

# Critiquing Information Architecture: Steepster & RateTea

February 5, 2016

This document presents the analysis of the organization schemes of both the Steepster and RateTea websites.

**Amy Schlachter**

**IAKM 60101: Information Architecture I**

# Steepster.com

## Site Organization

### Primary Organization Scheme

Steepster utilizes a bottom up organization system with hybrid topical and alphabetical organization schemes.

The screenshot shows the Steepster.com website interface. The main content area displays a grid of tea products under the heading "Best Teas". The sidebar on the right contains filters for "CATEGORY", "COMPANIES", "SORT BY", and "TEA TYPE".

**Best Teas (As rated by the Steepster community):**

- Cocoa Amore** (Whispering Pines Tea Company, 84 tasting notes)
- Golden Orchid** (Whispering Pines Tea Company, 196 tasting notes)
- The Jabberwocky** (Whispering Pines Tea Company, 94 tasting notes)
- Hand Picked Tieganyin Spring Oolong (2011)** (Verdant Tea, 62 tasting notes)
- Premium Silky Green Tea** (Bird Pick Tea & Herb, 59 tasting notes)
- Organic White Delight** (The Rabbit Hole Organic Tea Bar, 14 tasting notes)
- Planet Jingmai Ancient Tree Sheng** (Common Lotus Tea, 16 tasting notes)
- 2012 Haron Gold Needle Shou Pu-erh Cake** (Whispering Pines Tea Company, 23 tasting notes)
- 89** (Whispering Pines Tea Company, 14 tasting notes)
- 89** (Whispering Pines Tea Company, 14 tasting notes)
- 89** (Whispering Pines Tea Company, 14 tasting notes)
- 89** (Whispering Pines Tea Company, 14 tasting notes)

**Filters:**

- CATEGORY:** Tea, Teas
- COMPANIES:** A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z, #
- SORT BY:** Highest Rated, Most Popular, Newly Added, Tea Name
- TEA TYPE:** Select All, Black, Chai, Flowering, Food, Fruit, Green, Guayusa, Herbal, Honeybush, Matcha, Oolong, Pu-erh, Rooibos, White, Yellow, Yerba Mate

Ambiguous Topical Scheme

Ambiguous Topical Scheme

Exact Alphabetical Scheme

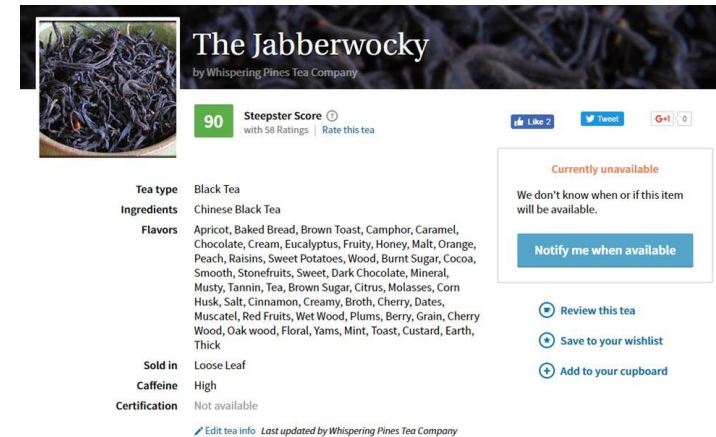
Ambiguous Topical Scheme

### Category Organization

Steepster utilizes a one page organization/filter system. When a user selects Tea in the main global navigation they are brought to the tea filtering page. From there they can filter their tea by company or type or sort by highest rated, most popular, tea name, or recently added. It should be noted that this page defaults to the highest rated tea selection prior to any selections being made by the user.

## Product Page

When you click on a specific tea, you are presented with six topical categories which define and categorize the tea within the site, Tea Brand, Ingredients, Flavors, Sold in, Caffeine, Certification.



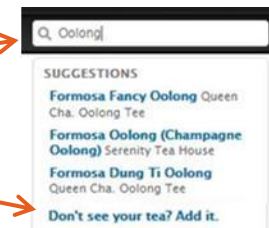
## Organization Strengths

### Hierarchy and Navigation

Overall the site has good depth, with two to three clicks to obtain most searched information. The site doesn't really need much more depth than this with the available filter design. It is easy to locate your position within the site, and move up or down a level with the available links.

