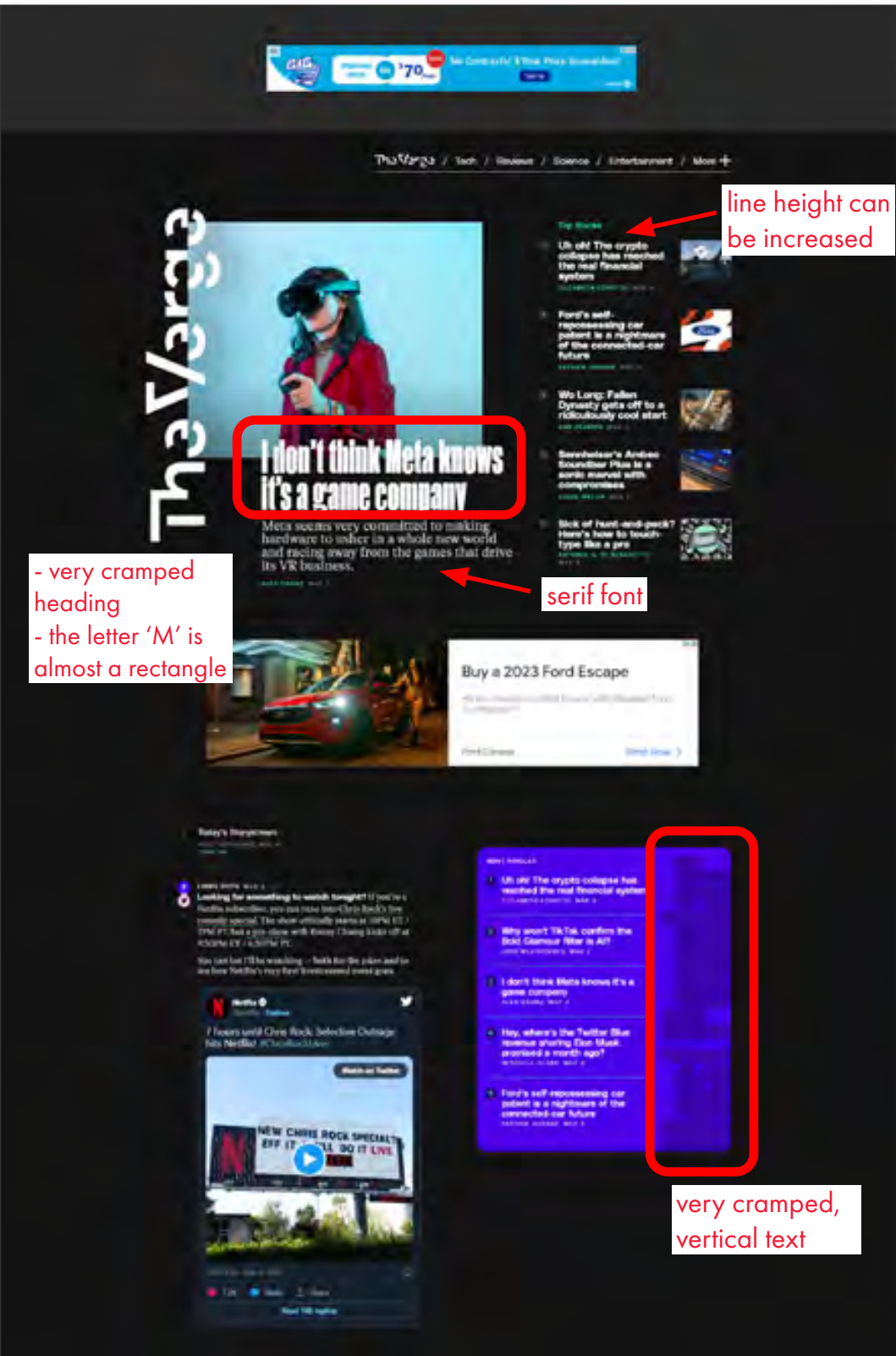


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The Verge is an online publication that focuses on topics like technology, science, entertainment, and culture.



The Verge is a relatively new tech news website founded in 2011. Its competitors include more established and well-known websites like TechCrunch, Mashable, and Wired just to name a few.

