't serve the DIY customer well. We need to serve up **more of that knowledge base**
- **Video could be strategic leg up**
- We need to look at the overall structure, mostly on page. AutoCare needs to be addressed as well. **We needs to be cohesive**.
- **We have you covered** DIY or DIFM.
- A lot of value in content for the DIFM is we have the parts and the service. It's **our value proposition**. The Integrated story is a big differentiator. Tell story together, holistically
- Store pages are very basic. Some independent stores have own microsites. How do we weave that into AutoParts Online. **Create some templates and themes they could use**
- Site maps could be optimized. **Content is missing or not there**. Have quality images, but not on the site

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Catalog & digital (continued)

- Facilitators:
- Stakeholders:

Processes

- Mike's blog team has a technical process has brought efficiency to content management from preview and publish to production. We want to retain this. (Currently use Excel). We've discussed moving SEO blocks, but back and forth. We don't want to change things based on single opinion without a strategy.
- The blog content is good stuff, but **how do we leverage it to provide a cohesive knowledge building experience**. We publish 18 articles a month. There is so much content that we are under leveraging. We need to inspect it for purpose.
- How blog topics are selected needs to **connect to the larger strategy**. It must align to business purpose
- When we introduce a new product, suppliers enter it in an online portal (100 some tasks) and run it through category managers for approval. Then it is enriched to add application data (year make model).
- **No appetite to change process to add data**. We just have to get better about how we use the data
- From a content perspective, we could start with a ticket and some grooming for a promo or featured product. Intake process: prioritization, where it should live, etc. Then work with Chris if it's a new component to get on schedule. If current needs suffice, then schedule it with Todd's team to make sure it is all square
- The blog is in WordPress. **All product content in the PIM** with a loosely coupled DAM (for marketing and promotional content in the DAM). Scene 7 is the publication mechanism. Technology gap for A+ rich
- **We need to be way more agile**

Processes (Continued)

- We have only systematically measured and assessed some pages (brand pages). Measure that page as a landing page—it's conversion from CTAs. **A lot of the rest needs to improvement**. It's now about a C+ or B-. We Need to take it to the next level. We need regular checkpoints
- **Very minimal regular review** of content that systematic
- **Old parts are showing up in know how**
- We check every build but it is a spot check, just to make sure we haven't broken something

Moving Forward

- **We no longer want to receive customer complaints about the quality and accuracy of our content**
- We want better content, better images: a defined plan that says where we should get synergy from retail and wholesale content. If we could do all these things it will benefit the entire business.
- The site navigation and the product hierarchy is very important for 2021, but it needs guidance. **Everything is technically correct but not consumer friendly**. It's based on industry lingo.

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AutoCare

- Facilitators:
- Stakeholders:

Goals

- Two main roles for the site: a way **to generate traffic** for our members and **supporting the members** in their conversations with customers
- We would like to see **content that is more dynamic than currently exists**
- We only marketi to consumers for our members. Opportunities: **we should have more of an omnichannel approach**. If you see a AutoParts emblem, you know what you are getting
- **A seamless experience is the goal** for NOL. The experience there should be identical buying a part of finding somewhere to service.

Areas for Improvement

- Schedule an appointment: should be able to pay or use my finance card. Rewards should apply to repairs as well as purchases. **Buy a part and get it installed, get a quote.** Firestone is what we are or what we should be.
- We are the back-end of a repair shop (i.e., the back of the house). **AutoCare is front of house here**
- Focus on **peace of mind** warranty, and **certified programs**
- We allow independent shops without enterprise level resources to compete. We are supposed to put our members among the big entities.

Content Needs

- Value propositions: **Promotions, Incentives. Easy Pay, Financing**. Should help educate consumers on why things cost the way they do in a shop
- Need to **help consumers understand the price differential**. You can buy the same steak at home. You don't have to pay chef
- Enhance messaging on product pages to say that, and add to AutoCare pages
- A Honda dealer does a good job of relaying that value prop. Independent shops score high because of **hands-on presence** and deals. National chains shine with better equipment and training. But perceived as less human, caring
- There is no downside of local **meets national**
- Make my care **options and experience on par with that of buying a part**

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Analytics & data

- Facilitators:
- Stakeholders:

Goals

- The BrightEdge engagement was to intended see a **lift in organic traffic**, which we've seen—as well as the **added revenue** from organic traffic
- We use all the basic SEO metrics. Looking for higher impressions, better ranking, higher organic site entries, etc. **Better content can affect onsite metrics**. Hope to help bounce and conversion
- SEO tracks **4,500 keywords**. Focus on areas where we do well and want to hold on to that advantage. We start with products

Reviews

- We are looped into comps and design at that stage. **For brand pages, we can control URLs, but we are hands off for microsites**. Just give them high level KPIs
- **We can't make URL changes to product stack**. Commerce follows established nomenclature. Still **fair game to figure out the best way to do it.** Brian maintains content of know how—but we can configure it

Focus Areas

- The things we focus on: 1) core content that is product related 2) business content 3) technical SEO to better present data to the crawlers/engines. **Content is not doing as much as we'd like** with our tools
- We've looked at optimizing metadata around pages on the site (content rich pages). Page types that are CLP and PLP (Product Listing). Now focused on schema mark-up. Adding video schema mark up to video soon. Focused on NOL, not the blog
- Product group picked categories focus—**brakes, batteries, filters, wipers, and headlights**
- Focus on conversion process, Know how, etc. We can track page views, but **can't really track contribution to conversion**. Want to measure engagement with calls to action. Always the opportunities in the organic space
- There are **other good actions to track on the site** (soft conversions, store located, directions, car, opening an account)

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STORE WALK

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Observations

In Store

- Paul XXXXX (Store Manager)
- The store employees are the best advertisement for AutoParts: friendly, knowledgeable, approachable—in short, the embodiment of AutoParts Know How
- The parts and other products are arranged similarly to the catalog online
- The AutoParts brand identity is much more apparent in the store, in the signage, shelf labels, and informational displays (how head lamps differ)

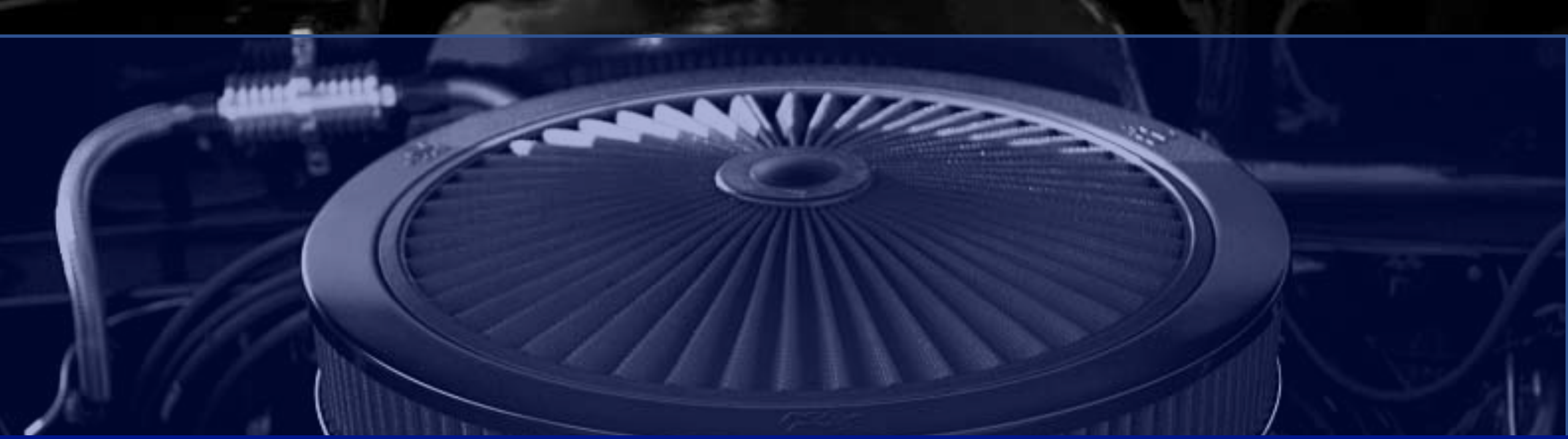
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Observations

Store Organization (Taxonomy and Hierarchy)

- ss

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03 CONTENT AUDIT

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CONTENT AUDIT OVERVIEW

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Methodology

1. Reviewed numerous Screaming Frog crawls of the site(s) provided by Genuine Parts Company (GPC)
2. Crawled Know How Blog and other sites using Site Bulb/Screaming Frog
3. Consolidated and cleaned up different crawls for de-deduplication, add microsites, subdomains, and store sites
4. Audited the sites with a multi-pronged approach, and captured any observations or questions
    - Looked at navigation by audience from the homepage with an eye to nested URLs and other domains and subdomains
    - Audited content using the navigation of the site to determine how users accessed the content in subdomains
    - Looked at the content to capture audience, content types, content gaps, and opportunities
    - Audited content for suitability for medium and visibility to search engines
    - Audited content for using the following criteria: *1) Content ecosystem, 2) Brand fidelity, 3) Content experience, 4) Editorial direction, 5) Navigation & wayfinding, 6) Contextual content & calls to action, 7) Community & social content, 8) Metadata, tagging & search, 9) Maintenance & governance, and 10) Accessibility*
5. Audited content for main content templates
6. Performed a high-level audit of AutoParts's social feeds

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Content audit by the numbers

~500k Total product pages/SKUs exist on the site

5,827 Total pages inventoried by crawl tools (sub-set of major pages provided)

100 Total pages identified for content audit

12 Subdomains\microsites inventoried

06 Subdomains audited

Deeper dive into audit numbers and microsite and subdomain specifics:

AutoPartsOnline.com

- **~50** errors or redirects observed from pages inventoried
- **5,030** assets/pages without errors inventoried for AutoPartsOnline.com (status-OK)
- **16** know how articles inventoried on AutoPartsOnline.com
- **2** pages inventoried for Auto Parts AutoCare on AutoPartsOnline.com
- **762** pages inventoried from Auto Parts Know How Blog

Auto Parts Microsites

- **753** pages or assets inventoried from AutoPartsbrakes.com
- **840** pages or assets inventoried from AutoPartsfilters.com
- **27** pages or assets inventoried from MyAutoParts
- **4** independent store sites inventoried
  - **20** pages / assets from Walker Auto Stores
  - **61** pages / assets from Sanel Auto Parts
  - **55** pages / assets from Auto Parts Do It Best
  - **63** pages / assets from Riebes Auto Parts

Other SitesAssets

- **A multitude** of PDFs observed on AutoPartsOnline.com
- **590** PDFs observed on AutoPartsbrakes.com
- **371** PDFs observed on AutoPartsFilters.com
- **3** PDFs observed independent stores sites (Sanel)
- Other sites viewed: AutoPartsRebates, Auto Parts Catalog, Auto Parts AutoCare Member Site

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Under the hood (inventory artifacts)

		5827	=Pages										
Page Type	Address	Status Code	Title 1	Title 1 Length	Meta Description 1	Meta Description 1 Length	Meta Keyword 1	Meta Keywords 1 Length	H1-1	H1-1 length	H1-2	H1-2 length	
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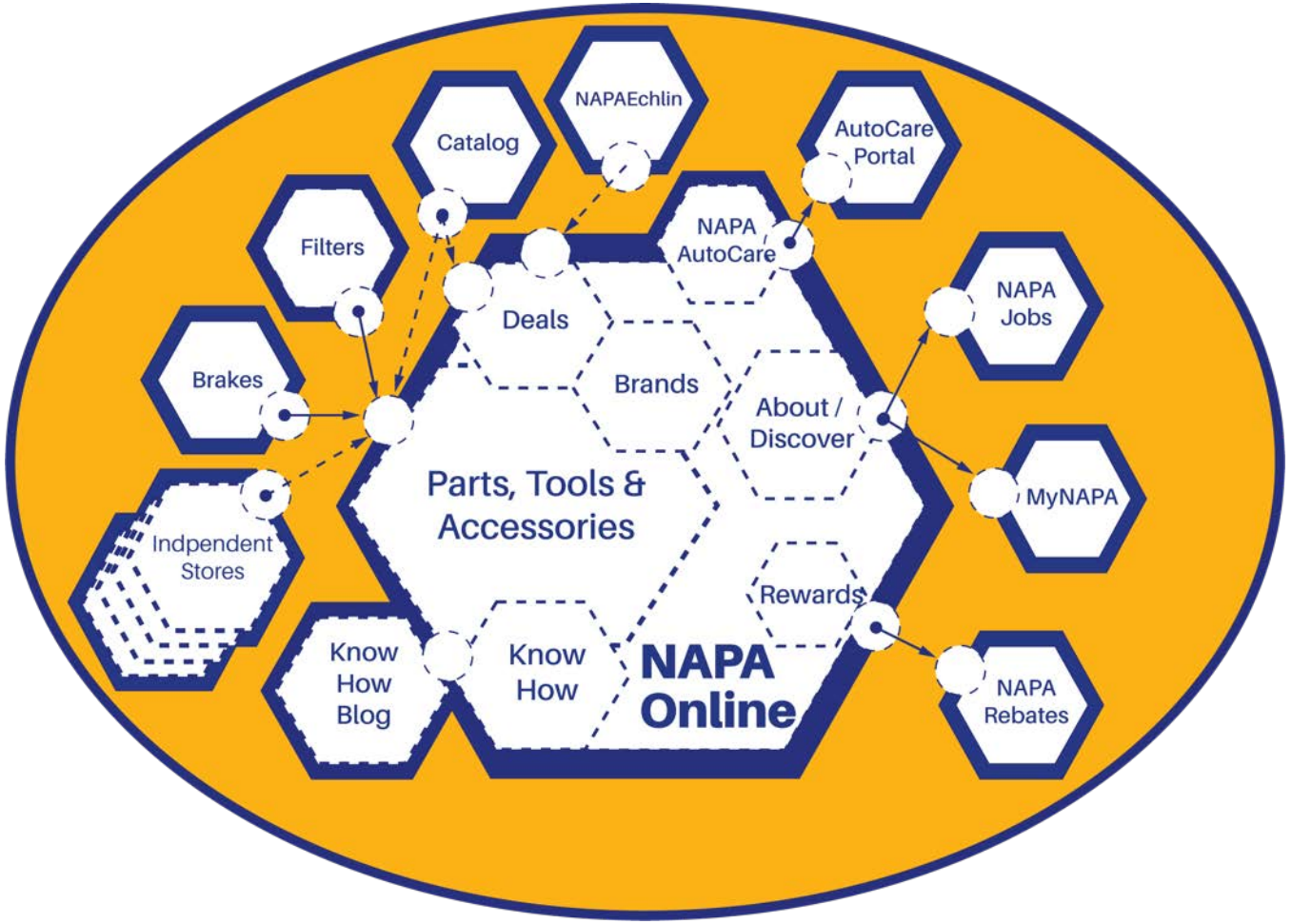
CONTENT AUDIT FINDINGS, INSIGHTS & OPPORTUNITIES

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Current state content ecosystem

Fragmented and Hard to Navigate—for Users and for Google

1. Main www site with a significant amount of content living in subdomains or other sites
2. The number of subdomains harm (10) our Google search rankings (SEO) and make for a confusing user experience
3. Non-product information is dispersed to other sites—and counted against the maximum number of pages Google will review
4. The number of the sites also cannibalizes SEO efforts by giving too many options to search engines



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Content ecosystem

Insights

- AutoParts's digital ecosystem is somewhat fragmented, split between various sites for different audience; some are authenticated
- Such fragmentation decreases SEO visibility by cannibalizing inbound search engine visibility
- It also increases customer confusion

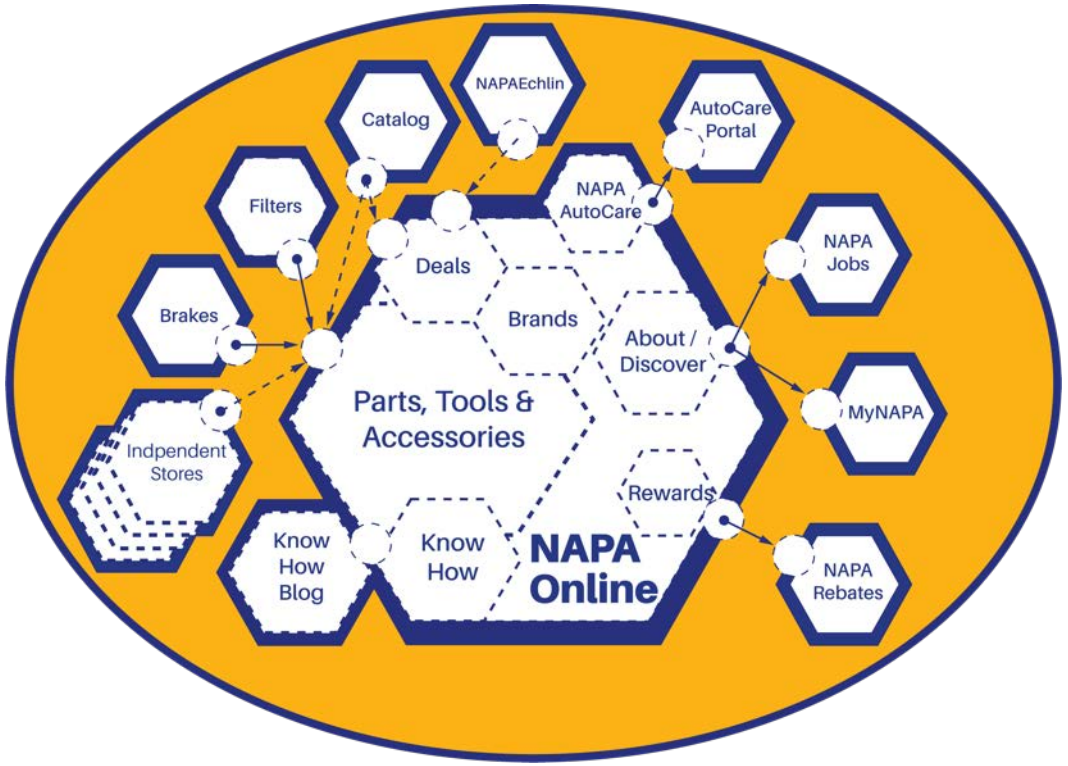
Opportunities

- Consolidate the digital ecosystem to reduce the number of sites that users—and search engines—have to navigate fewer distinct URLs
- Use a silo-ing strategy moving important subdomain content into folders rather than subdomains
- Provide templates and guidance to store sites to meet appropriate content and SEO standards

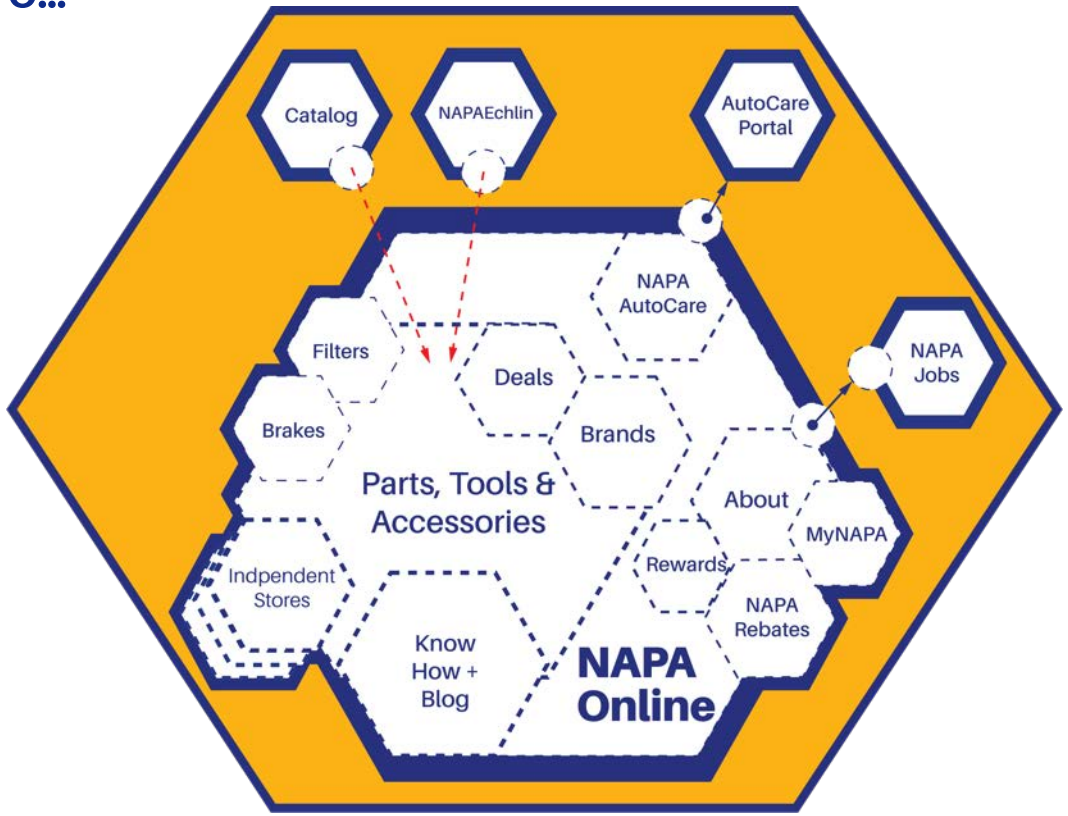
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Content ecosystem evolution

From...



To...

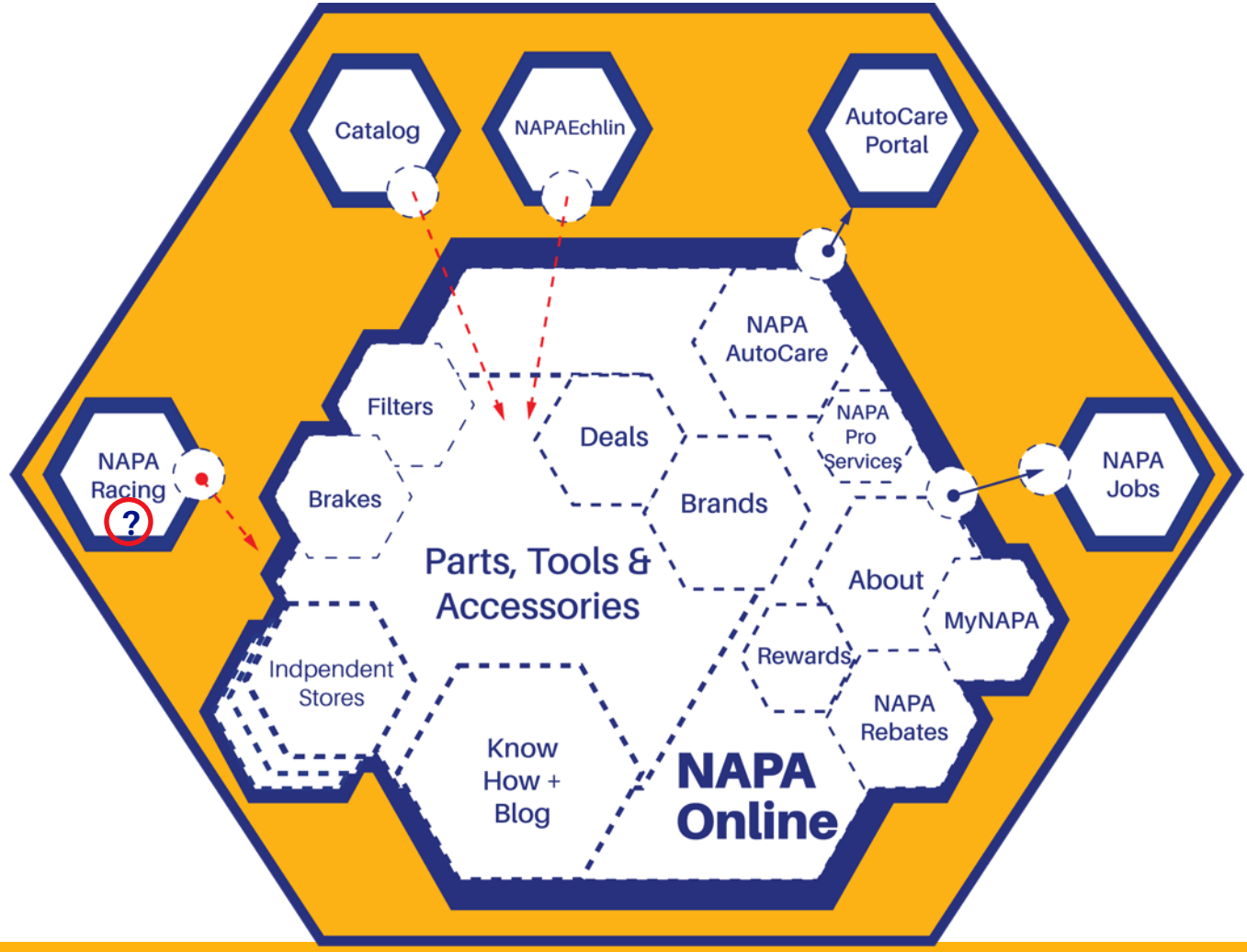


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Future state content ecosystem

A consolidated ecosystem:

- Focuses content and experience on information Important to user needs and AutoParts's strategic objectives
- Provides key information for to provide SEO lift:
  - Structures content in folders rather than subdomains or microsites where possible
  - Strategically placed no-follow links to limit what Google sees
  - Removes additional sites that cannibalize SEO
- Simplifies wayfinding within the majority of the overall experience
- Presents a more unified experience amongst sections and digital properties

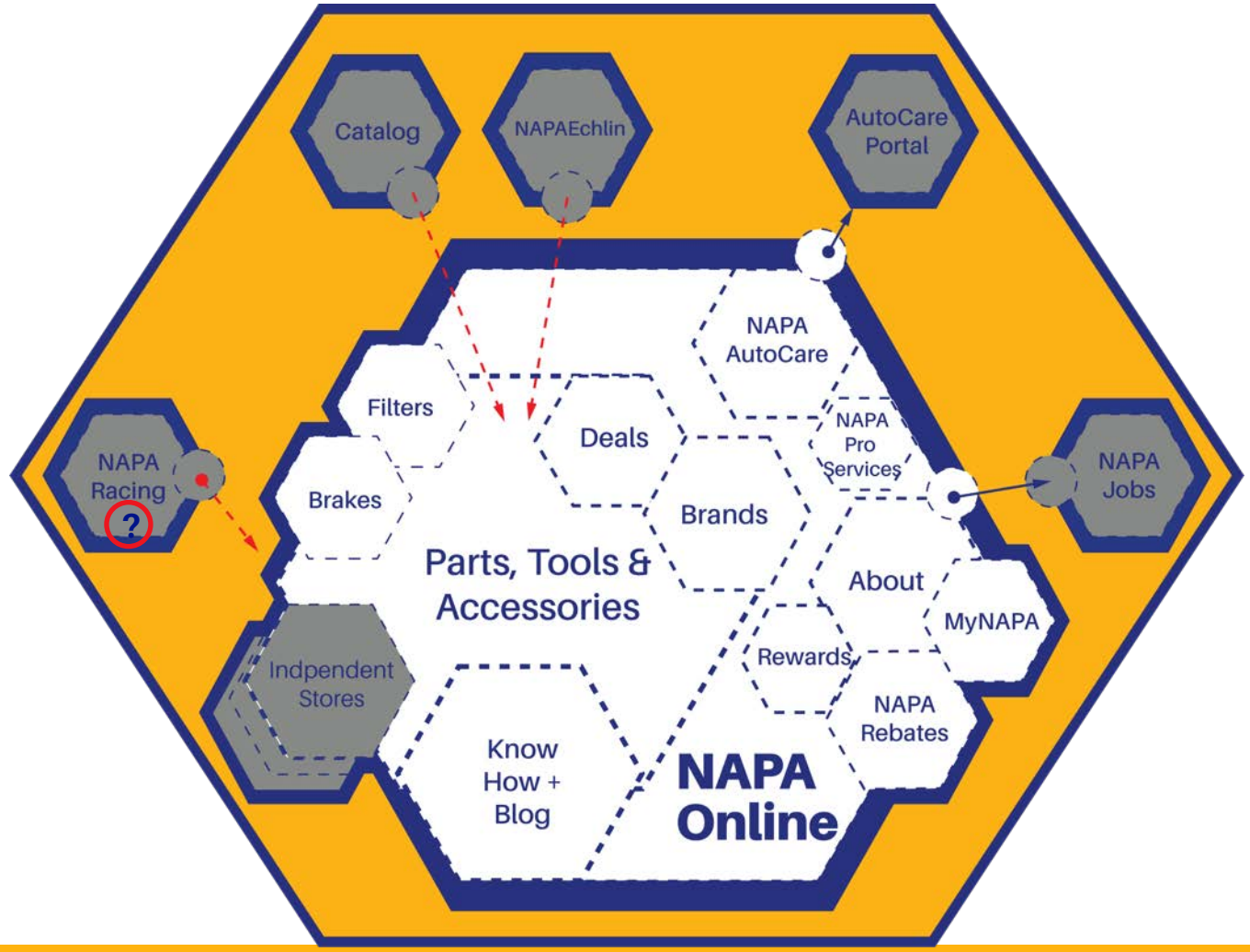


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Future state content ecosystem

A consolidated ecosystem (understanding of scope of current effort):

- Focuses content and experience on information Important to user needs and AutoParts's strategic objectives
- Provides key information for to provide SEO lift:
  - Structures content in folders rather than subdomains or microsites where possible
  - Strategically placed no-follow links to limit what Google sees
  - Removes additional sites that cannibalize SEO
- Simplifies wayfinding within the majority of the overall experience
- Presents a more unified experience amongst sections and digital properties



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Brand fidelity

- Digital Brand Guidelines are currently being developed
- Voice and tone of content is inconsistently applied across the entire ecosystem
- Voice of the content appears technical and standoffish at times
- Language often isn’t audience focused, but rather reflects internal or manufacturers’ terminology
- Microsites and blogs are much more on brand and better reflect the AutoParts brand and voice

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Brand fidelity

Insight

- While the information is sufficient for informational purposes, it doesn't really speak as AutoParts as a brand
- It doesn't relay what is uniquely AutoParts about the digital experience

Opportunities

- Create digital brand guidelines to guide the voice & tone of all editorial content (in-progress)
- Enforce guidelines for all new or updated copy on the site

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Content experience

- The AutoParts Online content experience is somewhat fragmented. There are no clear links between different sections of the site and other digital properties
- Content mix is almost exclusively editorial, even on the blog
- Product browse (CLP, PLP) and detail pages (PDP) which make up the hear of the digital experience, could be better optimized for digital and search:
  1. They lack "romance" or brand compliant copy to clearly differentiate products
  2. Listing pages provide very little context for products
  3. Product descriptions are blocky and are not scannable
  4. The lack community and interactive elements (i.e., ratings and reviews, etc.)
- Outside of product descriptions, The average word count is relatively long (up to 2500 words per page)
- Conversely, product content is sometimes slight and could be better used to sell products or indicate their utility
- The readability scores varied from easy to difficult (random sampling, limited crawl) on the Flesh Kincaid sore:
  1. Homepage, PLP 8/9th Grade –Fairly Easy
  2. CLP – 10th Grade – Somewhat difficult
  3. PDP, Know How – College – Difficult
  4. Blog –8/9th Grade – Fairly Easy
- Links don't always clearly indicate destination or action
- Know How blog adheres to a regular and strong editorial content, keeping it fresh for readers and potential customers
- Microsites and blogs are much more audience focused and approachable
- Contact Us and other forms are labeled inconsistently and Very little "snackable" content at the top of the inverted pyramid

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Content experience

Insights

- The site is very text heavy. What imagery that is used, however, is very impactful
- Increase “romance” or descriptive copy for products
- Include additional images of products
- Very little video was observed
- Only basic social integration
- Readability is an issue at times

Opportunities

- Make the text more scannable by using subheadings and lists
- Writer or edit content with brand in mind to add descriptive copy that is on brand at each point in the shopping flow
- Consider introducing more images, video (testimonial, tutorials, and stories), graphic content (infographics), and audio (podcasts)
- Incorporate social feeds directly into the site
- Create or update content with a Flesh Kincaid reading score of ~8th grade (Fairly Easy)

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Editorial direction

- Site is very product focused, putting products in the spotlight rather than focusing too much on other, corporate content
- Know How content is available but largely not integrated into the rest of the site
- The Know How blog isn’t easily accessed from main site site (footer link).
- The Know How blog is frequently updated with topics of interest for our potential customers
- Know How blog articles include contextual links to product pages for products referenced, which helps SEO lift
- Photos (media galleries) are not utilized on the site other than product shots in the shopping flow.
- Very few infographics or other rich content is present on the site

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Editorial direction

Insight

- The predominance of product content makes sense for AutoParts Online, but sometimes details are lacking
- Know-How content, while deep and useful, is hard to find outside of that accessed from the main navigation(blog is accessed from footer)
- Know-How and product content are not integrated well

Opportunities

- Use the inverted pyramid not only from top to bottom, but as the user navigates more deeply in the site
- Introduce “romance” and additional descriptive content for products and product categories
- Use structured content to enhance the entirety of the digital experience (cross-platform and channel) and integrate Know How into Products (and continue to do the reverse)
- Use imagery such as infographics to illustrate processes in Know How content

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Navigation & wayfinding

- Primary navigation is concise and clear
- Most of the content of the site, however, is found within “Parts, Tools & Accessories”
- The mega-navigation for the “Parts, Tools & Accessories” is large and contains a lot of choices for the user to make (29 Categories)
- Once in the shopping path, left navigation is clear and is distinct from the facets used to narrow a search within the site
- Know How content is present at the top level, but most of the Know How content lives within the blog itself
- Other content: The Know How Blog, careers, about AutoParts is only accessible via the footer
- Outbound links to additional sites were not observed frequently

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Navigation & wayfinding

Insights

- The main navigation is properly focused on the shopping path
- Branded content and learning content, while deep and broad, isn't easily accessed
- The vast majority of learning content is contained with the Know How subdomain
- Subnavigation and facets appear a bit similar

Opportunities

- Rethink navigation to focus users more directly on products in the shopping path
- Merge Know How content from main top-level domain with the Know How subdomain and make it easily accessible
- Use utility navigation or promotion slots on home and landing pages to direct users to other content, such as AutoParts AutoCare or corporate content
- Use site map to identify what is truly sub-navigation and present it consistently

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Contextual content & calls to action

- The primary calls to action (Add to Cart, Go to Cart, Checkout Now, Check Nearby Stores)
- Secondary calls to action are omnipresent in top navigation (Change Vehicle, Set Store, Sign In, Give Now)
- In-page calls to action could use rephrasing to emphasize verb (e.g., evolving from “Click to Save” to “See Savings).
- Very little contextual appears on the main site.
- Blog content does include contextual content based on the information being presented in context (evolved from a keyword approach)
- When contextual content is present on the blog, it does not appear to be personalized or dynamic based on where the user is or where he or she is coming from

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Contextual content & calls to action

Insights

- While the site presents users with appropriate calls to action on each step of the shopping path, sometimes the labels are poorly formed
- Non “Add to Cart” calls to action are displayed with appropriate ubiquity to help improve the shopper experience

Opportunities

- Use site map to identify what is truly sub-navigation and present it consistently.
- Create related content modules based on tagging and taxonomy to ensure differentiation of related links from navigation
- Provide audience-based navigation more clearly

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Community & social content

- No social feeds from AutoParts social properties highlighted on the main site other than links in the footer
- No community or user-generated content, such as ratings and reviews, questions, etc., are present on the site
- Blog posts present related content based on keywords or the information within the target article
- Bog posts do not allow comments as a medium for customers to create content or comment
- Social sharing is available for products (via Facebook) and for blog posts across a variety of social platforms (Facebook, Pinterest, Reddit, Twitter, as well as some less prominent channels)

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Community & social content

Insights

- Only social integration appears as links to AutoParts's social properties in the footer
- No user-generated content exists on the site, either as blog comments or as ratings and reviews or questions and answers

Opportunities

- More directly integrate social content from AutoParts's various social feeds to use as promotion and brand building elements
- Consider introducing user generated content both as blog comments and ratings and reviews--all subject to moderation to ensure standards

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Metadata, tagging & search

- Site structure inhibits organic search due the fragmentation among myriad sites and domains
- URL strategy is opaque. Users can't determine location independently of navigation
- SEO keywords focused on particular automotive parts, not automotive topics or brand story
- Metatagging inconsistently applied across the site, including Title, H1, H2, description, etc.
- Blog and product catalog both have a strong foundational taxonomy, but the two are not connected
- Both taxonomies are comprehensive and clear in what the terms represent, though no hierarchical structure, outside the catalog, was observed

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Metadata, tagging & search

Insights

- Titles, H1s, H2s, metadata descriptions are inconsistently applied across the site(s)
- Foundational taxonomies exist for the product catalog and the Know How blog
- Content focused on search engines as its audience only exists sporadically

Opportunities

- Include required SEO metadata and headings to improve site search ranking and accessibility
- Silo content in folders rather than subdomains to decrease SEO cannibalization
- Merge and normalize taxonomies for products and know how
- Create content with search engines in mind

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Maintenance & governance

- Responsibility for content for sites within the digital ecosystem is shared among a variety of entities within Genuine Parts Company
- Content governance is *ad hoc* with no centralized owner of content quality
- Product content comes primarily from the suppliers, with little to no review or notifications of updates
- Deals and other promotional content follow a editorial calendar set well in advance
- All visual assets are reviewed and approved before use.
- The Know How blog follows a rigorous editorial calendar, with frequent postings and all the reviews required
- Store sites and other properties are not reviewed in any systematic way, but rather are reviewed *ad hoc,* if at all before or after publication
- No set lifecycle or audit process has been instituted for content beyond the product catalog, which updates as necessary

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Maintenance & governance

Insights

- Product content is only reviewed on an ad hoc basis
- Editorial calendars for deals and the Know How blog exist and are followed
- Visual assets are all reviewed and approved before use

Opportunities

- Consider creating a governance board to oversee content maintenance
- Use learnings from editorial calendars already in use to expand to other areas of the site
- Perform recurring audits to validate content quality and usefulness
- Update product content to add brand voice and “romance” and descriptive content moving forward