### Search Systems

The site does provide a site specific search utilizing a search box in the global navigation menu. This search box does not, however, allow the user to search the site for any topic. The search box only allows for the searching of various types of tea. When you begin typing in the box, you are presented with a drop down menu of options relating to your search terms to select from. If you are not able to find your desired tea, there is a link at the bottom of the list allowing the user to add their desired tea to the site.



## Organization Weaknesses

### Labels

Some of the labels could be confusing for users.

- **Headings:** The titles of the pages match the navigation path rather than the “Sort By” category title. For example, when you navigate to teas, and then filter by highest rated, the navigation path at the top of the page is listed as Teas>Best Teas, Newly Added is listed as Teas> New Teas, and Tea Name is Teas>Teas. Most popular>Popular Teas.
- **Mouseovers:** The navigation labels don’t contain mouseovers to aid the user in determining what they may find in each category area.

### Navigation

When you click on Teas in the main navigation bar, it directs you to a page titled Best Teas as it automatically redirects you to the teas listed in order by their rating. Starting off the view with site selected filters could be confusing to some users. This could be remedied by directing the user to a page with a large navigation selection which then simplifies into the side navigation once a search is performed.

### Content Organization

Given the ability for users to add teas to the site freely, there is a really vast amount of content. With the current content groupings, it would be nearly impossible and definitely overwhelming for a user to browse through the 2253 pages of tea options. The site would benefit from more levels within the side filter navigation in regards to various types of teas. This could be achieved in two ways. Possibly by adding a filter option for users to see site added or company added teas versus user added teas, and/or further filtering the various tea types by options such as loose, bagged, ice tea, organic, caffeine, flavored, unflavored, available for purchase, etc... Given that the site allows purchases for teas, it could be frustrating for a user looking to buy tea to not be able to filter in this way. In a quick search of the highest rated teas, it was noted that of the 28 options on the first page, only 6 were available for purchase. Without the ability to filter out the unavailable teas, a user may become frustrated and abandon their search.

# Ratetea.com

## Site Organization

### Primary Organization Scheme

Overall, RateTea utilizes a top down hybrid organizational scheme. The organization of their teas occurs over three separate topical category pages, two of which can be accessed from the global navigation menu, footer menu, and main content area on the home page, and one of which is only present in the global navigation and footer.

### Category Organization

RateTea utilizes three main categories (Styles, Brands, and Regions) in the global navigation to organize their teas. Each with their own way of organizing the information.

### Styles, Varieties, and Types of Tea

This page utilizes a topical organization scheme, dividing the types of teas into three levels by caffeination, tea category, and then type. Clicking on a specific type of tea directs you to a detailed description page with information about the tea, varieties or types of that tea, the highest rated teas in the category, and the option to browse all teas from the category. At this point, you are either further directed to a directory of teas. The directory further allows filtering with options like organic, fair trade, loose leaf, region, and brand.

Home » Styles, Varieties, and Types of Tea

#### Styles, Varieties, and Types of Tea

Wikipedia: Category:Tea\_varieties

A **style of tea** is a type of tea. Some styles of tea come from specific regions, like Assam or Ceylon, whereas other styles are defined on how the tea tastes, like English Breakfast, which can be a blend of teas from different regions. Some styles, like Tie Guan Yin, are defined by a particular variety of tea plant, and a particular production method. We have a page on each style of tea, and we classify teas both by style and by region.

We also classify flavored teas into different styles. Styles of herbal teas can include individual types of herbs, or specific types of blends with a well-defined character, like a fruit herbal tea.

#### Generally caffeinated Blends caffeinated+caffeine free Generally caffeine free

Tea (Camellia sinensis)	Flavored Tea	Herbal Teas / Tisanes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Black Tea</li><li>Green Tea</li><li>Oolong Tea</li><li>White Tea</li><li>Pu-erh Tea</li><li>Yellow Tea</li><li>Others (blends)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Jasmine Tea</li><li>Earl Grey</li><li>Chai / Spiced Tea</li><li>Other Flavored Teas</li></ul> <p>Flavored Yerba Mate</p> <p>Miscellaneous Blends</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Rooibos (Red Tea)</li><li>Flavored Rooibos</li><li>Honeybush</li><li>Chamomile</li><li>Mint Tea</li><li>Fruit Infusions</li><li>Other Herbal Tea</li></ul> <p>Wellness/Medicinal Teas</p>

RateTea lists tea and drinks that are prepared like tea by steeping in hot water. We do not list drinks that are prepared like coffee.

