Sveglio: A Virtual Guide to Everything Coffee (Part Two)

ZACHARY FOOTE

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LIBR555: INFORMATION DESIGN – SYSTEMS

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APRIL 3, 2018

https://f3x8uz.axshare.com
Password: sveglio

Executive Summary

With Sveglio, our goal, as outlined in Part I of the Design Project, is to "give beginner coffee enthusiasts a polished, informative, and mobile-responsive" resource for researching coffee on the Internet. Because the coffee industry is expanding and diversifying so rapidly, we were surprised to see, when we surveyed the Internet's offerings, that there were few comprehensive (and no truly authoritative) educational resources dedicated to coffee. Sveglio aims to fill that gap.

Our userbase probably skews toward young adults, but we cannot count out older adults, especially recent retirees. The website's major users need not be coffee-savvy yet, but they are likely willing and interested to learn more. Sveglio aims to turn passive coffee consumers into active hobbyists. To do that, we need to present relevant information in ways our audience *actually finds* engaging – not just what we think they might find engaging.

Summary of Part I

In Part I of the Sveglio project, we began by identifying our mission. The Sveglio concept is built upon user customization and experimentation. Three broad categories – bean styles, drink types, and brewing methods – make up the major website sections. At first, the user would be presented with all of the content in that section's inventory. But what if the user has an idea of what they might want, and would like to filter out the things they *don't* want to get to the (as-yet-unspecific) results they *do* want?

To make this possible, we first proposed a handful of facets, or categories, for each section. The specific attributes within those facets would be alterable with sliders or toggles. For instance, if a user would want to see coffee beans with "earthy" flavor profiles, they would move the indicator on a "flavor profile" facet slider to "earthy," and the website would respond by showing them only the bean types commonly characterized as "earthy." More than one facet can be set in place at one time, narrowing the user's preferences even further. This feature makes professional-level coffee knowledge more accessible to novice-level coffee and espresso drinkers.

But that, in and of itself, may not justify return visits to Sveglio. To find out what other things potential users might be interested in, we conducted four interview sessions with five people, all frequent coffee drinkers. We wanted to know their habits surrounding coffee, how they research coffee at present, and what they might look for in an ideal website about coffee.

Most of our interviewees had similar coffee-drinking habits. Most often, they made coffee at home, using only one or two brewing devices (french presses and drip machines were most popular among our respondents; others also used pour-over funnels and Moka Pots). Respondents cited a host of different sources for getting coffee-related information: in-person word-of-mouth, social media, message board sources like Reddit, encyclopedic sources like

Wikipedia, online shops, and video upload sites like Youtube. This confirmed our initial claim that there are, so far, no truly singular online resources for coffee research.

When asked what features interviewees might expect from a coffee website, we received wide-ranging responses. Respondent 3 requested the site be split up into a few separate sections so that coffee beans, drinks, and brewing methods wouldn't compete for space on a single page. Respondent 2 concurred, but also wondered aloud how these different "indexes" might occasionally cross the threshold to interact with each other (e.g. *what's the best brewing method to suit this particular coffee drink?)* Respondent 3 also suggested that there should be a search function on the page in addition to a filtering function – giving the user multiple paths to find what they want.

Respondents 1, 2, 4, and 5 all thought "how-to" guides for brewing coffee and making drinks would be useful. Respondents 1 and 5 strongly preferred video guides, while Respondents 2 and 4 showed a preference for step-by-step, diagrammatic guides.

Our Approach for Part II

Our iterative process will first nail down the basic layouts and functions of the site. How will the home page look? What will the navigation bar look like? If we opt for a search feature, where will we position it? Will the commands that each facet requires work both individually and cooperatively within the prototyping program? Are the features easily findable? Is the language intuitive?

Then we will tunnel further, making decisions about how to present content. Should we arrange the items within each section in tile form (300px squares), or list form (800x100px rectangles)? If a user clicks on a tile/list item, does the page that provides more information on that item open in a pop-in window, an expanding sidebar, or a new browser tab? What information should display on these pages, and how should it be prioritized?

By combining our own design intuitions and sensibilities with feedback from usability tests, we hope to fully answer these questions.