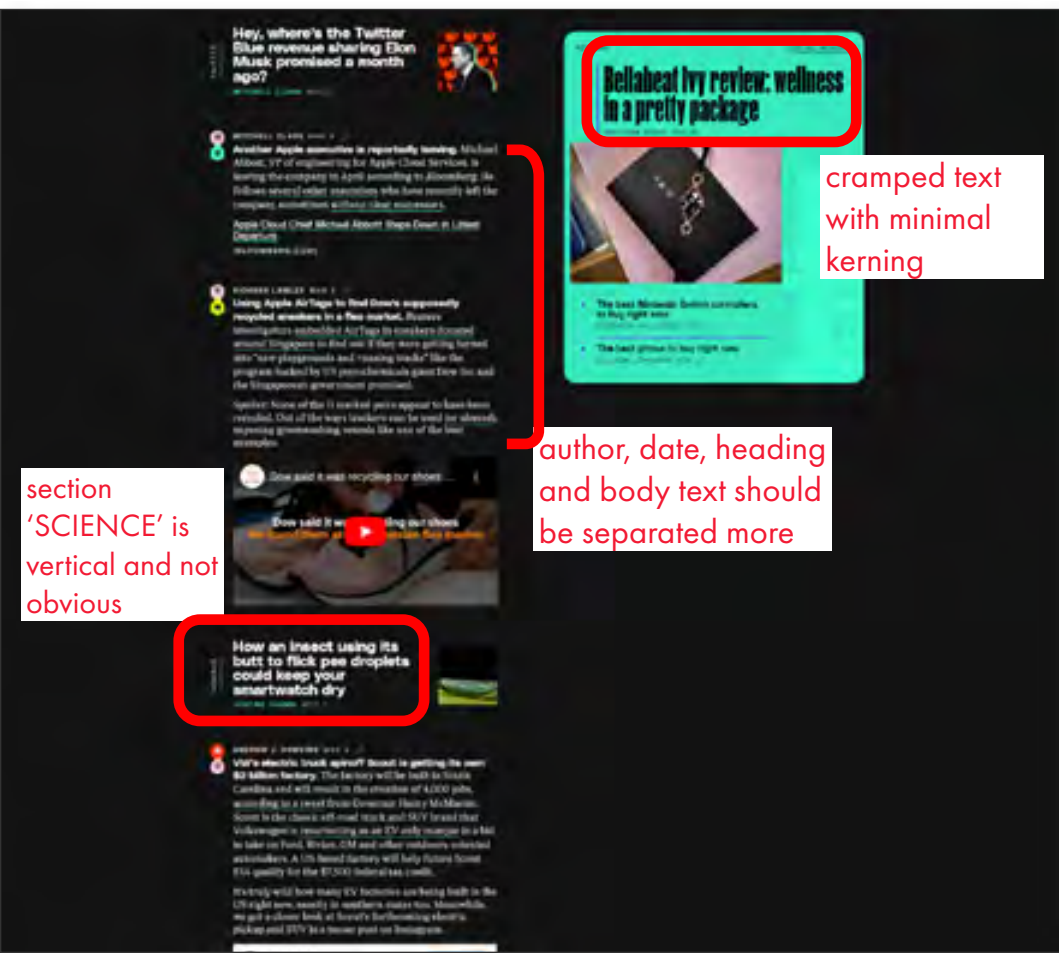
It's clear that all of these websites, including The Verge have similarities in their user interface design, however The Verge stands out the most in the following categories that may impact their users' experiences.

Accessibility

1

Opportunity: Having a nearly 100% black background with white text is hard on the eyes for people with astigmatism and dyslexia. Astigmatism is a common eye disorder that occurs in 1 in 3 people in the United States. People with astigmatism find it hard to focus on light, so bright text on dark backgrounds appear to be blurred, which may cause headaches.

Similarly, about 15 to 20 percent of Canadians have dyslexia meaning they have trouble reading, writing, and spelling. It's hard for them to read text that look cramped, which is evident in the headings on this website. Because the block text used for headings are so close together, it's hard for people with dyslexia to differentiate visually similar letters like 'a' and 'o' apart.



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Accessibility

1

Solution: Increasing line height in paragraphs, and the kerning and tracking in headings can improve readability so that text don't look cramped. Using sans-serif fonts are helpful as well.

To increase fixation duration on text, lowering the contrast on colour pairings of the background and text can help them read faster. Currently the website's background is in RGB(19,19,19) and the text is RGB(255,255,255) according to Google Inspect. Adjusting black text or background to #212121, instead of #000000, and pure white text of #FFFFFF to #FFFDFA can already make a huge difference.

Basically, harsh contrasts caused by pure black or pure white are hard on the eyes and makes web content less accessible. Giving users the option of toggling between light and dark mode can also help users consume your site's content better depending on the light source in which they are located (eg. sunny outdoors, theatre, dim restaurant).



