

# Critiquing Information Architecture

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Sept 10, 2023

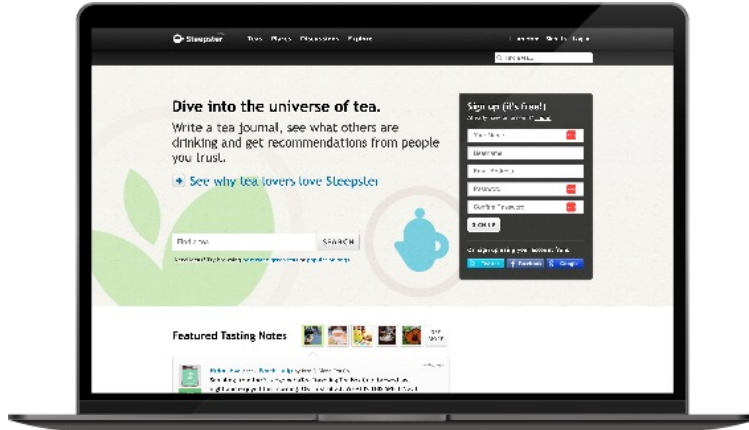
Fall 2023 INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE I (UXD-60101-004)



# Analyze & critique the organization schemes & structures of two web sites

1. Accurately identify and describe the sites' organization schemes, structures, and navigation.
2. Access how well the sites' organization schemes, structures, and navigation work for the tasks supported by the sites, and determine if and how they might be improved.
3. Compare the organization schemes and structures used: How are they similar? How are they different? Identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of the approaches.

<http://steepster.com/>



<http://ratetea.com/>



## Dive into the universe of tea.

Write a tea journal, see what others are drinking and get recommendations from people you trust.

[→ See why tea lovers love Steepster](#)

Need ideas? Try browsing [best rated green teas](#) or [popular oolongs](#)



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# STEEPSTER

steepster.com

## Featured Tasting Notes



65

[Kelmishka](#) drank [Peach Julip](#) by Bird & Blend Tea Co.

a day ago

Sampling from the Strange VariaTea Traveling Tea Box Cold-brewed last night and enjoyed this morning. OK, first of all, WHAT IS THIS SPELLING. I have never seen it before, but The Internet tells me it's an alternative for "julep." Wild. "Julip" looks so much more unpleasant, though... Well, anyway. "Juicy peach" seems a bit hyperbolic. The sage is actually pretty str

# What organization schemes are used for the various teas?

steepster.com

Steepster's teas are displayed initially with a heading labeled "Best Teas." The sidebar local navigation provides browsing aids and filters the displayed teas through the various hybrid schemes:

- Alphabetical
- Chronological
- Topical

Additionally, users can choose multiple options for sorting, including ranking by popularity and users' ratings.

Once different options are chosen, the heading label changes according to how the user has sorted.



The screenshot shows the Steepster website interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Teas, Places, Discussions, and Explore. A search bar is located on the right. The main heading is "Best Teas" with a sub-heading "As rated by the Steepster community". Below this, there are four tea listings with their respective ratings and tasting notes. On the right side, there is a sidebar with several filter sections: CATEGORY (Teas selected), COMPANIES (alphabetical grid), SORT BY (Highest Rated selected), and TEA TYPE (checkboxes for Black, Bubble Tea, Chai, Dark/Heicha, Flavored, Flowering, Food). A "Pop-out menu" is visible, showing a list of teas sorted alphabetically. Red arrows point from the text labels to the corresponding elements in the screenshot.

**Best Teas**  
As rated by the Steepster community

- 91 Taiwan Wild 'Shan Cha' Black Tea  
What-Cha  
20 tasting notes
- 90 Creme de la Earl Grey  
Tealuxe  
19 tasting notes
- 89 Royal Ceylon Flowery Black Tea  
Elephant Chateau  
10 tasting notes
- 89 Zhu Lu Alishan High Mt. Oolong Tea  
JLTeaco (fongmongtea)  
17 tasting notes