Digital Wireframes

The first digital wireframe sought to cement Sveglio's basic look and layout in desktop format. The banner location (near the top of the page), main menu buttons, and square content tiles remain relatively intact throughout the iterative process. The **Beans** toolbar button is highlighted here, indicating that the user is currently on the page listing coffee bean varieties. The interactive sliders and dropdowns shown below the toolbar reflect the categories by which different types of coffee beans can be sorted.
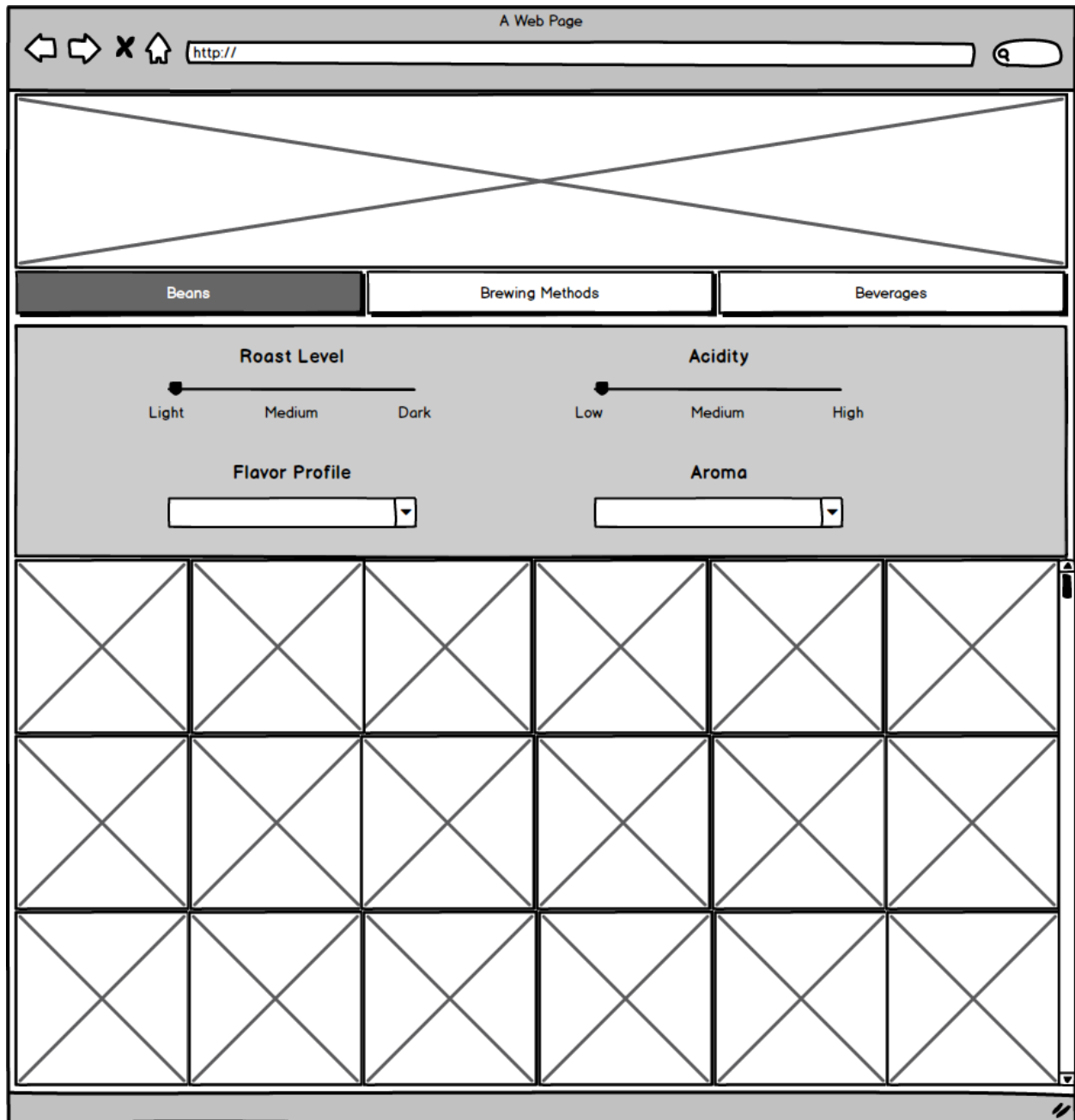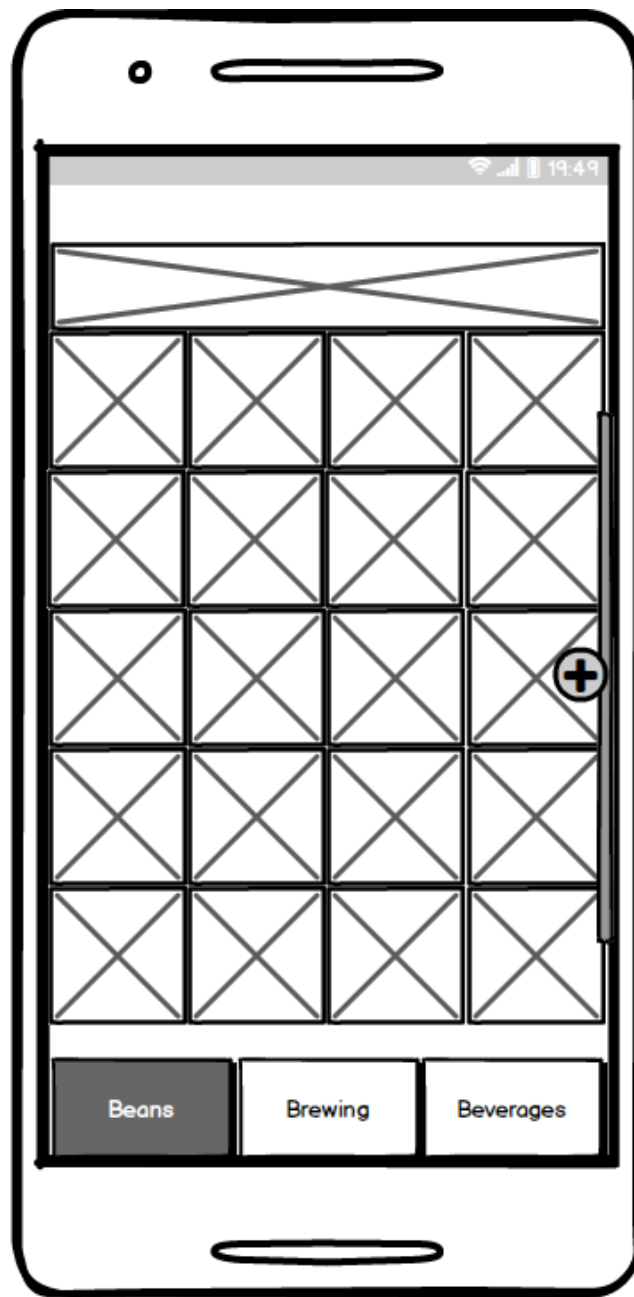
Sveglio's **mobile format** moves the toolbar buttons down to the bottom, Usually, when a user holds a smartphone, the thumb they hold the phone with handles actions on the bottom half of the screen. The pointer finger on the user's free hand, by contrast, handles most of the actions on the top half of the screen. We