#212121
#FFFFFFE5

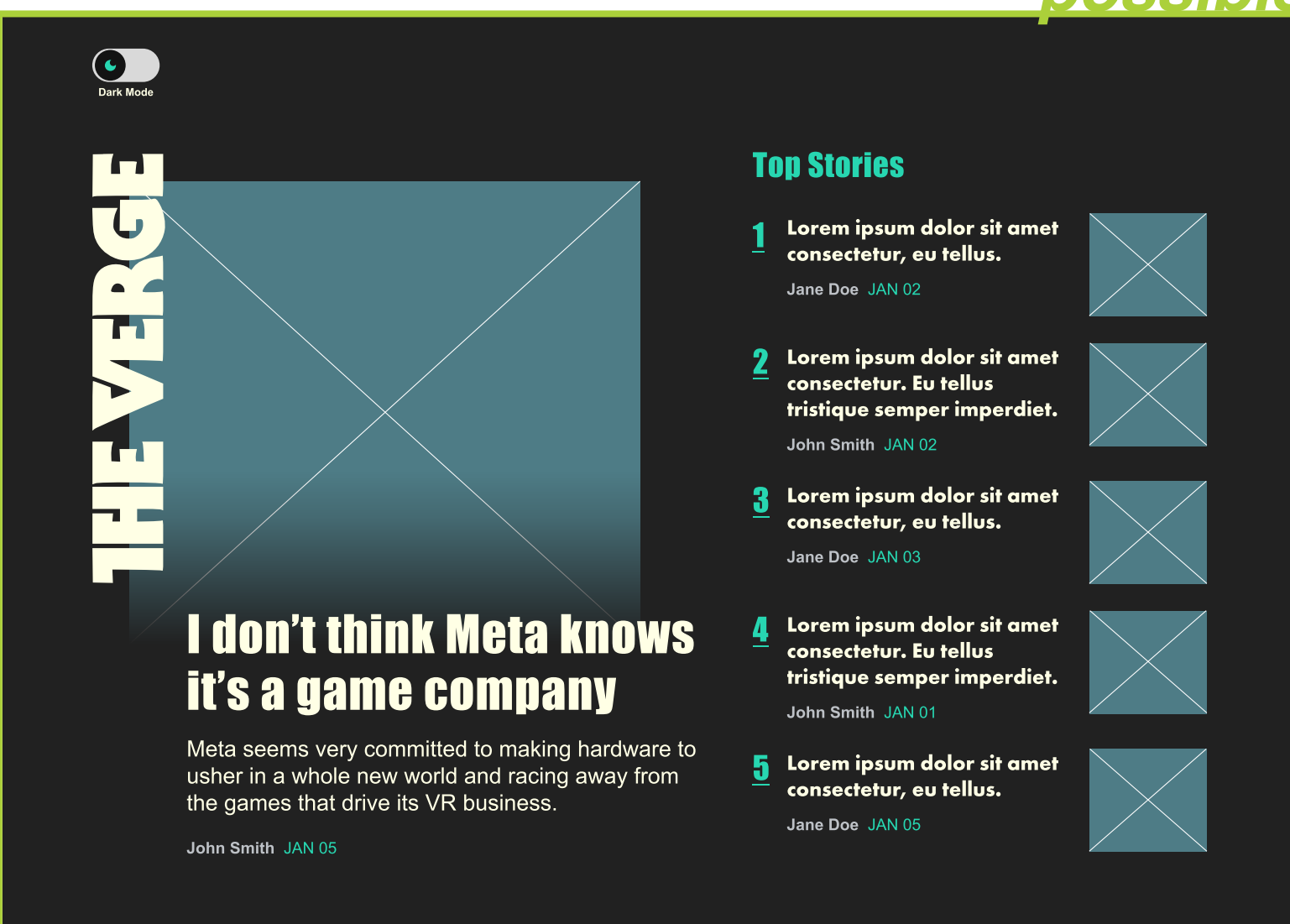


#000000
#FFFFFF

Consider:

1. [W3C's basic checklist on web accessibility](#)
2. [Style guide from the British Dyslexia Association](#)