**Pop-out menu**

Eagle Investments	EBay Wisdom China	Emerald Tea	Espirita Premium Loose Leaf Tea
Earl Grey Cream	Ececko	Eminence Organics	Esprit Provence
Earth	eden f	Emma Tea	Essentia Tea
Earth Medicines	Eden Foods	Empereur Tea Co.	Estate
Earth tea	Eden's Tea	Emprez T-Stick	Estate Gardens
earthbar	Edible	Enchanté Whole Leaf Teas	English Breakfast
Earthfare	Ehsans & Pappas Tehus	Endeavour	Enjoy Leisurely Life (AliExpress)
Earthsense Herbsals	Eight Horses Tea	enerBio	ETERNAL LOVE
East London Tea Company	Eighty-Eightea	Engagement Teas	Ethio Agri-CEFT
East West Crossings Teahouse	Ejima	English Breakfast	Eu Yan Seng
Eastern Tea Corporation	Ékorce Kombucha	Enjoy Leisurely Life (AliExpress)	Eugen Jungmanns Euro-tea
Easy Buy Trading Co	El Almacén	enrich	European Fine Foods Co.
Easy Teasy	El Gawhara	ENSO TEA	European Importing Company
Eat Clean Tea	El Puente	entireTea	Envisioned Web Inc.
Eataly	Elderberry Herb Farm	Eon Foods	EOT
EBay Fengyuan Tea Shop	Elephant Origins	eLife Co., Ltd.	
	Eleven O'Clock	Elixir	

**Alphabetical**

**Chronological**

**Topical**

# Discuss the strengths & weaknesses of the organization scheme steepster.com

## Strengths

The hybrid schemes allow users to take control and display the content how they'd prefer to browse.

## Weakness

The numbers in the corner of the product images were unlabeled, so it is unclear what they represent initially.

On e-commerce platforms, the term "brands" is often used more than "companies."

The different sorting and filtering options could become a bit intimidating and overwhelming, and the sidebar navigation interface/functionality needs to be consistent.

Instead of checkboxes, tabs, and pop-out menus, the sidebar navigation could be more consistent in formatting, like how Amazon provides filtering for ratings and truncates large groups of content.

The screenshot shows the Steepster website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Teas', 'Places', 'Discussions', and 'Explore'. Below that, a search bar and a 'Best Teas' section with the text 'As rated by the Steepster community'. The main content area displays a grid of tea products, each with a rating in a green box (91, 90, 89, 89) and a product image. The right sidebar contains filtering options: 'CATEGORY' (Teas, Teaware), 'COMPANIES' (a grid of letters), 'SORT BY' (Highest Rated, Most Popular, Newly Added, Tea Name), and 'TEA TYPE' (checkboxes for Black, Bubble Tea, Chai, Dark/Heicha, Flavored, Flowering, Food). The left sidebar shows a 'Department' list, 'Customer Reviews' with star ratings, and 'Brands' with checkboxes. A 'Truncated/expandable content' label points to a 'See more' link in the brands list. A 'Grocery & Gourmet Food Price' section is at the bottom left. Red annotations include 'Tabs' pointing to the category tabs, 'Pop-out menu' pointing to the company grid, 'User ratings by stars' pointing to the star ratings, 'Tabs again' pointing to the sort by tabs, and 'checkboxes' pointing to the tea type checkboxes. The text 'Amazon's sorting and filtering options' is written at the bottom right.

Amazon's sorting and filtering options

**RATETEA**  
ratetea.com

Discover tea. Search by brand, style, and region; learn where your tea comes from.

Find tea

Styles Brands Regions People Places Images Articles

New

### Discover New Teas

...and tea companies, and styles of tea.



### Learn About Where Your Tea Comes From

Tea production, organics, fair trade, environmental issues...



### Keep Track of Which Teas You Enjoy Most

Write your own reviews. Compare your tastes to others.



**RateTea** is a website where anyone can rate and review teas. We have a wealth of carefully-researched information about tea, including an extensive database of teas, classified by brand, style, and region of production.

7458 teas, 6548 ratings/reviews, 725 brands, 982 places, 174 styles of tea.

### Most Often-Rated Teas — Highest Rated Teas

### New & Recently Updated Articles: all of our articles

More on: Tea and Health, Tea and Sustainability, Brewing Tea, Tea Business and Industry, Buying Tea.