thought it would be easier for users if they could cycle between main sections with only one hand as opposed to two. To the right side of the screen, there is also see a thin box with a circle circumscribing a plus sign on top of it. If the plus sign icon is clicked…
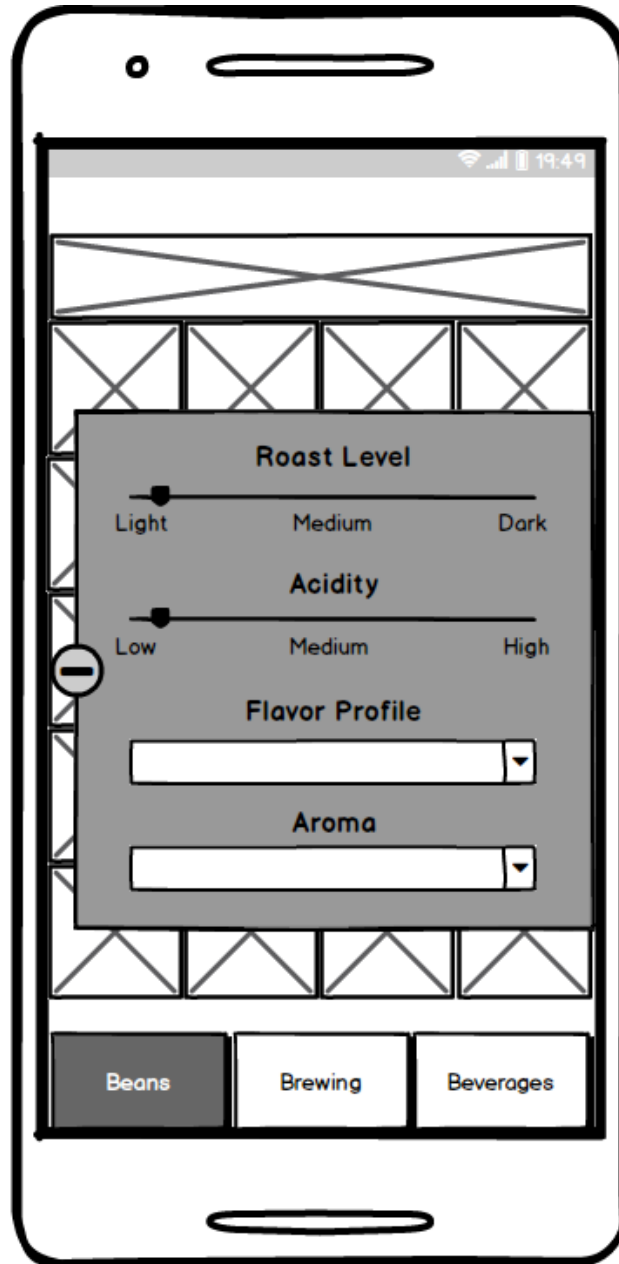
…The menu with the interactive sliders and dropdowns slides into frame. Had the interactive features been integrated directly on the mobile page, it would have been competing with all the other items in an already-crowded space. By placing the interactive widgets inside this tap-responsive expanding window, they become large enough to manipulate on a small screen. Moreover, the menu is always ready to be pulled out when the user wants to see it, and is stowed away when the user no longer needs it.
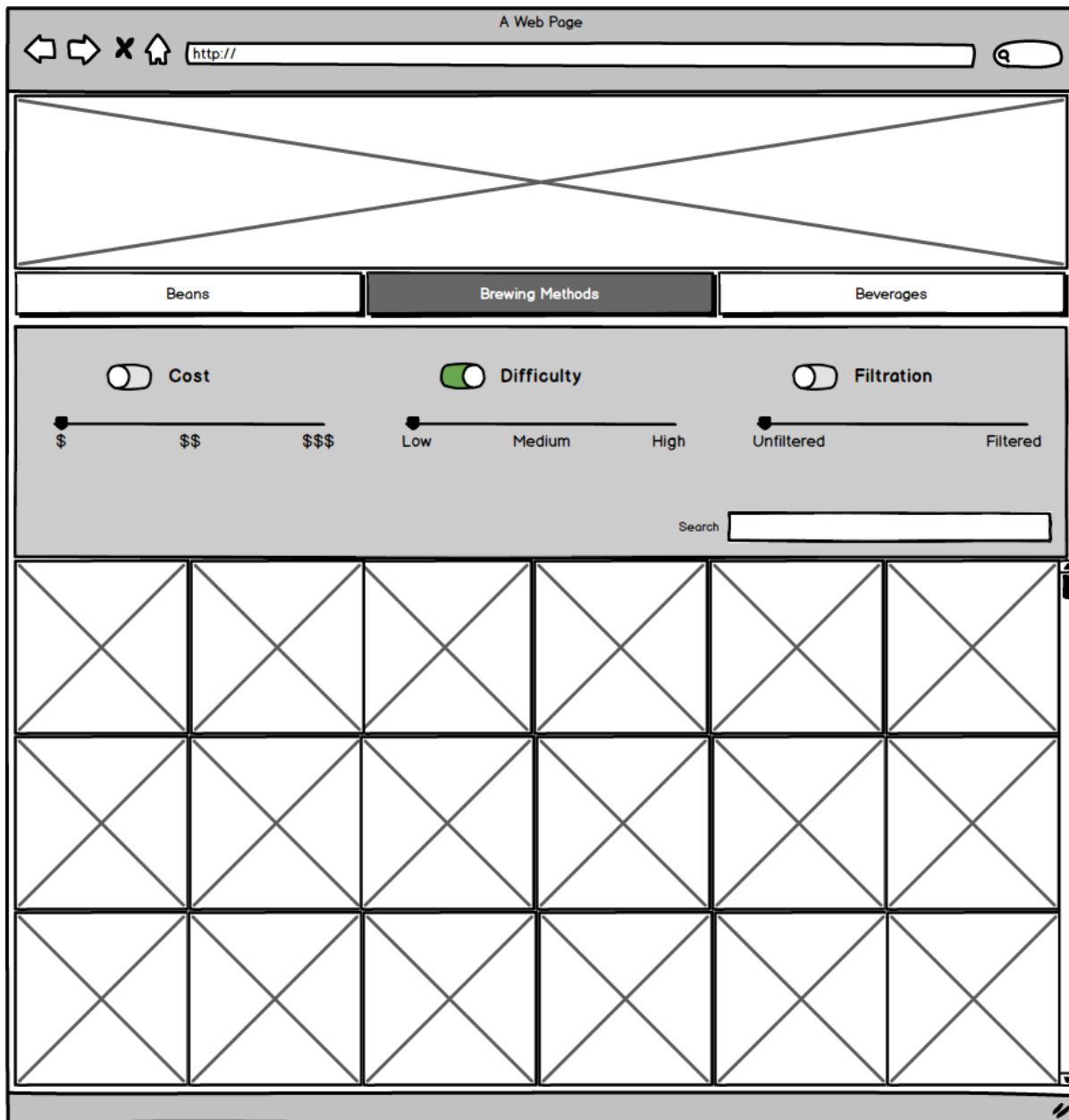