possible solution



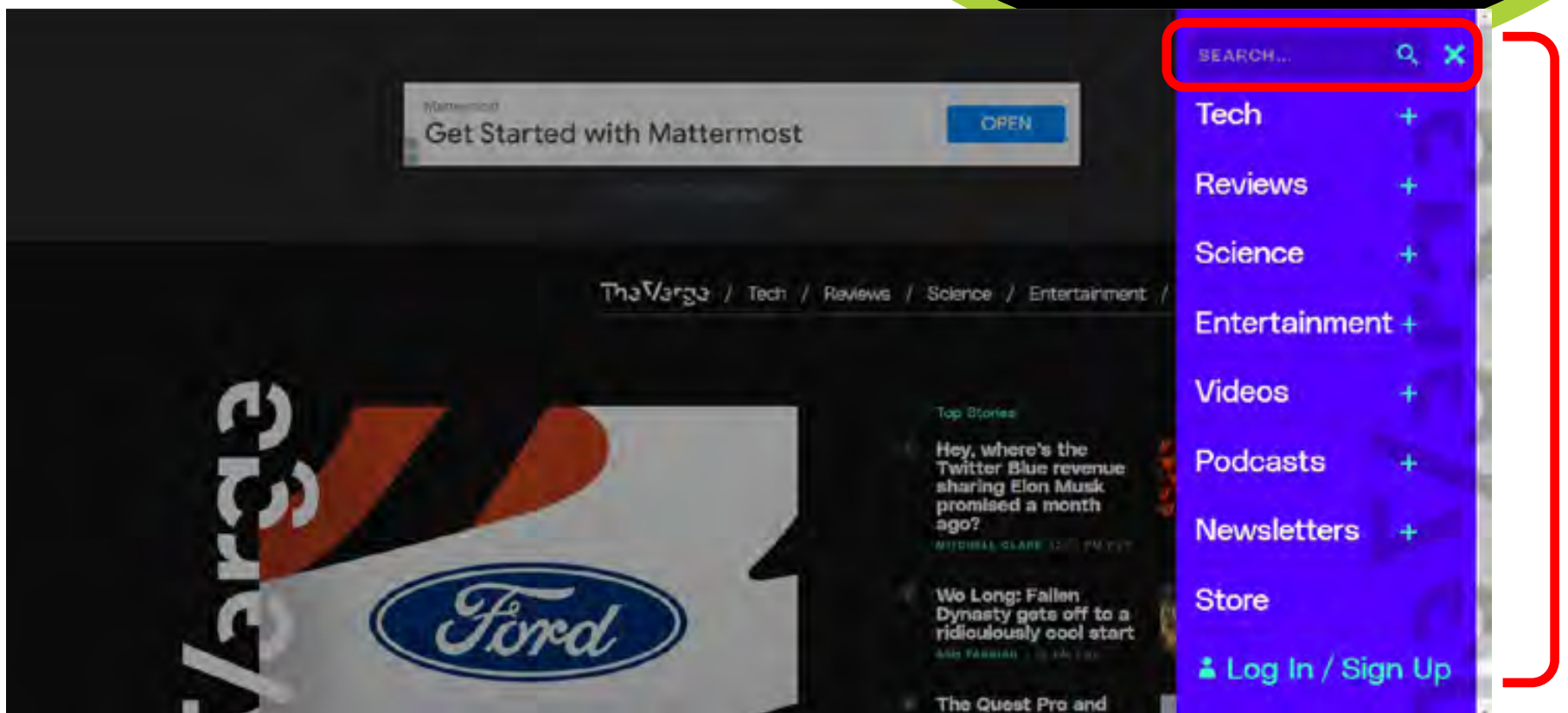
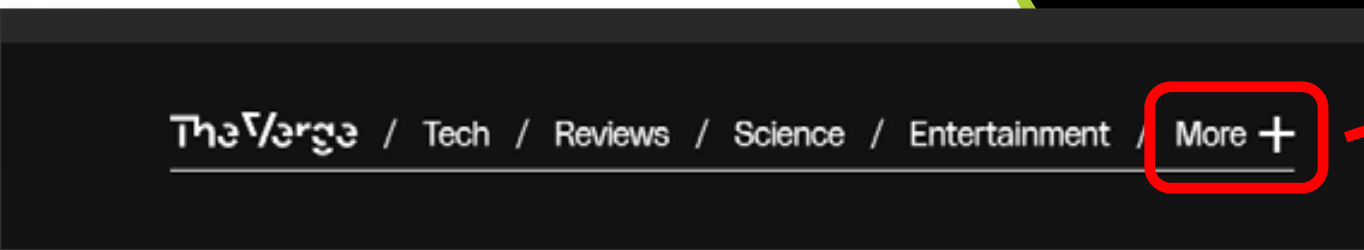
In this wireframe, I maintained the same style and theme.

What I modified:

- font attributes to improve legibility
- dark mode toggle in top-left corner
- bigger, more obvious "Top Stories" heading
- bigger Top Stories ranking numbers
- dates and writer names are in different colours