#### Black Tea

Wikipedia: Black\_tea | Teaviews: black-tea

Updated: Mar 12, 2014

Browse Black Tea (1859) – Read Reviews (1170) – Brands of Black Tea

Review RSS

##### Table of contents:

About Black Tea | Varieties of Black Tea | Best (Top-Rated) Black Tea

#### About Black Tea

**Black tea** is tea that has been fully oxidized (sometimes referred to as being "fermented" although it is not a true fermentation process). Both the leaves and brewed tea tend to have a dark color, although some black teas are golden or greenish in color. In Chinese, black tea is called **hōngchá** (红茶), meaning **red tea**, although in English, red tea more often refers to rooibos, an herbal tea that is not made from the tea plant.

Black tea also tends to contain more tannins, chemicals giving the tea its characteristic dark color. The tannins are actually a form of antioxidants, and are the chemicals that the catechins of green tea are transformed to when they undergo oxidation.

The most popular type of tea in the world



SFTGPOP1, a very high grade of loose-leaf black tea.

Page 1 2 3 ... 36 37 38 of 38 pages with 1859 results

Only showing Black Tea. (Show all Pure Tea (Camellia sinensis))

Narrow your search:

Show (Only Organic Teas)

Show (Only Fair Trade Teas)

Show (Only Loose Leaf Teas)



**How-To: Essential Oils**  
Interested in Essential Oils? Here's what you need to know.  
miraclessentialoils.com

Only Teas From India (647 teas)

Filter

Only Darjeeling Black Tea (323 teas)

Filter

Fair Trade | Organic | Caffeine Free | Decaffeinated | Leaf | Loose | Teabag | Sachet | Bloom | Compressed

Tea	Brand	Style	Region	#
Black Tea	Lipton Tea	Black Tea	?????	25
PG Tips Pyramid bags	PG Tips	Black Tea	Blend	23
Irish Breakfast	Twinnings	Irish Breakfast	?????	19
Assam	Two Leaves Tea	Assam	Assam, India	14
English Breakfast	Twinnings	English Breakfast	?????	12
Awake English Breakfast Filterbag	Tazo Tea	English Breakfast	Blend	9
Golden Monkey Black Tea	Teavana	Golden Monkey	Fujian, China	9
English Teatime	Biscuit Tea	Black Tea	?????	8

## Brands of Tea & Tea Companies and Tea Producing Regions & Single Origin Teas

Both the brand and region categories organize their information alphabetically. These categories are less about browsing and more about finding known information.

### Brands of Tea & Tea Companies

We list brands of tea and individual teas for each brand. Some brands correspond to tea companies, but sometimes multiple brands are owned by a single company, and some companies sell brands other than their own.

Only show: Loose Tea Brands – Organic Tea Brands – Fair Trade Tea Brands

or only brands of: Green Tea – Chal – Herbals – Black – Oolong – Earl Grey

583 brands of tea

0-9 A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P R S T U V W X Y Z



0-9 24 Mantra Organic - new  
52 Teas

A Adagio Teas  
Admari Tea  
Ahmad Tea  
Aiya  
Ajiri Tea  
Akbar  
Alghazaleen Tea (Do Ghazal)  
Alice's Tea Cup  
Allegro  
Alokozay Tea  
Alvita  
Amanda  
Amanzi Tea  
American Classic Tea  
American Tea Room  
ANC Educational Farm

Regions

### Tea Producing Regions & Single Origin Teas

The region a tea is grown in is important because it affects flavor, aroma, and other qualities. This section of the site lists single origin teas and talks about what characterizes the teas from different regions.

Tea Producing Countries with the Most Teas on RateTea

China – India – Japan – Sri Lanka (Ceylon) – Taiwan – Kenya – others...

We list both tea and herbal teas, and our list of countries reflects the combination of both.

Which Countries Produce the Most Tea?

The following map uses 2008 FAOSTAT data, color-coded on a logarithmic scale. Note that countries that produce commercial tea on the global market are highlighted, but they may only produce tea in a small subregion. For example, most of Russia is too cold to produce tea. A few countries not highlighted, like the U.S. and England, produce negligible amounts of tea commercially, and are not included in these figures.