There has been one consistent issue with the interactive widget containers so far. When a user first travels to a given page, all of the tile items are *supposed* to display because the page's content should not be filtered *until* the user manipulates the sliders/dropdowns. But because the sliders are already set to certain filter settings by default, only the content that satisfies those settings will display. To obtain the desired "display all results" starter setting, off/on toggles were placed to the left of each filter's header. The toggles are all set to the "off" setting when the user first visits the page. To use a given filter, the user clicks the toggle to the left of the header once to set it to the "on" position (as seen with the **Difficulty** slider above. The user can then manipulate the slider. If the user no longer wants to sort by the slider's category, they simply toggle it back "off." Additionally, a search function has been added to the interactivity container.
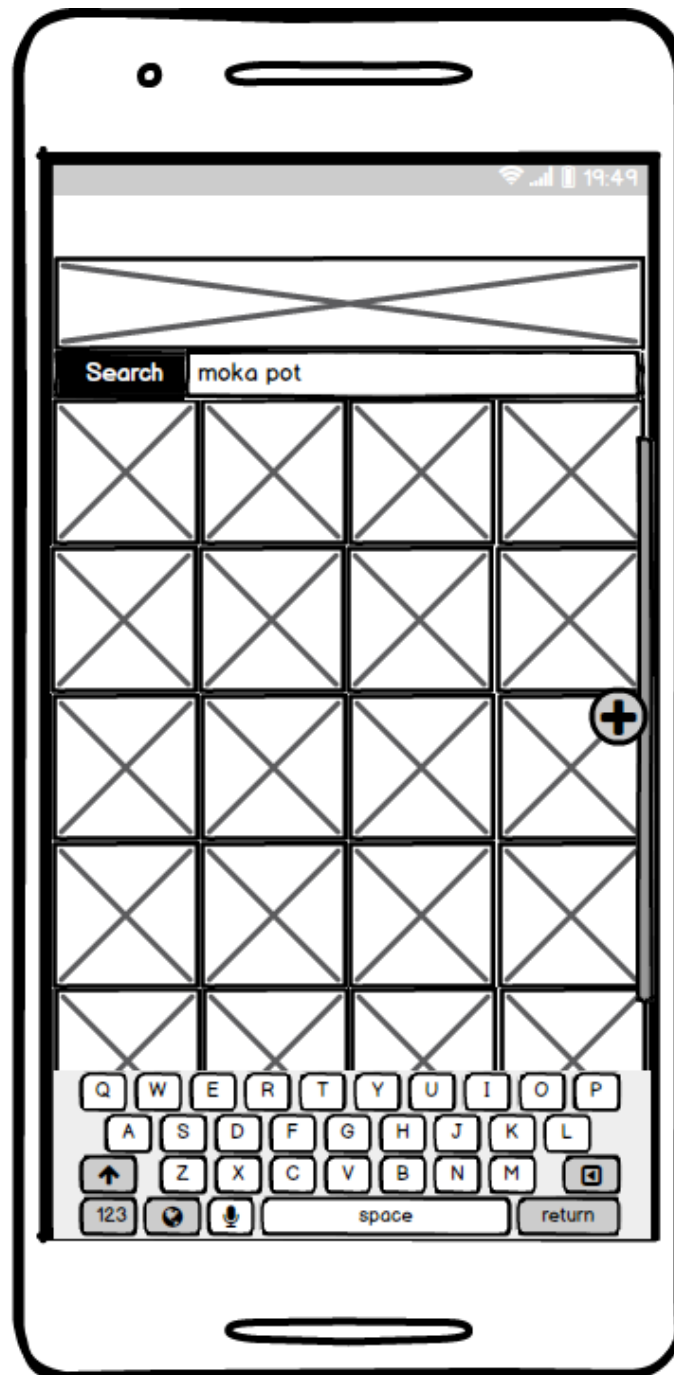
In the mobile version, the newly-implemented search function has been moved near the top of the page, just under the site's logo banner. When the user taps to place their cursor within the search field, the smartphone's keyboard appears at the bottom of the page.
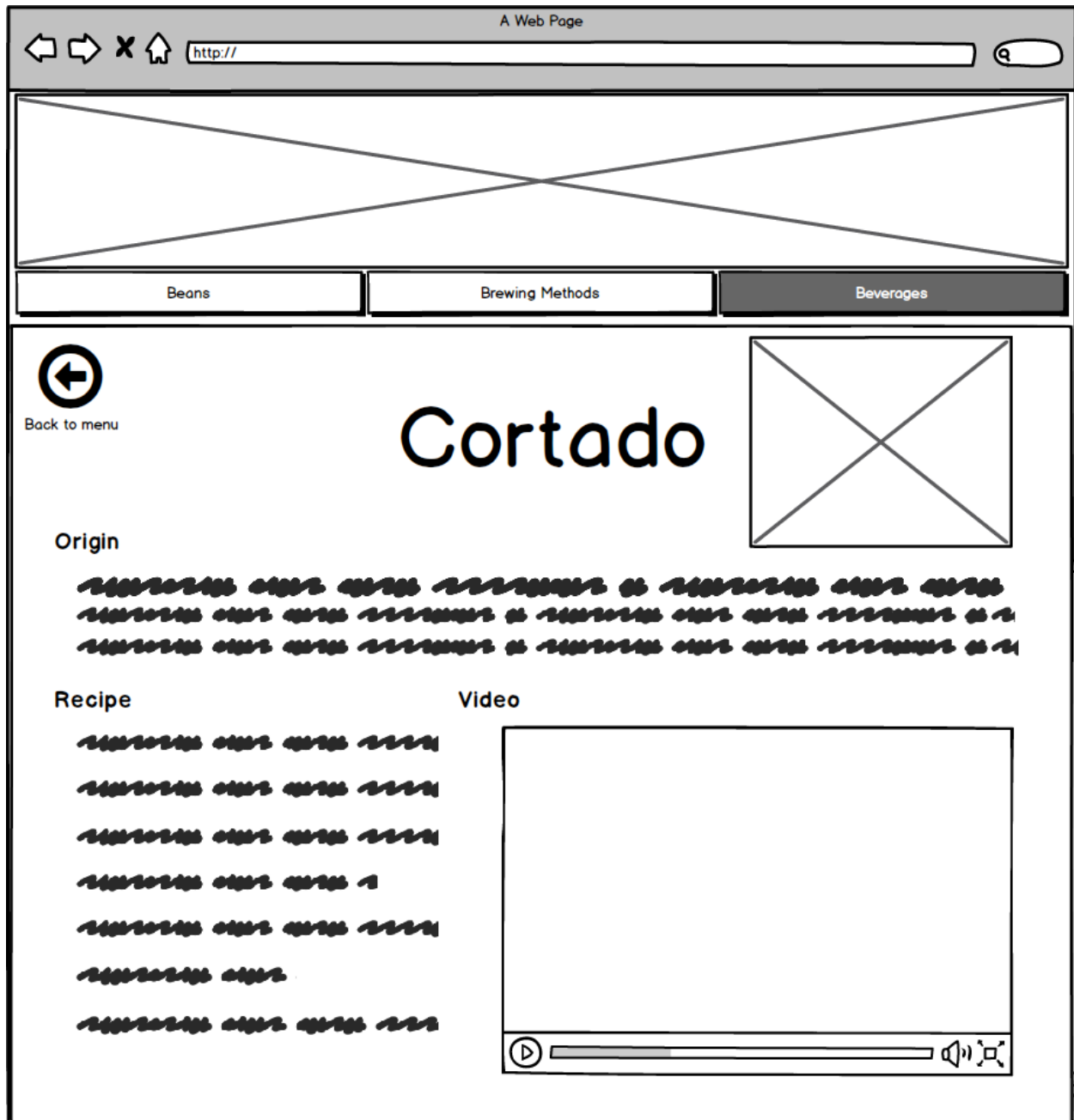
Above is a "notecard" that might display when the user clicks on a given tile. At least one interview participant in Part I of this project expressed their desire to stay on one page. The "notecard" layout slides neatly into the tile content container and displays information relevant to Part I interview participants' stated interests: the item's background, recipes/proportions (specifically with regard to beverages), and instructional "how-to" videos. The circle-arrow button at the top-left of the notecard takes the user back to the tile list for whichever section they are currently browsing.