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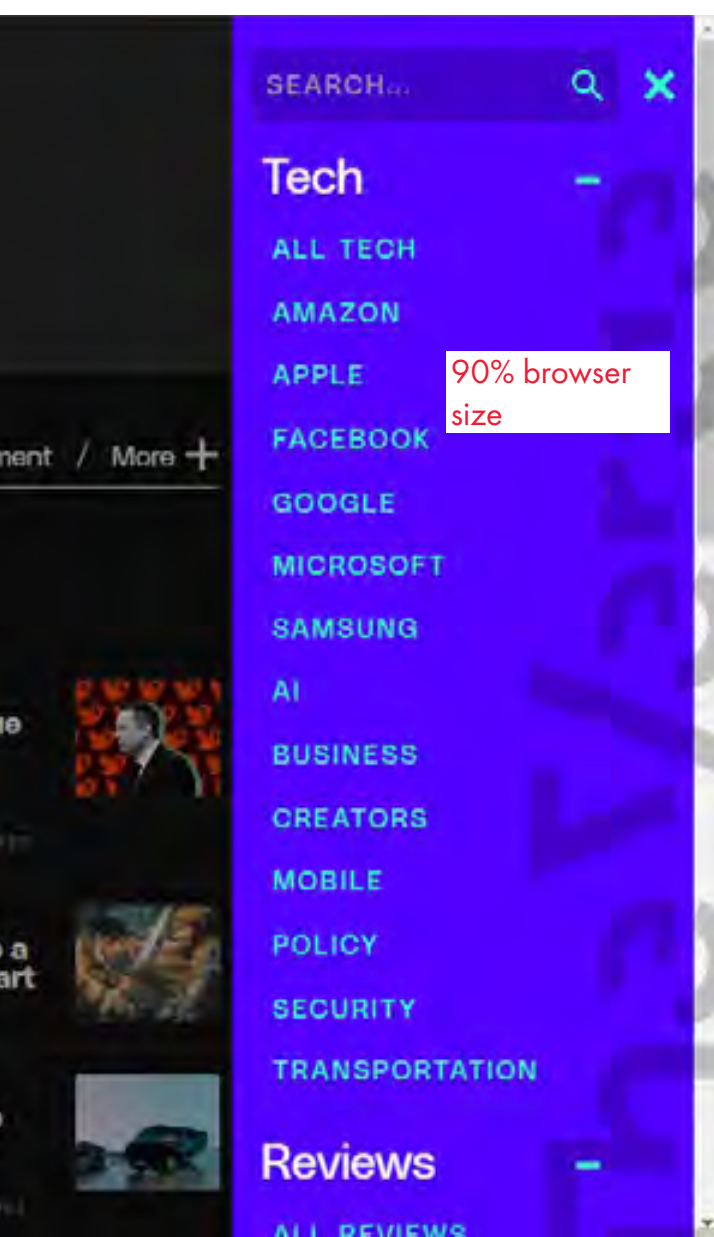


Navigation

Opportunity: On all of The Verge's competitors' websites, the search function is visible in the header without having to click open a slide-out menu. However, the search function is only visible on The Verge's website by clicking on the "More+" label in the navigation bar. It is unusual to have a label called "more" on a navigation bar,

2

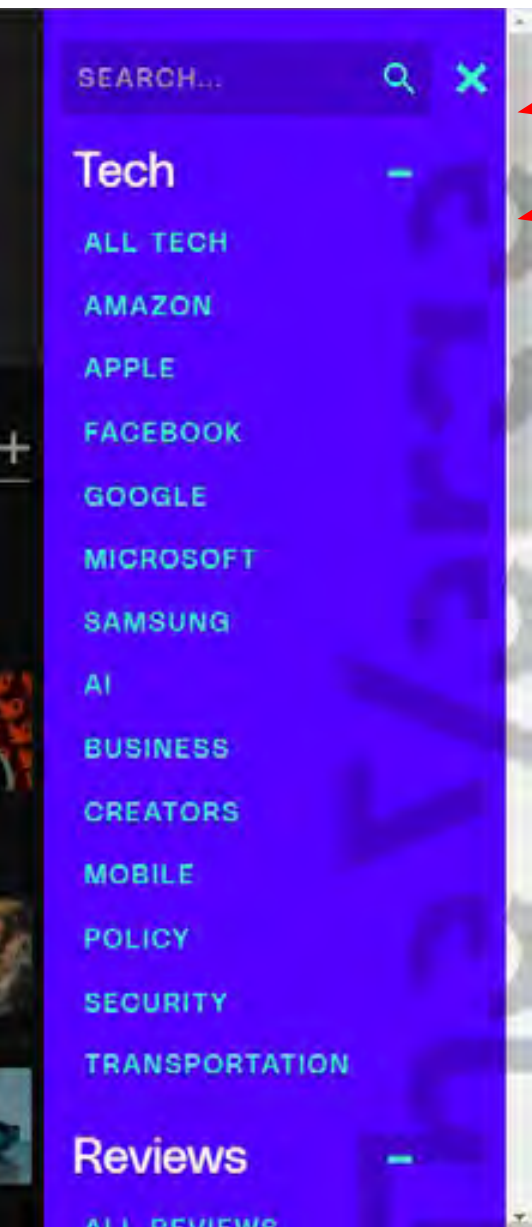
let alone having a search function hidden under a category called "more". This creates more clicks than necessary to see all the categories the website has to offer, especially when the slide-out menu is simply a repeat of what is already in the navigation bar with only 4 additional labels: Videos, Podcasts, Newsletters, and Store. It is redundant to have a slide-out menu feature when it only offers slightly more value. Also, it feels like a **false affordance** because users may think they will see a lot more labels, but really it's a repeat. If **utility plus usability equals usefulness**, then this slide-out menu feature does not meet that criteria.



Each category in the navigation bar have sub-categories, but they're only visible when the slide-out menu is opened. When expanding the sub-category under the "Tech" label in the slide-out menu, I can only see the long list when I zoom out my Chrome browser to 90%.

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I noticed this slide-out menu feature is on [TechCrunch](#), [Wired](#), and [Mashable's](#) website.

However, they have more content and categories than The Verge. Mashable's slide-out menu is most similar to The Verge's in the sense they also don't have many additional labels, but at least the sub-categories are in a smaller font size so they are visible without having to zoom out, and if they ever need to add more sub-categories, they have a lot of screen real-estate to do so.