### Recent Reviews - bro

 **Tchuggin' Okie** (353)  
Sep. 4th, 2023

Chai Diaries: Rooibos Co

 **JGS1122** (117) review  
Aug. 24th, 2023

Yunnan Sourcing: Pure G  
Black Tea of Tong Mu Gu  
other tea.

 **Tea Reviewer Jeren**  
Jul. 4th, 2023

Teasenz: Snow Chrysanth  
Xue Ju Hua Cha.

 **Difflugia** (170) review  
Jun. 6th, 2023

Foojoy: WuYi Mtn. Oolong

 **Trailesque** (130) review  
May. 5th, 2023

Arbor Teas: Organic Pin

# What organization schemes are used for the various teas?

ratetea.com

RateTea's global navigation is organized by a task-oriented scheme, allowing users to browse teas by styles, brands, regions, and other tea-shopping and learning tasks.

The styles page content is organized in a hybrid scheme - topical first highlighting teas in major categories (as stated by the heading), then listed alphabetically, likely for easier browsing and scanning.

The topical categorization at the top of the page provides a link to jump down to a category within the alphabetical list. At the same time, the breadcrumb navigation tells the user where they are in the site's scope.

The screenshot shows the RateTea website interface. At the top, a green navigation bar contains links for 'Styles', 'Brands', 'Regions', 'People', 'Places', 'Images', 'Articles', 'News', 'Contact', and 'About'. Below this, a breadcrumb trail reads 'Home » Styles, Varieties, and Types of Tea'. The main heading is 'Styles, Varieties, and Types of Tea'. Below the heading, there is a 'Wikipedia: Category:Tea\_varieties' link. The content is organized into 'Major categories' with a 'Topical heading' for 'Pure (Unflavored) Tea'. Under this, there are 'Sub-category options' for 'All', 'Black', 'Green', 'Oolong', 'White', and 'Dark'. A 'Flavored Tea' 'Topical heading' is also present. A large list of tea styles follows, starting with 'Pure Tea (Camellia sinensis)' as the 'Main Category', and 'Black Tea' as a 'Sub-category'. The list includes: Assam, Black Gunpowder, Bohea, Ceylon Black Tea, Darjeeling Black Tea, Darjeeling First Flush, Darjeeling Second Flush, Darjeeling Autumnal Flush, Darjeeling In-Between, Darjeeling Winter / Early Flush, East Frisian Tea (Ostfriesentee), English Breakfast, Golden Monkey, Irish Breakfast, Keemun, Keemun Hao Ya A, Keemun Hao Ya B, Keemun Mao Feng, Lapsang Souchong, and Panvang Congou. Red annotations highlight various organizational features: 'Browse teas by' points to the navigation bar; 'Additional Task-oriented options' points to the breadcrumb trail; 'Breadcrumb navigation' points to the 'Home »' part; 'Heading' points to the main title; 'List sorted topically, then alphabetically' points to the 'Pure Tea' and 'Black Tea' categories; 'Topical heading' points to 'Pure (Unflavored) Tea'; 'Sub-category options jump down the page' points to the category buttons; 'Alphabetically ordered' points to the list of tea styles; and 'Ambiguously ordered - perhaps by popularity' points to the list of styles.

# Discuss the strengths & weaknesses of the organization scheme steepster.com

## Strengths

The list of all tea options on the page makes it easy to scan everything, especially alphabetically. Context links jump users down the page to the sub-categories.

## Weaknesses

An enormous list like this can be intimidating and overwhelming, especially to a novice tea enthusiast, and there is no way to filter and sort results. It's unclear what "Major categories" means, and the tea not in "major categories" is discarded at the bottom of the page in ambiguous order.

In 3-level deep categories, some things could be more consistent in organizing lists. For example, one list seems organized in no order, while all others are alphabetical.

## Recommendations:

1. Keep the ordering format consistent across categories, ideally alphabetically, for easy scanning.
2. If sorting and filtering functionalities aren't an option, break up the major categories into column lists and bold sub-category headings instead of one giant list.
3. Possibly rename "major categories" to "Popular Teas" or something less ambiguous.