In the mobile version, the notecard would be scaled to fit the more restrictive dimensions of the smartphone, and would probably need to be able to scroll in order to capture all of the elements that the desktop version has. The notecard display also features a back button. Android users could potentially use the built-in back button found on most of their phones as well. However, iPhones lack a physical back button, so it would be useful to have it on the screen.
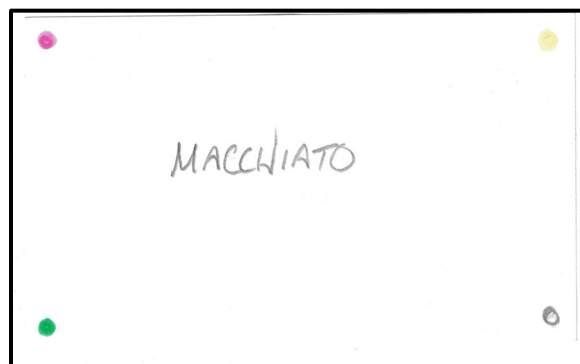
The Prototype

Analog Development

To start, we developed a simple prototype on index cards to get an idea for how the concept's basic functionality would be presented. The index card prototype corresponded to the **Beverages** section in the later digital prototype. First, we developed interactive "toggles" based on common coffee beverage properties. The toggles were devised so users could use concepts that might be more immediately familiar to them to "drill down" and find an item of their preference.

The four toggles were color-coded and offered two narrowing choices: **hot or cold**, **dairy or non-dairy, foamed or unfoamed**, and **sweet or unsweet**. Between the two choices was a default OFF setting. If a given toggle was "off," it meant that the user expressed no preference for either on the two choices within it. Quarter coins served as toggle "switches."
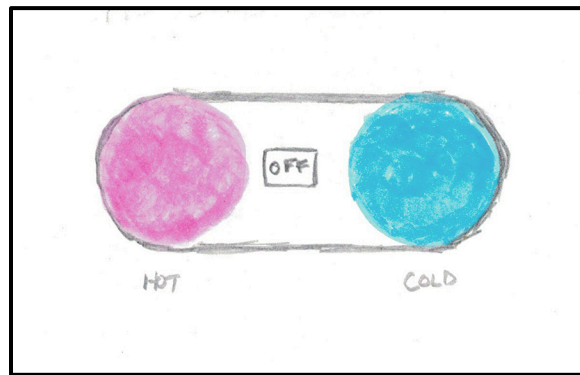
Below the four toggles were nine "tile cards," each of which had the name of a beverage written on their front. We placed dots in the four corners of each card to match the toggle color-codes. When users slid the quarters away from the default OFF position and toward one of the two options within the toggle, we took away the tile cards that did *not* correspond to the preference the user expressed. For instance, if a user slid the hot/cold toggle from OFF to the pink circle denoting HOT, we took away all of the tile cards that denoted cold beverages.

On the backs of the tile cards were illustrations depicting recipes for the beverages named on the cards' fronts. This is a sampling of the more detailed content the project aims to provide its users.
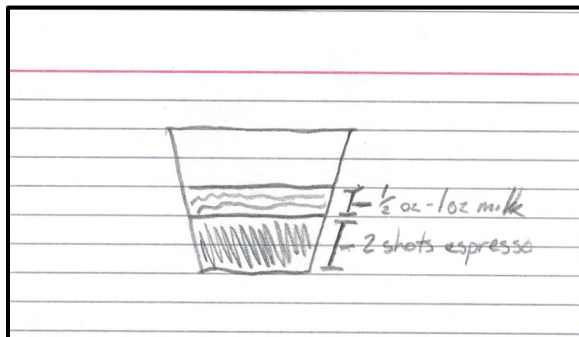
Digital Development

The digital prototype was constructed in Axure RP 8. It can be found at https://f3x8uz.axshare.com. The password is **sveglio**.