Lastly, the scroll bar is a **false affordance** because it is not clickable where The Verge logo is covering. If you click on the scroll bar where the logo is covering, it will not drag/scroll, but if you click on the area where the logo is *not* covering, then you can drag it. It looks nice to have a logo there, but it sacrifices a basic function.

Navigation

Solution: According to [Fitt's Law](#), touch targets should be placed in areas that can be easily reached, so it would be beneficial to move the search function out of the slide-out menu to the header.

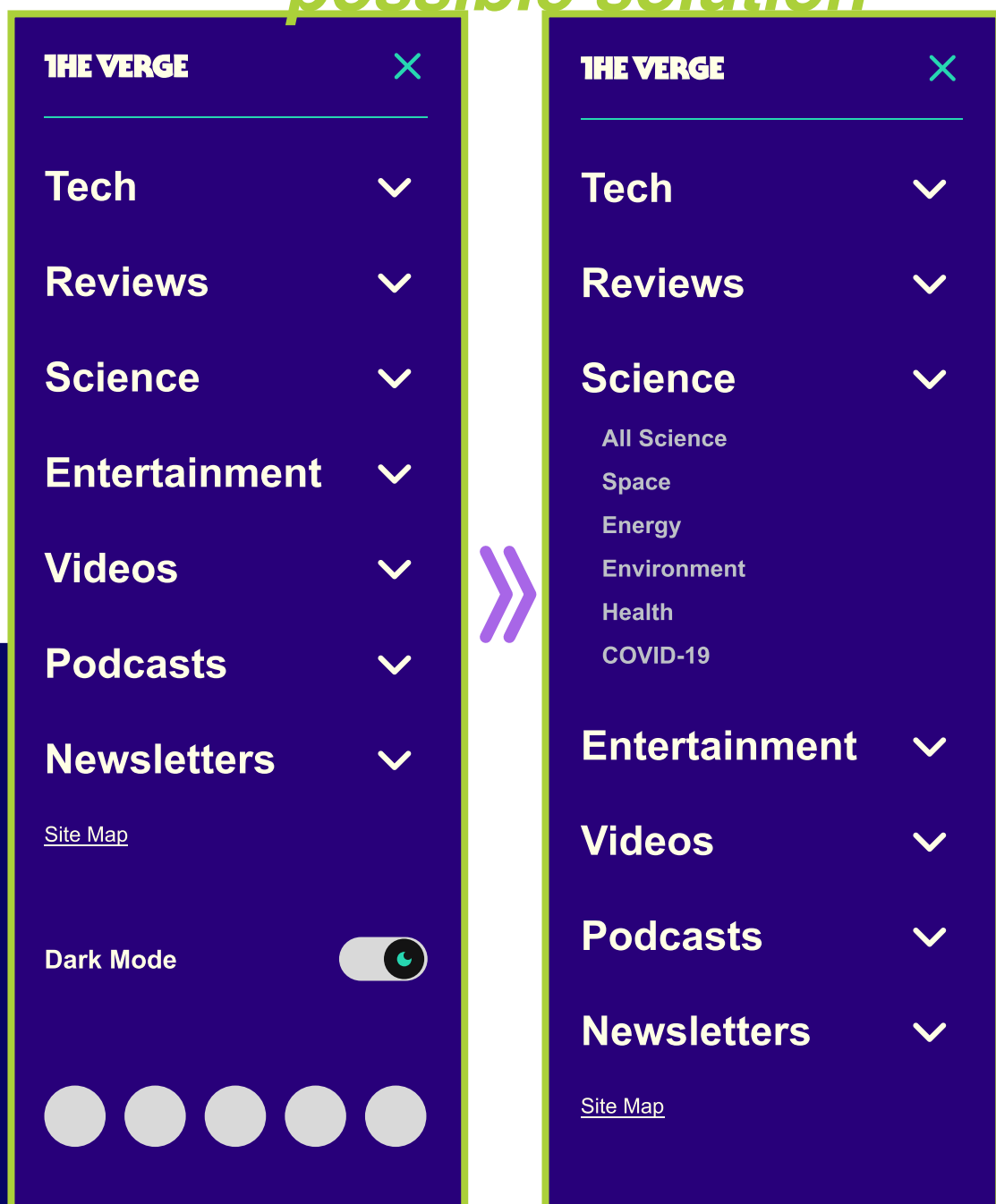
The "Log In/Sign Up" button can be in a utility navigation in the header beside the search bar. As for a subscribe button, I typically would put it in the utility navigation as well, but this could be a business strategy for The Verge to make sure they

What I modified:

- search bar removed
- sub-categories not in all-caps and are smaller
- added site map link
- dark mode toggle (can be here or in the header)