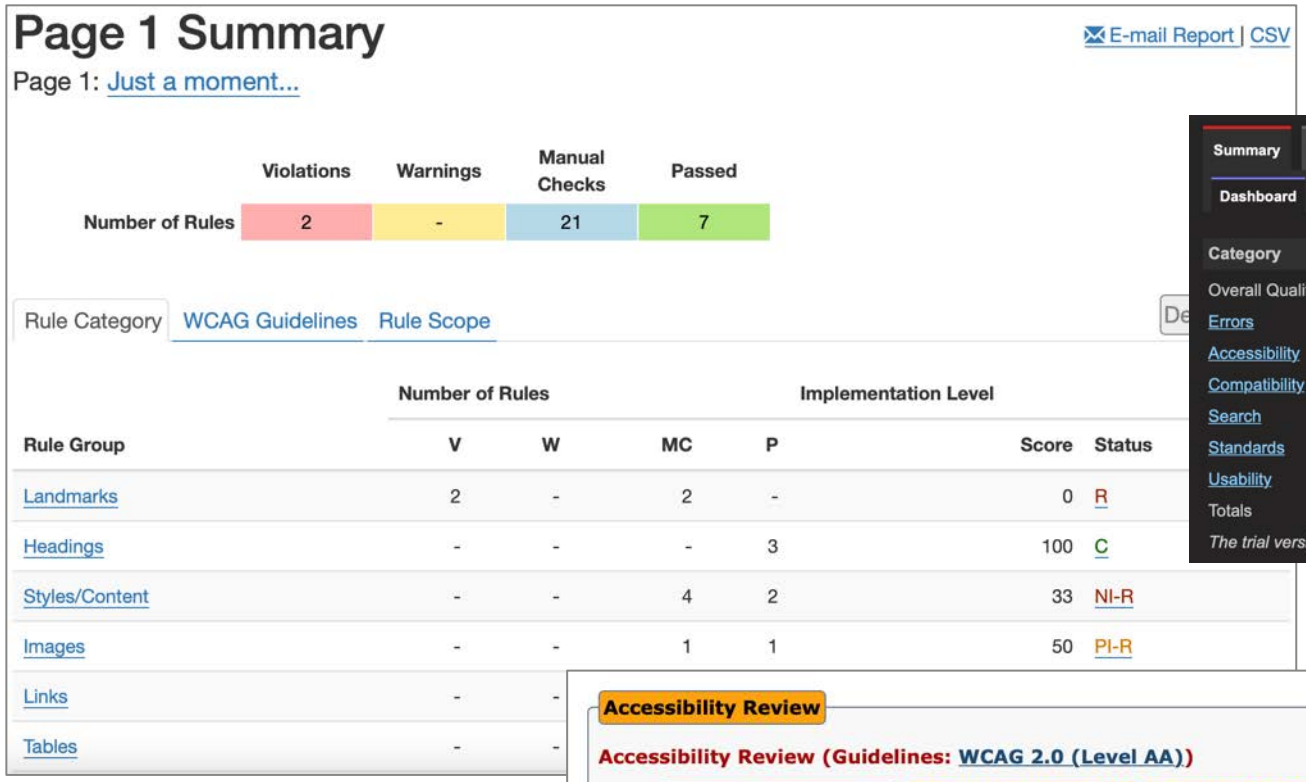
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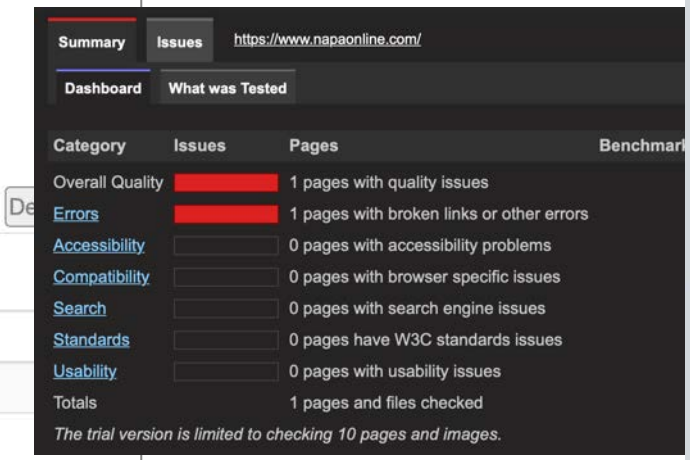
Accessibility

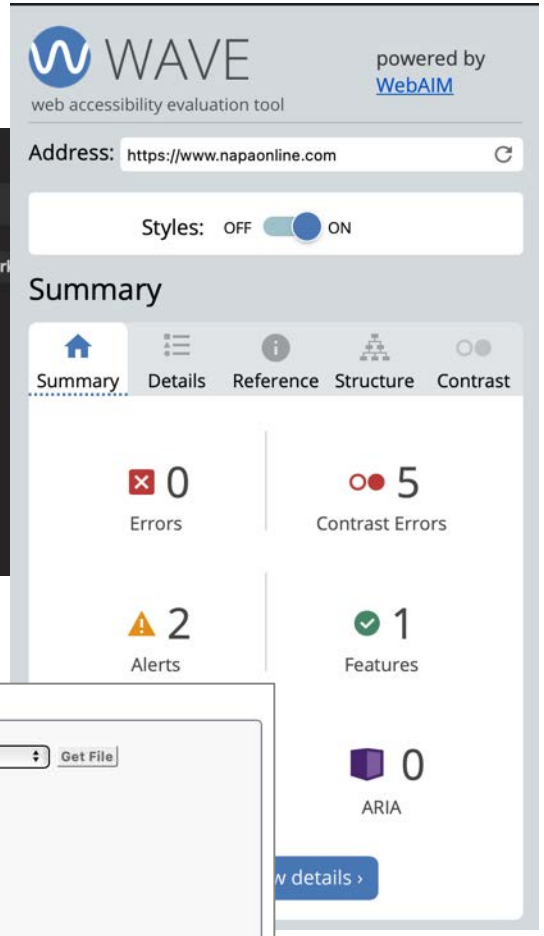
- Automated accessibility scans were run on the site using the following online resources: Achecker, F.A.E., PowerMapper, and WAVE.
- The results of these scans indicate that accessibility is less of an issue for AutoParts than it is for many sites—the majority of observed issues appeared as warnings
- The following accessibility issues were observed:
  1. Images without an alt attribute or with an empty alt attribute
  2. Images that may require a long description
- Some graphical renditions of these results follow

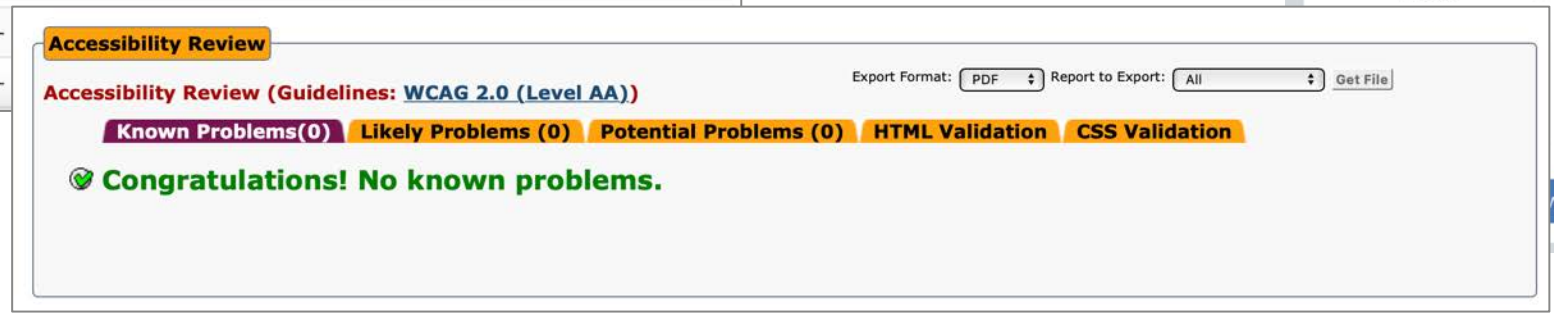
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Accessibility









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Accessibility

Insights

- Titles, H1s, H2s, metadata descriptions are inconsistently applied across the site(s)
- The only accessibility issues are low-hanging fruit from a content perspective

Opportunities

- Include required SEO metadata and headings to improve site search ranking and accessibility
- Bake ALT tags, link titles, page titles, H1s, H2s, metadata descriptions, and keywords (mapped to taxonomy) into the content model

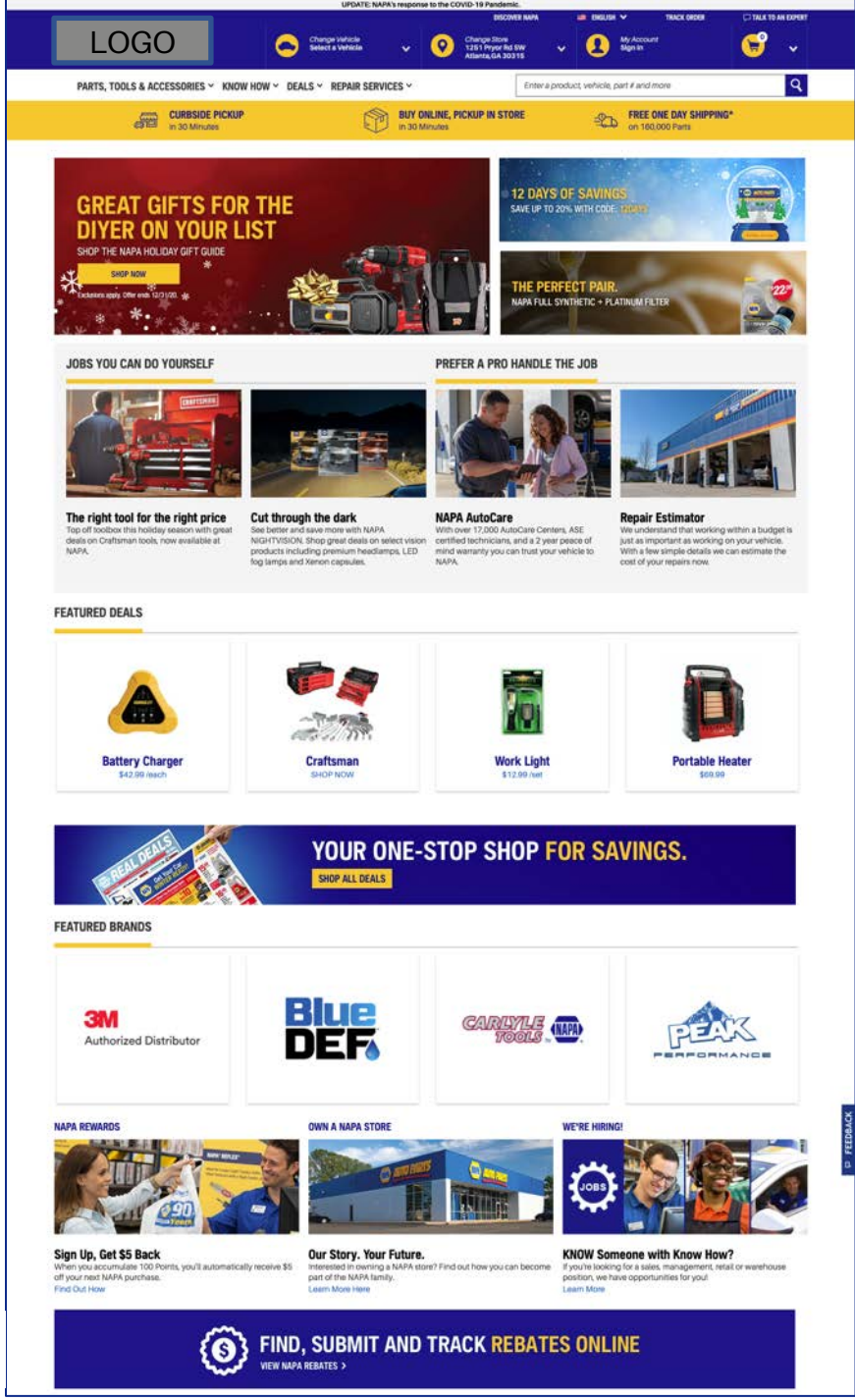
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TEMPLATE-SPECIFIC AUDIT FINDINGS

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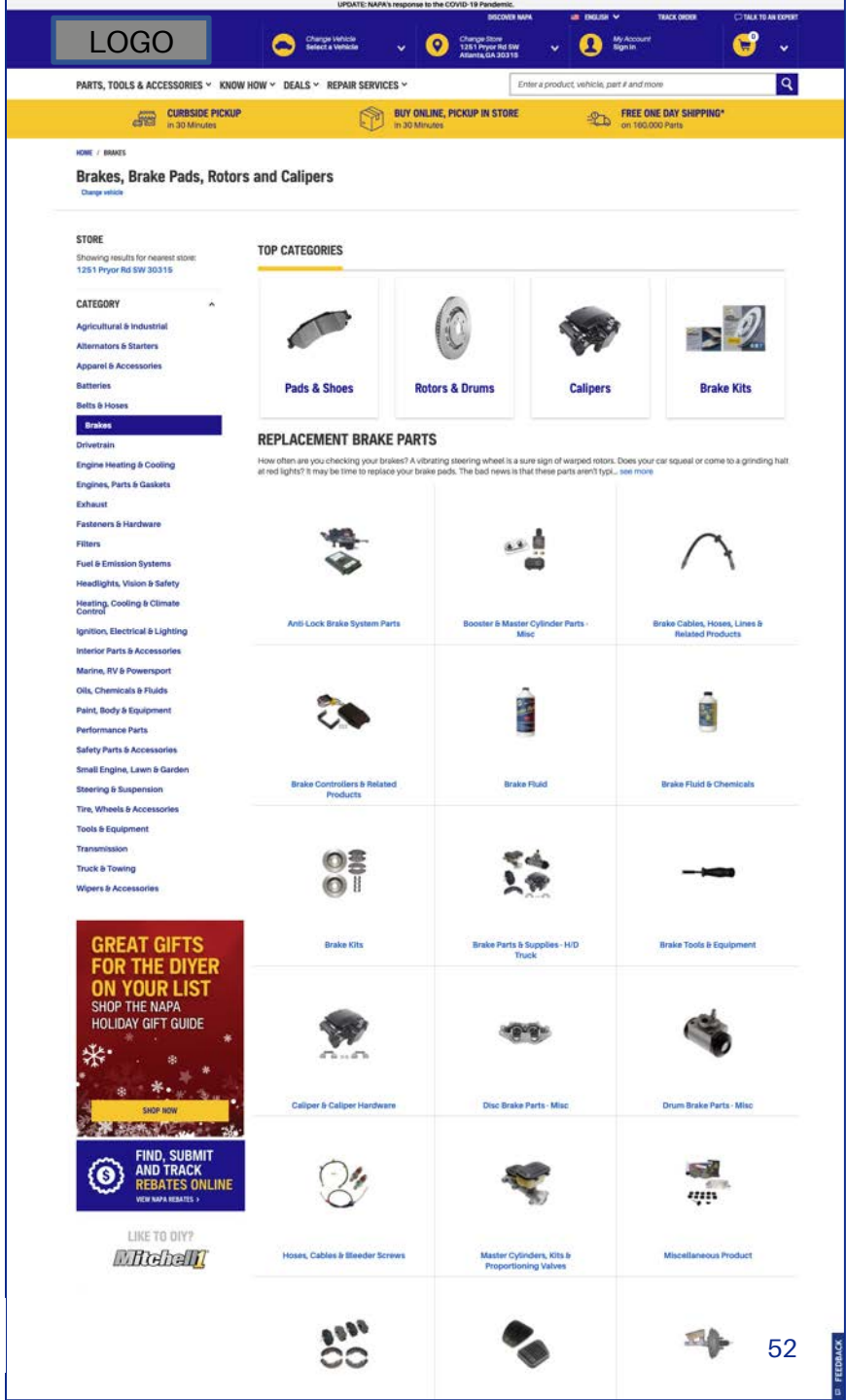
Homepage

- Homepage focuses almost exclusively on the shopping path, including deal content
- Heroes and banners are used for deals
- Only a small portion of the page focuses on know-how or brand-building content (two modules)
- The only indication of AutoParts AutoCare is in the primary navigation and the inclusion of two articles highlighted on the homepage
- Brand entryways are equally prominent as the know-how content
- Corporate content is relegated to the footer by and large
- Calls to action for some of the modules are poorly formed (i.e., “Click Here”)



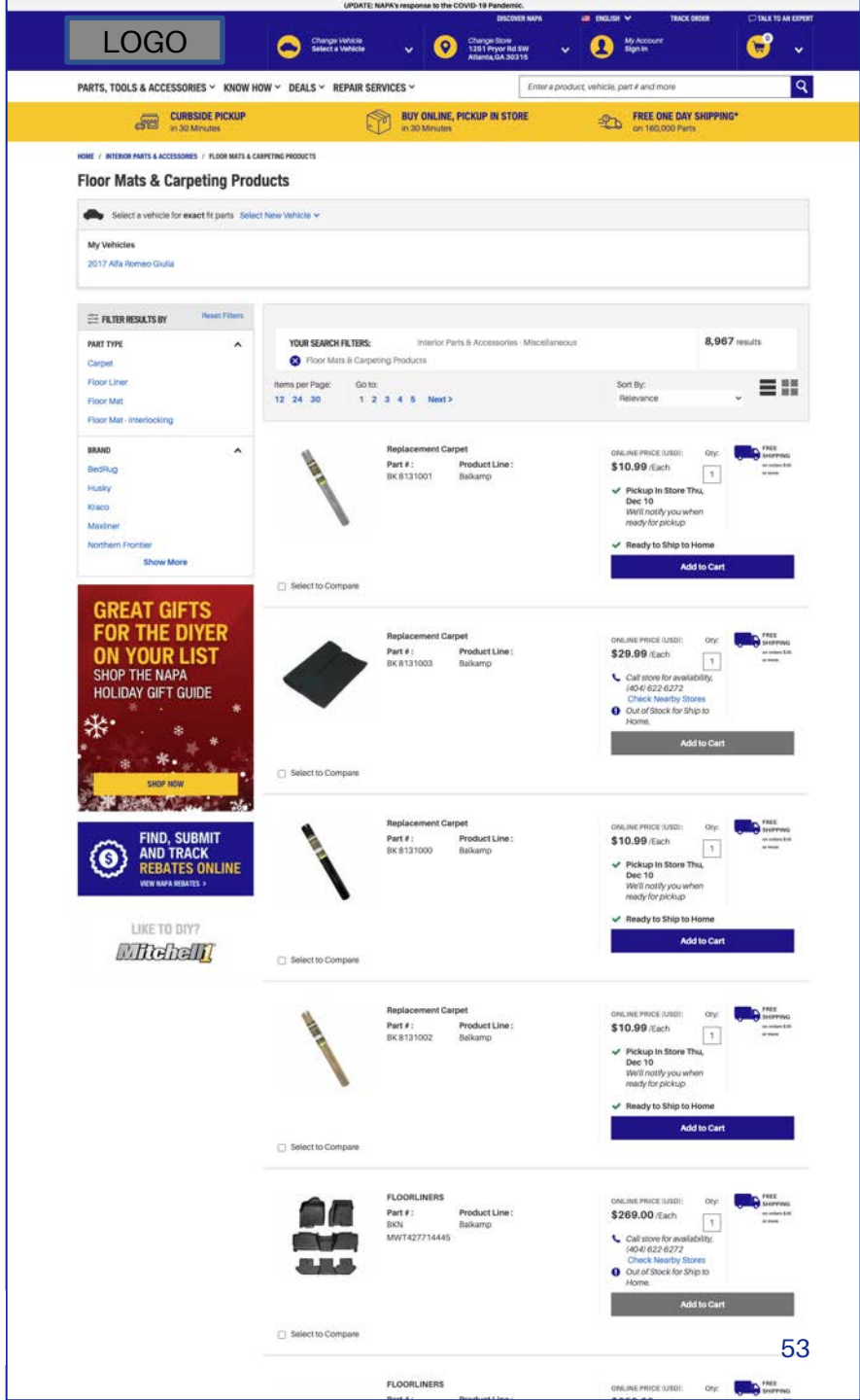
Category listing page (CLP)

- Category Landing Pages (CLPs) understandably focuses on the shopping path to get users to the information they seek quickly
- Very little introductory content is provided to help with search and to frame the category
- Parts only list the part name and include a picture with no other context or description
- Subnavigation is introduced at this level for subcategories
- Promotional banners and brand content modules are placed below the subnavigation



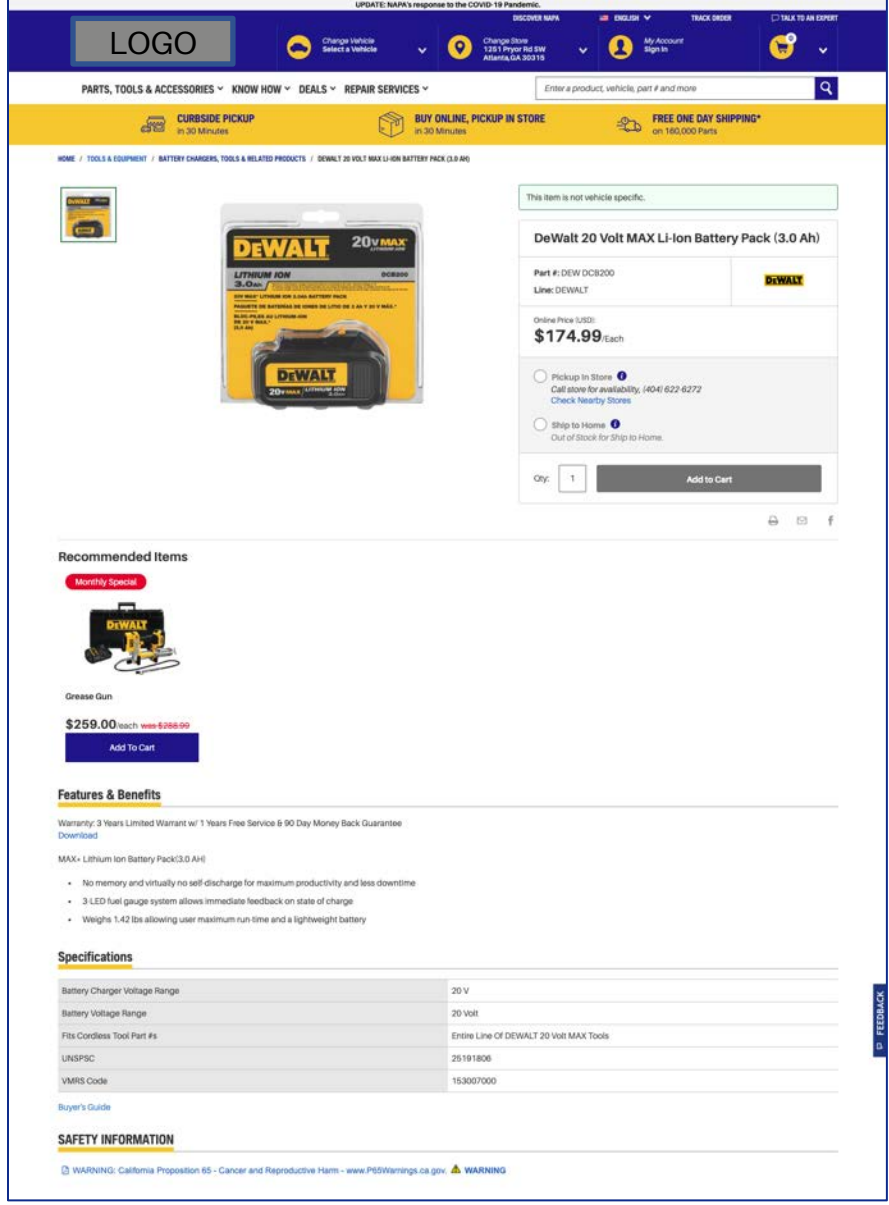
Product listing page (PLP)

- Product Listing Pages (PLPs) also understandably focuses on the shopping path to get users to the information they seek quickly
- Very little introductory content is provided to help with search and to frame the category
- Parts only list the part name and include a picture with no other context or description
- Facets to help users filter the results of the page replace
- Facets seem well suited for the categories, obviously indicating an underlying taxonomy (i.e., catalog or PIM)
- Promotional banners and brand content modules are placed below the subnavigation



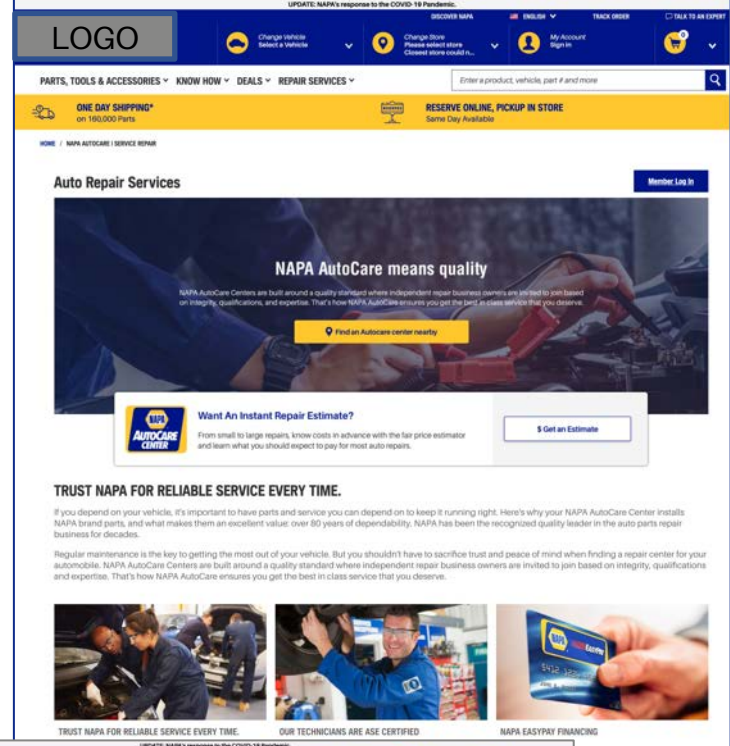
Product detail page (PDP)

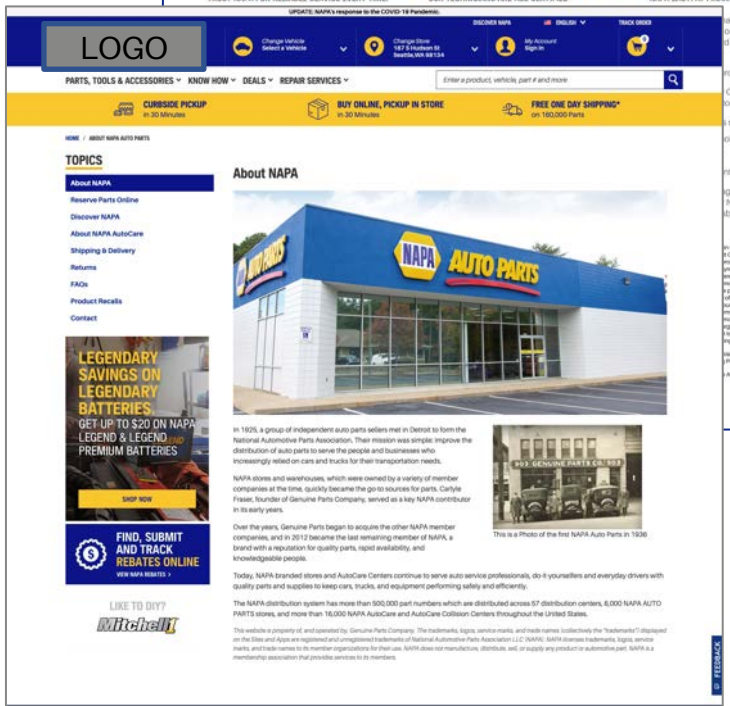
- Product Detail Pages (PDPs) include the bare minimum information about a product
- Very little introductory content is provided to help with search and to frame the category
- Product descriptions are near the bottom of the page, effectively burying them unless a user has an incentive to scroll
- Page only list the part name and include picture(s) along with a brief product description, specifications, and safety information (more image would always be helpful)
- Subnavigation and Facets disappear at this level
- No promotional banners and brand content modules appear on the page, keeping the user focused on the task at hand
- Very little, if any, video content is available
- No ratings or reviews or other user-generated content is present on the page



Landing pages – non shopping

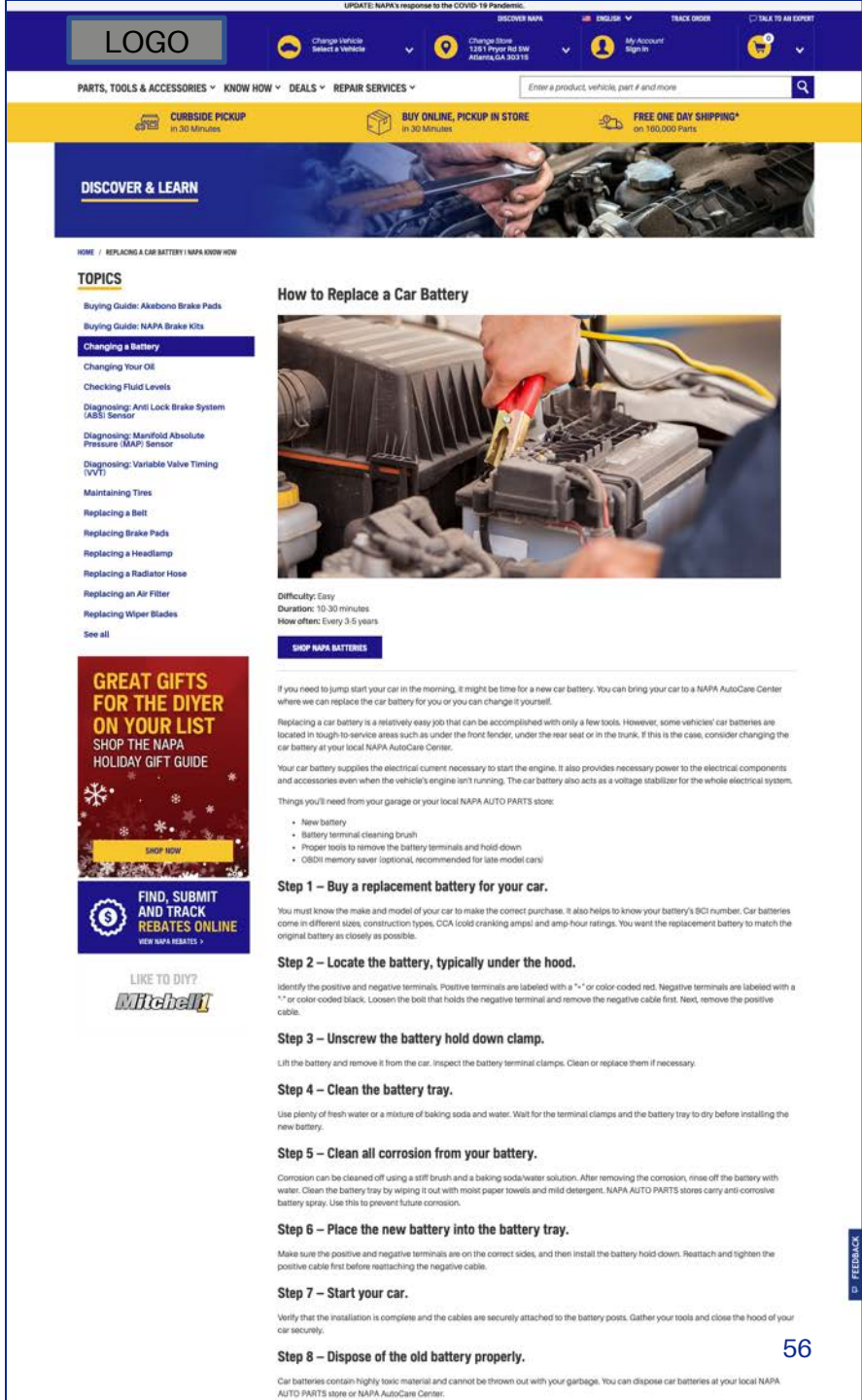
- Other landing pages are inconsistent in their experience—some have subnavigation (About), some do not (AutoCare)
- Content on these pages is very text heavy and not very scannable
- Content is almost purely editorial in nature, along with supporting images
- Promotions and other action-oriented content take up about the same percentage of these pages as the CLP and PLP
- No video or other rich content was observed





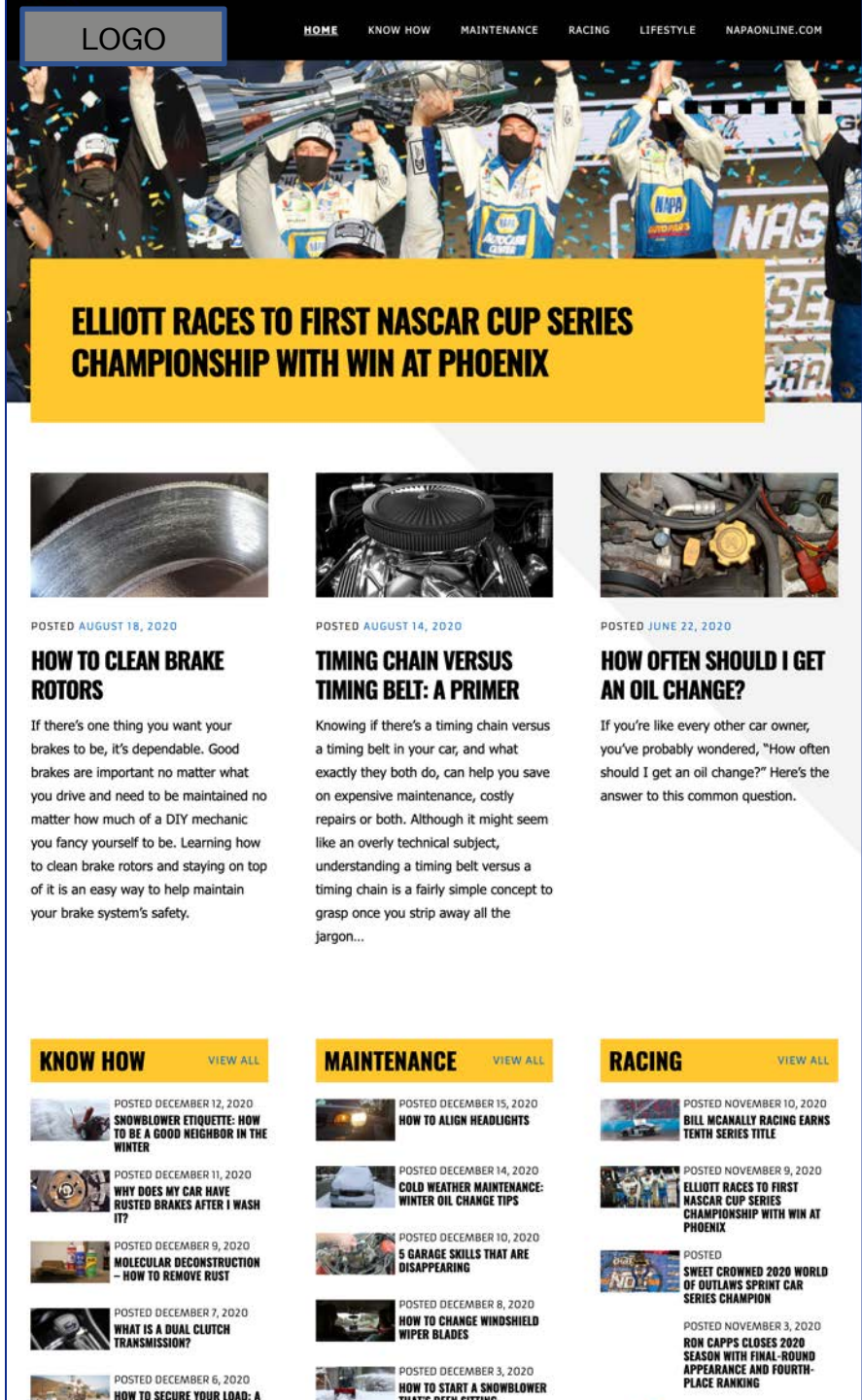
Article page

- Article pages do a good job of presenting complex information in an easy to understand and scannable way
- Blog know-how content is not integrated on mentioned in any way for the Know How section
- No contextual links are presented within the copy, which is a missed chance to lift SEO
- No video or other rich content was observed



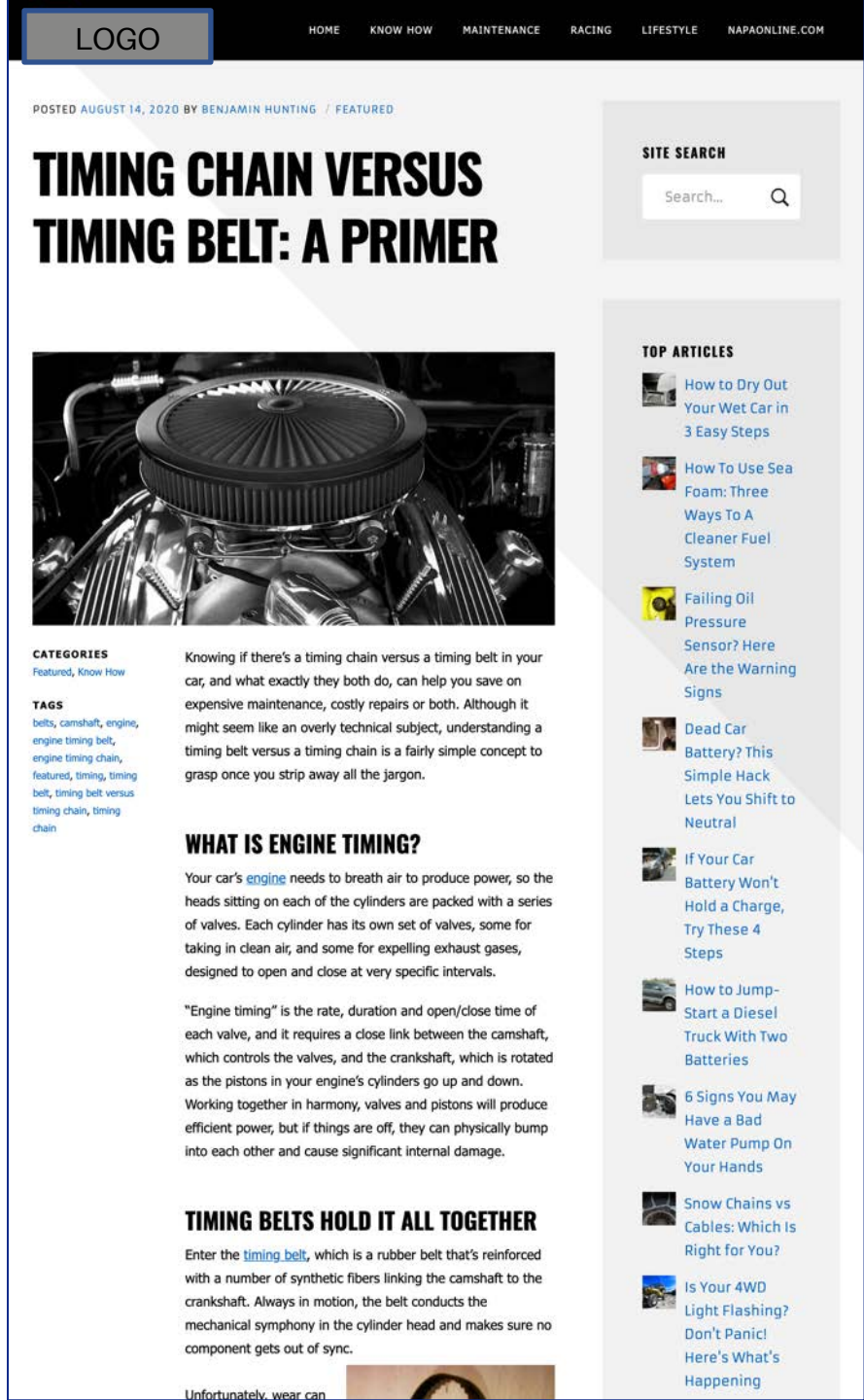
Blog home

- The blog home page presents users with an entirely different experience from the main site
- Blog posts are listed by category or topic
- Blog teasers are scannable and easy to read
- There seems a preponderance of racing content for “Know How”
- No promotional areas are present on the blog home page
- Racing and how it we should support it?