The first task was to create a template to be applied across all of the site's main pages. The prototypes frame was made wide enough – 1280 pixels – to fit high-resolution monitors. It may be scaled on as appropriate. Making the page a bit too big, we thought, was probably better than making it too small to see. The length of the frame depended on how much room was needed for the content within the frame. With actual website code, the length of the frame would likely be more fixed and a scroll bar would be added to the container below the section buttons. We also settled on a color palette (white and several shades of brown/tan) and two fonts (Futura, the sans-serif, and Charter, the serif). Once the frames were in place, we developed a dropdown container for each section – a box containing three or four different dropdown menus corresponding to relevant categories within each section. (The use of sliders was abandoned for the prototype, as the prototyping software made them complicated to implement.)

The we developed the content tiles for each section. At first, the tiles were built row by row, aligned and distributed manually. Eventually, we realized that a lot of Axure's functionality rests upon programmable grids the program calls "repeaters." We then substituted grids we had built manually with repeaters that mimicked their arrangement. The repeaters allowed us to build a little database that assigned each tile to a given property (or properties, in the case of flavour profiles) within each dropdown. Using conditional logic, we were able to add filters to each dropdown menu that worked in conjunction with the other dropdowns on the page. This saved a lot of time. Had we continued to build out manually, we would have had to create multiple specific conditions for each tile.

An example of a tile "notecard" that offers more detailed information on a given item can be found if the prototype user goes to **Bean Varieties** and then clicks **Blue Mountain** when each dropdown is set to **All.** For now, the notecard is filled with sample headings and placeholder text.

For the mobile example, we tried to fit all of the important desktop content onto a 360x640-pixel screen while remaining faithful to the wireframe mockup. We developed a new logo banner (this time without the tagline – there was no room) and moved the search box to a spot below the logo banner. Then we copied the repeater from the desktop Beverages page and shrank the tiles from 200x200 pixels to 80x80 pixels. The buttons for the major sections were moved to the bottom so users' thumbs could more easily reach them. Finally, we implemented a conditional show/hide function on the plus sign/minus sign buttons, which activated and deactivated a panel containing the same dropdown lists found on the Beverages page.

Usability Tests

The usability tests we conducted showed that the drill-down, faceted functionality was intuitive to our testers. All of the testers caught on to the layout quickly and used the dropdowns without difficulty. This is likely because they resemble the refinement functions of many other applications, like Yelp or Google Maps.

However, our testers had a few quibbles with our prototype's structure. The first tester mentioned the default size of the desktop webframe was too big. We had made the pages a bit large so we could attend to detail, but we recognized how that could inconvenience browsability, so we zoomed the pages out a bit for subsequent testers. Tester #3 mentioned that they would prefer to be able to choose multiple options for at least one facet. In this case, we were a bit hamstrung by the limited capabilities of the dropdowns in Axure; buttons may allow users to select multiple options, but would require much more complicated commands with relation to the repeaters. Tester #4 caught a major bug in our **Hot/Cold** facet, which we promptly identified and fixed.

The testers also had a couple questions about the site content. Tester #2, observing the "notecard" containing the Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee beans placeholder content, suggested we should place its roast, acidity, and flavour attributes front and center, since those features are what lead the user to the content in the first place. Tester #1, meanwhile, questioned the situational value of how the **Beans** section presents information. They suggested that the information could be valuable in some specific situations, but not in others. We believe this merits deeper study; to date, we have only been able to anticipate and assume the situations of potential users.

Successes

We believe we have found a market that sorely needs an organized, authoritative online resource. The material exists on the Internet, but it seems scattered and sometimes contradictory; many of Google's top results for queries on coffee offer little structure or editorial control. So many people drink coffee, and yet it seems so many of the people who drink it do not know all that much about it – at least in comparison to other beverages like beer or wine. Through the use of faceted classification, we have illustrated a way to make user-centric coffee research easier.

Shortcomings

Some of our shortcomings were the result of our inexpert grasp of the Axure RP prototyping software. We learned the software as we went along, so we took beginners' approaches like making our page containers longer in lieu of built-in scroll bars. We also forewent the use of interactive sliders (as shown in the wireframes) in favor of dropboxes. The dropdowns did not permit users of the prototype to select multiple potential options within one category, but we were concerned that the use of buttons (which *would* allow users to select multiple options) would overcrowd the interface and and overwhelm our users. We also could not implement a full search option with the prototype tool, but decided to put one in place anyway to demonstrate where it would go on the "real" site. This resulted in a bit of embarrassment when one tester attempted to actually use the tool.

Still other shortcomings resulted from our own limited understanding of the coffee industry. We are not professionals, so we are less privy to distribution methods, trends, and recent changes in the industry. For instance, while some roasters are gravitating toward "single-origin" beans (coffee beans of a single type grown in a single location), most of the packaged beans sold today are still "blends" (combinations of multiple different types of beans). The fact that most coffee is sold in blend form could potentially undercut the perceived value of isolating and identifying particular types of beans.