2

possible solution



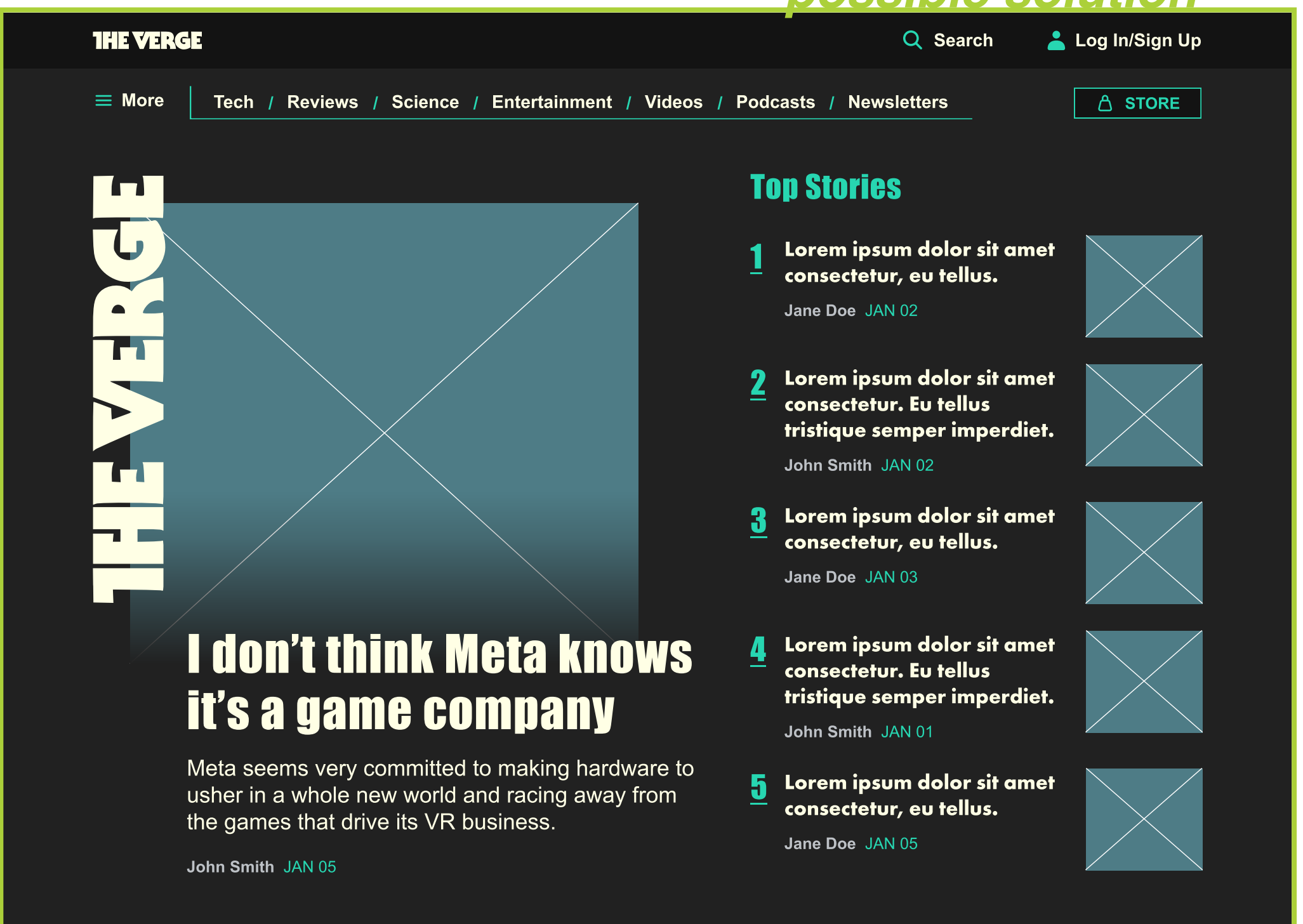
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get quality instead of quantity sign-ups, so I will leave that within the "Newsletters" page. The "Store" label on the other hand can be more visible by placing it in a utility navigation or navigation bar, instead of being hidden at the very bottom of the slide-out menu because this is a source of revenue for the company.

Since all competitors and many news/magazine sites like [National Post](#), and [The Atlantic](#) have some sort of slide-out menu, I will keep the feature to future-proof the website in case The Verge has more categories to add. I would however suggest placing the menu on the left instead of right side due to [Jakob's Law](#), and also users will read from left to right since it is an English website.

possible solution



What I modified:

- navigation bar shows all labels
- "More+" label is relocated with hamburger menu icon
- "Store" CTA added and removed from navigation
- added utility nav with "Search" and "Log In/Sign Up" buttons

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Clarity

Opportunity: Sections are not clearly defined on the homepage. There are no clear headings or dividers that separate the actual articles and tweet-like posts.

The page is very long, and the length of it is exacerbated by the amount of ads that are scattered throughout the length of the page. There are so many ads that they seem to be dividing up the sections of the page for you, otherwise there would be no **visual breaks**. These ads are **disguised ads** that have black backgrounds with bright CTAs that match the website.