Blog post

- Again, a blog post presents users with an entirely different experience from the main site
- Blog posts well tagged category or topic
- The tagging strategy, however, does not seem to be hierarchical, but flat—with only categories and tags, with no relationship apparent
- Blog posts are scannable and easy to read
- Each post includes contextual links to the products listed, as appropriate, which helps with search rankings
- No promotional areas are present on the blog home page



SOCIAL CONTENT AUDIT FINDINGS

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Social content

- **Facebook** (200k+ following): AutoParts's main Facebook presences focuses on the retail consumer and presents the same kind of promotional/deal content as found on the site. It also includes brand, know-how, and engagement content which lead users to the site
- **Instagram:** (~17k+ following): AutoParts's Instagram profile functions much like the Facebook feed.
- **LinkedIn** (~57k+ following total): AutoParts AutoCare and AutoParts both have LinkedIn presences. AutoParts's main LinkedIn profile functions much like the Facebook feed.
- **Pinterest** (3k+ following total): AutoParts's Pinterest presences seems exclusively focused on racing (at the time of the audit)
- **Twitter** (~70k+ following total): Four feeds were observed with large followings: Know-How, CA, TX, and AutoParts Jobs. @AutoPartsKnowHow highlights updates to the blog effectively. Another feed, @AutoPartsAutoCare, protects its tweets

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04 COMPETITIVE ASSESSMENT

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Competitive set, adjacent digital properties & other sites of interest

For this competitive review, we conducted a deep-dive into the 5 competitive sites identified by the GPC and Rubicon CX in concert:

Core Competitors

1. Advance Auto Parts [US]
2. Amazon [US]
3. AutoZone [US]
4. Firestone [US]
5. Halford's [UK]

Adjacent Sites

1. Crutchfield [US]
2. Home Depot [US & CA]

Other Sites

1. Microcenter [US] – community & "wizards"
2. Patagonia [US] – blog integration
3. Ace Hardware [US] – Store pages

Although the screen shots provided herein are for the desktop, the mobile experience for each site was also considered. In each deep-dive we provide an overview of the content and experience for key user pages: **Shopping Flow**, **Know-How** or **Advice**, and Other **Informational** content

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Overview

1. No best-of-breed sites were observed in this audit among the core completive set, save Amazon
2. The content mix for these sites is similar to that found on AutoParts Online, save for a widespread availability of user-generated content in ratings and reviews, Q&A, and blog comments
3. Many lack “romance” copy and make the user scroll to see product details and specifications
4. Best-breed content can be seen both adjacent sites
5. None of the competitive set (core and adjacent) showed the maturity of the other examples provided

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ADVANCE AUTO PARTS

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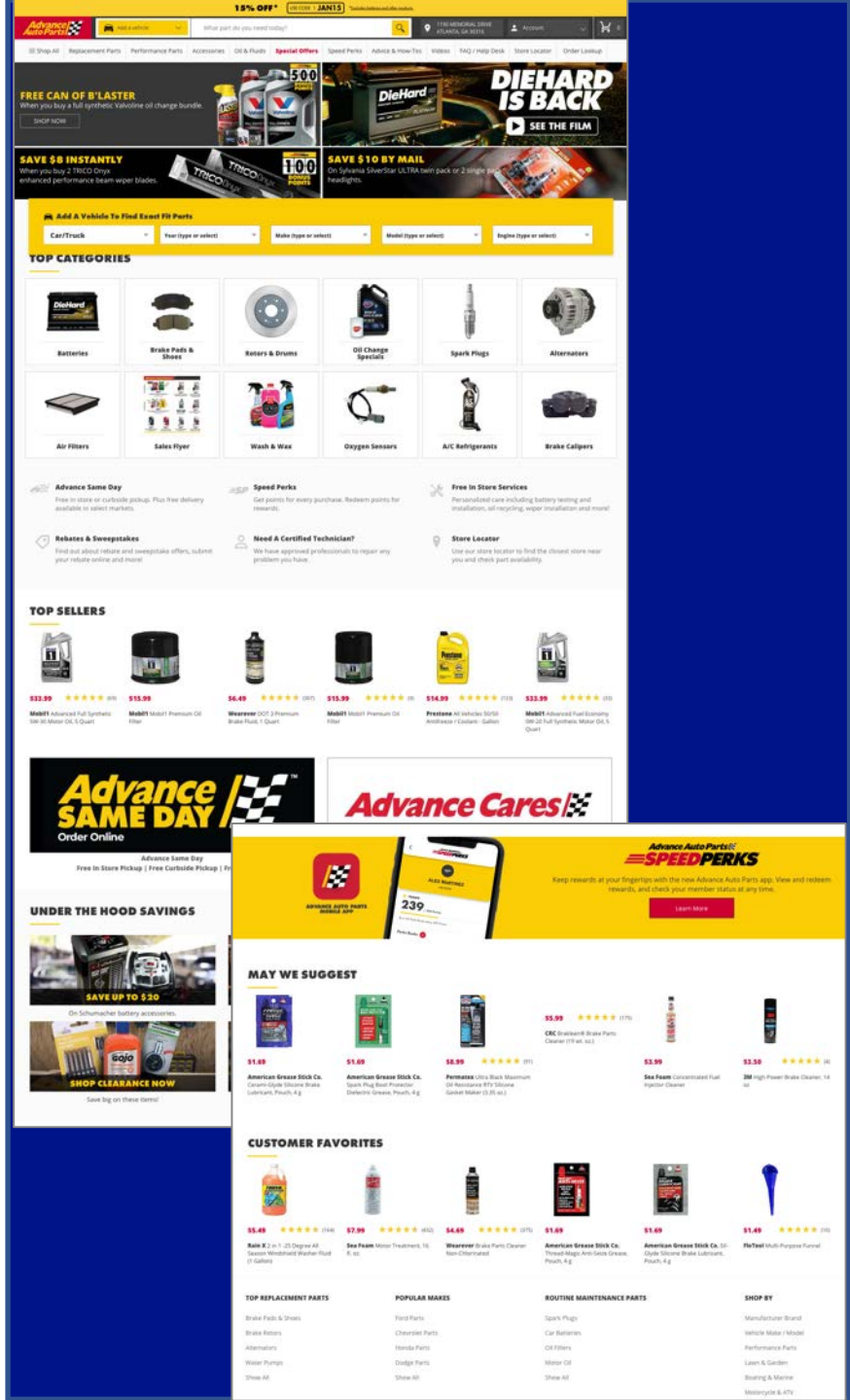
Overview

1. Advance Auto Parts approaches navigation similarly to AutoParts Online with a product focus, but it goes a level withing the navigation itself
    - It adds the Product Categories, however, into the main navigation
    - It also splits help content into categories in the primary navigation
2. The homepage is 100% focused on products, deals, and rewards
3. The CLPs and PLPs function similarly to AutoParts Online's
4. The PDP offers very little branded content, and the product descriptions are brief without providing much in the way of a value proposition
    - It provides a mechanism for user-generated content in the form of Questions & Answers, though this feature was not widely used in our observation
    - It provides a list of related products, though the presentation mechanism is unclear
5. How-To and other informational is split between Advice and Help Desk, both of which are easily accessible from the navigation, but isn't well integrated into the site

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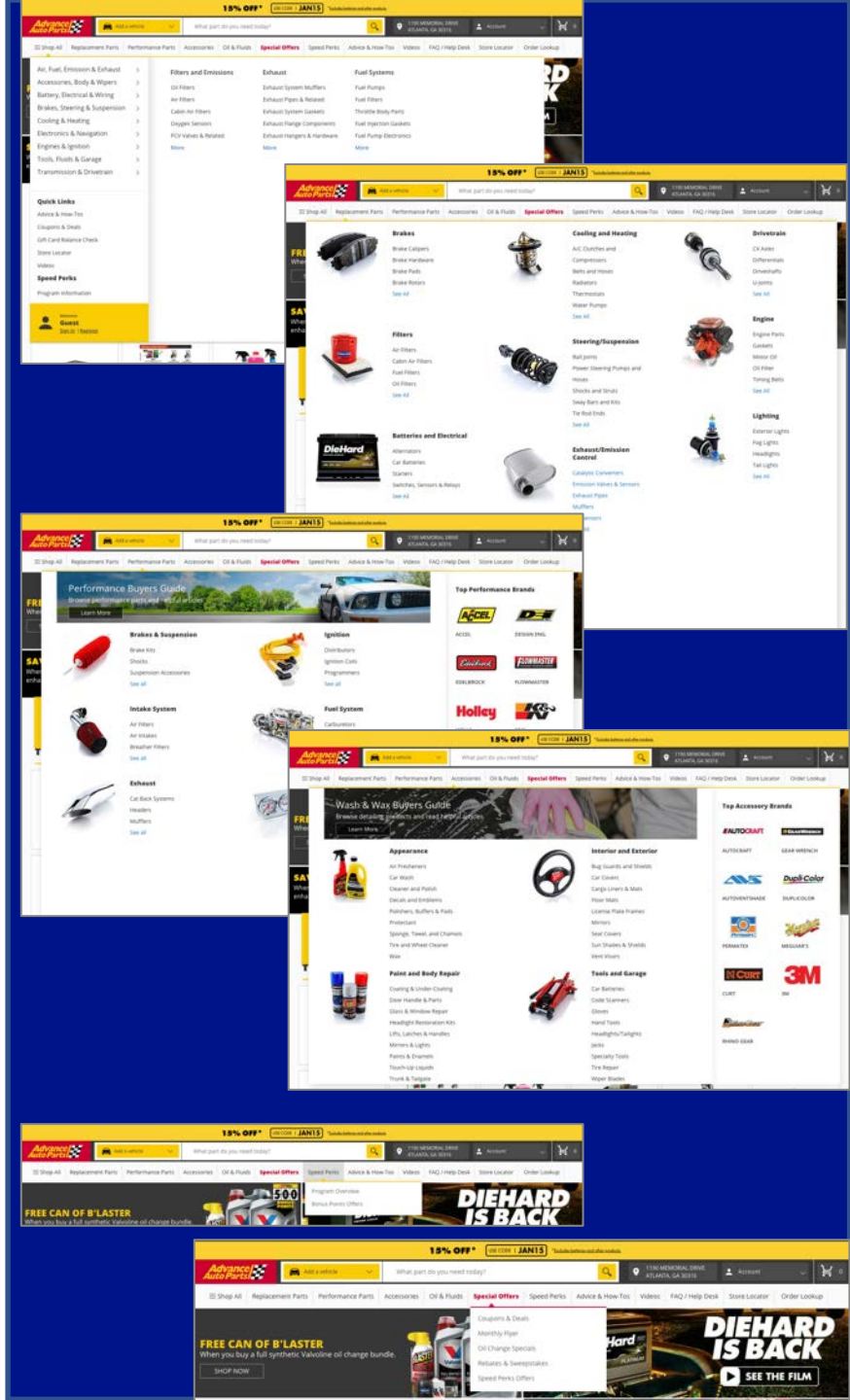
Homepage

- The homepage focuses entirely (100%) on the shopping flow, highlighting products, deals, and reward content that a user can select to view in more detail
- T provides a large promotional hero—focused on product, in this case the Diehard brand
- No advice or informational content is highlighted on the homepage
- The vehicle selector is front and center of the homepage experience
- Very little SEO focused content is immediately apparent on the page
- It highlights recently viewed items and “customer favorites”, although it is unclear if this is curated or populated systematically



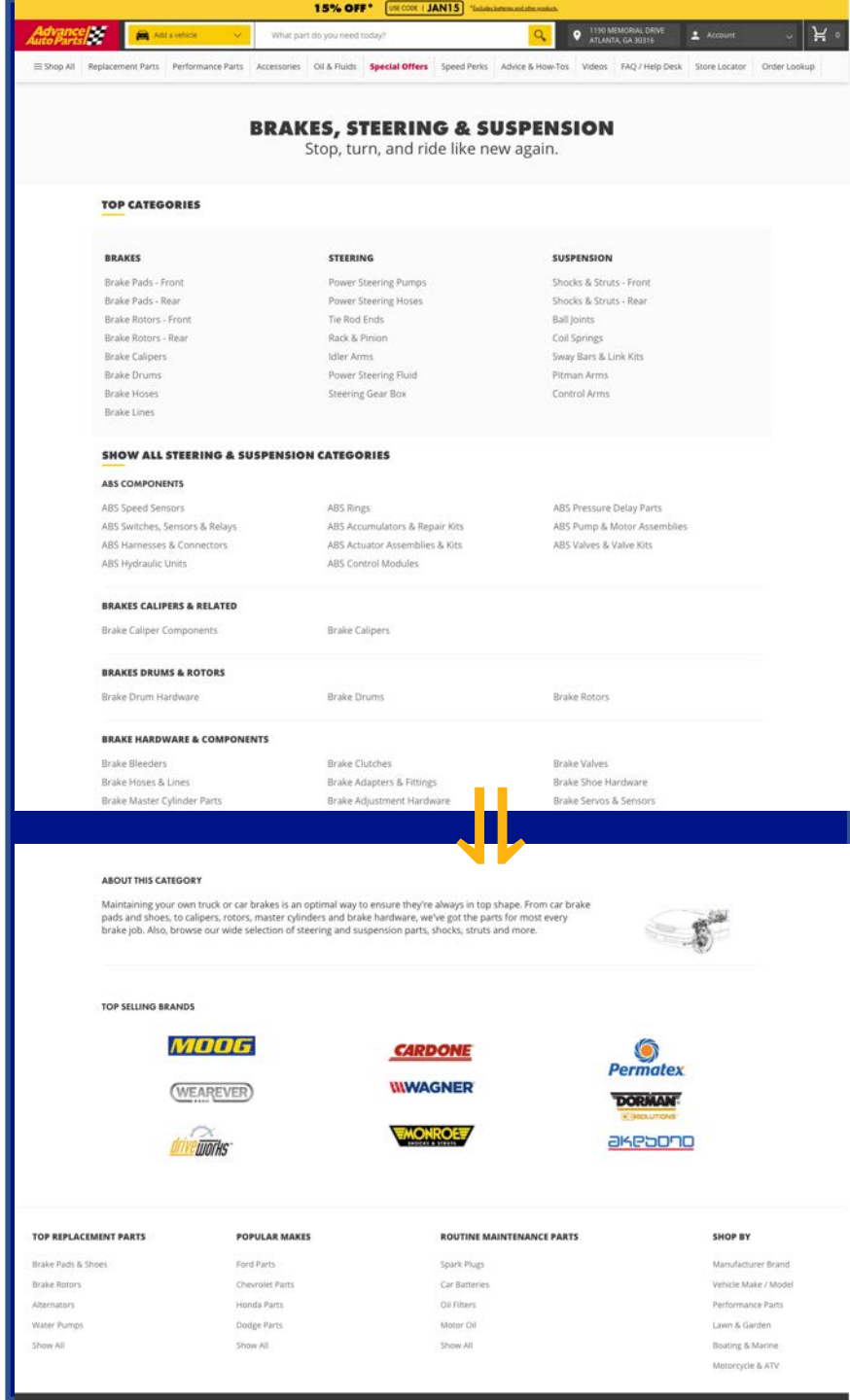
Navigation

- The navigation is a bit exploded, both with a “Shop All” option and prominent categories present in the primary navigation
- No utility navigation is present other than Account and Store access
- Advice and Help Desk both appear in the primary navigation as well, which could lead to confusion for a user about the difference
- Deals are presented in the primary navigation as “Special Offers”
- Rewards, or “Speed Perks” are also accessible int the navigation
- The navigation includes an area for promotions and brand



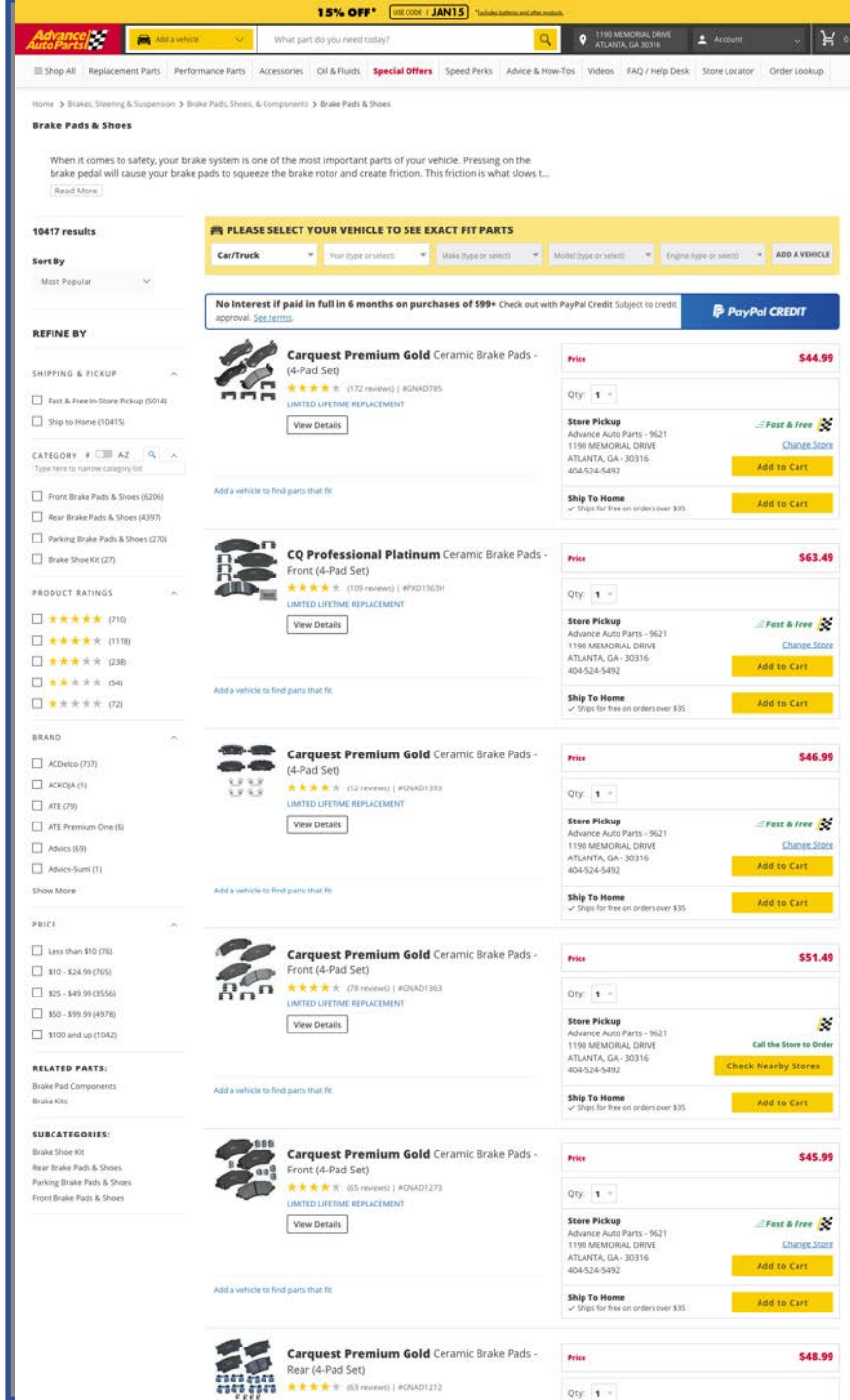
Category landing page

- Via the navigation, the user can't easily access this page, which is primarily a link farm
- It can only be accessed using contextual, "breadcrumb" navigation
- This is likely used for SEO purposes
- It represents a full list of brake products offered in one view
- It also includes links to brand pages



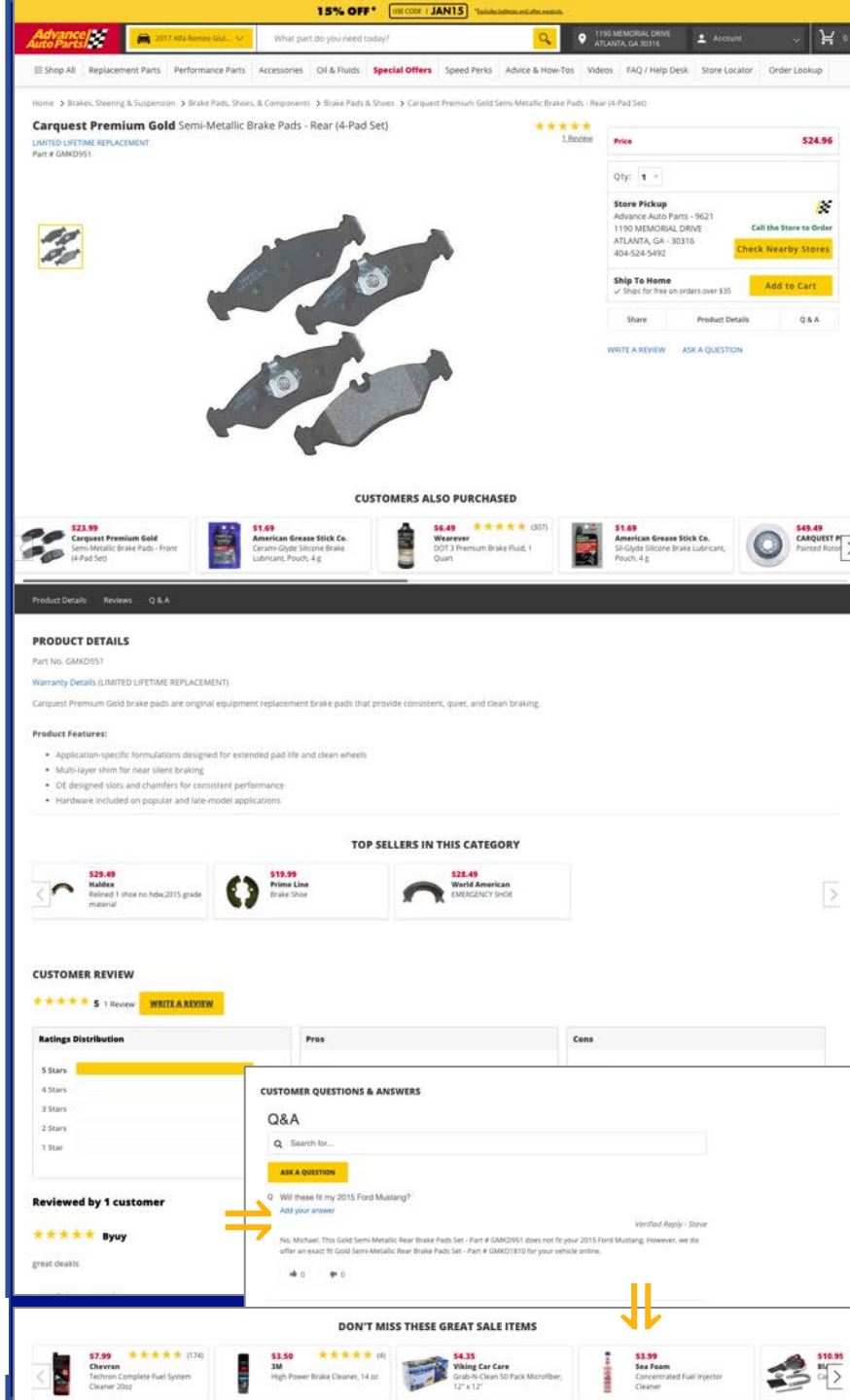
Product listing page

- The PDP presents a sortable list or products for the user to choose from
- Users can filter their results in two ways:
  - Based on their vehicle selection which appears prominently at the top of the list
  - Facets to narrow the results, including product type, ratings, brand, and price
- The facet area of the page also lists related parts and subcategories for the product in question
- Each product in the list relays relevant details present on the PDP, including ratings and reviews



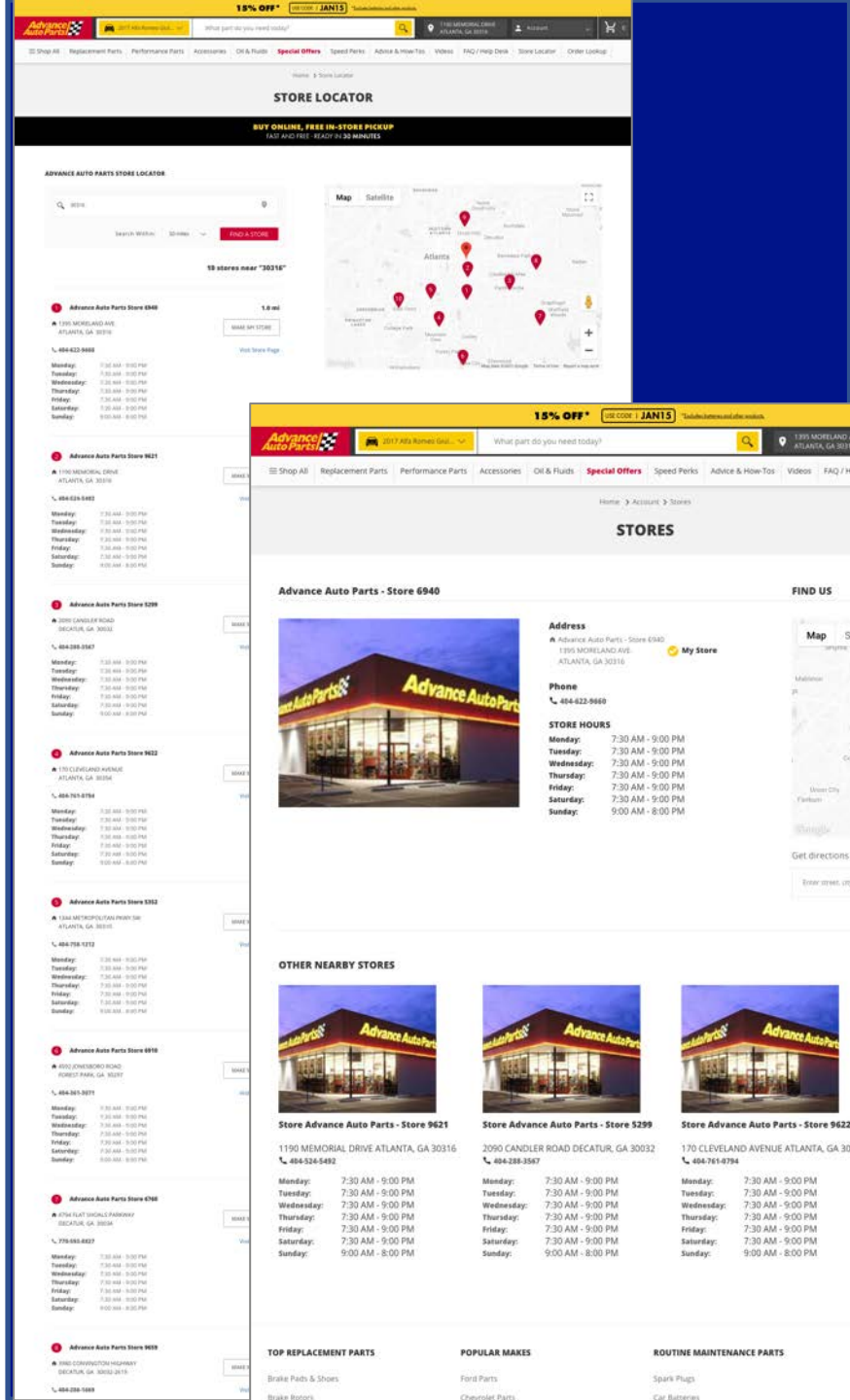
Product detail page

- The PDP leads with the name and image of the part in question
- Most products have a single image
- Users must scroll down to find the product description, which is often brief and without any branding or selling content on the features and benefits
- Each product page provides two mechanisms for user-generated content: Ratings & Reviews, and Q&A. On the observed products, however, these were not widely used, especially the Q&A
- Finally, the page ends with Recently Viewed and Related Items—how these are populated is unclear



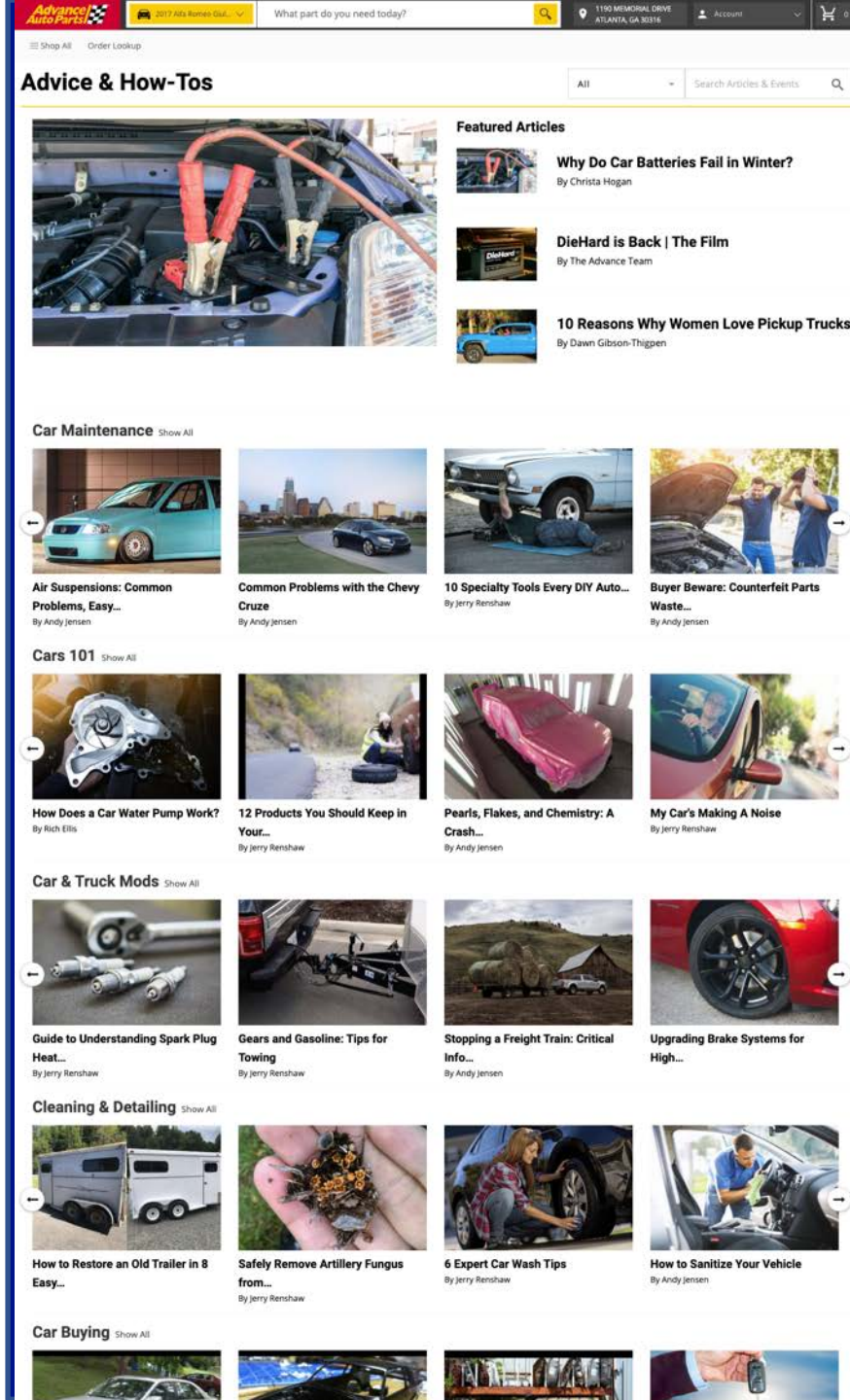
Store landing & detail

- The store flow is relatively basic, with a map and listing of stores near the user's ZIP Code, along with hours of operation and contact details
- Once a user chooses a store, they are presented with the same information in a larger format
- No introductory or other brand-forward content appears for the store
- They can also view other nearby stores on the store page



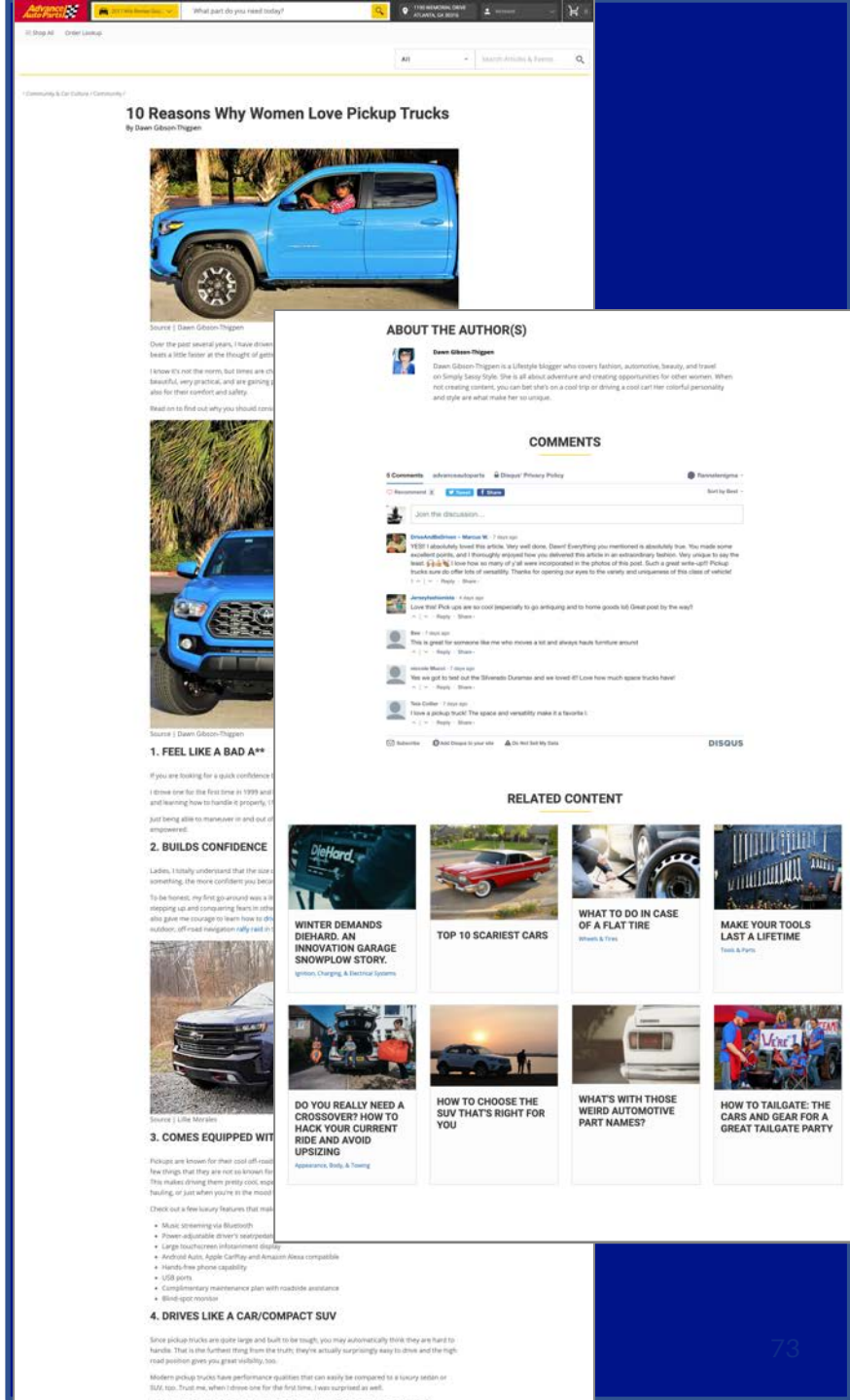
Advice landing page

- When a user selects Advice from the navigation, most of the remaining navigation disappears other than “Shop All”
- The advice provided is comprehensive in its coverage
- Advice articles are listed with rich imagery and the title of the advice article
- It also gives pride of place to Feature Articles



Advice detail

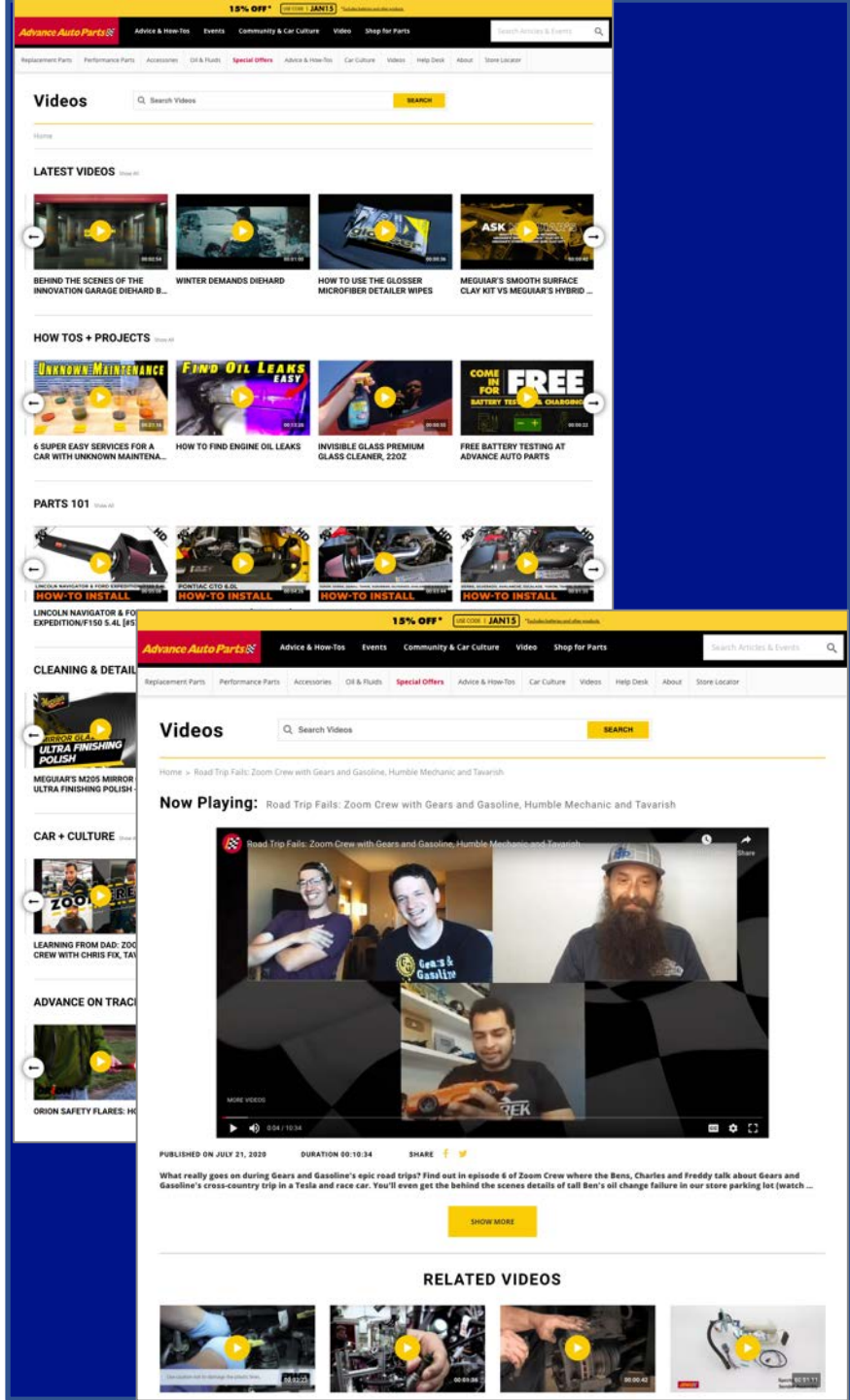
- The advice articles offer a range of quality, from very good (featured) to pages with very little information or information that is optimized for digital
- Upon reading an article, users can provide feedback or other reactions via the comments area
- Articles are not categorized by any observable tags or taxonomy, even though each presents related articles at the end of the page
- Many of the articles are given bylines, which adds personality the the choices offered
- No tags are viewable tied to content



COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: ADVANCE AUTO PARTS

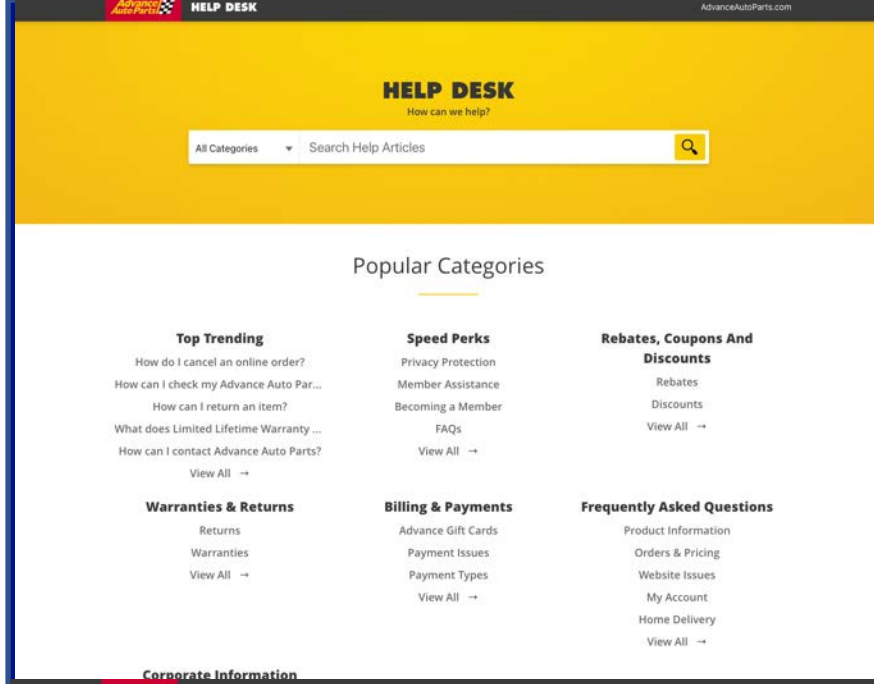
Videos landing & detail

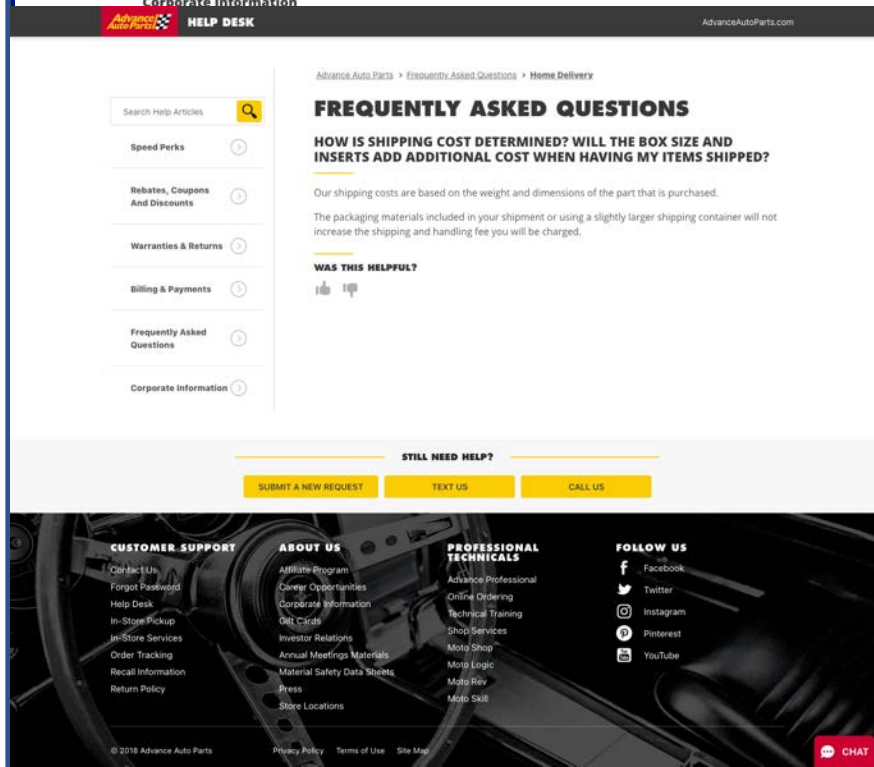
- Videos are highlighted in the primary navigation, separate from the Advice content
- Once the user arrives at the video landing page, they are presented with an attractive list of videos from which to choose
- No context for the videos is provided other than the title and grouping on the page
- The video landing page does provide a little context for users to introduce it
- Related videos are also displayed on the page, though the mechanism for populating it remains unclear, as tags are not visible for the videos



Help desk landing & detail

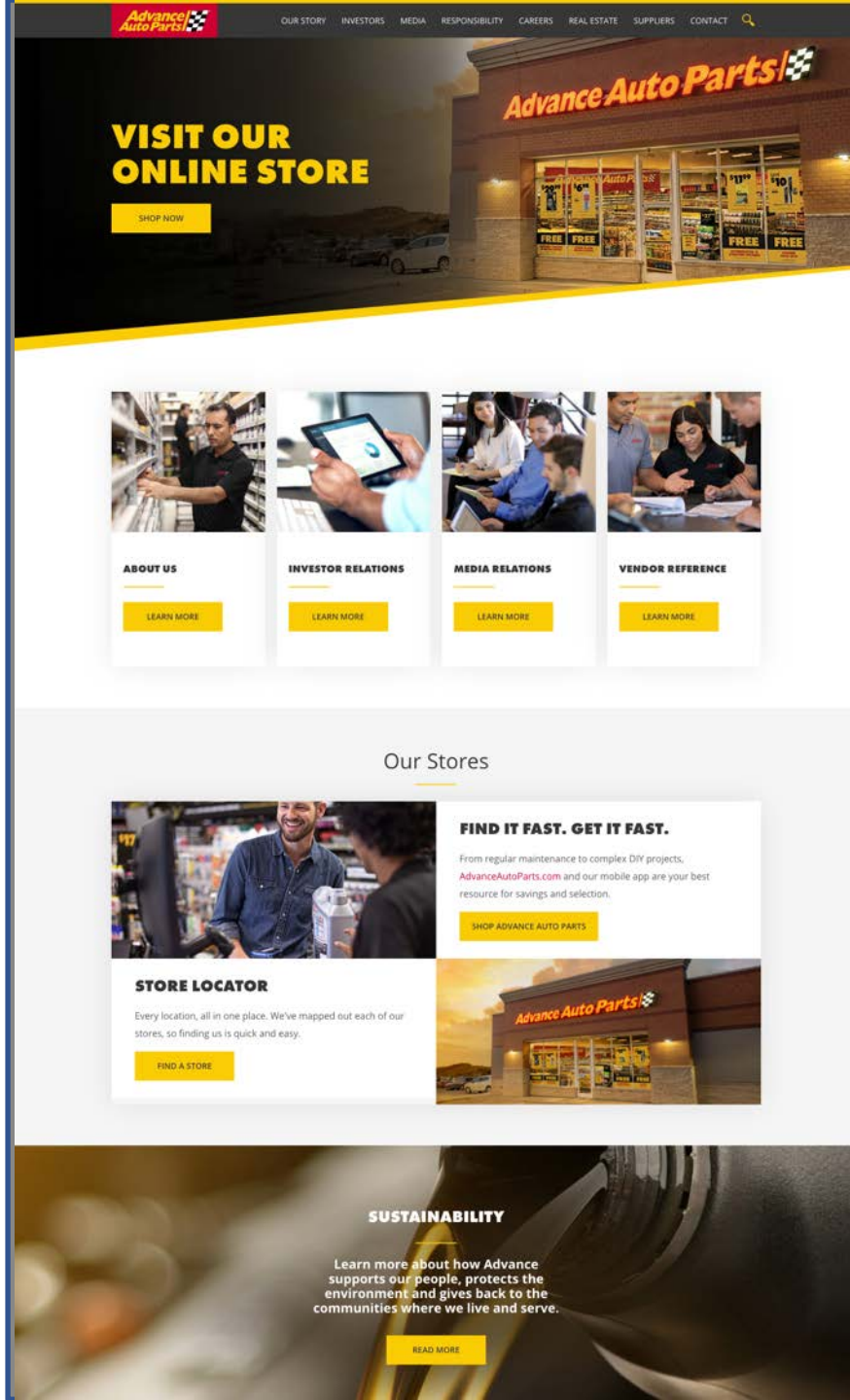
- Users can also access a “Help Desk”, which could confuse users because much of the content is redundant with the Advice section (other than account, purchase, and shipping questions)
- This launches a different experience than the main site (it is a subdomain), launching it in a new tab or window and leading the user away from the main site
- Once a user chooses a topic to explore, much of the content is brief, presented on stub pages





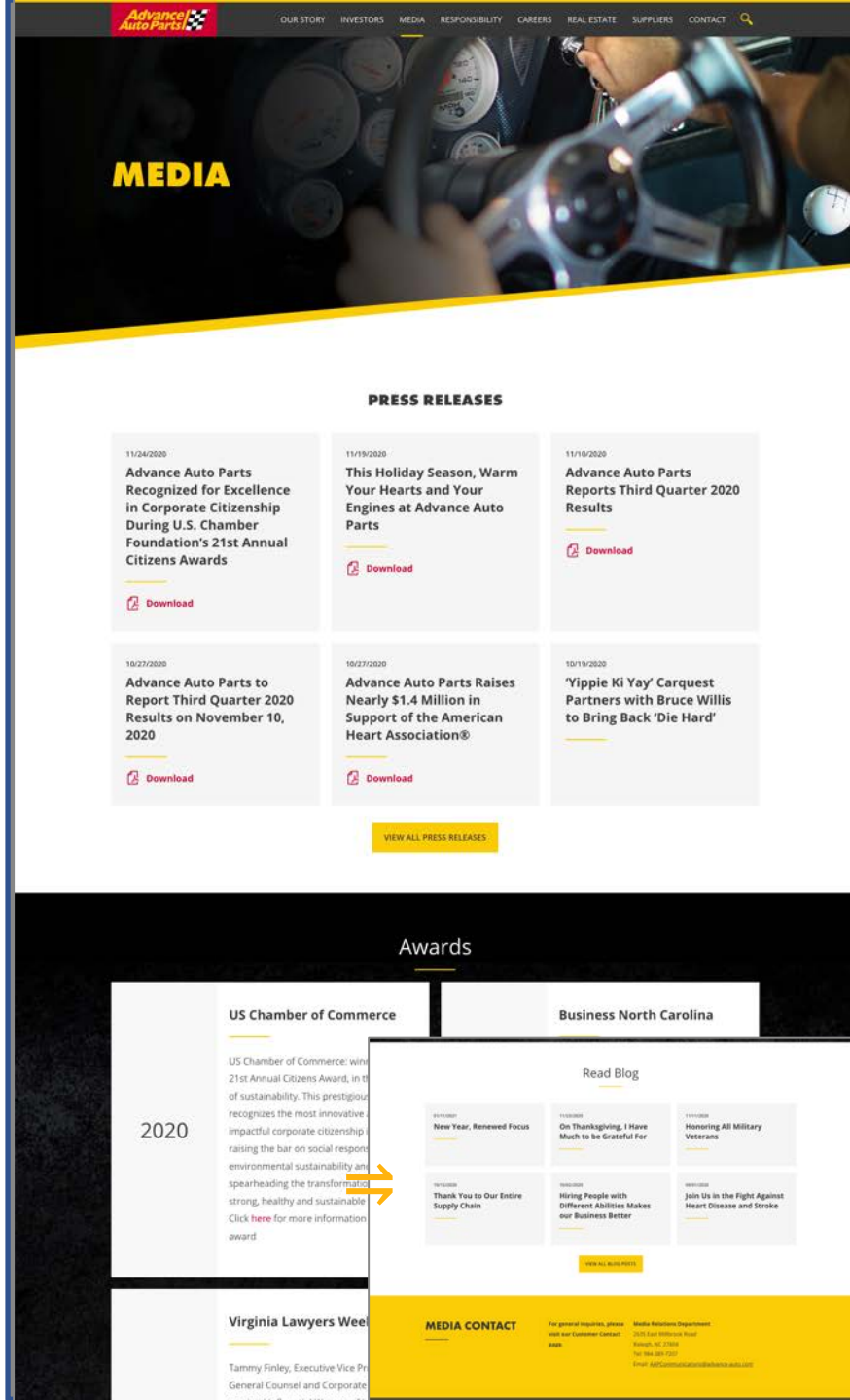
Corporate

- Corporate information is presented as a separate site (subdomain), launching in a new tab or window and leading the user away from the main site
- The experience or the page seems much more modern than the primary site



Corporate landing page

- Corporate landing pages make the most of the real estate provided



AUTOZONE

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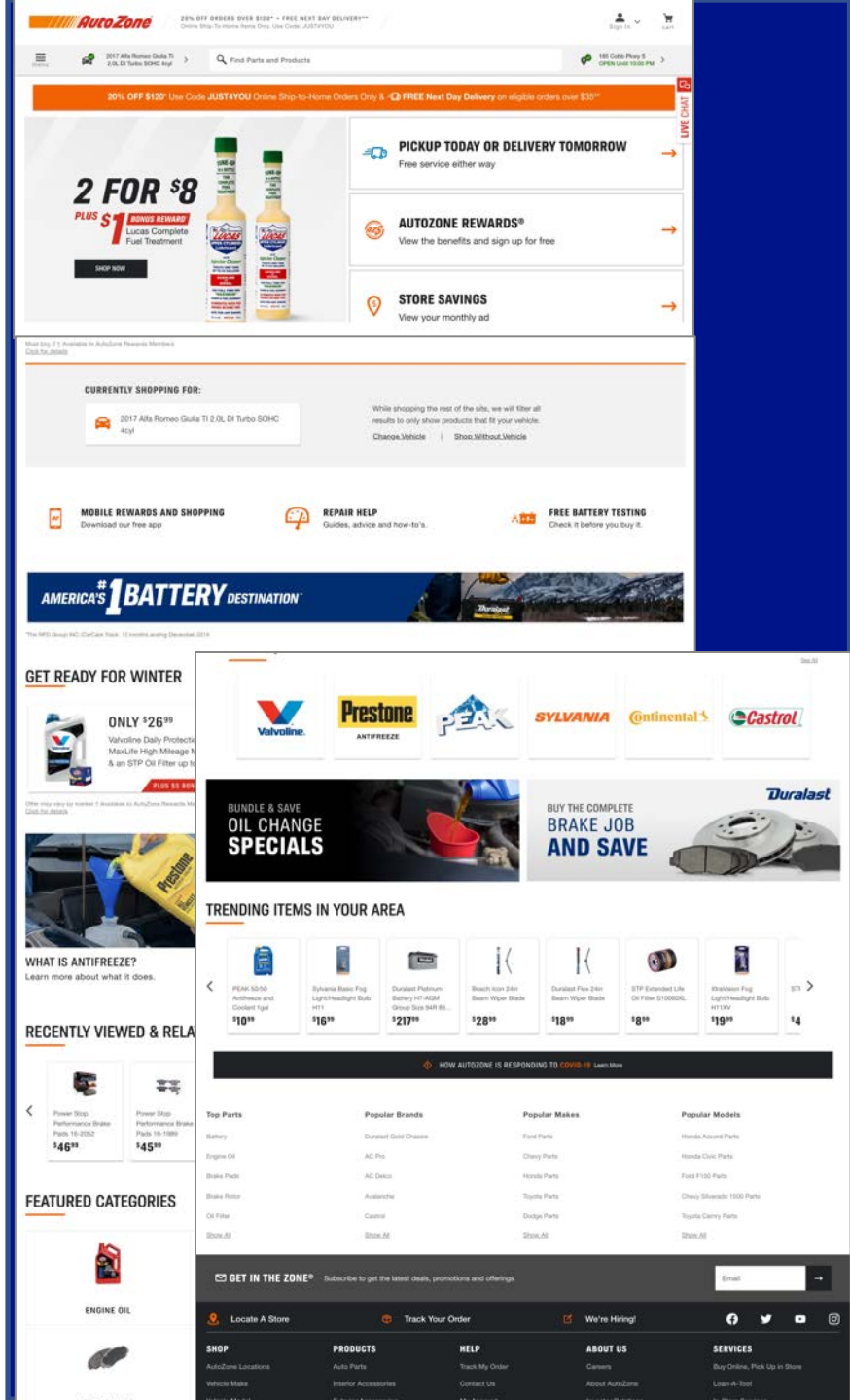
Overview

1. AutoZone approaches navigation similarly to AutoParts Online with a product focus, but it goes a level withing the navigation itself
2. The homepage is 100% focused on products, deals, and rewards
3. The CLPs and PLPs function similarly to AutoParts Online's
4. The PDP offers very little branded content, and the product descriptions are brief without providing much in the way of a value proposition
    - It provides a mechanism for user-generated content in the form of Questions & Answers, though this feature was not widely used in our observation
    - It provides a list of related products, though the presentation mechanism is unclear
5. How-To and other informational content is split between Advice and Help Desk, both of which are easily accessible from the navigation, but isn't well integrated into the site

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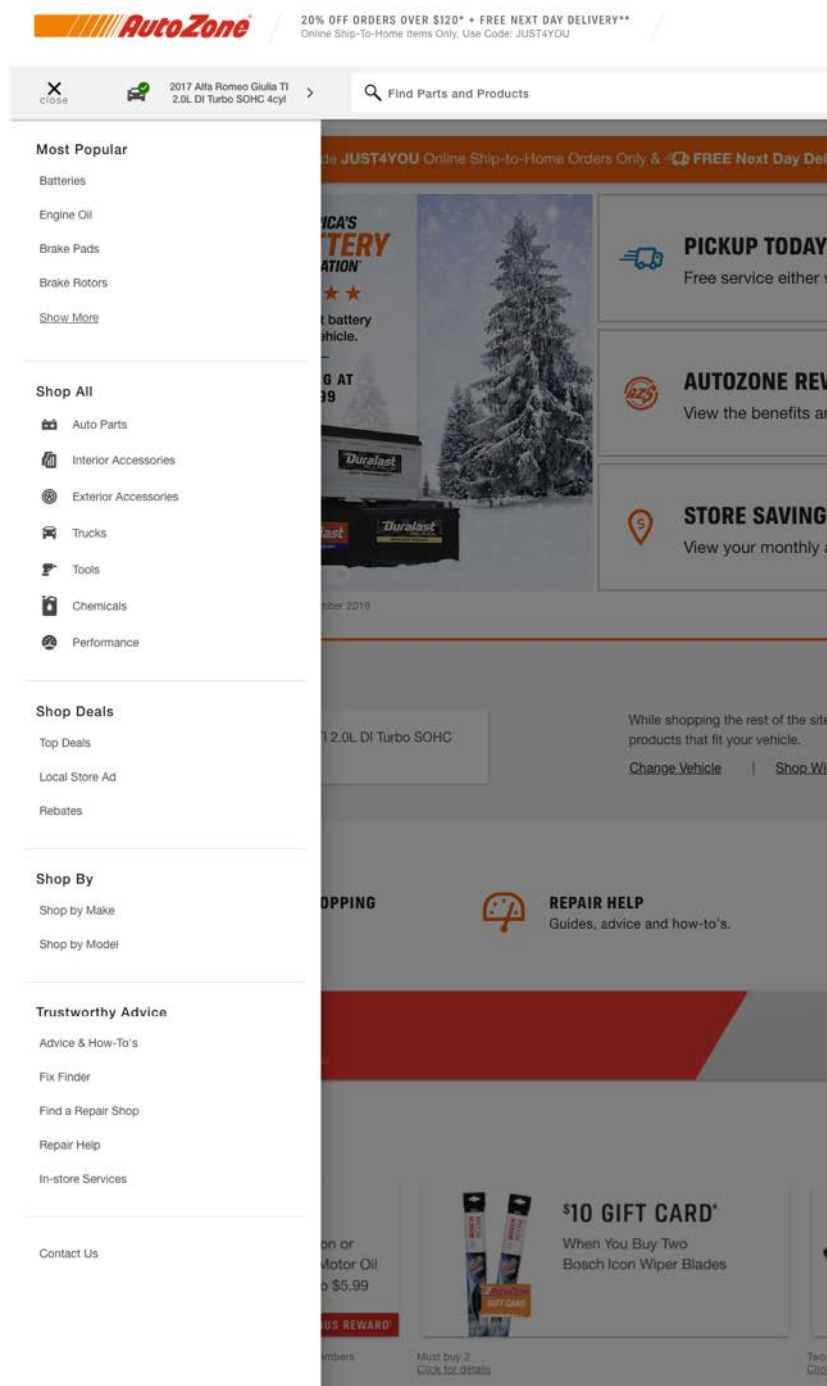
Homepage

- The homepage focuses entirely (~80%)on the shopping flow, highlighting products, deals, and reward content that a user can select to view in more detail
- The page provides a large promotional hero—focused on product
- Advice content is highlighted in a module on the homepage
- The vehicle selector is present midway through the page experience
- Very little SEO focused content is immediately apparent on the page
- It highlights featured categories and bands
- It also highlights trending items and more



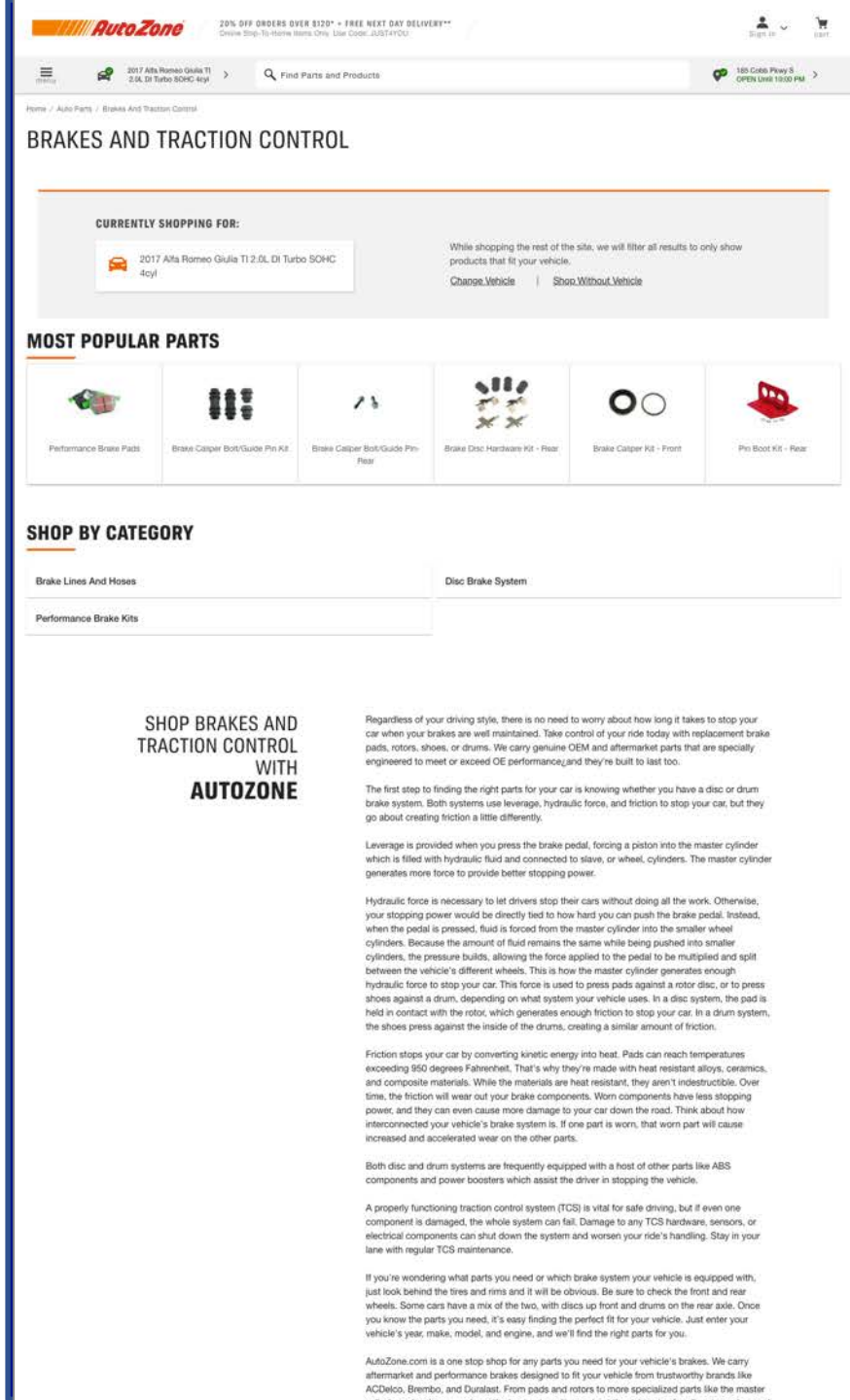
Navigation

- The navigation is very condensed, all found under the “hamburger menu.” It includes shopping and advice. Corporate and other information is accessed via the footer
- Advice content is mix of directions (find a store, etc.) and knowledge (Repair Help)
- No utility navigation is present other than Account and Store access
- Deals are presented in the primary navigation as and presented on the the page itself
- Rewards, or “Speed Perks” are also accessible int the navigation



Category landing page

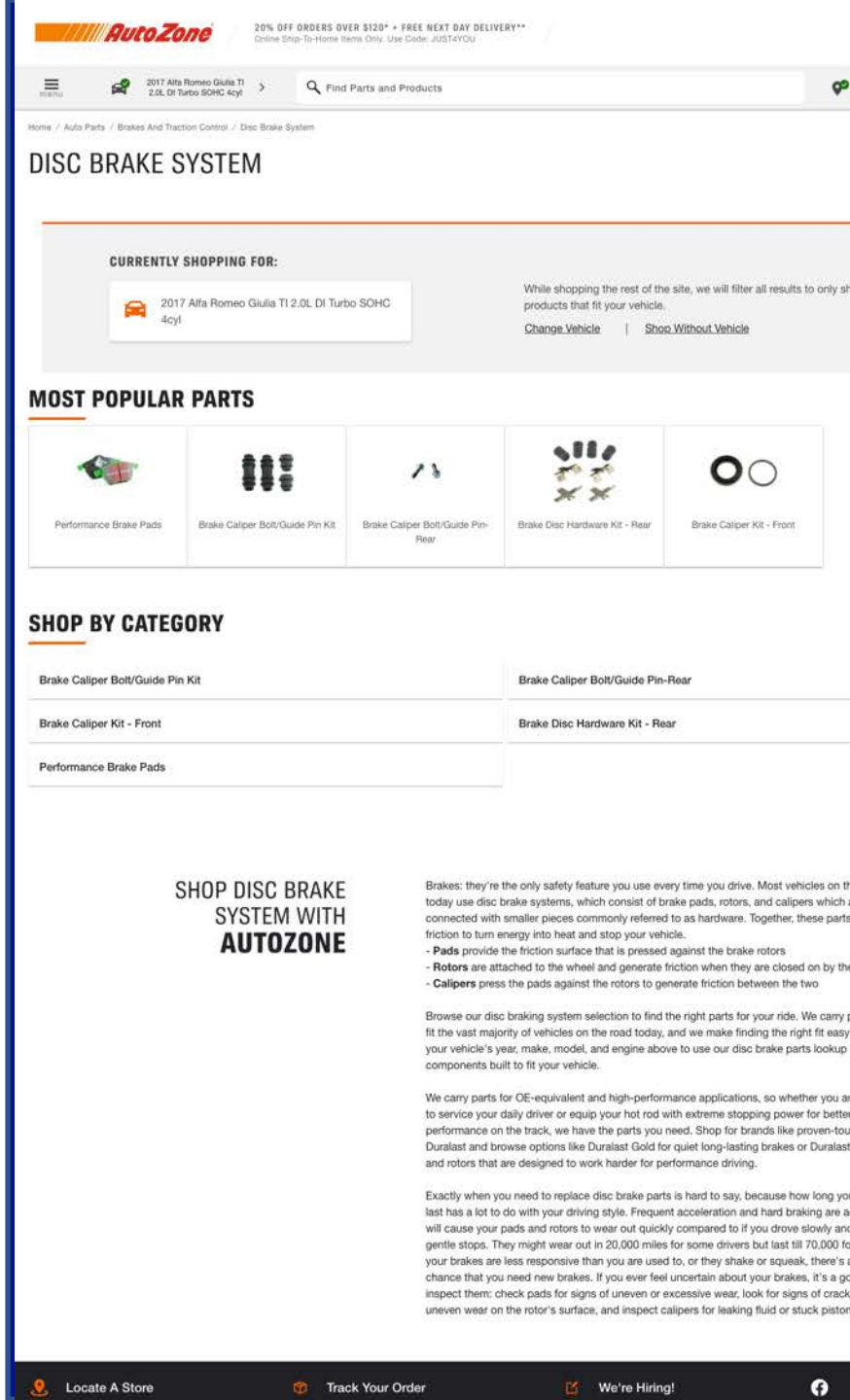
- Category landing pages feature the most popular parts
- Users can then access subcategories under the main category
- It includes a large block of brand body copy that is likely used for SEO purposes



COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: AUTOZONE

Sub-category landing page

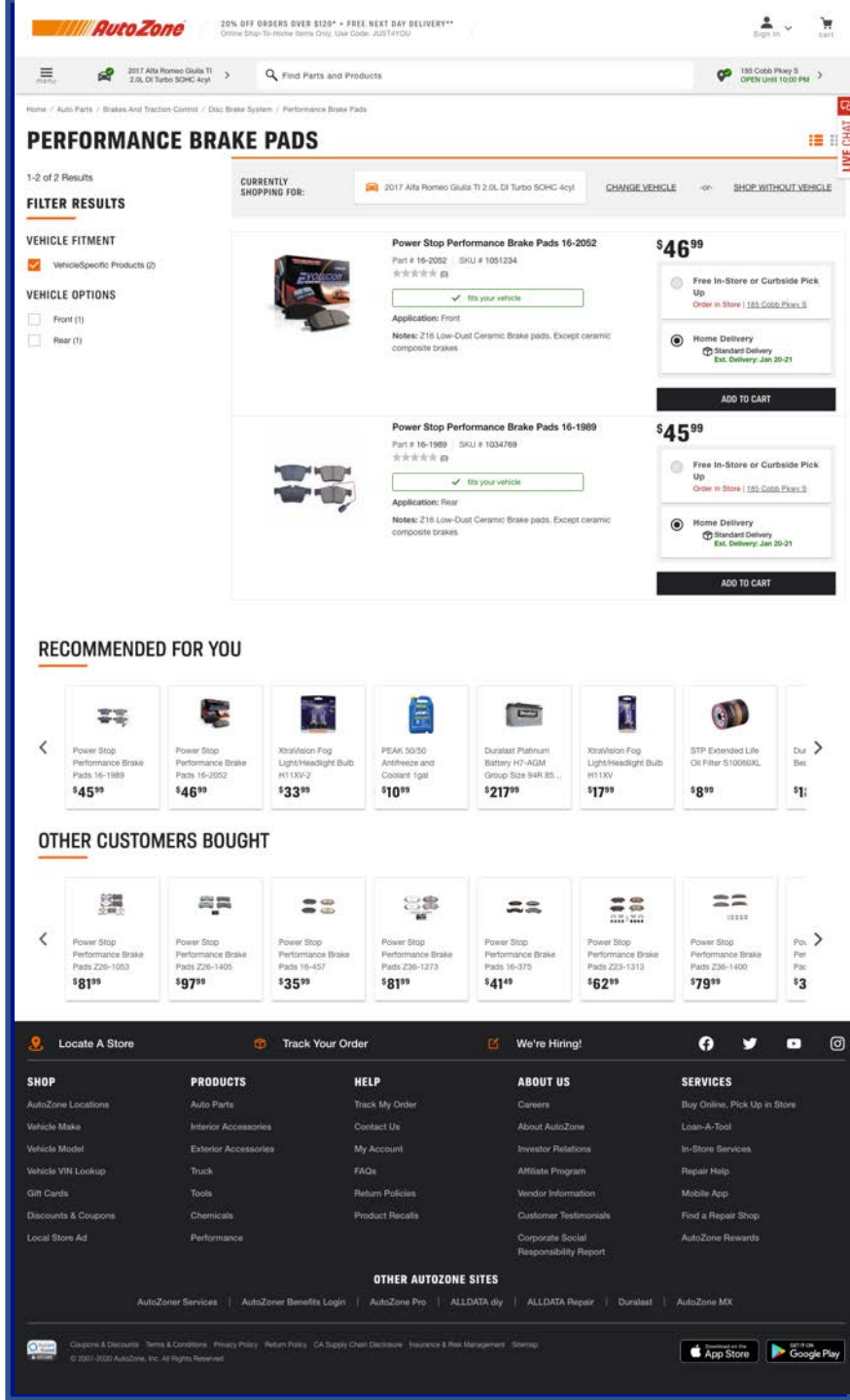
- Sub-category landing pages mirror the layout and content mix of the Category Landing pages



COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: AUTOZONE

Product listing page

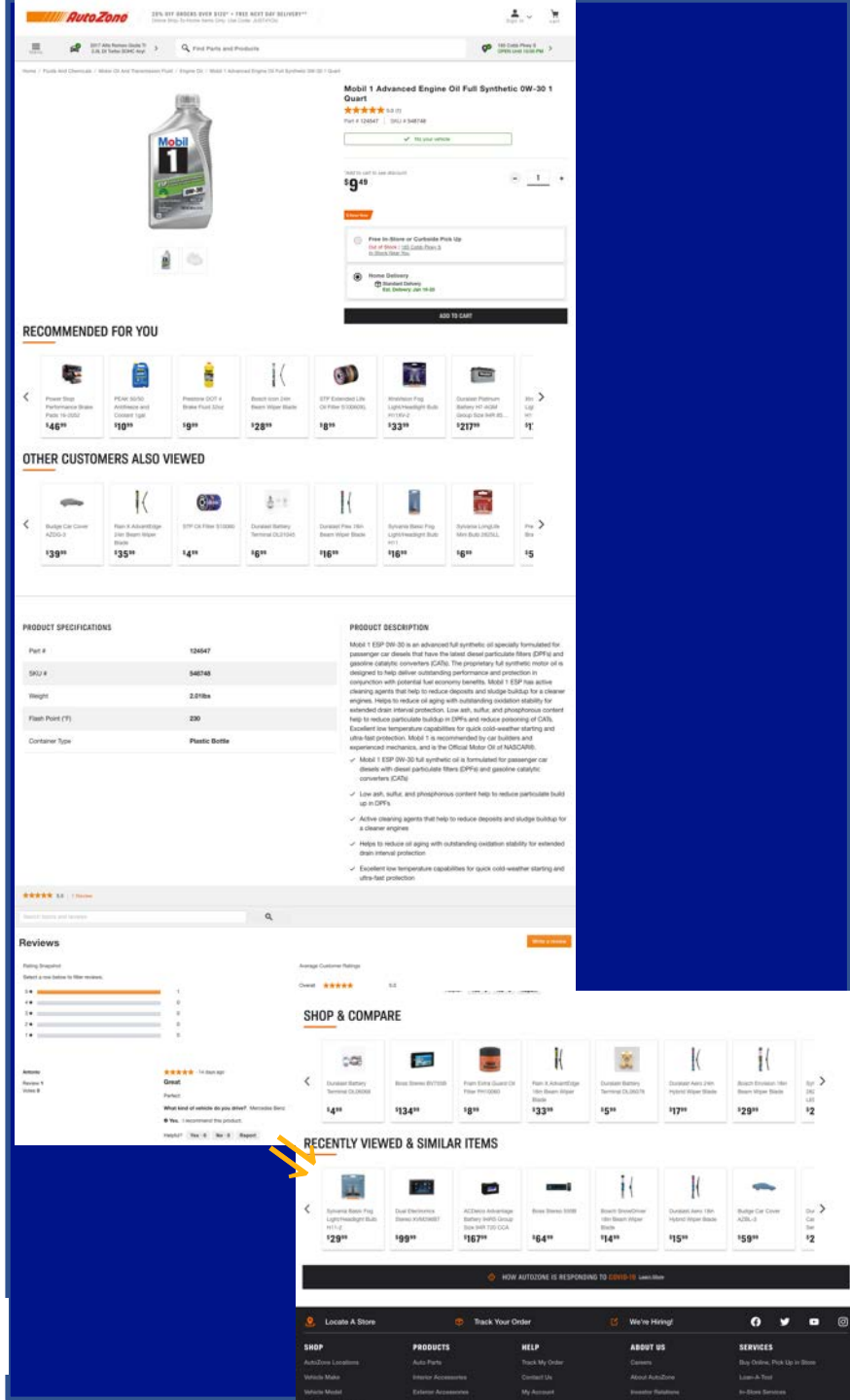
- The PLP presents a sortable list or products for the user to choose from
- Users can filter their results based on vehicle
- No other facets are available in this view
- Recommended products are presented under the product list, as well as popular products (Other Customers Also Brought)
- Each product includes customer reviews in the list (though none are present in this example)



COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: AUTOZONE

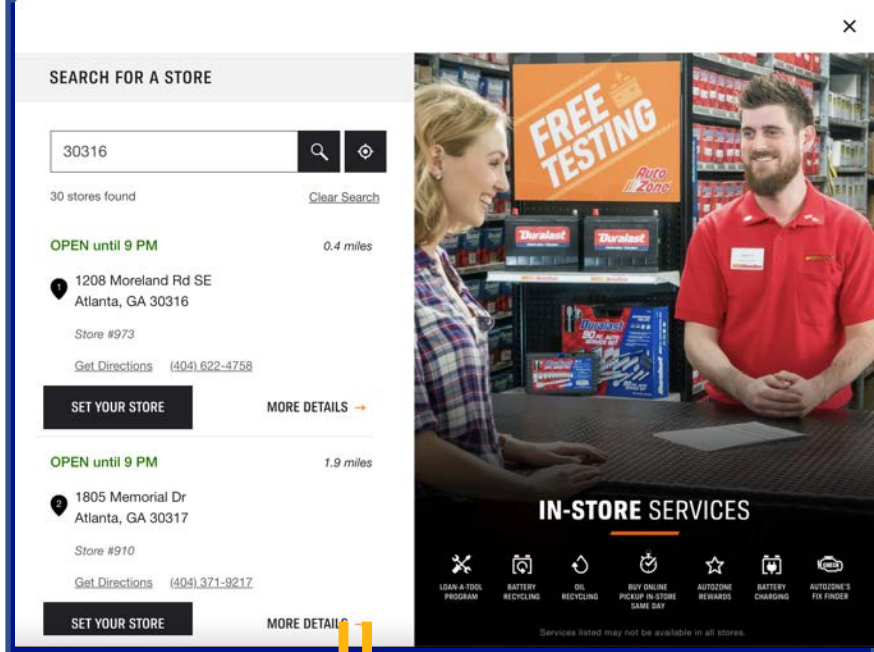
Product detail page

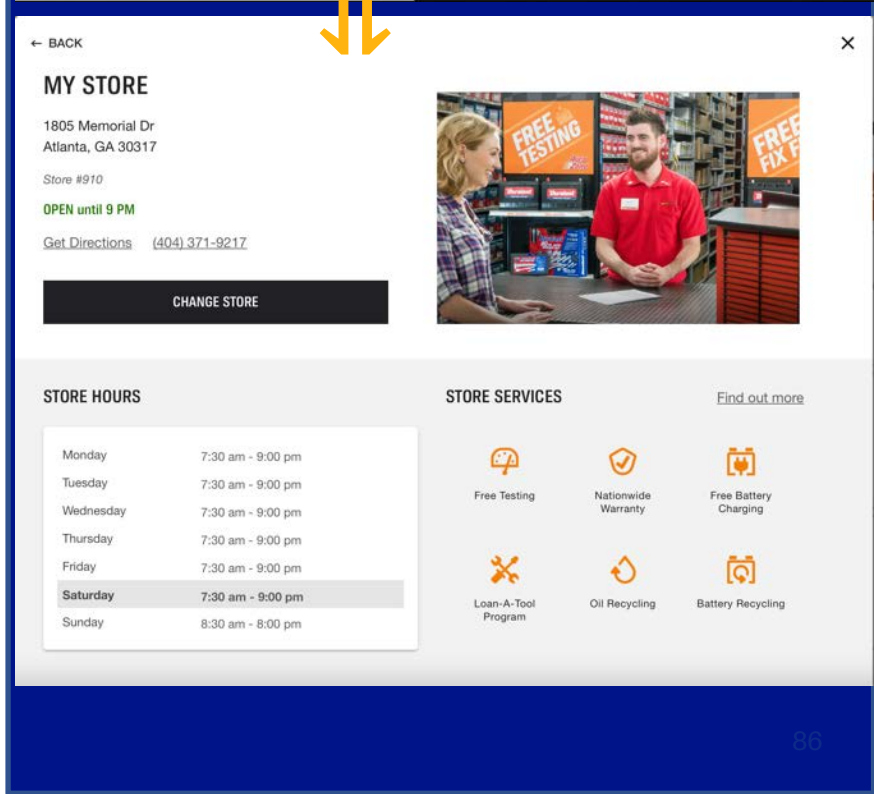
- The PDP leads with the name and image of the part in question, along with ratings & reviews
- Most products have a single image
- The page presents quick access to recommended and popular products
- Users must scroll down to find the product description, but that description is detailed and highlights the features and benefits
- Each product page provides a mechanisms for user-generated content, Ratings & Reviews, and they seem pretty widely used
- Finally, the page ends with Related Items, Recently Viewed, and Similar Items—how these are populated is unclear