Browse All Countries Producing Tea and Herbs for Herbal Teas

You can also read about blends of teas from different regions, and teas of unknown origin.

A B C E F G I J K M N P R S T U V Z

A Albania  
Argentina

## Product Page

When you click on a specific tea, you are presented with six topical categories which define and categorize the tea within the site, Brand, Styles, Caffeine, Region, Loose Teabag, and Product Page.

### Irish Breakfast

This page is for the **caffeinated** version. See also *Irish Breakfast Decaffeinated*.

34  
Percentile  
19 ratings

Brand: Twinings  
Style: Irish Breakfast  
Caffeine: Caffeinated  
Region: ?????  
Loose/teabag: Teabag  
Product page: Irish Breakfast

#### Commercial Description

The Irish really love their tea and are amongst the most frequent drinkers of tea around the world. In celebration of this tea drinking tradition, Twinings blended a special Irish Breakfast Blend. This tea is best taken with milk and sweetened to taste to bring out the best flavor.



## Organization Strengths

### Vocabulary

Overall the site seems to do well with utilizing a controlled vocabulary. Unlike the Steepster site, the submissions on this site seem to be controlled by the site creators rather than the users. This helps to standardize the way in which the teas are described and categorized within the site.

## Organization Weaknesses

### Site Depth

While the site is much deeper than Steepster, the depth seems to help the navigation through the various categories. This could be improved however by allowing for a more detailed search area with filter rich navigation earlier within the hierarchy of the site. This would allow a user to immediately navigate to their desired tea options, and switch between options and tea types more easily.

### Labels

The global navigation menu labels do not have mouseovers allowing for the viewing of what types of information can be found within each tea category. Allowing for mouseovers and drop down menus in this area would enable the user to more quickly chose the information they are interested in. In addition, it would help them to understand, prior to clicking, if that category was going to provide them with their desired results. Additionally, the labels don't accurately describe the page the user is directed to. For example, the brands section is labeled Brands of Tea & Tea Companies once you navigate to the page. The simple term Brands, doesn't accurately describe the Tea Companies aspect of the page to allow a user to understand that they would find this information there.



### Search Systems

The site does provide a site specific search utilizing a search box within the global navigation. The search box only allows for the searching of various types of tea. When you begin typing in the box, you not presented with a drop down menu of options relating to your search terms to select from. This could make things difficult for a user with a vague idea of what they are looking for. Indexing the teas and connecting them to the search to provide a dropdown of like items could be beneficial in helping the user to more easily find what they are searching for.

# Steepster and RateTea Comparison

## Similarities and Differences

RateTea	Topic	Steepster
Begins the filter with a category area where the user clicks on a topic to navigate to a more specific area to further define their search.	<b>Filter Options</b>	Has a side navigation that allows you to make several filter options at once.
Offers a breakdown of teas by tea, brand, style, region, and #.	<b>Search Listing</b>	Provides a basic listing of teas with pictures indicating the tea name, company, and tasting notes.
Offers information on brand, style, caffeine, region, loose/teabag, product page, and commercial description.	<b>Product Page</b>	Offers information on tea type, ingredients, flavors, sold in, caffeine, certification and the ability to buy if available.
Requires you to know what you are searching for.	<b>Search System</b>	Provides a dropdown of potential matches when you type in the field.
Provides a deeper structure with more clicks, but more specific, focused information on each page.	<b>Site Depth</b>	Provides a shallow depth with minimal clicks, but vast amounts of information presented.
Allows the addition of content only by the site administrators.	<b>Content</b>	Allows anyone to add information to the site with any level of completeness.

## Strengths and Weaknesses

One distinct advantage Steepster has is in its use of a singular filter area. While its filters could be vaster, they are located in one place and allow for the quick changing of options by the user. This is an advantage over RateTea who begins all filtering on the category specific pages and doesn't allow the user to change their main focus within the filter page. Instead they have to navigate out and into another category to begin again.

RateTea offers more information on their search listing page which could be helpful to the user. It allows the user to immediately see whether a tea is loose, a particular style or even retired. These options aren't apparent on Steepsters site until you click on the product.

The Steepster search system is more function for users who aren't exactly positive what they are searching for given its ability to provide potential options matching your text.