The website uses third-party cookies from their advertising partners, but there is no cookie consent banner when I land on the website. The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) is a Canadian law that requires websites to obtain consent from users before collecting and sharing their data.

Clarity

Solution: Have separate columns or rows that show posts and articles respectively so people aren't forced to see both all at once. It may be the style and theme of the website to make it look like a social media feed, however it would be more accessible to users if the display can be changed using a filter because users all have different ways of consuming content.

In order to make the page shorter, we can add a "load more" button earlier/higher on the page. As for the ads, it can help to distinguish

3

3

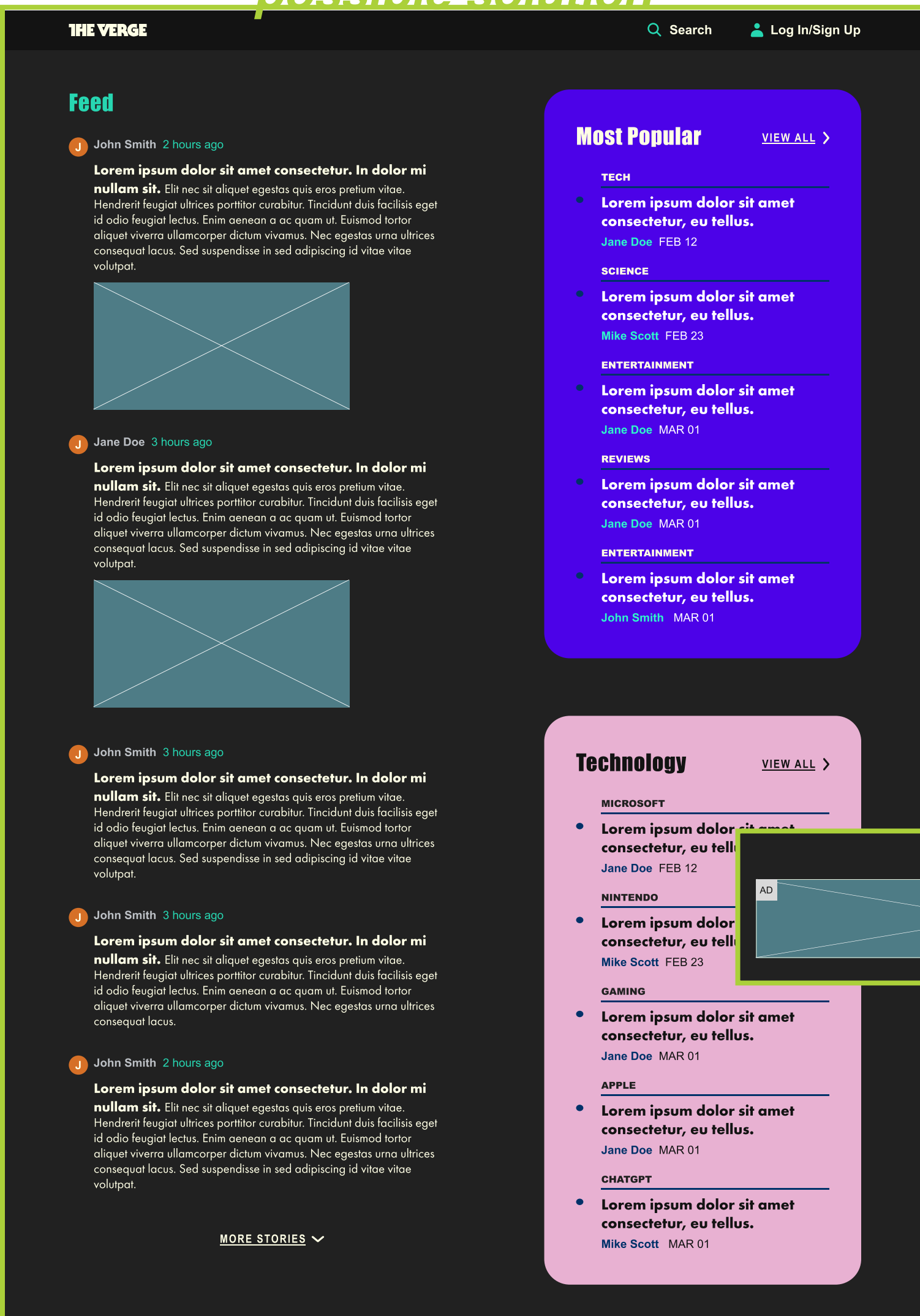


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them by adding more space around it, a coloured border around the ad or a bigger label indicating it is an ad.

possible solution



What I modified:

- articles are all on the right side
- posts are all on the left side
- posts have a heading called "Feed"
- "More Stories" button to see more Feed posts on a separate page — this way the remaining parts of the homepage layout won't be affected

The advertisement has a bigger label above it to indicate that it is an ad, as well there is a subtle white border.