Store landing & detail

- The store flow is relatively basic, with a listing of stores near the user's ZIP Code, along with hours of operation ,contact details, and store services
- The store listing and store details are presented as a modal window that is presented with the same information in a larger format
- No introductory or other brand-forward content appears for the store

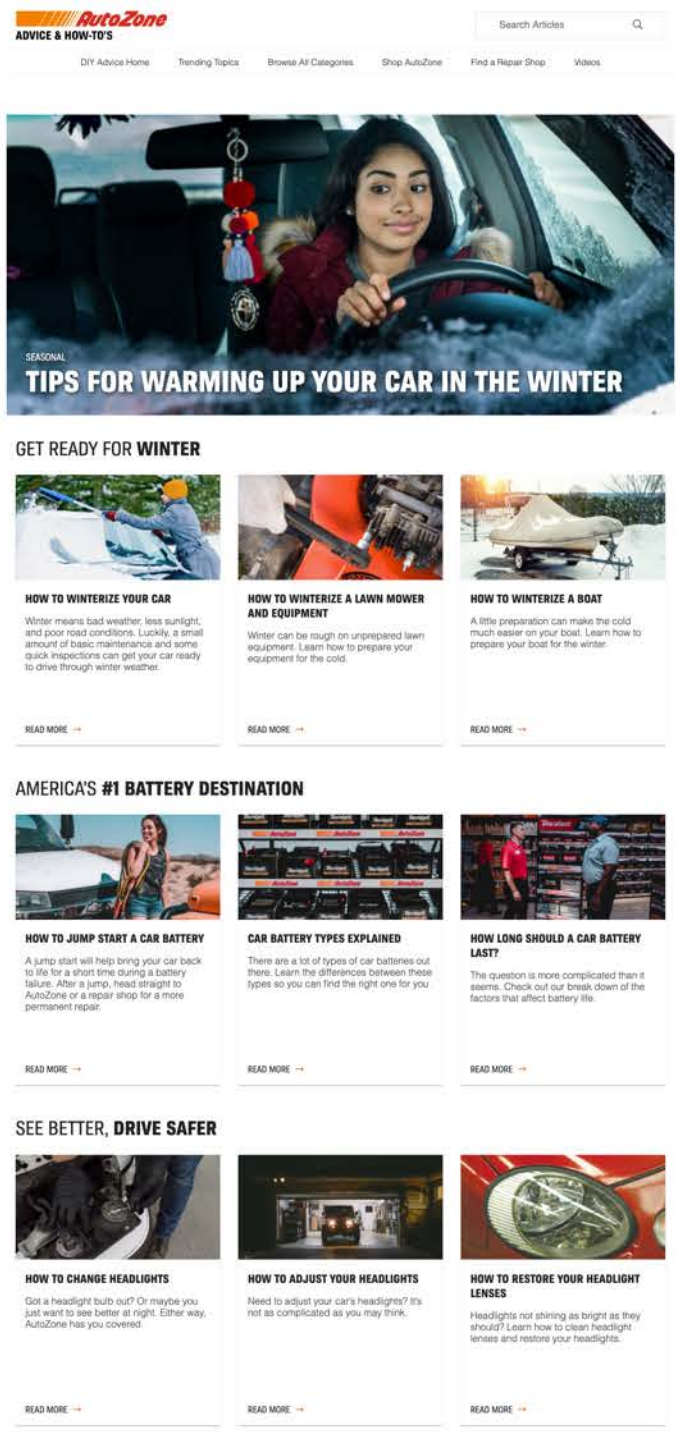




COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: AUTOZONE

Advice landing page

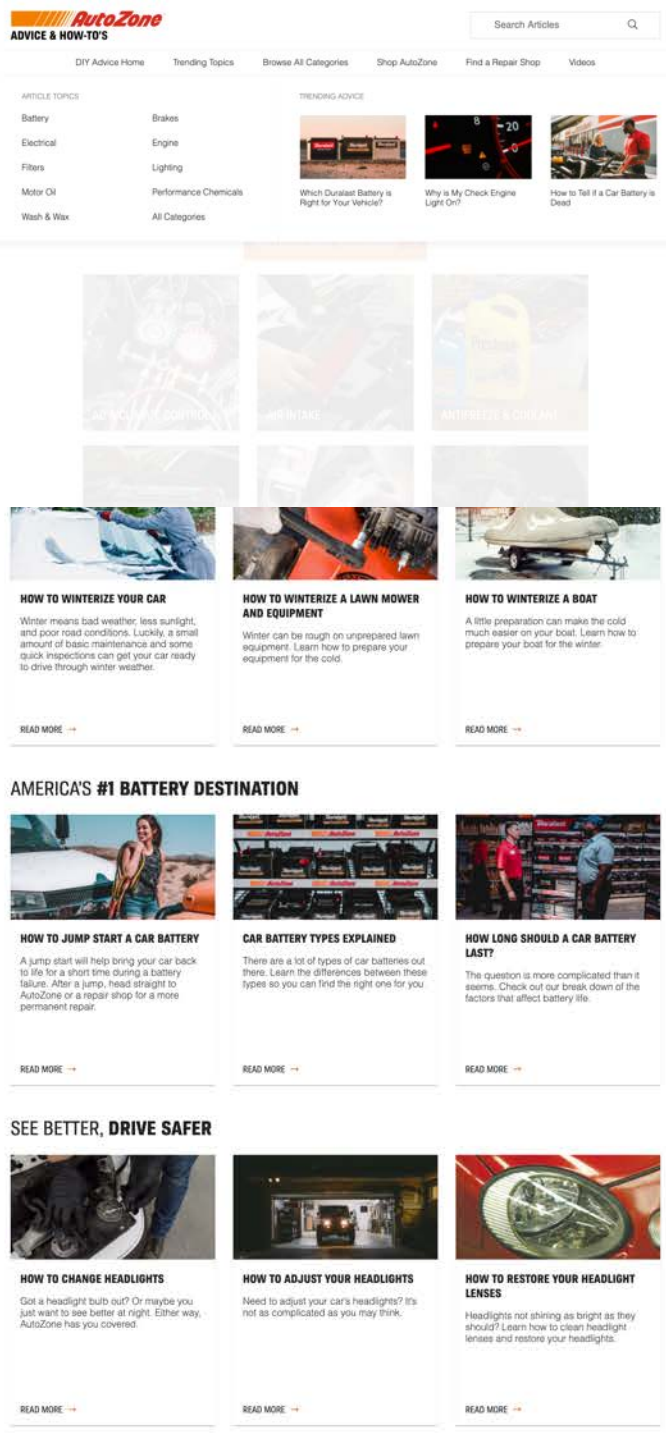
- When a user selects Advice & How Tos from the navigation, the remaining product navigation disappears
- The advice content provided is comprehensive in its coverage
- Advice articles are listed with rich imagery and the title of the advice article
- It categorizes Articles under set categories



COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: AUTOZONE

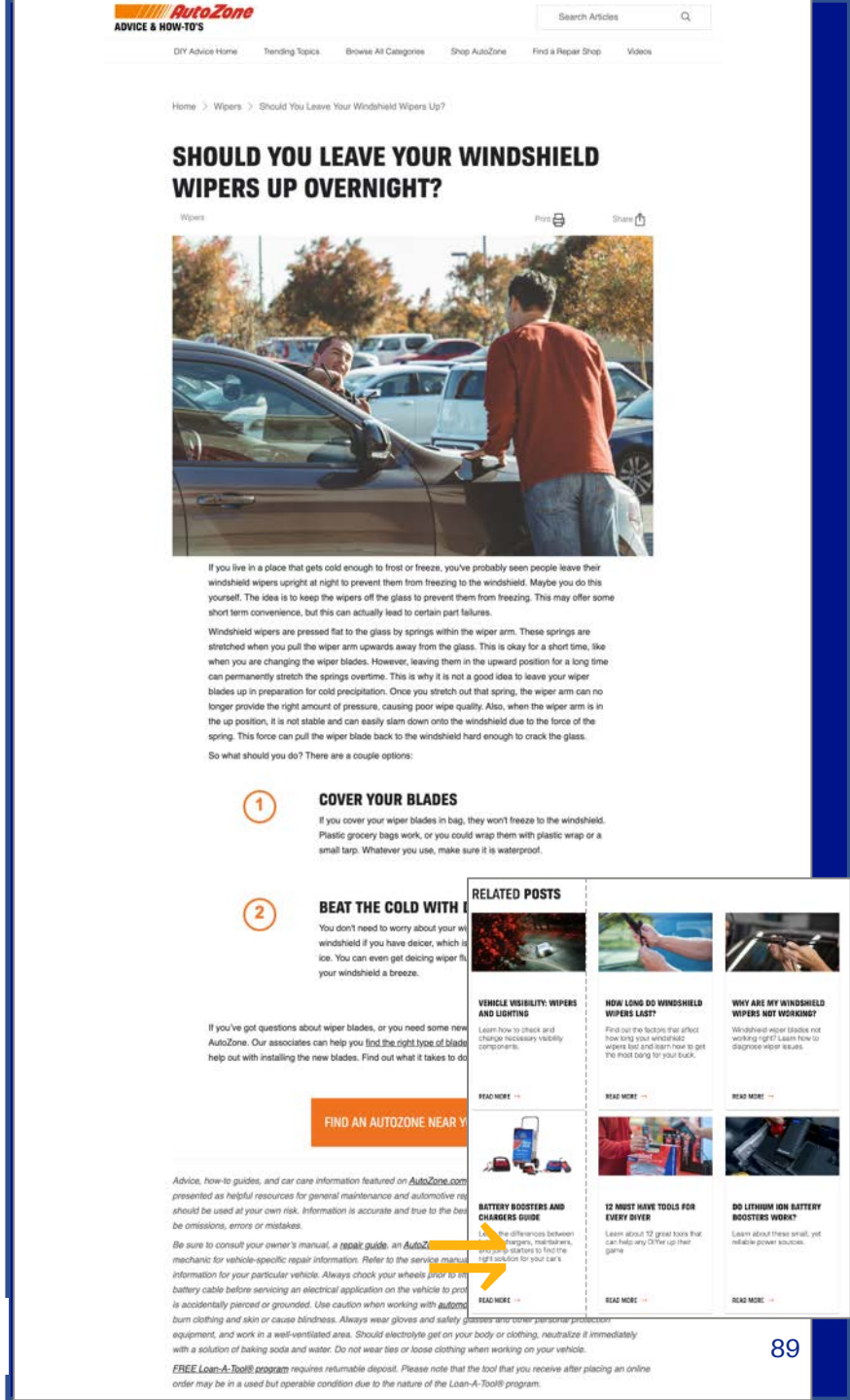
Advice navigation

- The navigation for the Advice section follows the same model as the rest of the site navigation
- It breaks the Advice content into easily accessed categories, which mirror that on the page
- The navigation also provides the opportunity to highlight promotional and feature content placement



Advice detail

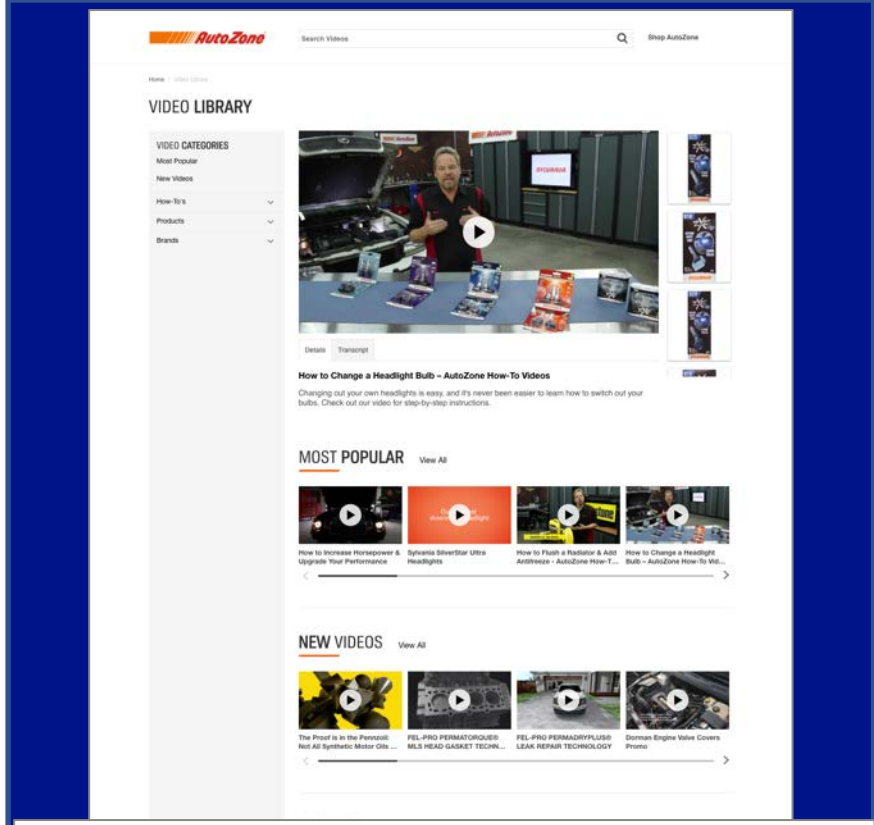
- The advice articles offer a range of quality, from very good (featured) to pages with very little information or information that is optimized for digital
- Articles are not categorized by any observable tags or taxonomy, even though the navigation implies that it is present along with the related articles at the end of the page
- It also highlights related products, though they are not presented in the context of the article

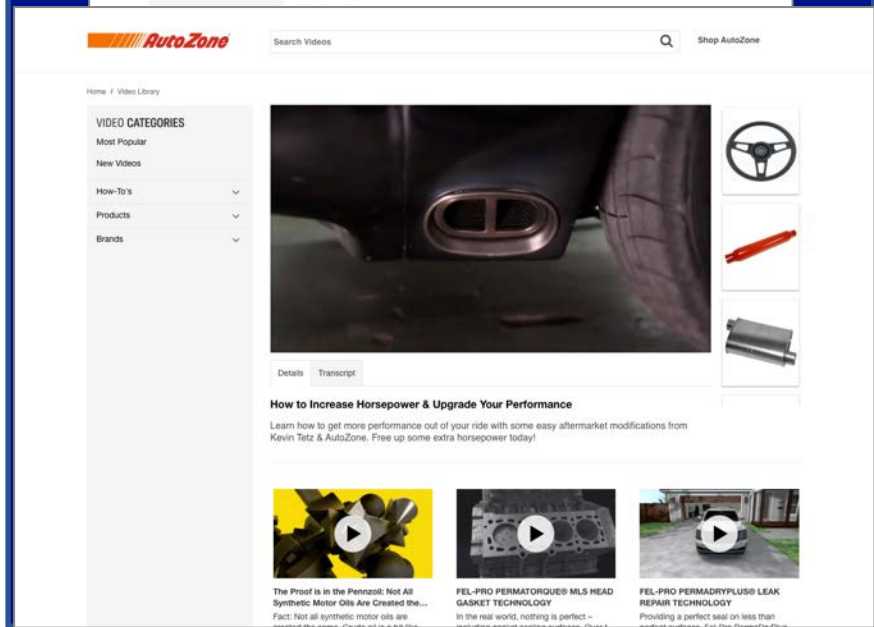


COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: AUTOZONE

Videos landing & detail

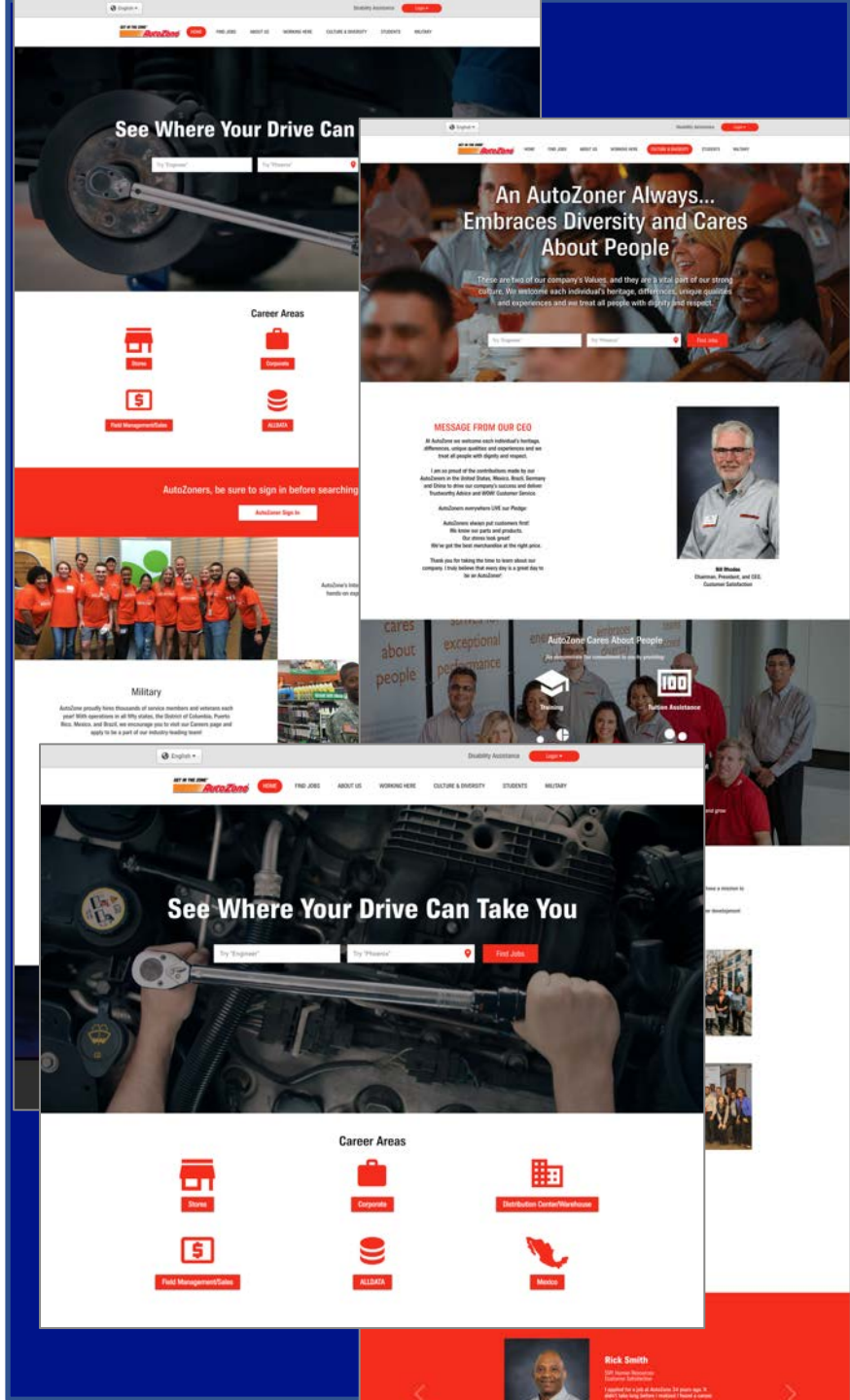
- Videos are highlighted in the Advice & How-To navigation
- Once the user arrives at the video landing page, they are presented with an attractive list of videos from which to choose
- Each video provides copy to provide context and they are grouped by category (mirroring the navigation)
- The video includes a transcript option to increase accessibility
- Related videos are also displayed on the page, though the mechanism for populating it remains unclear, as tags are not visible for the videos





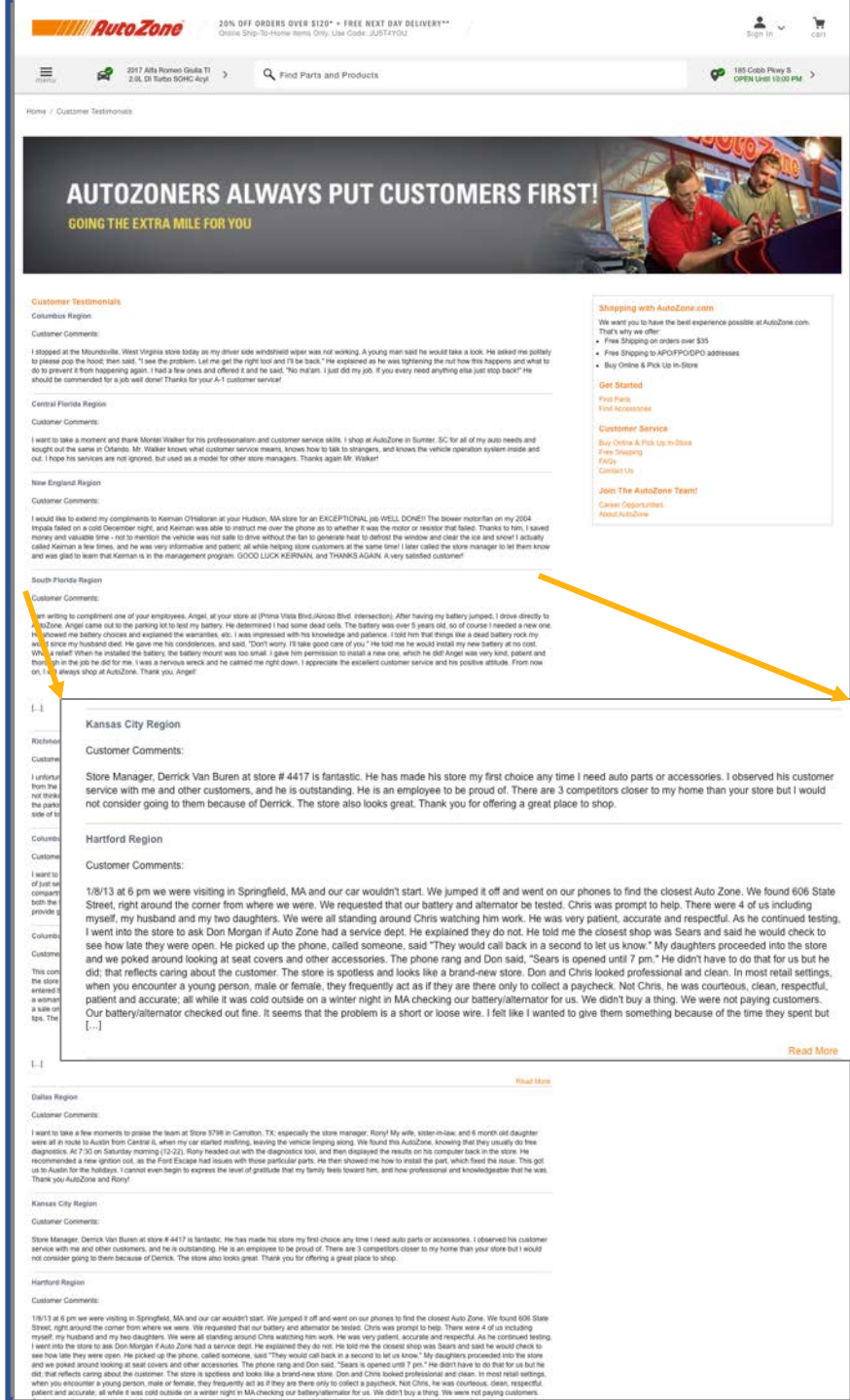
Corporate landing pages

- Corporate information is presented as separate sites (subdomain), launching in a new tab or window and leading the user away from the main site
- The experience or the page seems much more modern than the primary site



Customer testimonials

- Uniquely, AutoZone provides customer testimonials, yet another way user-generated content is presented on the site
- These provide real-world stories told by real AutoZone customers that personalize the brand and speak like real people (which they are) to potential customers, humanizing the brand



HALFORD'S

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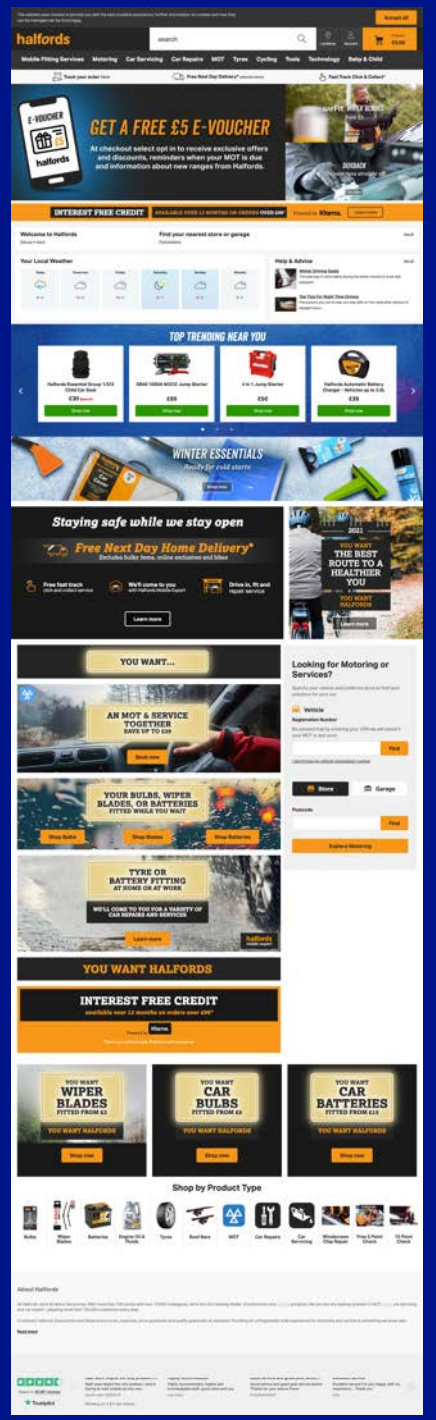
Overview

1. Halford's offers a much wider range of products and services than AutoParts Online or any of the other direct competitors other than Amazon
2. Halford's approaches navigation similarly to AutoParts Online with a product focus, but it has a lot of additional product categories
3. The homepage is mostly (~90%) focused on products, deals, and rewards
4. The CLPs and PLPs function similarly to AutoParts Online's
5. The PDP offers very little branded content, and the product descriptions are brief without providing much in the way of a value proposition
    - It provides a mechanism for user-generated content in the form of Questions & Answers, though this feature was not widely used in our observation
    - It provides a list of related products, though the presentation mechanism is unclear
6. How-To and other informational content is split between Advice and Help Desk, both of which are easily accessible from the navigation, but isn't well integrated into the site

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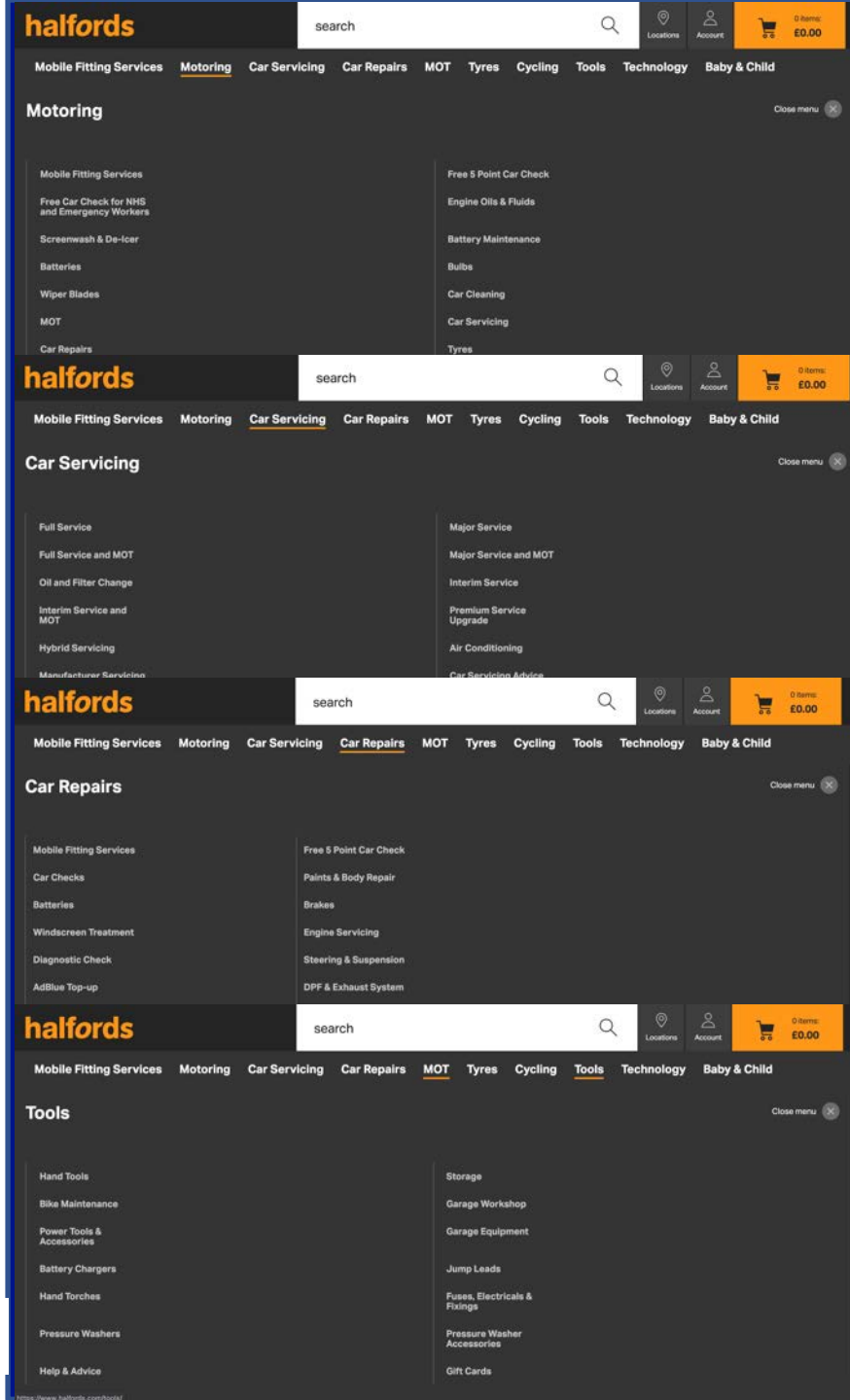
Homepage

- The homepage focuses entirely (~80%)on the shopping flow, highlighting products, deals, and reward content that a user can select to view in more detail
- The page provides a large promotional hero—focused on shopping content
- Advice content isn't highlighted on the homepage
- Auto care and service content is highlighted on the homepage as well as in the navigation
- Very little SEO focused content is immediately apparent on the page
- It highlights trending products and recently viewed products



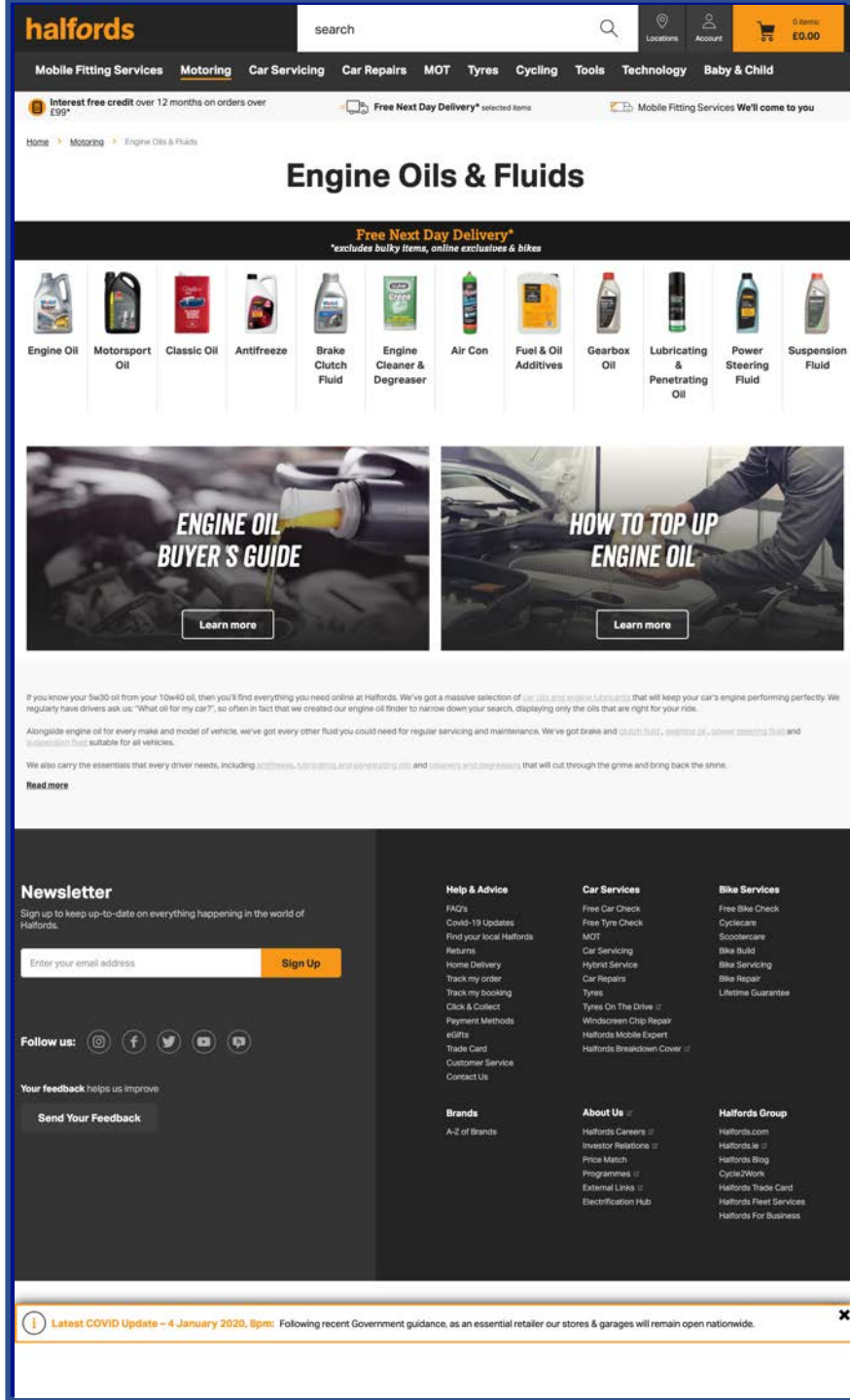
Navigation

- The navigation is very wide and expansive to cover all the areas offered by Halford's. Corporate and other information is accessed via the footer
- Advice content is accessed from within each category from the navigation
- No utility navigation is present other than Account and Store access
- Deals are not presented in the primary navigation



Category landing page

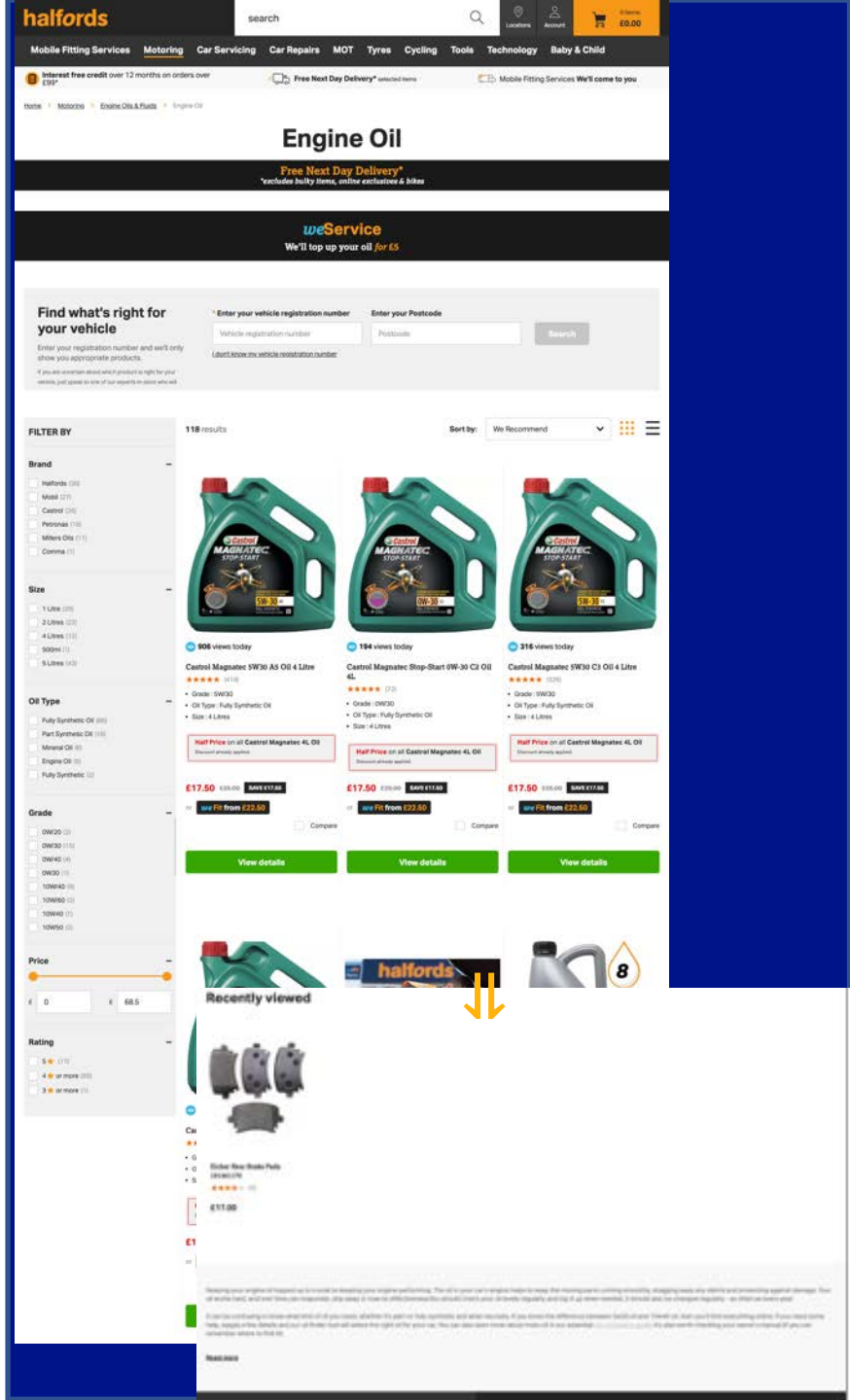
- Category landing pages feature the subcategories within the category
- It gives almost 50% of the page to how-to or advice content most popular parts
- Users can then access subcategories under the main category
- It includes a block of brand body copy that is likely used for SEO purposes



COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: HALFORD'S

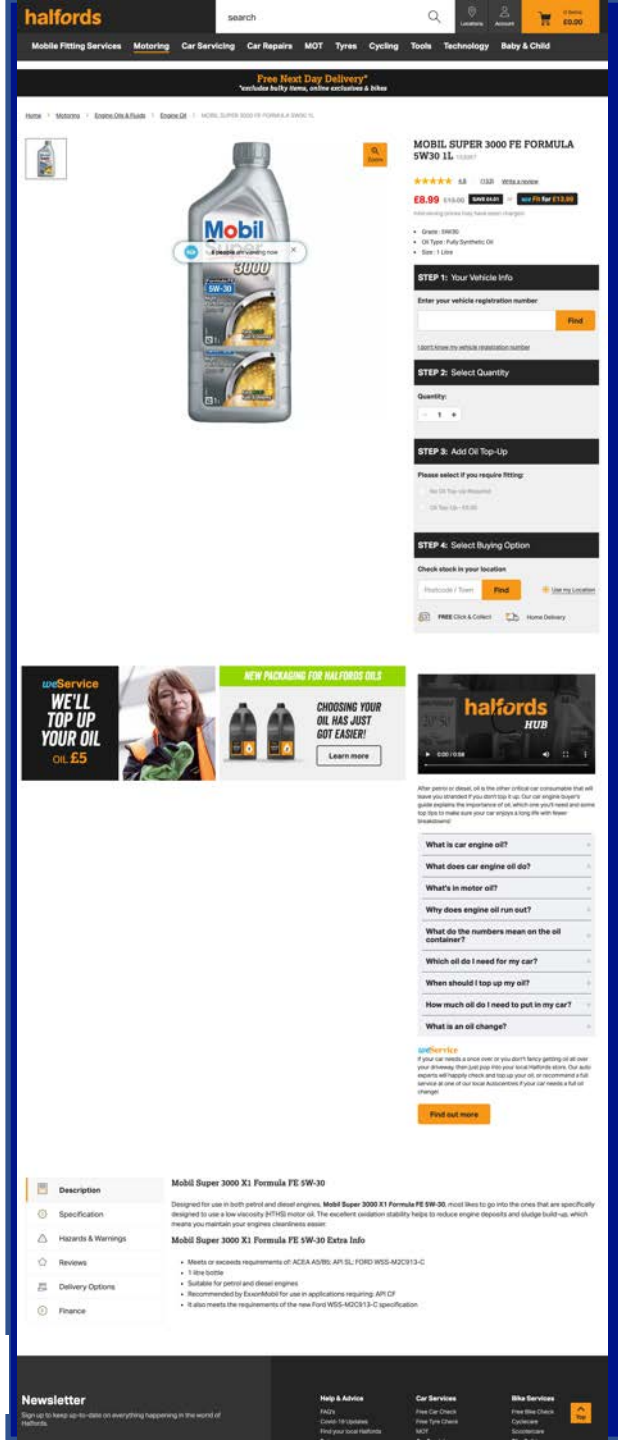
Product listing page

- The PLP presents a sortable list or products for the user to choose from
- Users can filter their results based on a number of in this view
- Recently viewed products are presented under the product list
- Each product includes customer reviews in the list



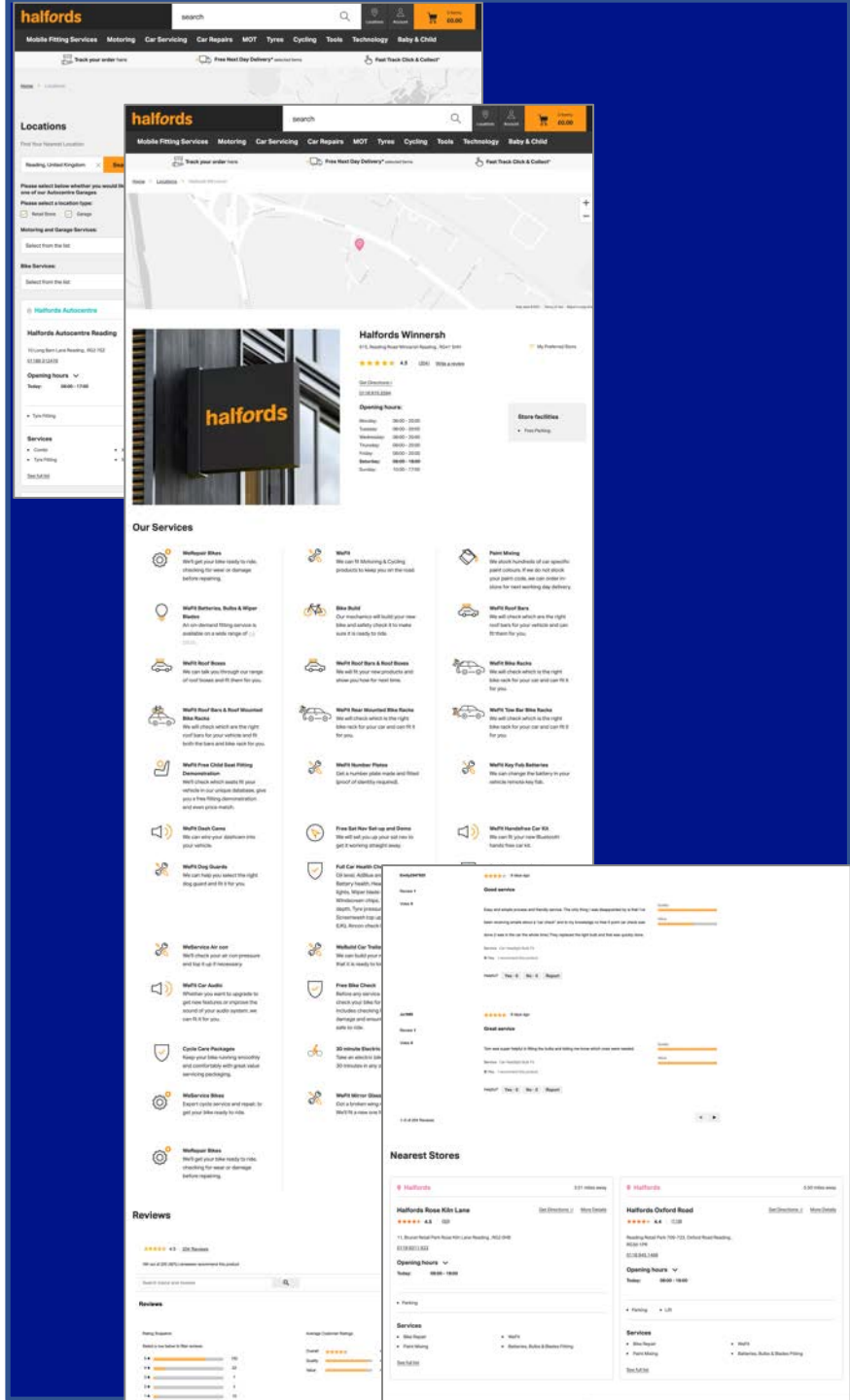
Product detail page

- The PDP leads with the name and image of the part in question, along with information usual entered into the shopping car (quantity and financing)
- Most products have a single image
- The page presents promotions between the top of the page and other detail
- Users must scroll down to find the product description and specifications, but that description is detailed and highlights the features and benefits
- In the product description area, the page highlights finance information
- Each product page provides a mechanism for user-generated content, Ratings & Reviews, and they seem pretty widely used



Store landing & detail

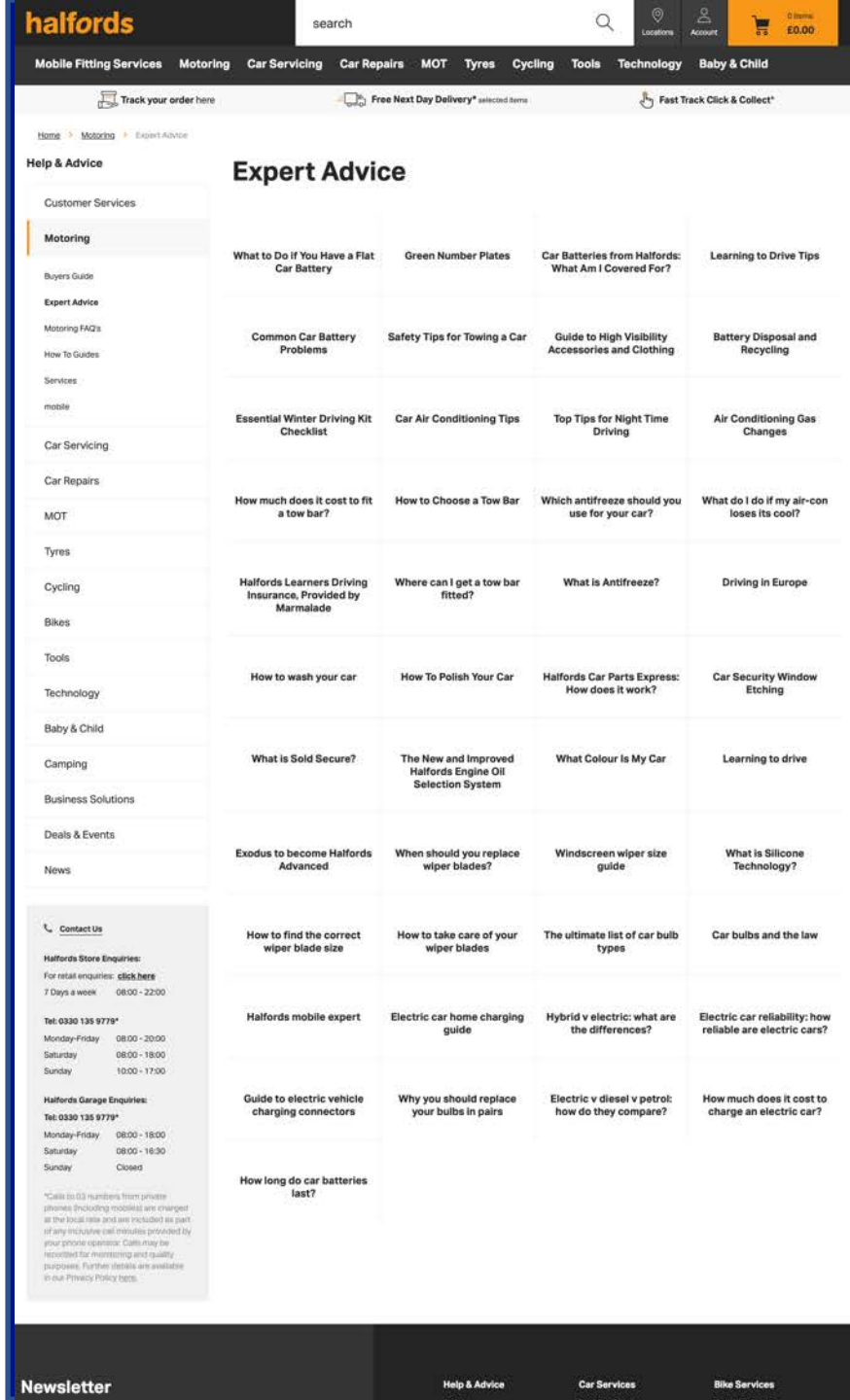
- The store flow is relatively basic, with a listing of stores near the user's location, along with hours of operation, and contact details
- The details are presented as a modal window that is presented with the same information in a larger format
- No introductory or other brand-forward content appears for the store
- Ratings and reviews are provided for each store though
- It also highlights other nearby stores on the detail page



COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: HALFORD'S

Advice landing page

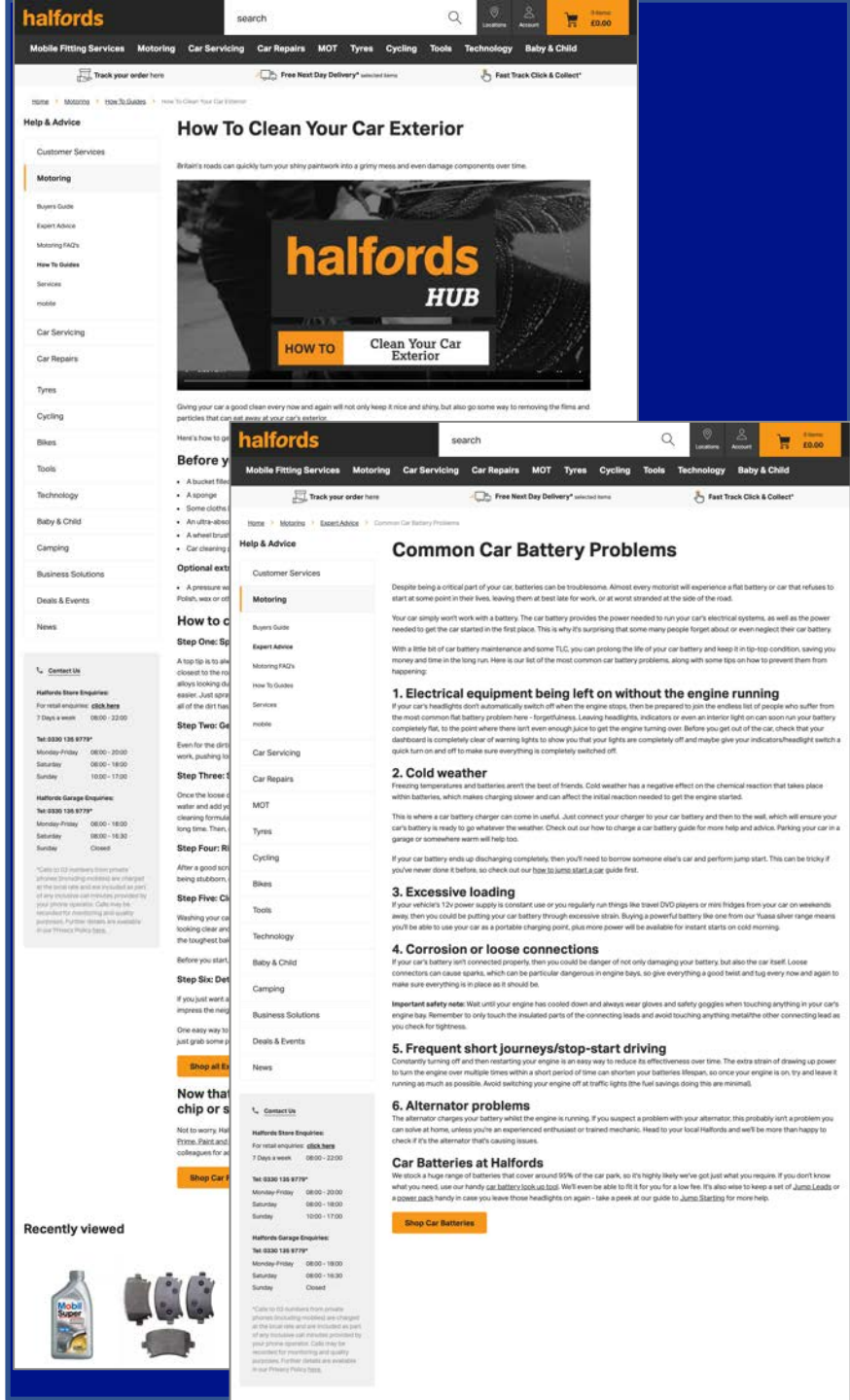
- When a user selects Advice from the navigation, they are presented with a laundry list of categories with very little context or visual cues and imagery
- The advice content provided is comprehensive in its coverage



COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: HALFORD'S

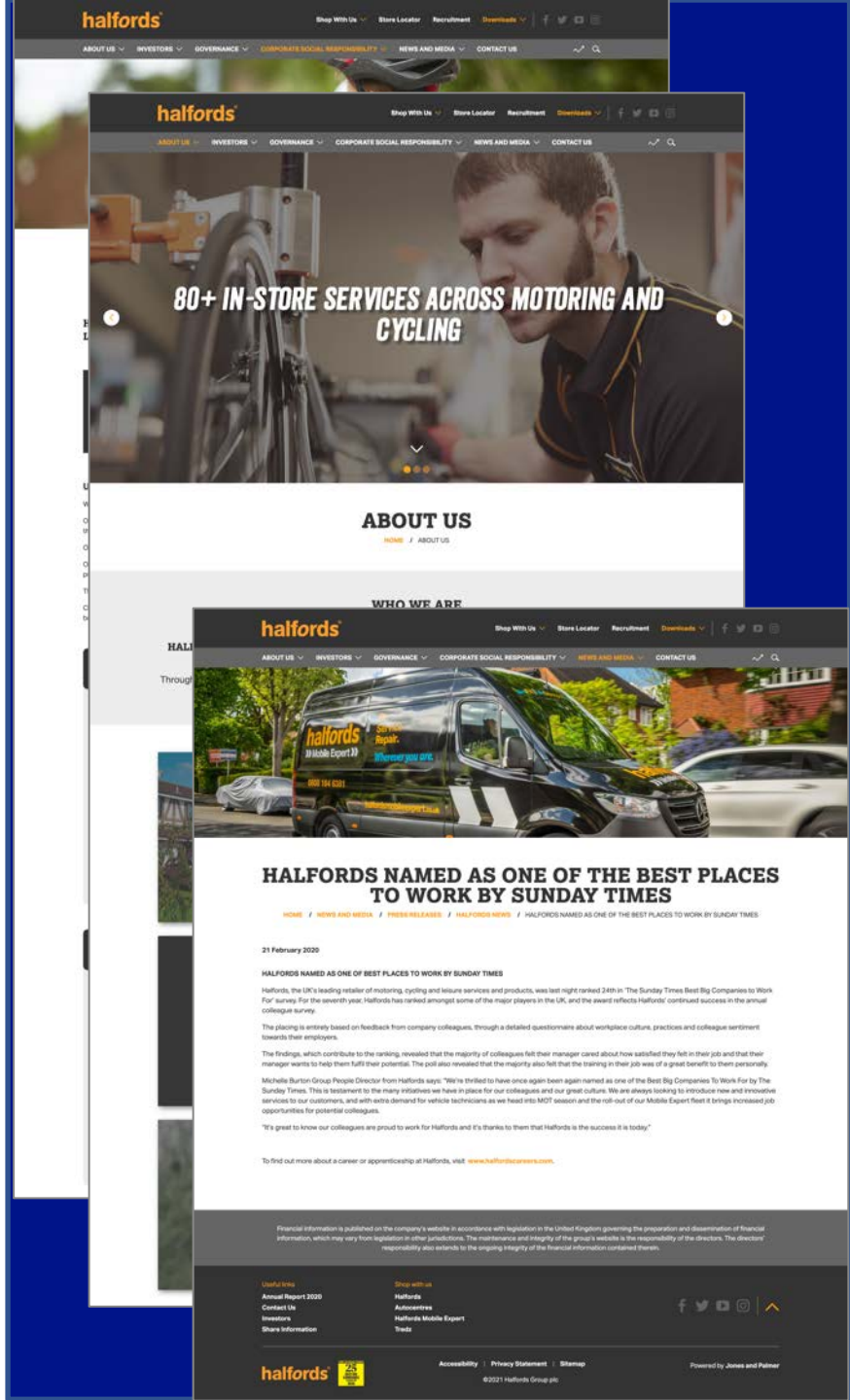
Advice detail page

- When a user selects an Advice article, the detail page is presented
- Advice articles are span a range of content mixes (some include/focus on video), while others (the majority) are text focused
- The text is generally scannable, presenting information in an easy to digest way
- The Advice section provides its own navigation that allows users to quickly access categories



About pages

- Halford's corporate content is only accessible through the footer navigation
- Upon selecting one of these footer links, the user is taken to a new domain (halfordscompany.com) in a new tab
- Corporate content presents much larger imagery and more digestible chunks of text by and large, but provides no opportunity for interaction
- Corporate content exists mostly in a silo, with very limited links back the e-commerce experience



AMAZON

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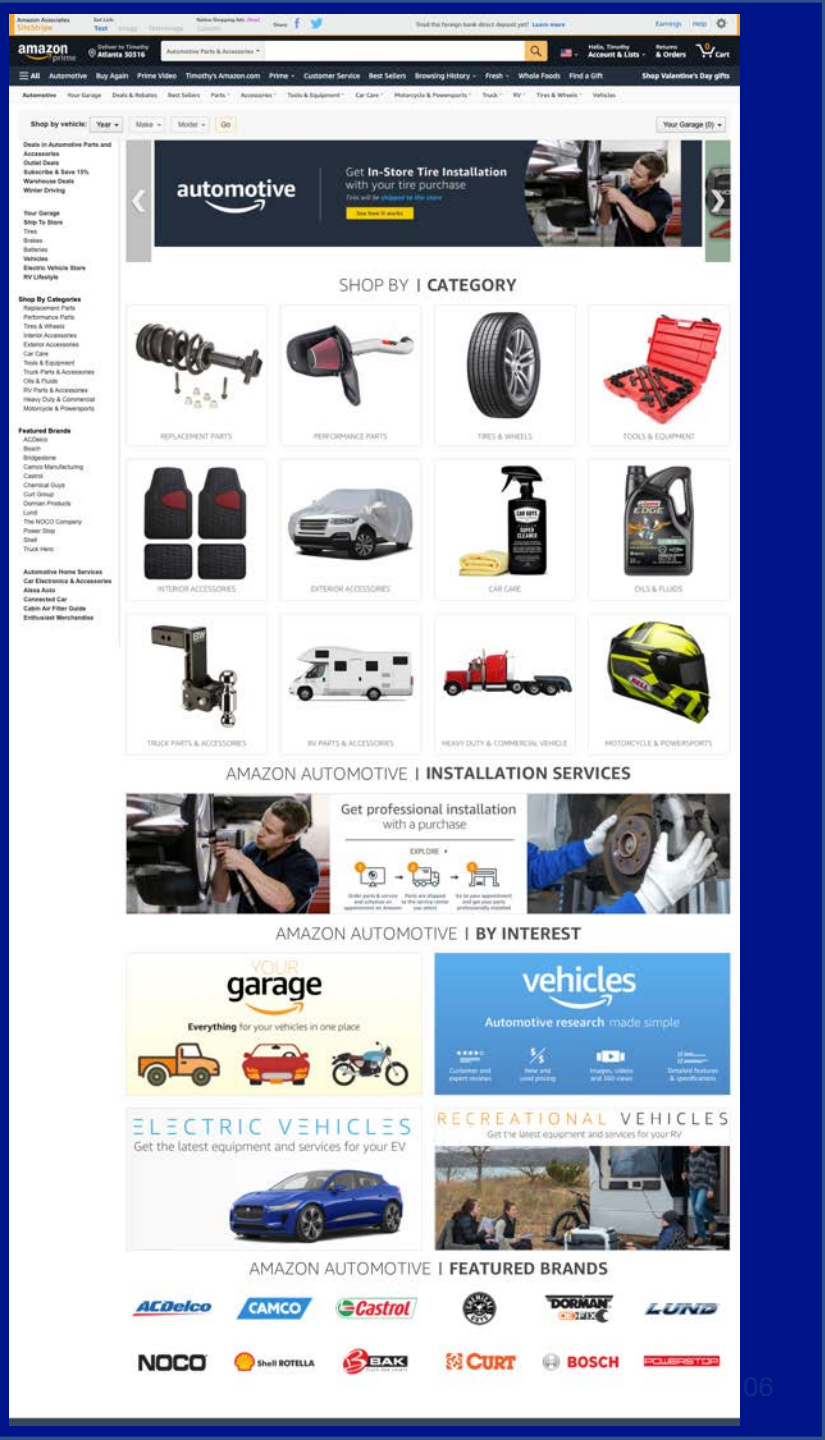
Overview

1. Amazon is bit of a different beast than the other sites reviewed because it sells basically everything (for this assessment, we started with the Autocare Category Landing page, which functions as a "homepage" analogous to most of the other sites reviewed
2. Its shopping flow is the most comprehensive when it comes to user-generated content and product details, including selling content
3. Amazon lacks analog to the Know-How content on some of the other sites
4. Amazon serves as the *de facto* standard for ecommerce sites
5. That said, it relies on search instead of navigation, for wayfinding and locating sought after products

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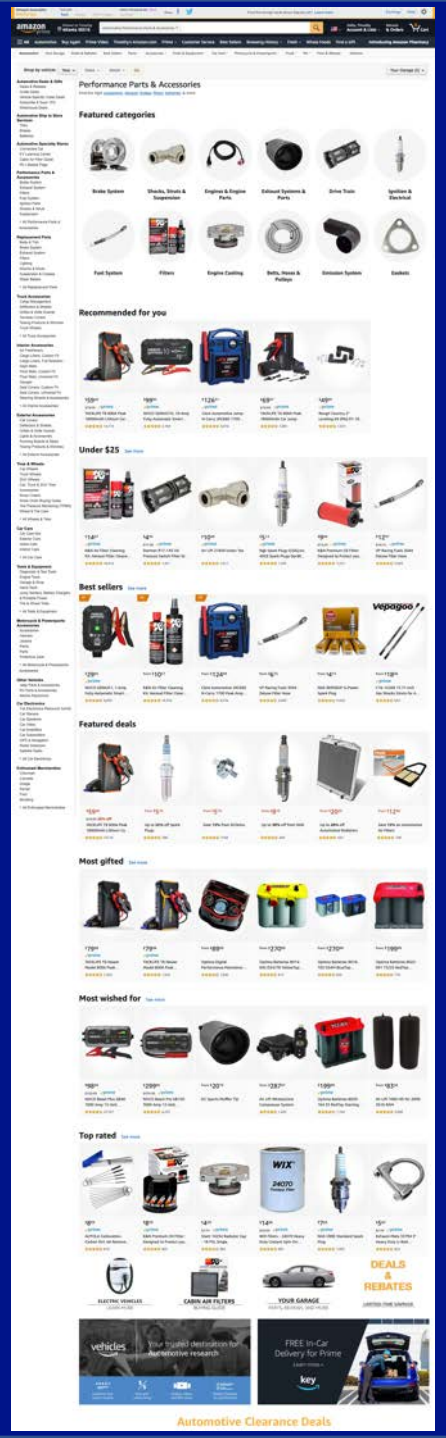
Amazon autocare landing

- The Autocare landing page provides easy access to product categories
- It also provides areas are to highlight promotions, brands, and installation services



Amazon CLP

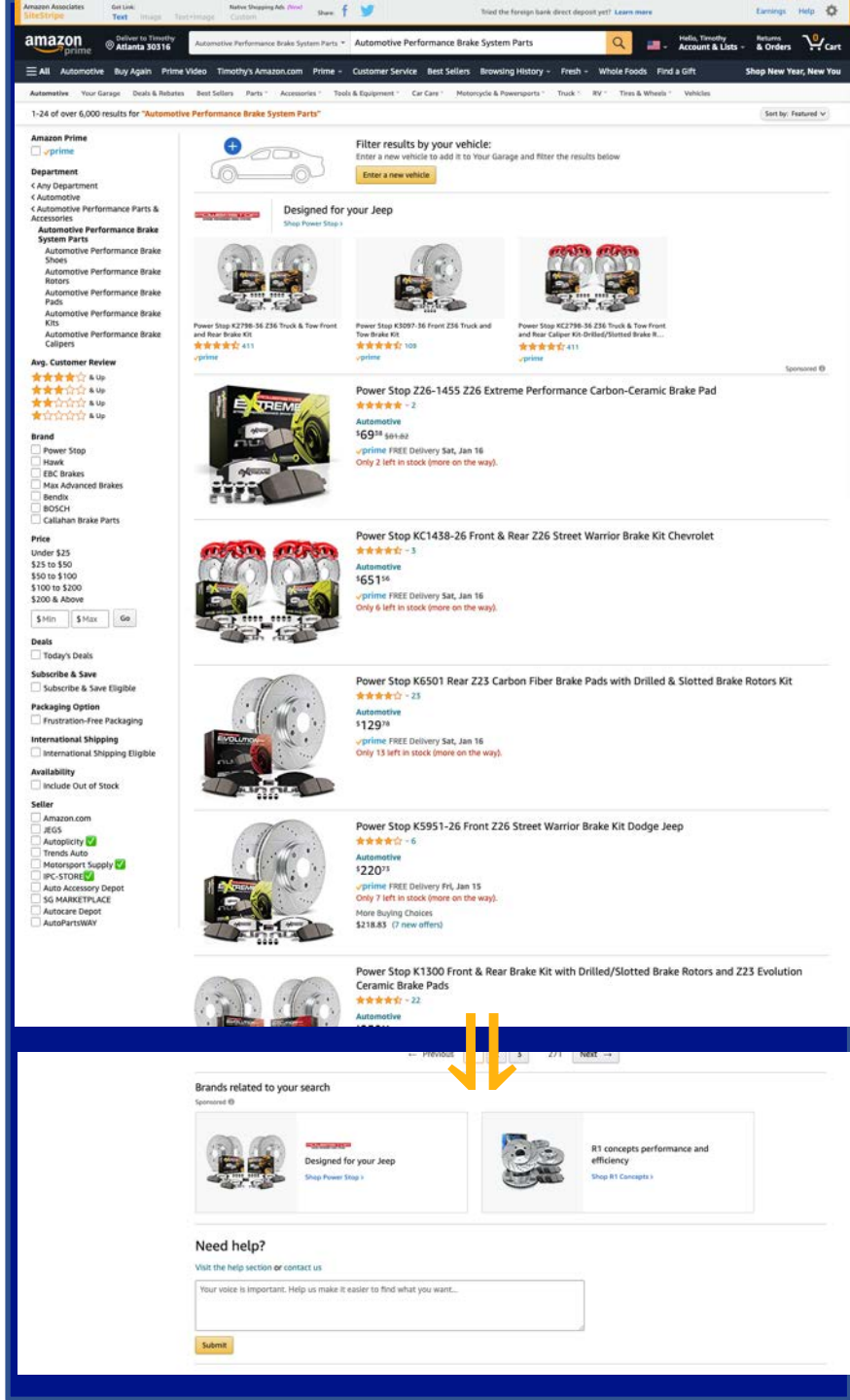
- The category listing page lists the subcategories and products in a similar format to the rest of the sites surveyed
- All subcategories are available using the left-hand navigation
- Each category/product provides and image and name, and the product selections also include some further details



COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: DIRECT COMPETITORS

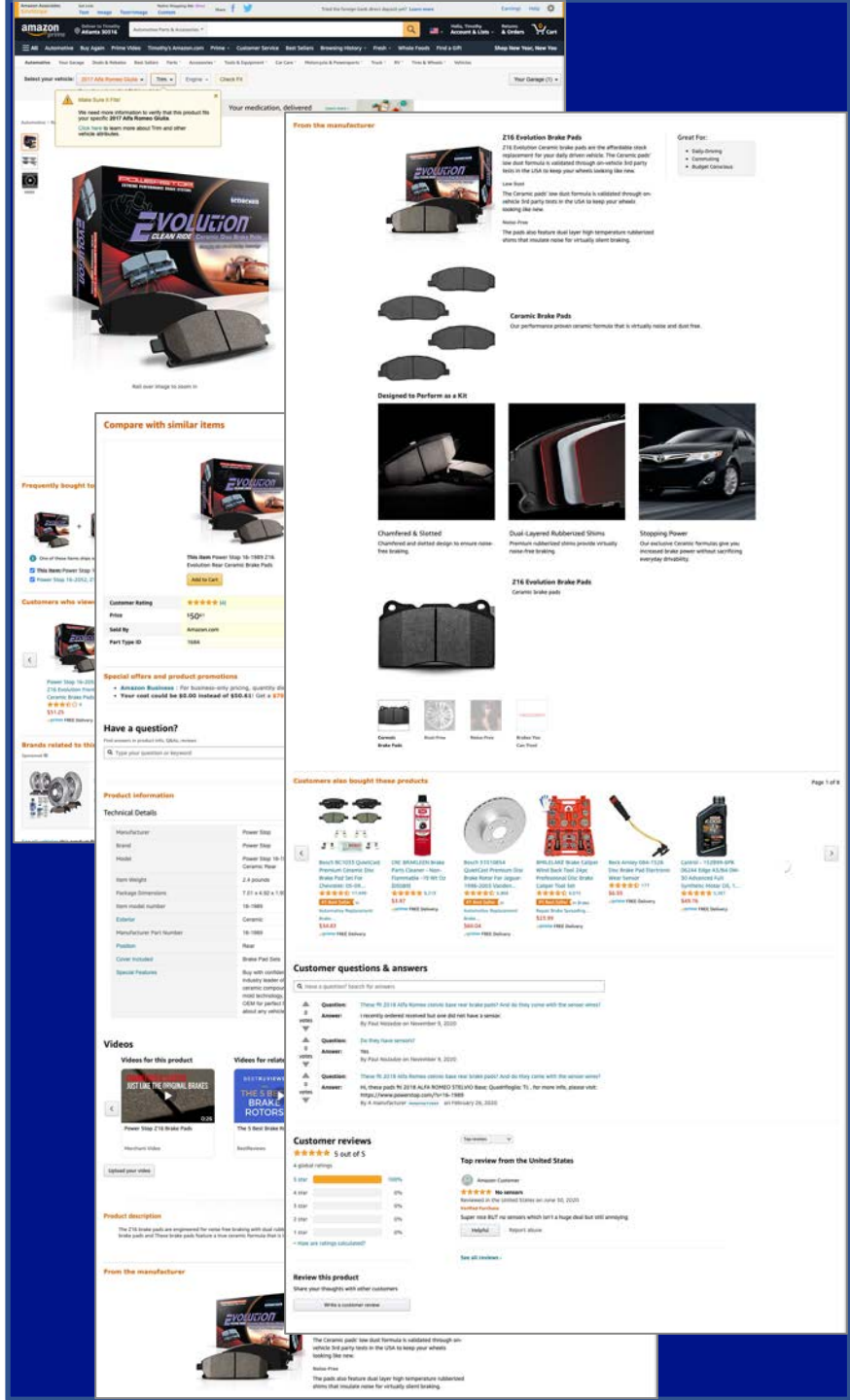
Amazon PLP

- The product listing page offers the ability to filter by vehicle make and model
- It also provides a broad set of facets that allow users to further narrow their search
- Ratings and review a highlighted in the product list as well a being one the facets that users can use to narrow their results
- The page also highlights related brands
- Finally, the page offers the user the ability to interact with Amazon around the content (“Need Help?”)