We were also unsure whether we wanted to make Sveglio a purely not-for-profit informational resource or a highly market-oriented resource. So far, we have not demonstrated evidence of any advertising, tie-ins, or product recommendations, but we may need to pivot toward that model in the future so we can stay solvent.

Future Considerations

Moving forward, we will seek the expertise of professionals in the field – growers, roasters, baristas – to make our content accurate and relevant. If we need to, we will reorganize the content within our major sections to better reflect professionals' advice. We will also look to ways we can produce our own multimedia content – visual diagrams (flowcharts, component breakdowns, etc.), audio (a coffee podcast, perhaps?), and video – with the help of these experts.

For now, the three main sections of the site do not interact with each other. In the future, we would like to change this too. Which kinds of beans brew best in a Moka Pot? What's the most interesting flavour profile to incorporate into a flat white? If I want to use something other than instant coffee in my frappé, which brewing method confers good results? All are valid questions. Beans, brewing methods, and beverages, all steps in the coffee-preparing process, should not be sequestered away from each other. It would make sense for our website to be more cross-referential.

Appendix: Usability Test Results

Usability Test #1

Scenario: *You stop at a coffee shop and get the daily "dark roast" offering to go. As you drink it, you notice that it is remarkably low in acidity. You also detect a distinct flavor and aroma, almost like strong jasmine tea. You become curious as to what specific kind of coffee this could be.*

Simulation: On the homepage, Tester #1 zoomed out on the interface so they could see more of it on the screen. Because they knew they were looking for a specific type of coffee bean, they chose the **Bean Varieties** section quite quickly. The tester stopped for a second and expressed preference for this page to open in the same window. The tester assessed the dropdown boxes on the **Bean Varieties** page for about five seconds before choosing **Dark** from the **Roast** field, **Low** from the **Acidity** field. They were less certain, however, about which option to choose from the **Flavour Profile** field. Is jasmine characterized as **earthy** or is it **floral**? (**Floral** was what we were aiming for. The combination of dark roast, low acidity, and floral flavor narrows the options down to a single bean: **Sumatra Mandheling**.)

At the end of the test, Tester #1 stated "I would ask the barista [which beans are present in the coffee]… I wouldn't assume the specific bean variety is listed here," and then added "I think this would be more useful in general if I knew I liked dark roasts with low acidity and floral flavors… it's maybe not as useful if I am trying to figure out what is in front of me."

Usability Test #2

Scenario: *A friend mentions they tried a remarkably good "Jamaican Blue Mountain" coffee the other day. They do not drink coffee that often, so they do not necessarily know enough to go into detail about it. They do know, however, that you drink coffee fairly frequently, so they recommend you look it up sometime.*

Simulation: Tester #2 started by typing a keyword in the search bar. No text showed up in the search bar function, and it became clear to the tester that it was just there for show. The tester then navigated to **Bean Varieties** and began to browse the tile list. Because the list was in alphabetical order, **Blue Mountain** was near the top of it. The tester saw it quickly and clicked on it, which displayed the tile content "notecard" within the same container frame. The tester, upon seeing the placeholder content, said we would probably want to "make sure all of the attributes you might see in the dropdowns at the top of the screen are visible within the content as well." By this, the tester meant that the particular bean's roast level, acidity, and flavor profile should be displayed somewhere in the content area.

Usability Test #3

Scenario: *You have been drinking more coffee at home lately since you started working remotely, so you want a moderately-priced, multi-cup alternative to the single-cup pour-over funnel you currently own.*

Simulation: From the homepage, Tester #3 thought a moment before deciding on **Brewing Methods.** They then took a look at the dropdown categories. They said they "wouldn't rule out cost yet." When asked what they meant, the tester responded that they wanted to keep things in mind that might be cheaper than mid-range. The tester indicated that the **Amount Brewed** function was probably the operative one for them, and selected the **Multiple Cups** option. Then they cycled through both the **$ and $$** options on the **Cost** dropdown. The tester indicated that they ideally "would want to be able to select multiple cost options, but the amount brewed option is helpful."

Usability Test #4

Scenario: *You've just purchased a small [home espresso machine](#) to go with your cheap, dependable old French press. The machine has a little milk foamer attached, which gives you more freedom to explore different drinks. The trouble is, beyond the common beverages you've heard of (lattes, cappuccinos), you're not quite sure what your options are. So you decide to do a little research.*

Simulation: From the homepage, Tester #4 navigated to **Beverages. "**That's a lot of options!" the tester said. They determined that they wanted foamed drinks first, so they selected **Foamed** underneath the **Foamed/Unfoamed** dropdown. Out of curiosity, the tester selected **Non-Dairy** in the **Dairy/Non-Dairy** dropdown. They asked what a "frappé" was, because it was the only option shown. The moderator explained that a frappe is a cold coffee drink that gets its "foam" when the coffee is shaken with water and ice. The tester decided that did not sound good, so they switched the selection to **Dairy** and observed a greater array of results. Tester #4 also found a bug in the prototype where the **Hot/Cold** dropdown was not functioning properly in relation to the other dropdowns. The moderator pledged to fix the issue.