The screenshot shows a webpage titled "List of All Styles, Varieties, and Types" with a sub-section "Pure Tea (Camellia sinensis)". The list is organized into several categories, each with a sub-heading. The categories and their items are:

- Black Tea**
  - Assam
  - Black Gunpowder
  - Bohea
  - Ceylon Black Tea
  - Darjeeling Black Tea
    - Darjeeling First Flush
    - Darjeeling Second Flush
    - Darjeeling Autumnal Flush
    - Darjeeling In-Between
    - Darjeeling Winter / Early Flush
  - East Frisian Tea (Ostfriesentee)
  - English Breakfast
  - Golden Monkey
  - Irish Breakfast
  - Keemun
    - Keemun Hao Ya A
    - Keemun Hao Ya B
    - Keemun Mao Feng
  - Lapsang Souchong
  - Panvang Congou
- Pure Chamomile Tea**
  - Rooibos
    - Green Rooibos
  - Tulsi / Holy Basil
  - Vana Tulsi
- Wellness Tea / Medicinal Tea**
  - Lapacho / Taheebo (Pao d'Arco)
  - Licorice
  - Passionflower
- Guayusa**
- Yaupon**
- Yerba Maté**
- Flavored Guayusa**
- Flavored Yerba Maté**
- Energy Tea**
- Miscellaneous Blend**
  - Yerba Maté Black Tea
- Unknown**

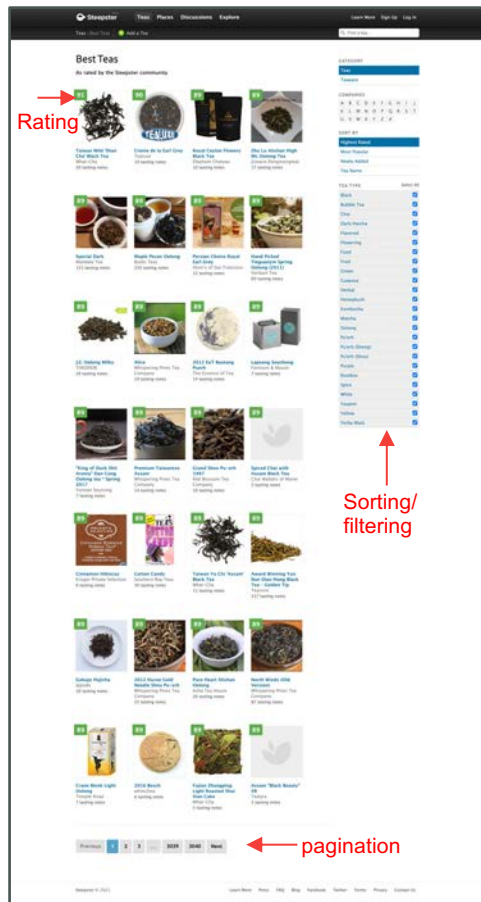
Annotations on the image include:

- A red arrow pointing to the "Pure Chamomile Tea" section with the text: "Non-major" teas listed under herbal teas in no particular order.
- A red bracket next to the Darjeeling sub-category with the text: "No order?"
- A red bracket next to the Keemun sub-category with the text: "Alphabetically"



# **Comparing the organization schemes and structures**

# Steeper



## Similarities

Both sites feature their teas by ranking (users' ratings), although not explicitly evident, and provide extensive lists of teas to scan and browse.

## Differences

Steeper features a number rating to indicate ranking, while RateTea doesn't display ranking/rating on the main Styles page. Steeper also features local navigation to help users sort and filter through options and pagination at the bottom of the page.

## Strengths

Steeper's sorting/filtering options with hybrid schemes allow users to take control of their browsing experience. RateTea lists all teas without the user having to leaf through pages and pages of pagination and breaks the teas down by sub-category headings.

## Weaknesses

RateTea has no filtering or sorting options, forcing users to scroll through a long list, and needs to be consistent with alphabetical ordering. Steeper could use a more universal method to display ratings and keep sorting/filtering functions consistent. Both sites need to be less ambiguous with headings, e.g. "Best Teas" and "Major Categories."

# RateTea