Product detail page

- The product detail offers a wealth of information to the user
- Important product details and feature and benefits are highlight next the the primary product image
- Each product observed had multiple image, rich content (360˚ views), and videos
- The page also provides deeper, branded selling content and “romance” content
- Larger images are also presented on the page with the deeper content and full specifications
- User-generated content—ratings and reviews, Q&A— is featured prominently
- Related products and recently products are also displayed



FIRESTONE

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Overview

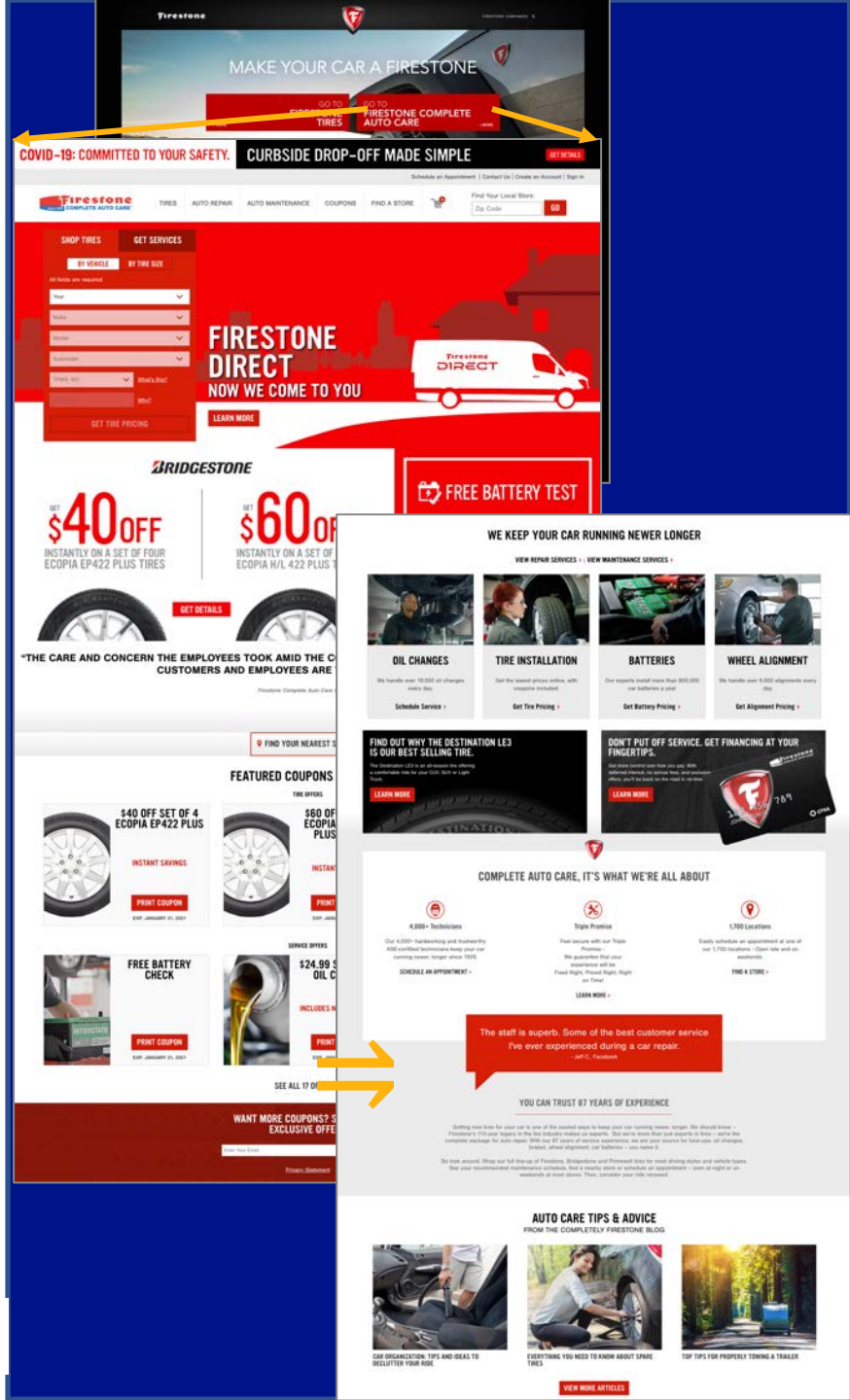
1. Firestone was audited to ascertain the weight of their Auto Care site
2. Auto Care is given the same prominence on the homepage as products
3. The Auto Care site drives users to visit a location, learn about particular products, and schedule a serve

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COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: FIRESTONE

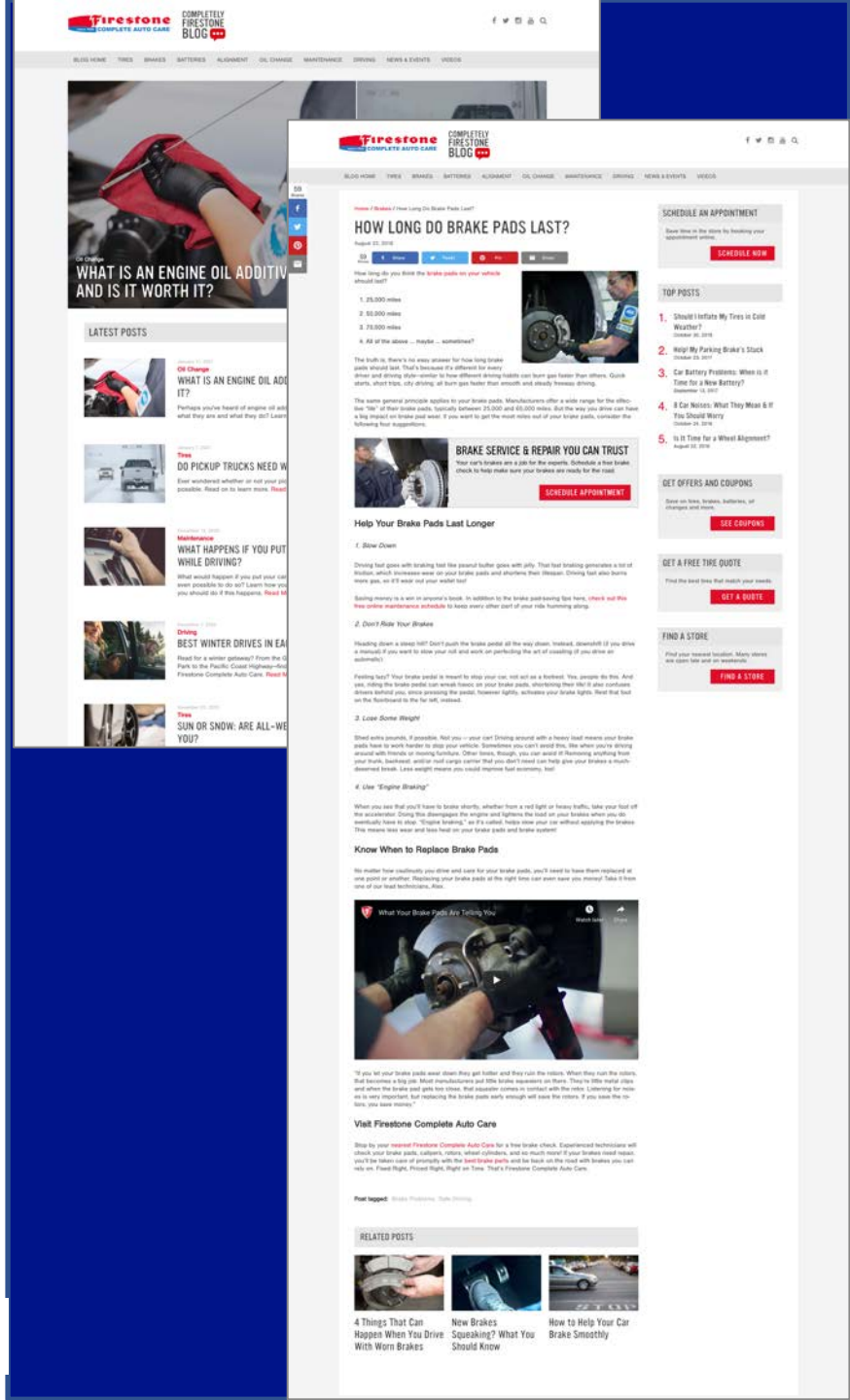
Auto care home & category pages

- Service content makes up most of the auto care experience
- It allows the user to find a store, view store details, and schedule an appointment
- It provides access to information about each service offered, along with a little context to entice the user to select a service
- Coupons are also highlighted prominently
- Know-how and informational content are also highlighted prominently on the main page



Autocare blog

- The know-how content on the auto care takes the form of a blog, that is then integrated at other points in the experience
- Know-how articles provide a mix of content editorial, images, and video
- Each article includes calls to action reenter the service browse and schedule experience
- They also include links to related articles, based on the tags that are tied to the content and display



CRUTCHFIELD

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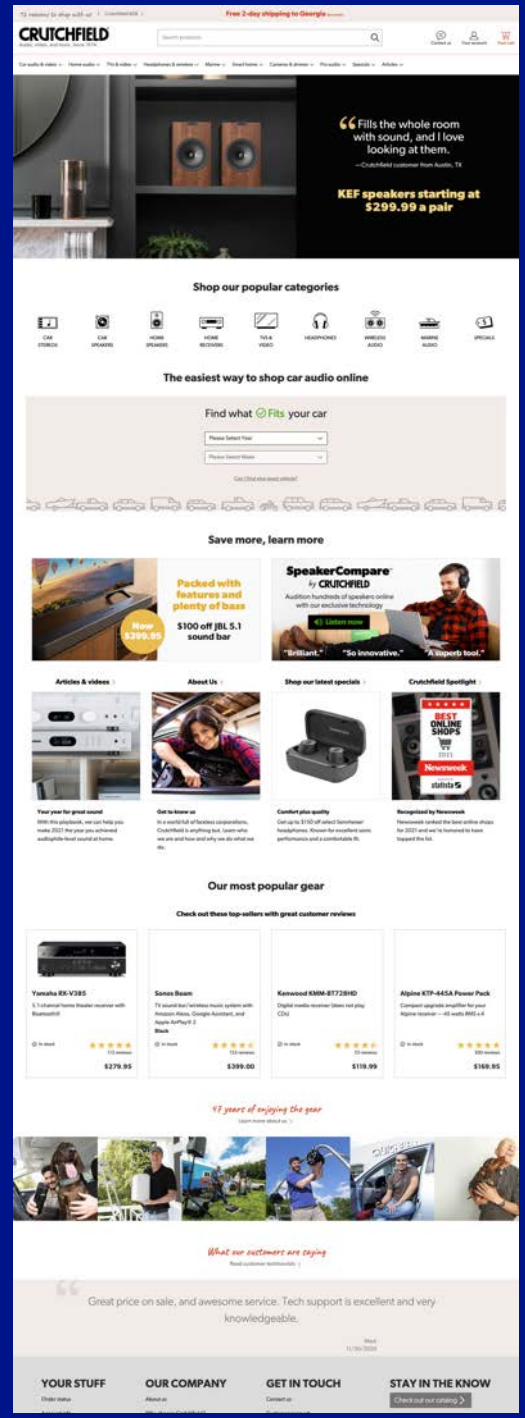
Overview

1. Crutchfield is a provider of audio and video equipment
2. It seamlessly mixes knowledge content with sales and product content
3. The product details are enticing and provide clear benefits and enticing imagery
4. Branded content and “romance” copy feature heavily for the site
5. User-generated content, such as ratings and reviews and Q&A are also prominently featured

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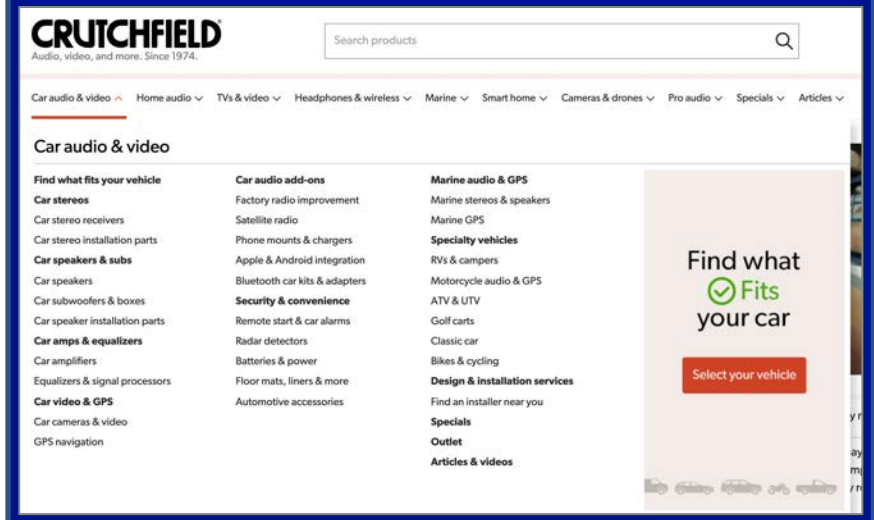
Homepage

- The homepage is rather concise and provides a mix of sales (and deal) content alongside informational articles about the products
- About content is also feature on the homepage
- The most popular products are also highlighted on the homepage
- For car audio, it provides the users ability to choose their vehicle to ensure fit
- It shows users similar products and those products they have already viewed
- The page closes with branded content and user testimonials



Navigation

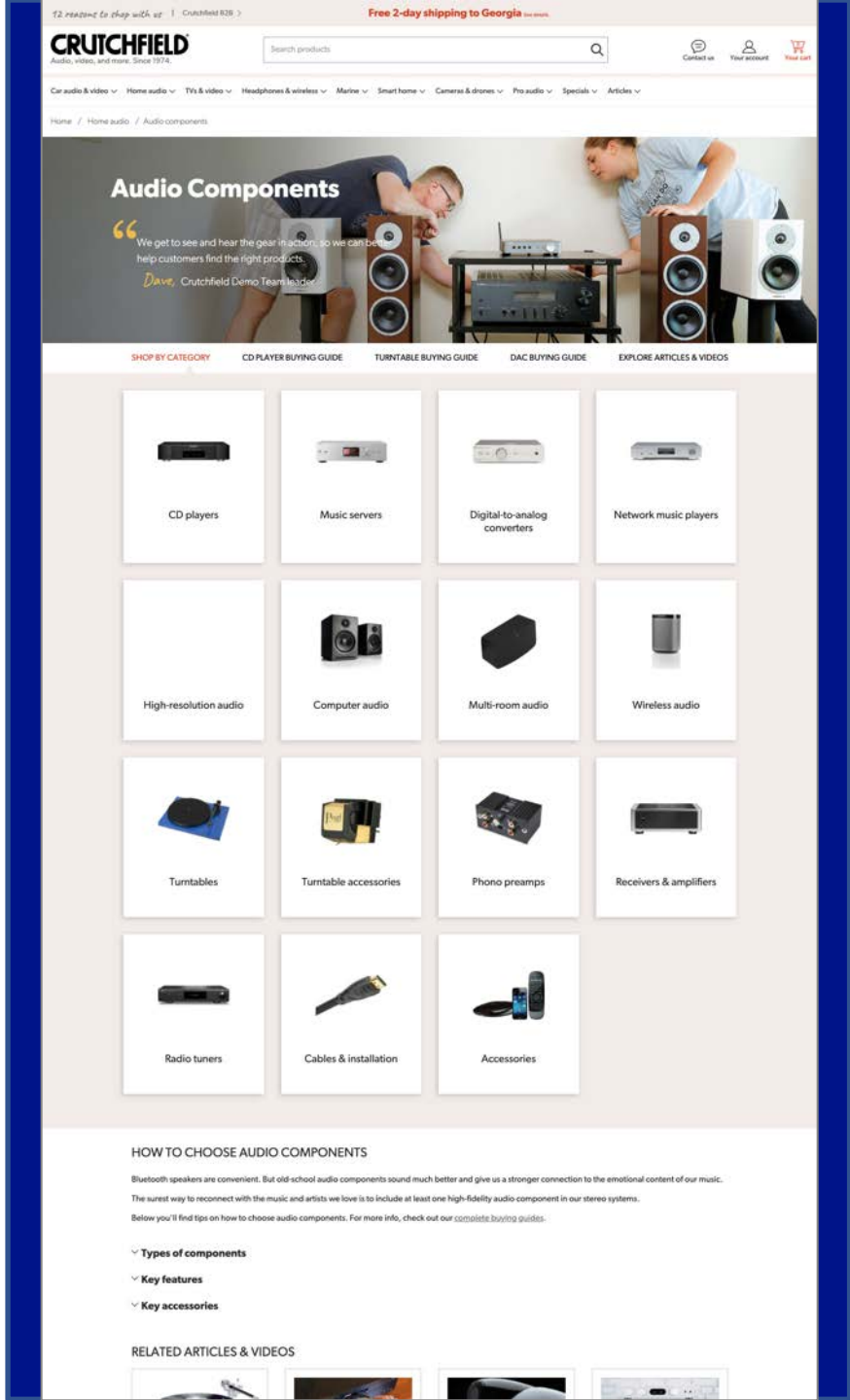
- Crutchfield has a much narrower set of products that the rest of the sites surveyed
- Product categories sit alongside Specials and Articles on the primary navigation
- The fly-out navigation also affords the opportunity to present feature products, featured content, and promotions



COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: CRUTCHFIELD

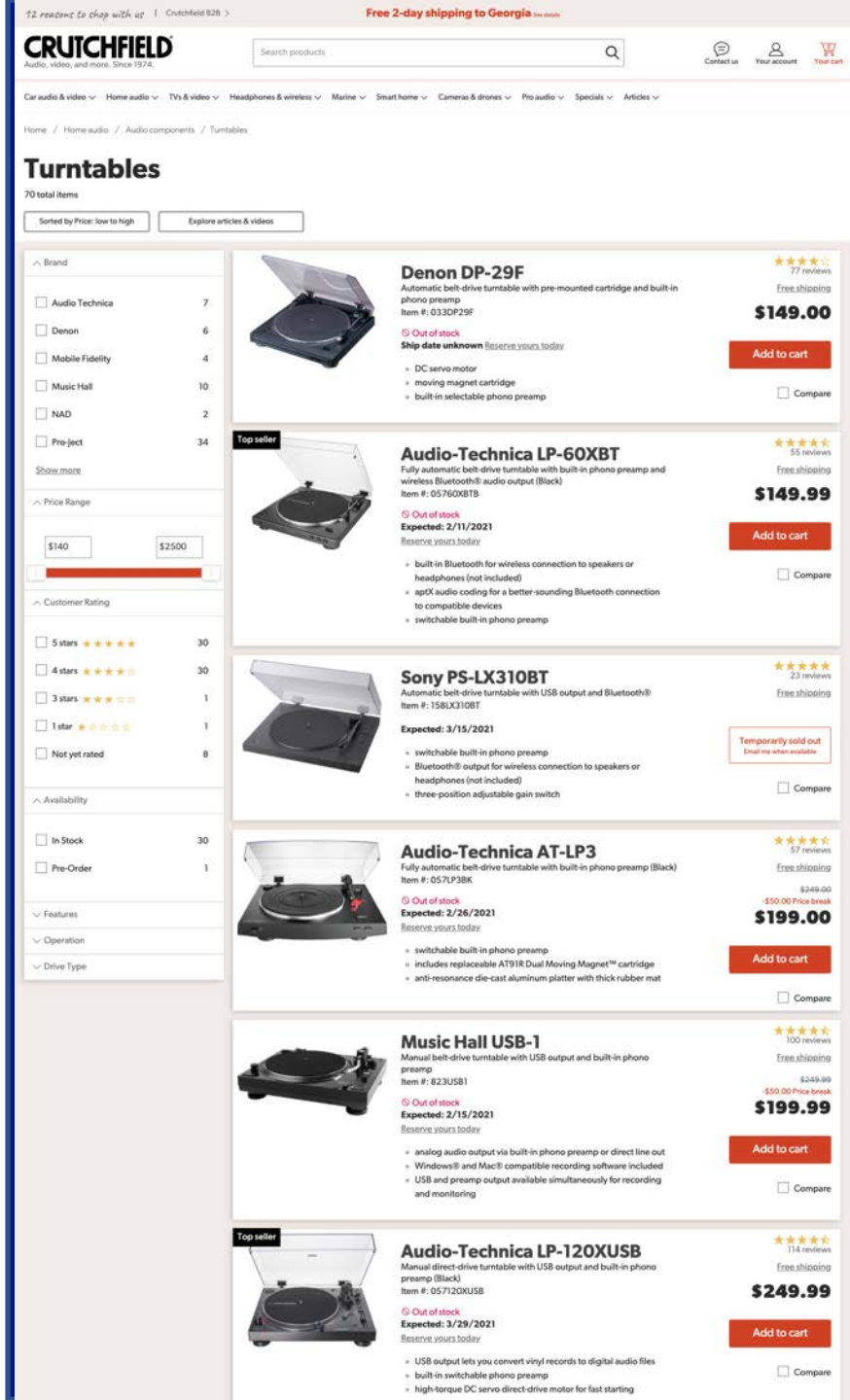
Category listing page

- Given that fewer categories are required in their space, category landing pages are also concise with a visual category menu
- It also includes editorial copy to frame the category and inject a bit of branded and know-how content
- It also presents the user with articles and videos that relate to the category



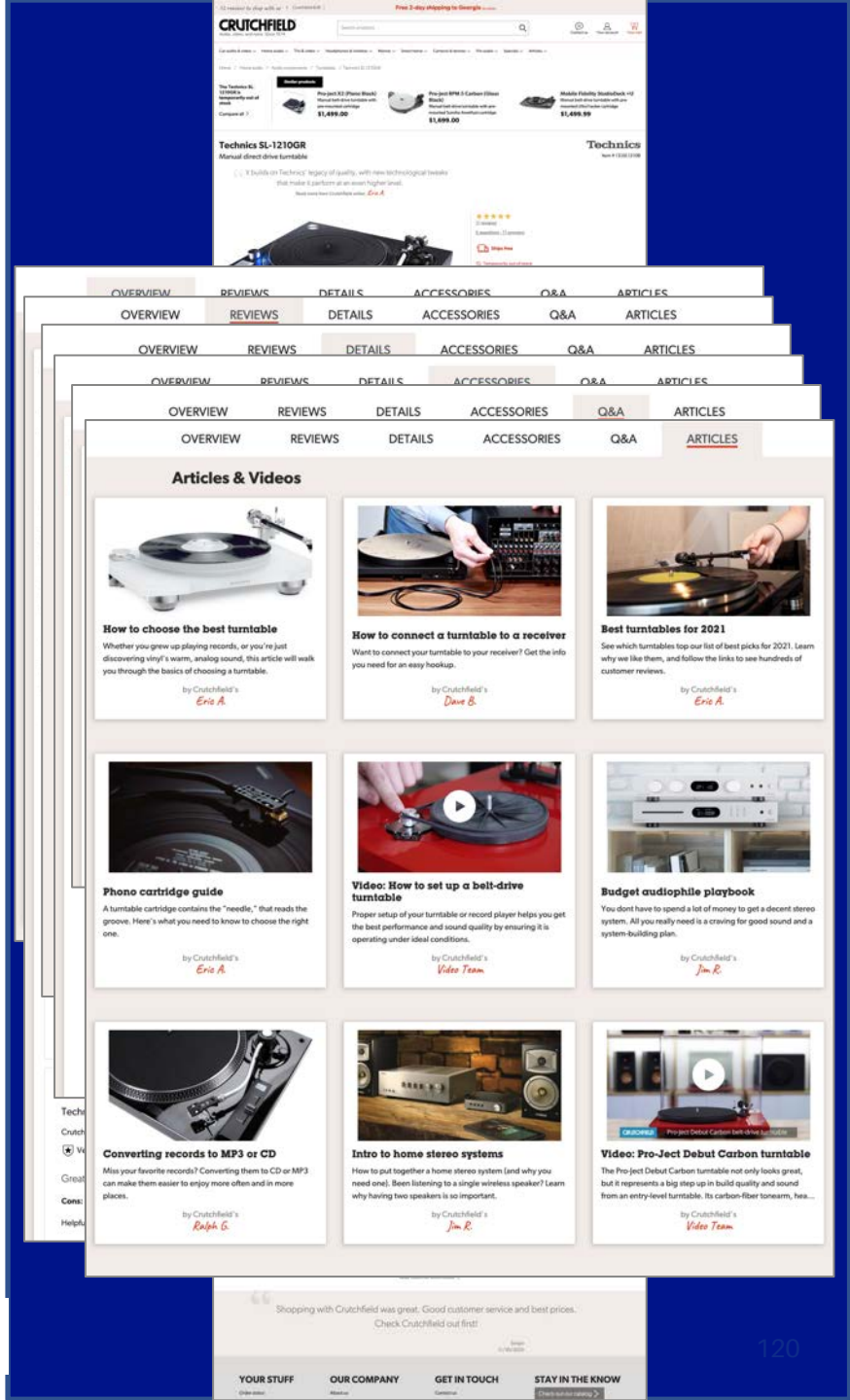
Product listing page

- The product listing pages focus entirely on products within the category
- Each product features a representation of its ratings and reviews
- The page provides a number of facets, including average ratings, as options users can use to narrow their search



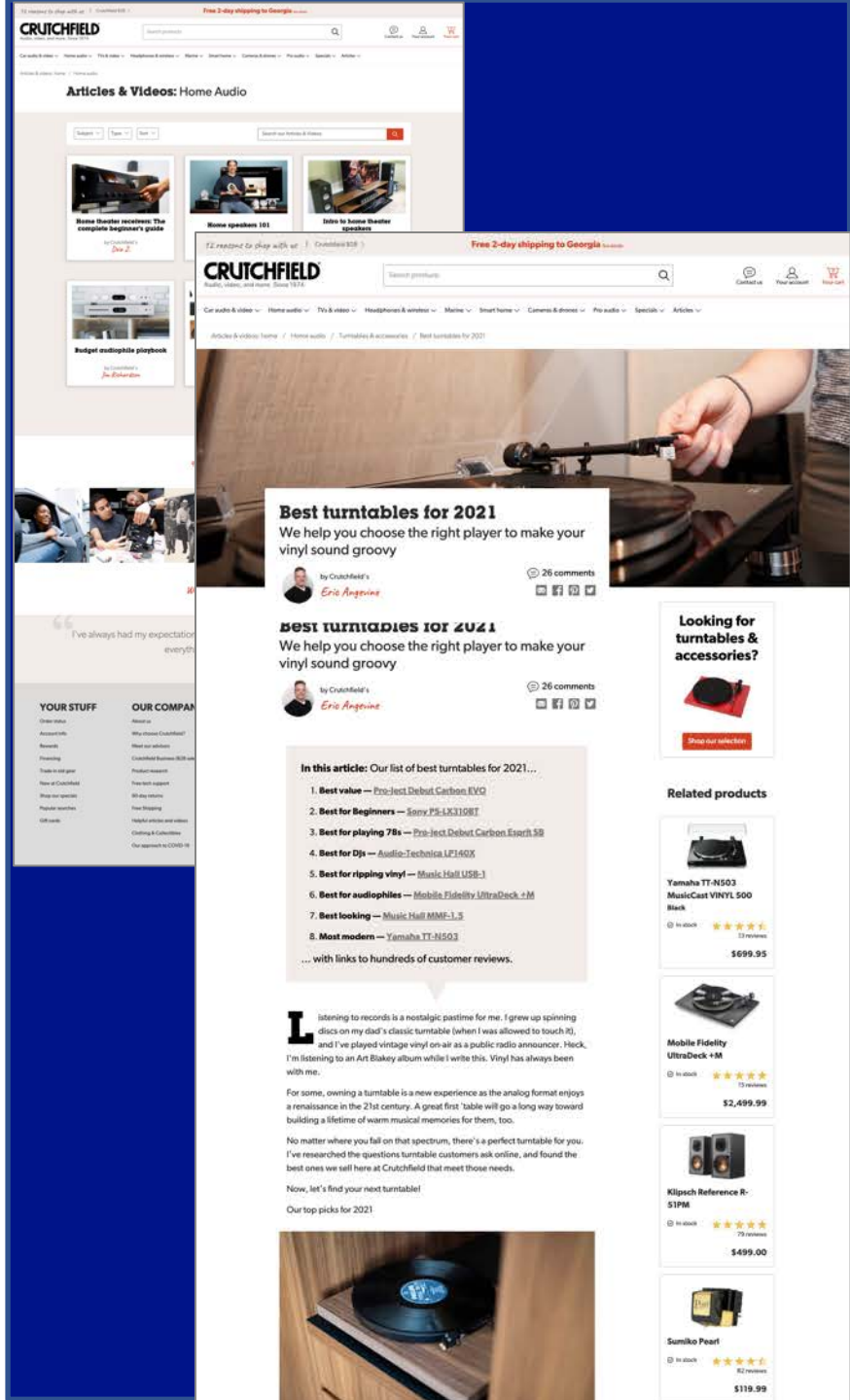
Product detail page

- The product detail is the richest product item page viewed
- It includes the usual suspects: price, images, ability to purchase
- The product-detail content is very wide and deep, with brand, product, know how perspectives easily accessible in one place
- Instead of related products, users are presented with other product other users have compared the product to
- Finally, it provides related search terms to the product



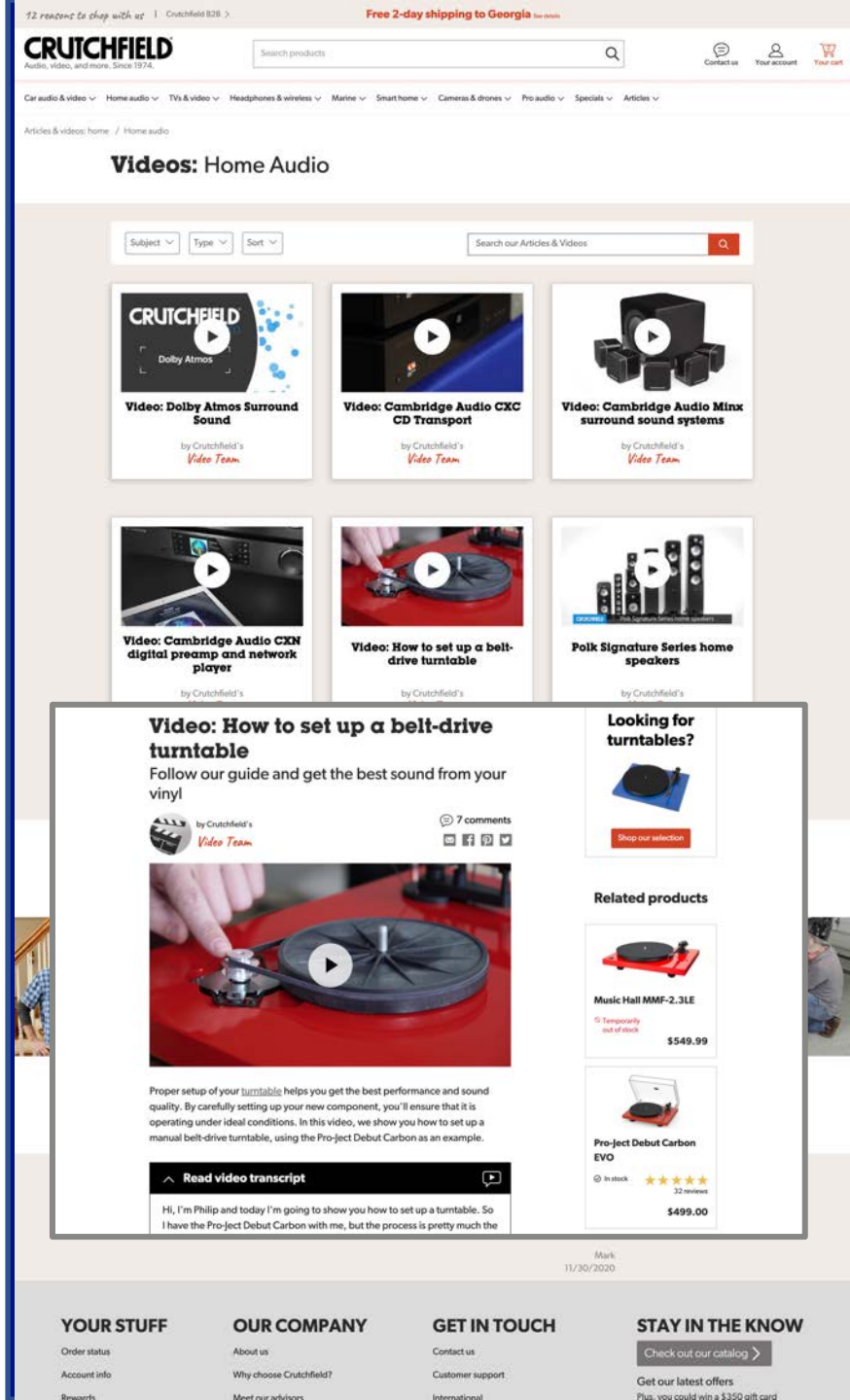
Product knowledge – landing & article

- The site's product knowledge is next to none in its sector
- The quality of the content is top notch, and offers a mix of editorial, images, and video content
- The copy is written to be suitable for digital consumption



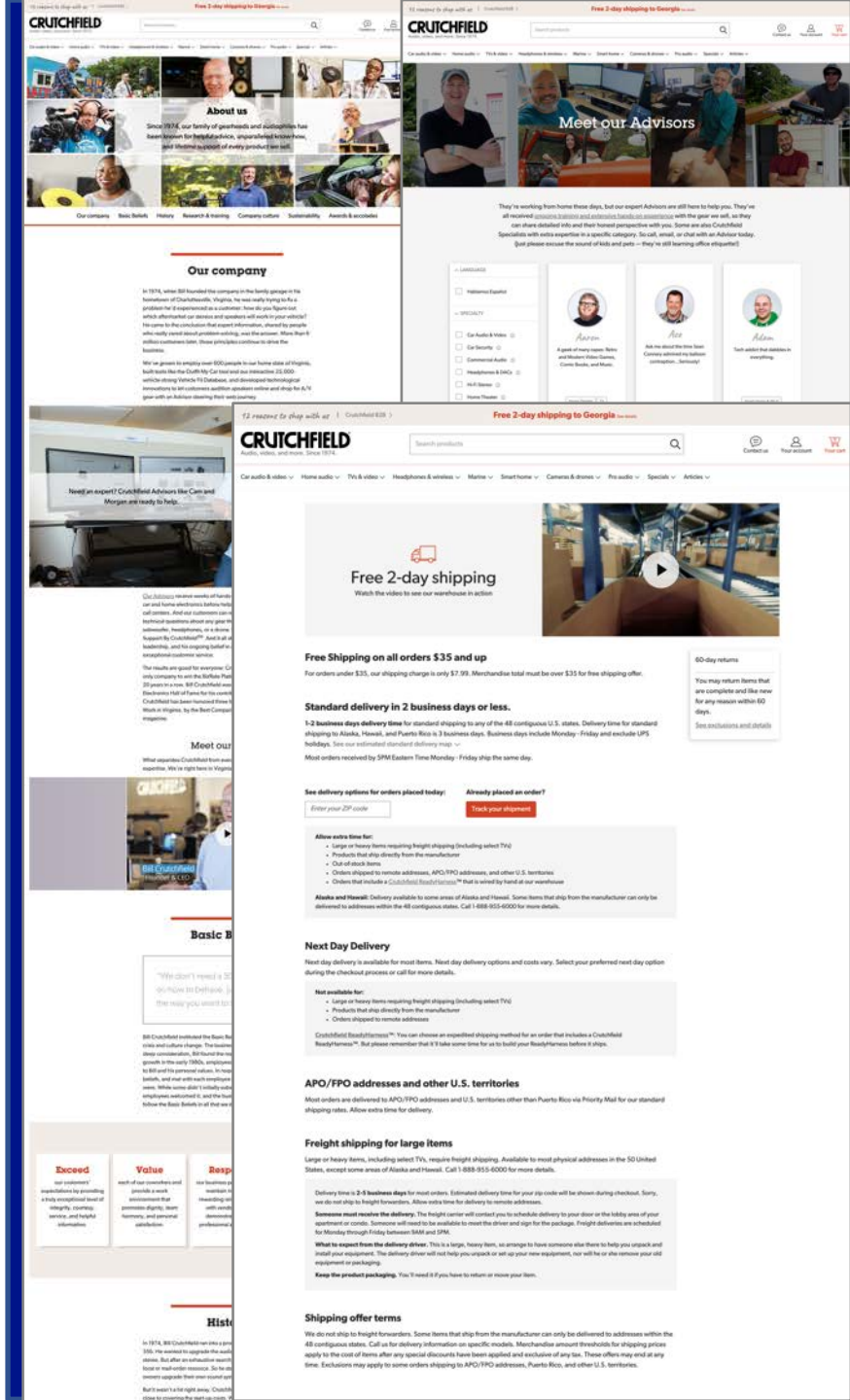
Video landing & detail

- Videos are a subset of the product knowledge content, and are well produced and informative
- Each video has copy to provide content upon viewing the video detail page
- Each video also provides a transcript to ensure accessibility
- Products that are related can be easily accessed from the page



About

- The corporate content can be accessed from on page links and banners throughout the experience
- The site uses this content to support and elevated its brand, establish credibility, and otherwise relate company information to users



THE HOME DEPOT

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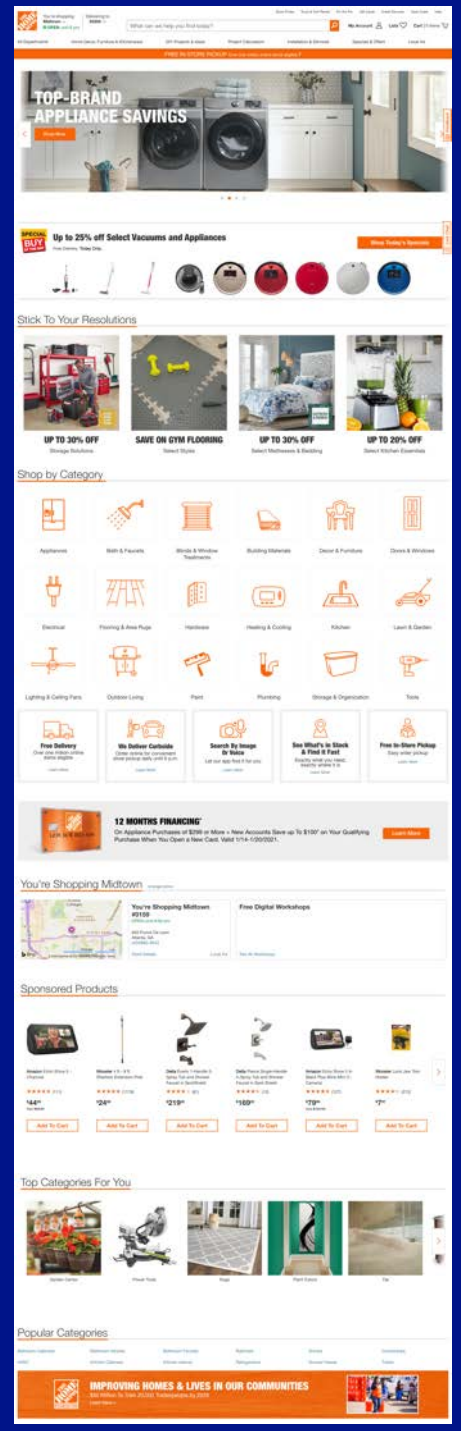
Overview

1. Similar to Amazon, The Home Depot offers a wide array of product categories and types
2. The shopping experience is top notch, providing users ease of access to products, whether they choose to search, or browse using the navigation
3. User-generated copy in the form of rating and reviews is also central to the Home Depot product experience
4. It provides rich, wide, and deep information know-how content, from buying guides to project knowledge and procedures
5. Installation services was also assessed as an analog for AutoCare

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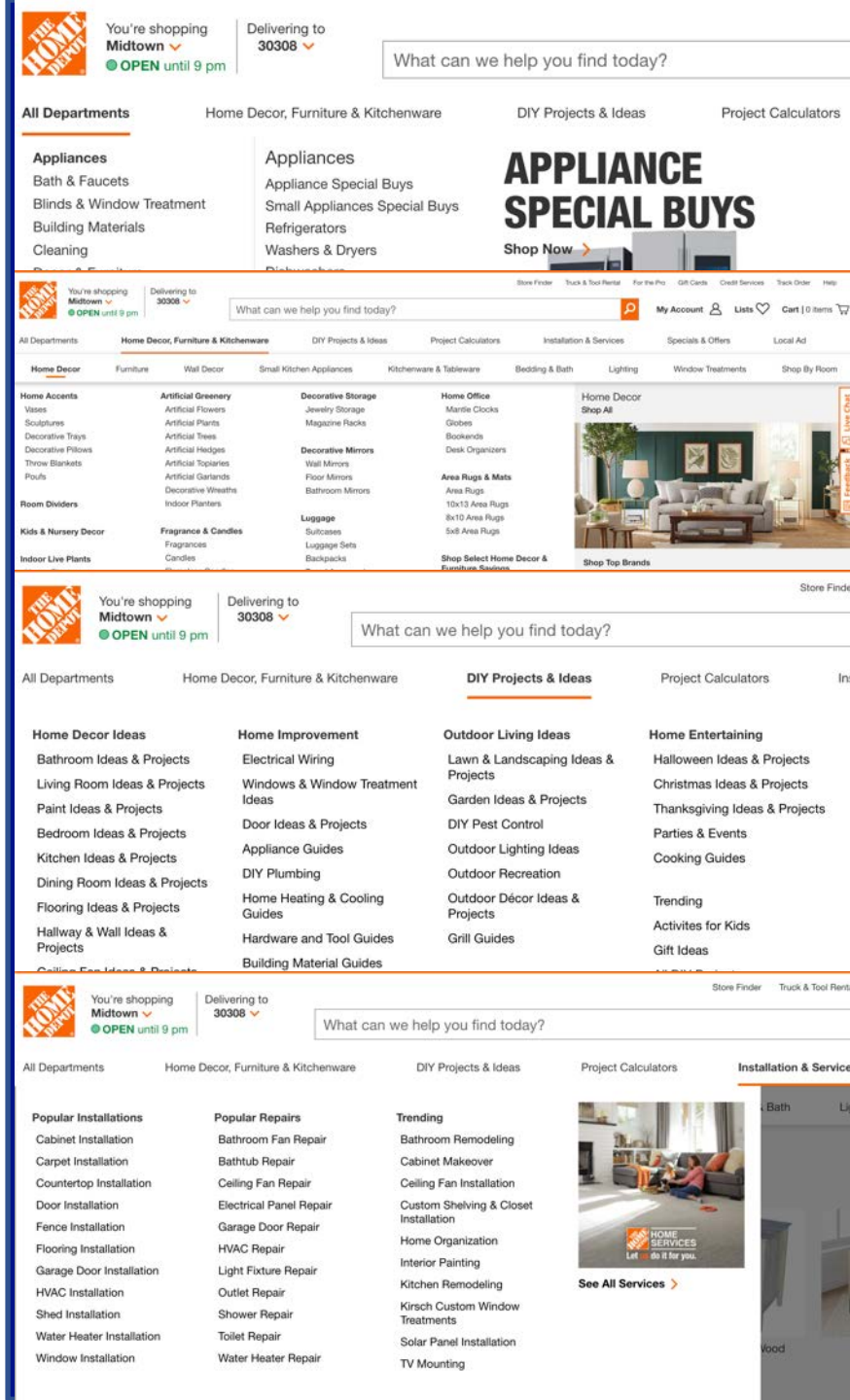
Homepage

- The homepage displays the full breadth of Home Depot's offerings
- Category navigation is central to the page
- It also highlights a user's store and provides the ability to change it
- It presents promoted and sponsored products on the page that are clearly marked as such



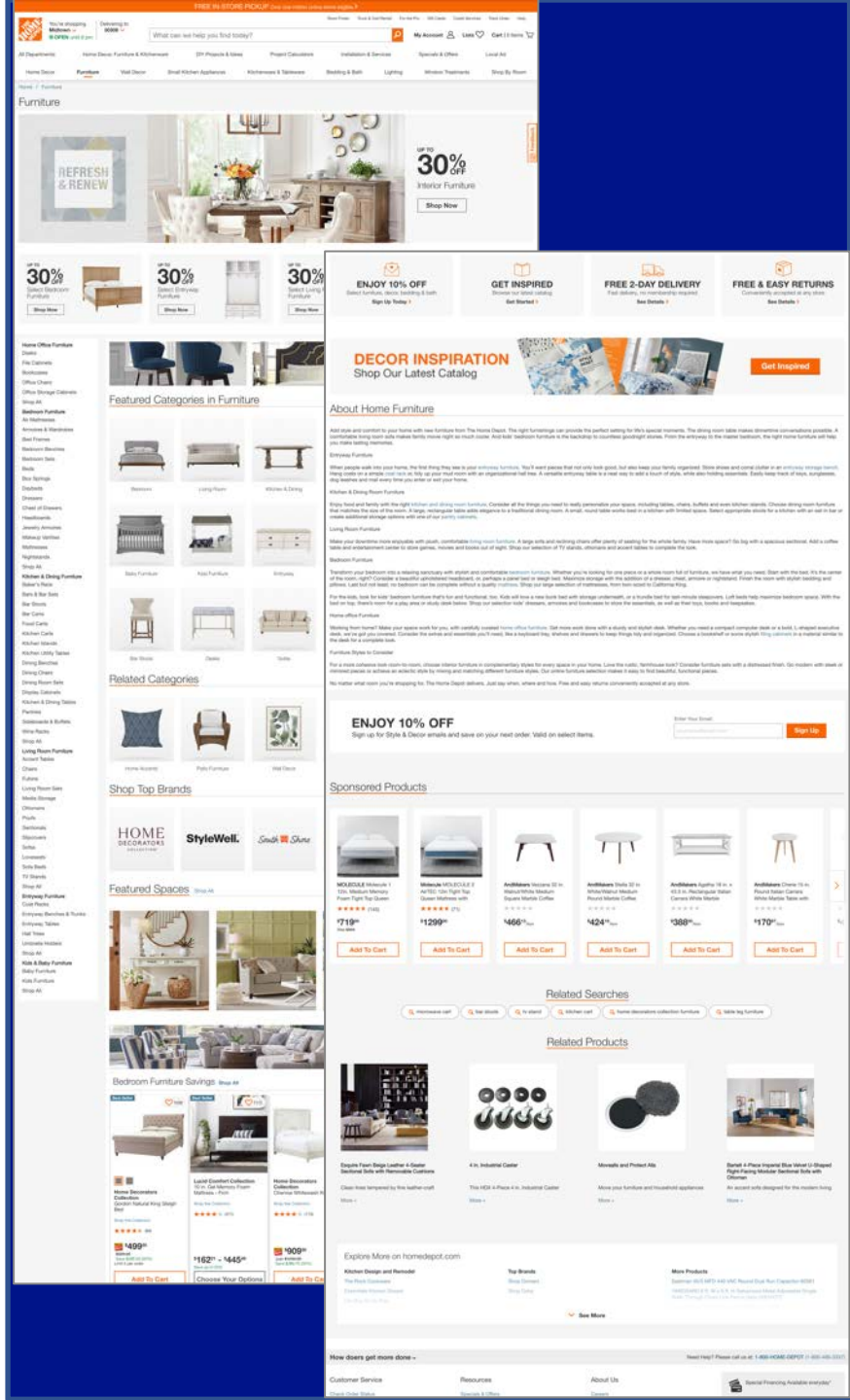
Navigation

- Given the breadth and width of Home Depot's offerings, the navigation starts with a focus on product categories from "All Departments
- The only product category displayed on its own is Home Décor, etc.
- Project calculators, know-how content, and installation services are giving just as much prominence as products



Category landing page

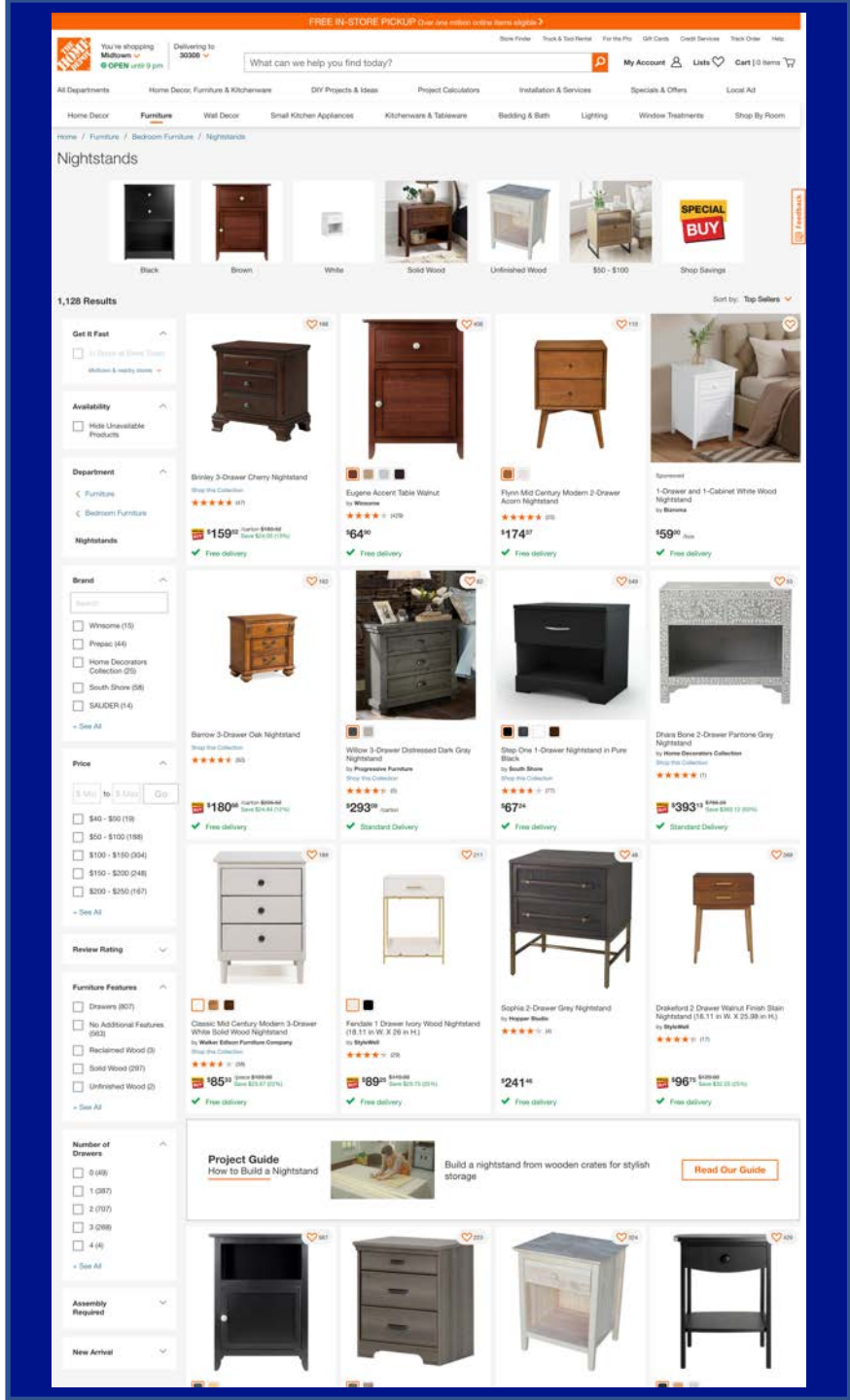
- The category landing page offers visual navigation to sub-categories and products within the category
- The full list of sub-categories, however, are only provided in the secondary navigation
- Product categories are introduce with only a name and image
- It provides promotions for its top brands
- It groups products in “Featured Spaces” in this example to further highlight products in a particular content
- The main editorial context is provided near the end of the page and is used primarily for SEO purposes
- Again, sponsored products are highlighted with almost the same way as featured products



COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: THE HOME DEPOT

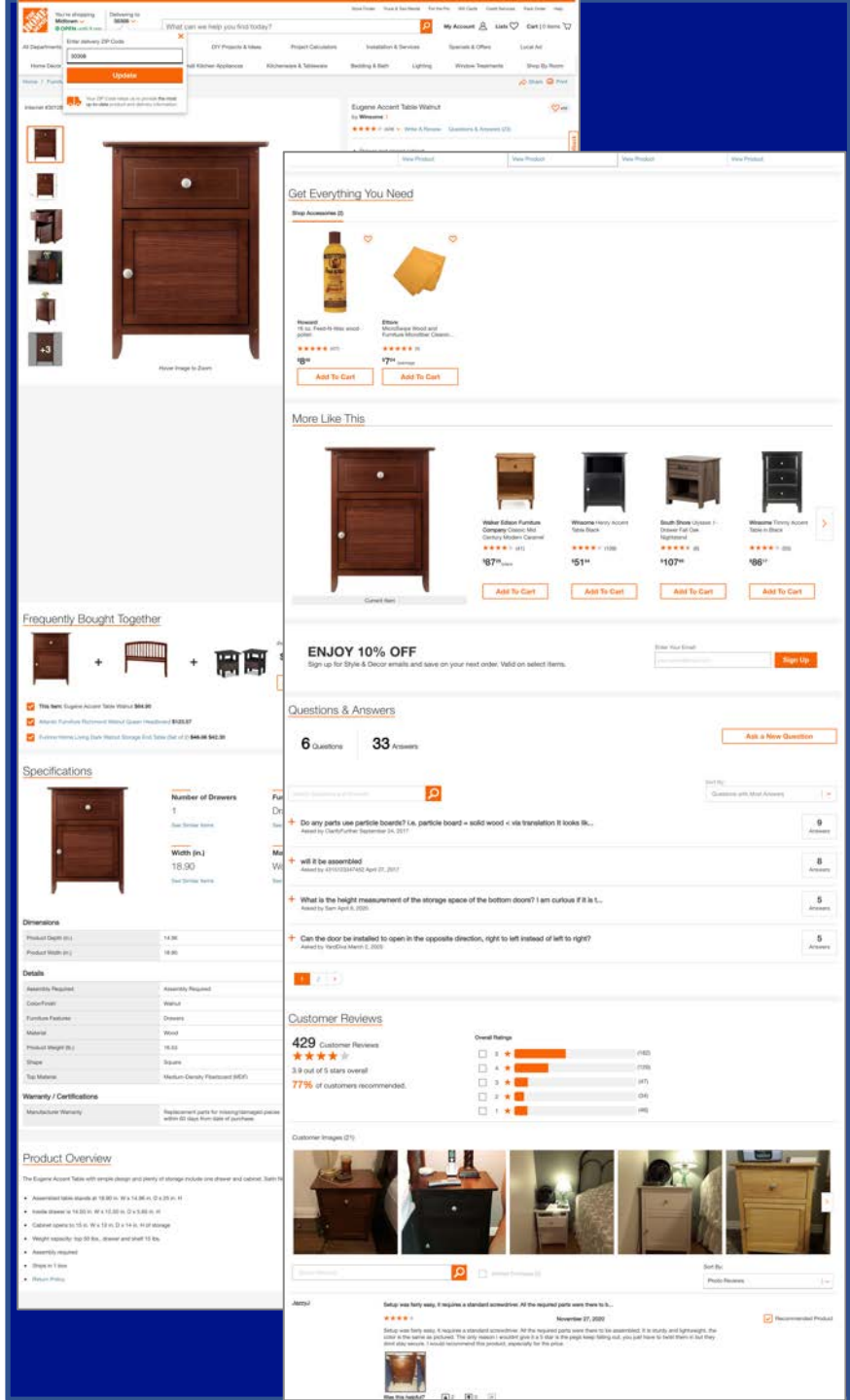
Product listing page

- Products are listed in a visual navigation on the page, that provides an image, nae, and options (e.g., color)
- The product listing page with a category or subcategory introduces facets that allow users to narrow their search
- The facets also include average ratings and reviews
- Related know-how content is also featured within the page



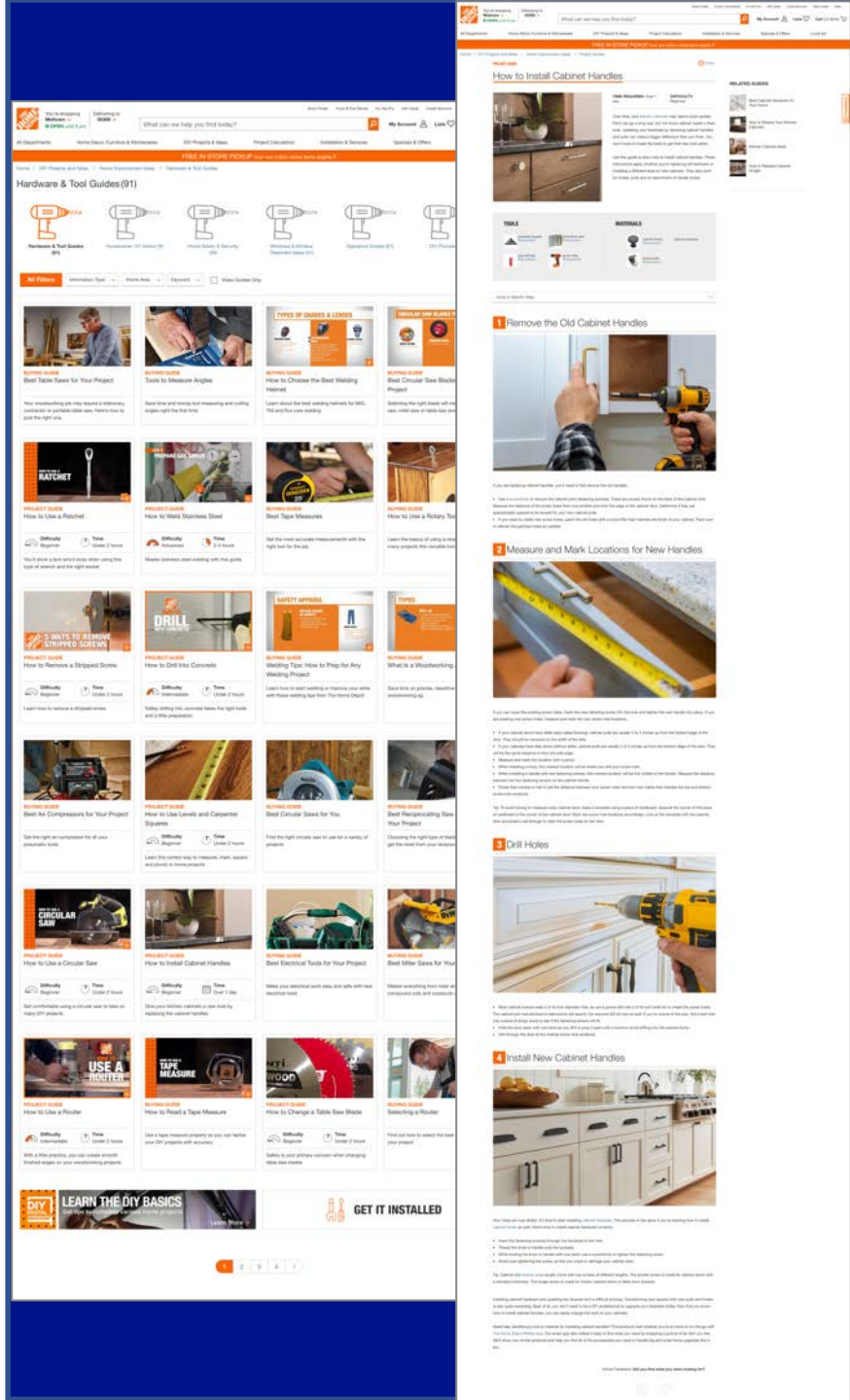
Product detail page

- Home dept provides a rich product detail experience
- Each product has multiple images and usually rich media (360s and video) in the product area
- The product details, specifications, etc., are informative and clearly state features and benefits and provide the capacity for “romance” copy (though that is not always present)
- Each product has two types of user-generated content: ratings and reviews and Q&A
- The reviews are features prominently on the page and they allow the ability for users to add their own photos of the product
- As for related content, it provides “More Like This” and “Frequently Bought Together



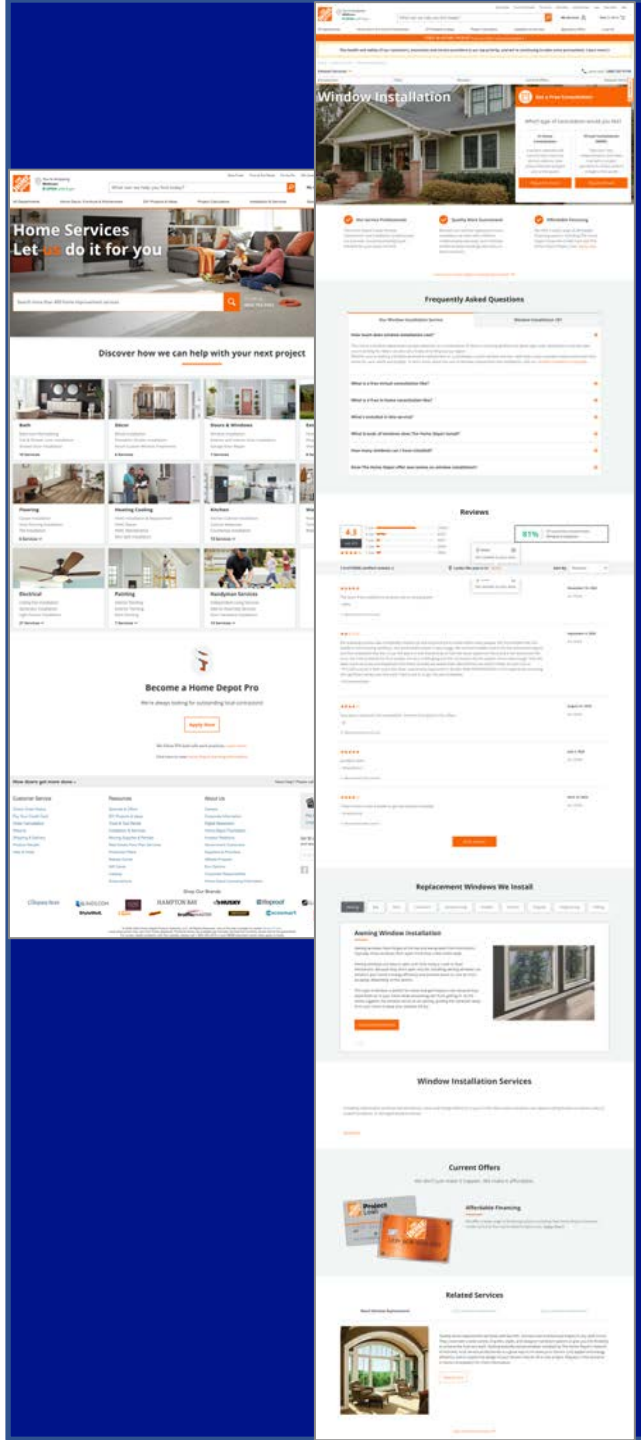
How-to landing & article

- Home Depot offers a wealth of know how content, both copy-based and in videos
- The landing page groups all this content together in a visual navigation that provide a branded feature image, clear title, as well as other details, such as time to complete
- Know-How detail pages are mix of copy and images. They are written to be scannable and easily digestible to users
- Since know-how is also central the its brand, quality know-how content is brand content



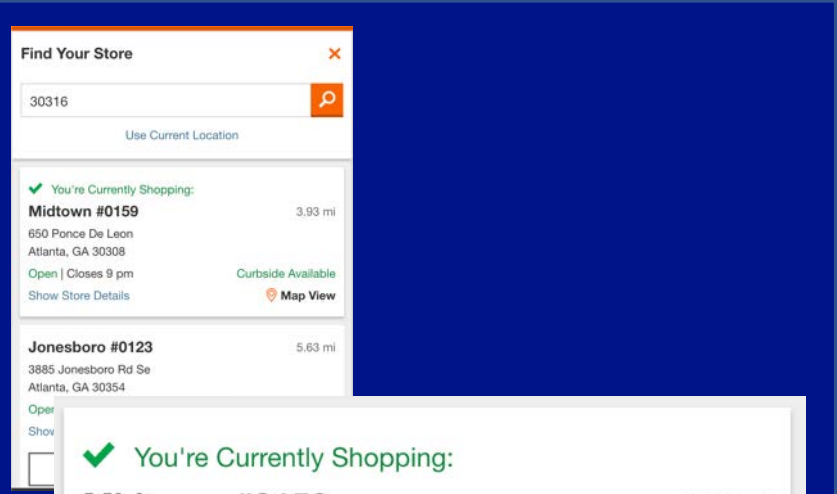
Installation landing & detail

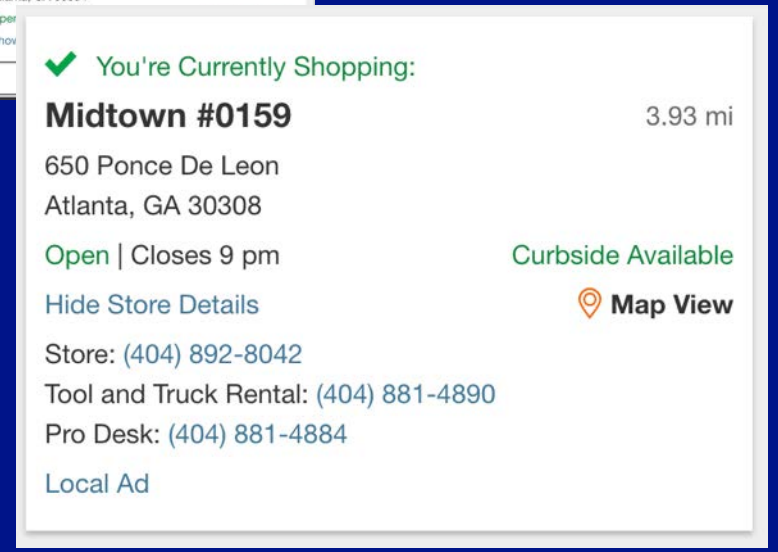
- Home Depot’s installation services provide the DIFM audience an easy avenue purchase products and project work by experts
- Users can browse for their project type using the visual navigation on the page, accessing the installation service they desire
- The installation service landing page provides a branded value proposition, service details, and ratings and reviews for the service providers from Home Depot
- Related services content is also presented

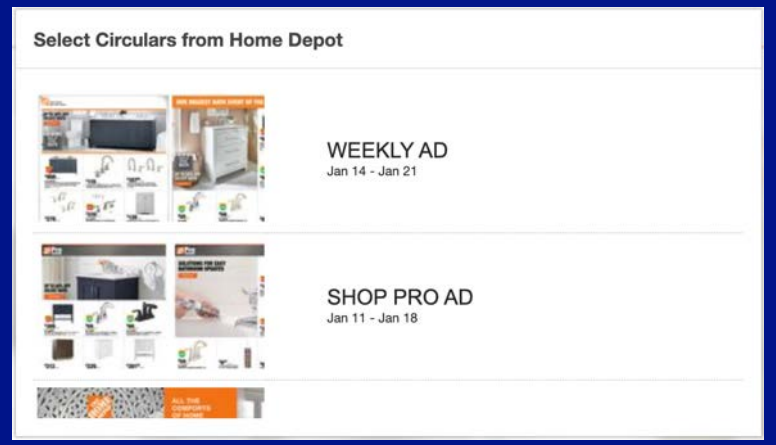


Store locator & detail

- Home Depot's store locator is very concise, occurring within the same dropdown
- It allows users to pick a particular store and view its details
- The store detail content only barely expands on the store locator module
- It does, however, allow users to see the weekly ad or other circular from the store they are viewing







OTHER SITES OF INTEREST

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Overview

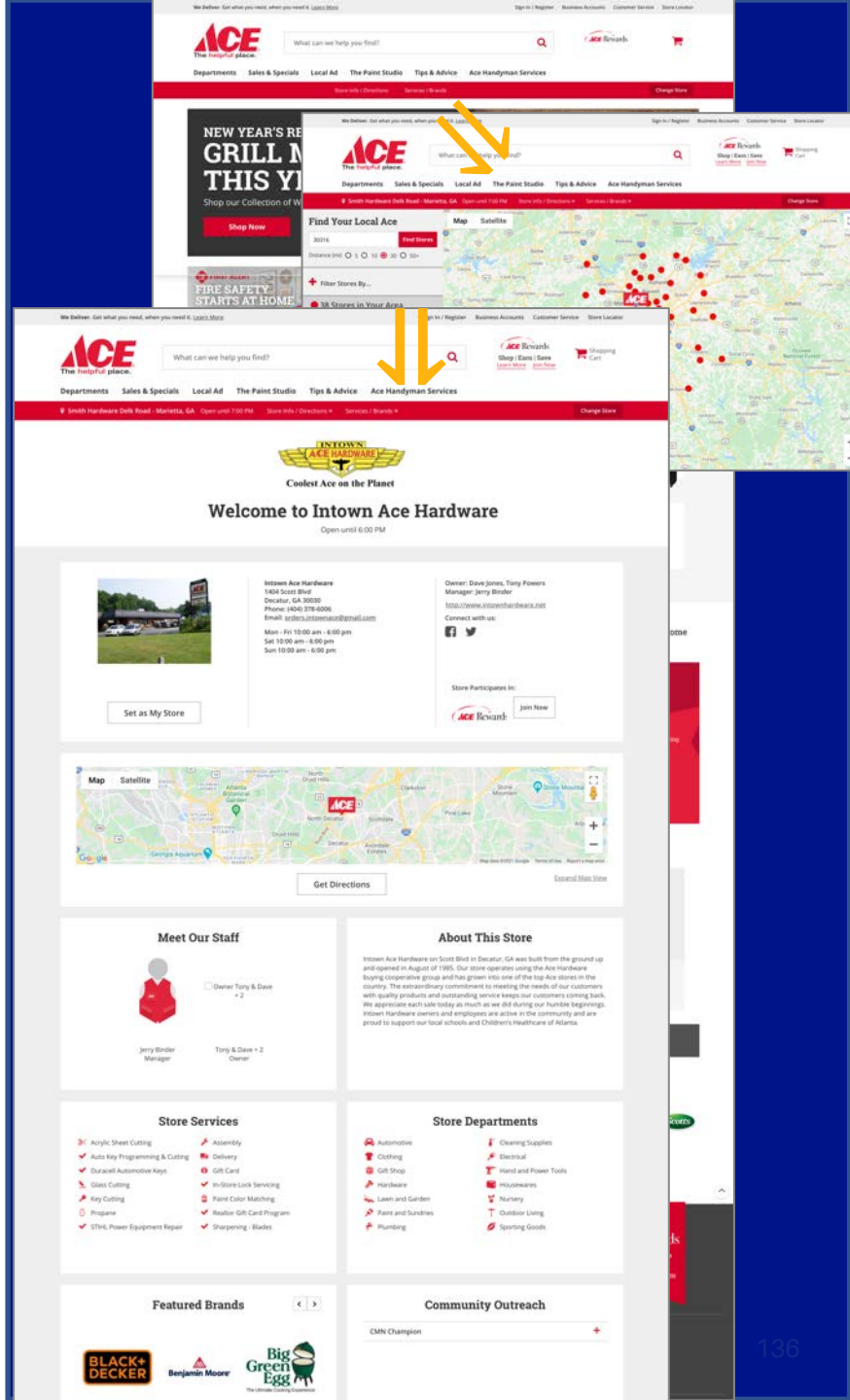
In addition to the competitive and adjacent sites, we looked at a number of other sites for particular features

1. Ace Hardware – Store Locator and branded Store Detail Page
2. Microcenter – Robust community (only a year old but very active)
3. Patagonia – Brand experience and blog integration

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Ace Hardware

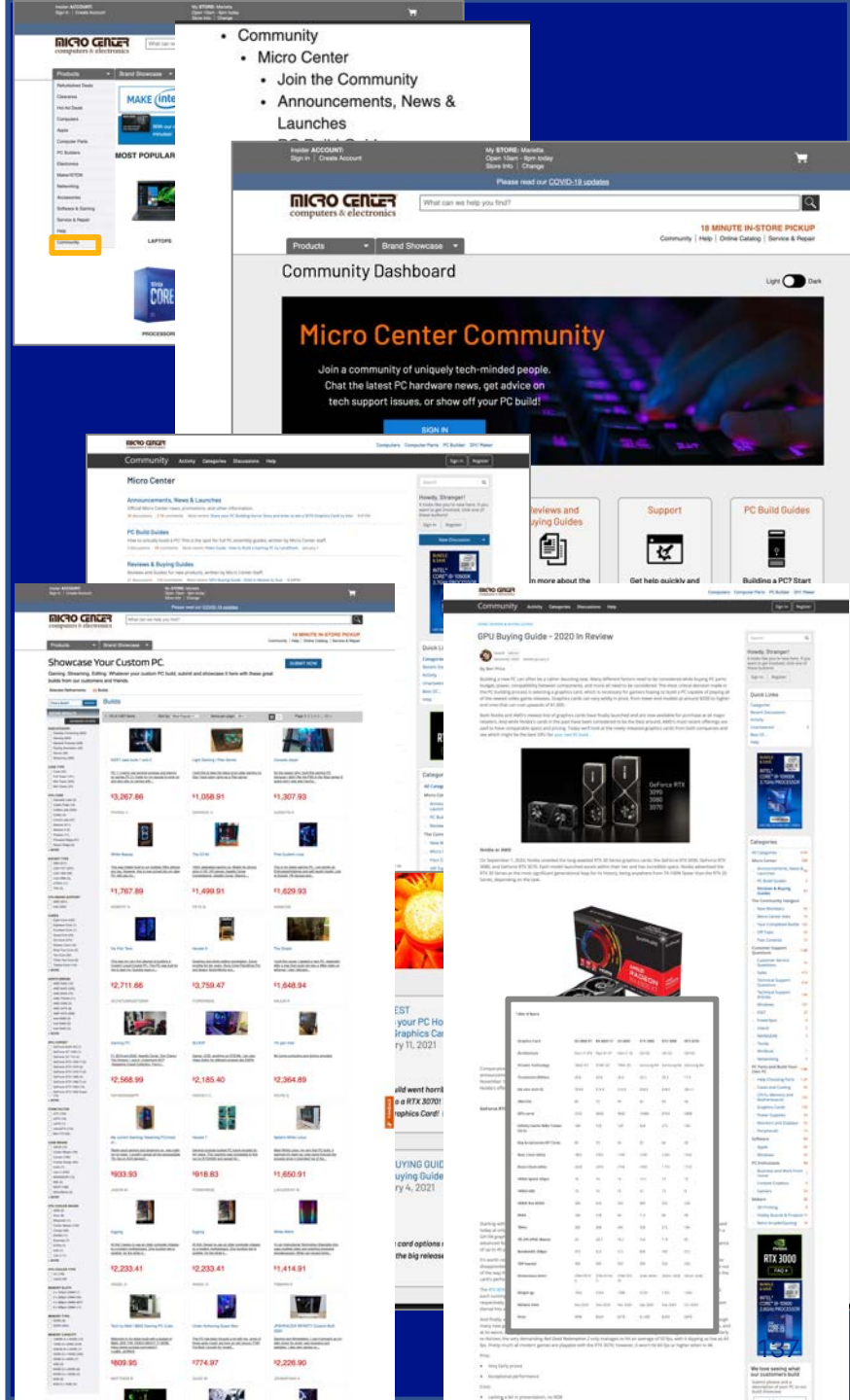
- Ace Hardware provides a more detailed experience for its local stores (all within the Ace experience, Ace branding, and further details beyond hours and contact information)
- The flow is much like every other site accessed: 1) enter location, 2) choose store, and 3) view store details
- The store detail page, however, allow for the presence of branding the local store
- It also provide other information about it, such as history)
- It lists the primary staff for each store as well, humanizing the experience



COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: OTHER SITES OF INTEREST

Microcenter

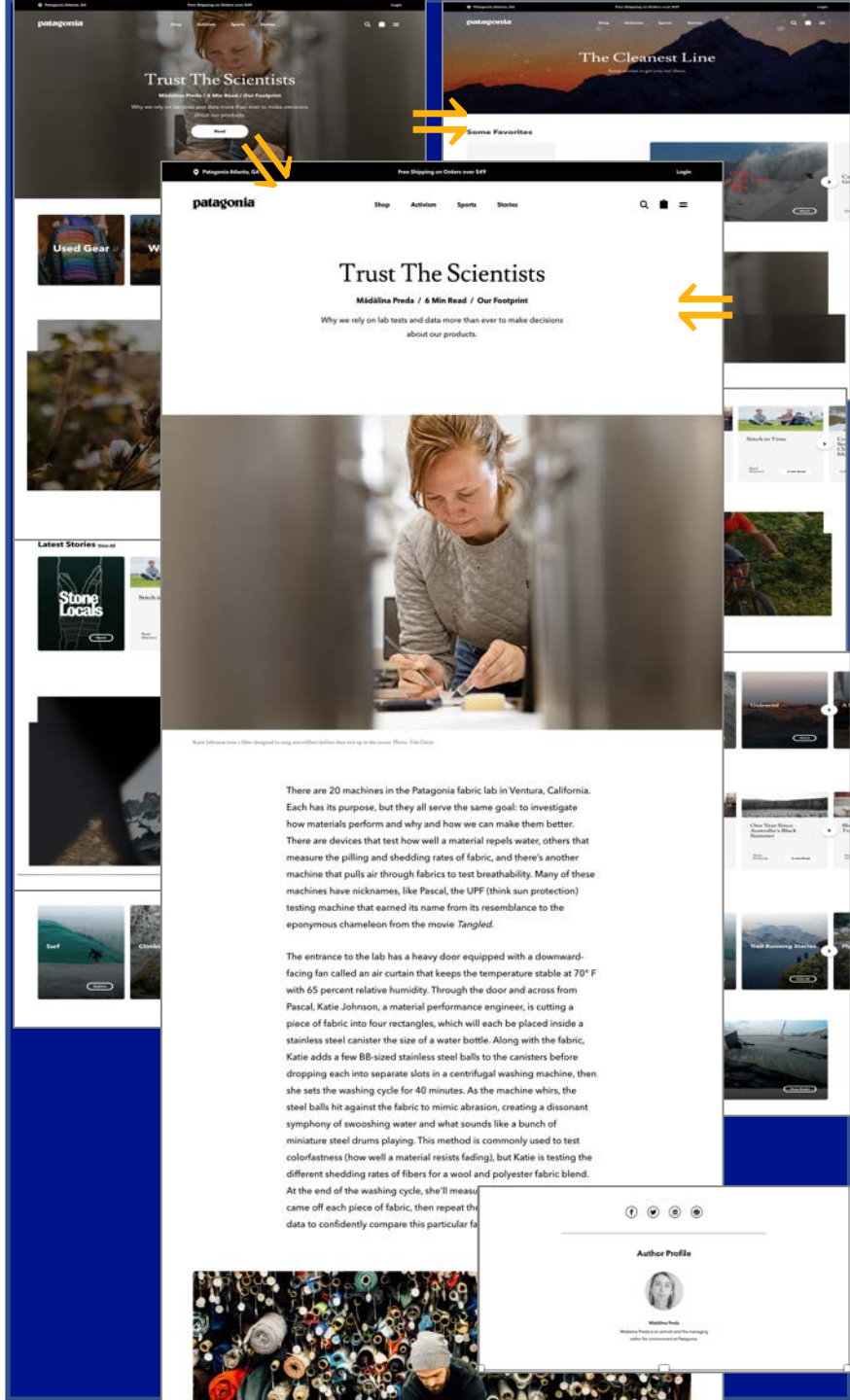
- Microcenter has an active and broad community on the site
- The community covers many products, projects, user-generated content at a page level (Build Showcase), and forums
- The buying guides and other knowledge content provided by Microcenter is broad and deep, and each provides detailed and optimized content for digital
- This active community on the site launched less than a year ago



COMPETITIVE ASSESSEMENT: OTHER SITES OF INTEREST

Patagonia

- Patagonia leads its entire digital experience with its blog and lifestyle content
- Users access blog articles from not only the homepage, but also a blog landing page
- Once they reach a particular blog post, they are presented with rich informative content that helps tell and sell the Patagonia lifestyle
- Links to specific products are unobtrusively integrated contextually as links with the blog post copy



SUMMARY

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Summary comparisons

Assessment Area	AutoParts Online	Advance Auto Parts	AutoZone	Halford's	Amazon	Firestone	The Home Depot	Crutchfield	Patagonia	Microcenter	Ace Hardware
Homepage											
Category / Sub-Category Listing Page						N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A
Product Listing Page						N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A
Product Detail Page						N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A
Store Finder / Store Pages					N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A	
Know-How / Advice					N/A				N/A		N/A
Blog / Know-How Integration					N/A						N/A
Community & Social						N/A					N/A
Auto Care (or installation services)			N/A					N/A	N/A	N//A	N/A
Overall Content Experience (Ecosystem, Content Mix, Editorial Direction, Branded Content, Nav)	+	+							N/A	N/A	N/A

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04 CONTENT & EXPERIENCE VISION

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Transform AutoParts Online’s digital ecosystem to that of a human-centered, forward-thinking brand, support business initiatives and audience needs, and more efficiently deliver an improved site experience by using AutoPartsOnline as a consultative selling tool, regardless of audience

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Vision: content & experience strategy

From...

1. **Disconnected:** structured by business silos, visitors can easily get lost; stand-alone sites/subdomains are somewhat disconnected
2. **Disjointed:** inconsistent look and feel that is staid and variable between properties
3. **Transactional:** entire experience of main site is focused on the "now:" transaction and does not showcase AutoParts Know How
4. **Complicated:** duplicative, complex content and development efforts
5. **Static:** product data and pricing only in product catalog portion, and new experiences are challenging to launch quickly

To...

1. **Continuous:** progresses through an uninterrupted experience across the ecosystem; picks back up right where you left off
2. **Immersive:** provokes engagement, inviting you into a world to keep exploring
3. **Human:** authentic personality that responds thoughtfully to user needs, guides with confident, well-informed choices, and tactfully inspires action
4. **Uncomplicated:** brings clarity to complex concepts and ideas in a straightforward yet sophisticated manner
5. **Dynamic:** library of content for dynamic presentation; greater integration between sites and makes for an easily updated promotional platform.

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How do we do this? We put AutoParts Know How, as personified by store employees, at the center of the content and experience.

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AutoParts Know How is...

1. Making content more easily viewable and indexable by search engines so potential products or content that suits their needs

2. Making it easy for B2B customers to skip the wayfinding and go directly to what they are looking for

3. Making it easy for customers to find the content they seek once on the site

4. Providing the context required for customers to decide whether to attempt the job themselves (DIY) or have it done for them (DIFM)



5. If the customer decides to do the job themselves, giving them support with Know How content that is easily found

6. If the customer decides to have the job done for them, making it easy to located and get a quote from AutoParts AutoCare

7. Making it easy for customers to find and or change their local store

8. Giving customers the ability to choose their vehicles to automatically refine their searches

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05 NEXT STEPS

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Next Steps

1. Provide feedback and validate results of research – GPC
2. Provide feedback and validate results of content audit – GPC
3. Perform competitive analysis – RubiconCX
4. Provide detailed, actionable content recommendations based on the opportunities presented here, those observed in the competitive analysis, and adherent to the overall content and experience vision for AutoPartsOnline – RubiconCX
5. Create content and experience roadmap for future work – GPC & RubiconCX

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THANK YOU!

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