

Mapping Information Architecture

OCTOBER 15

Company: Stash Tea

Authored by: Mary Beth Berberich

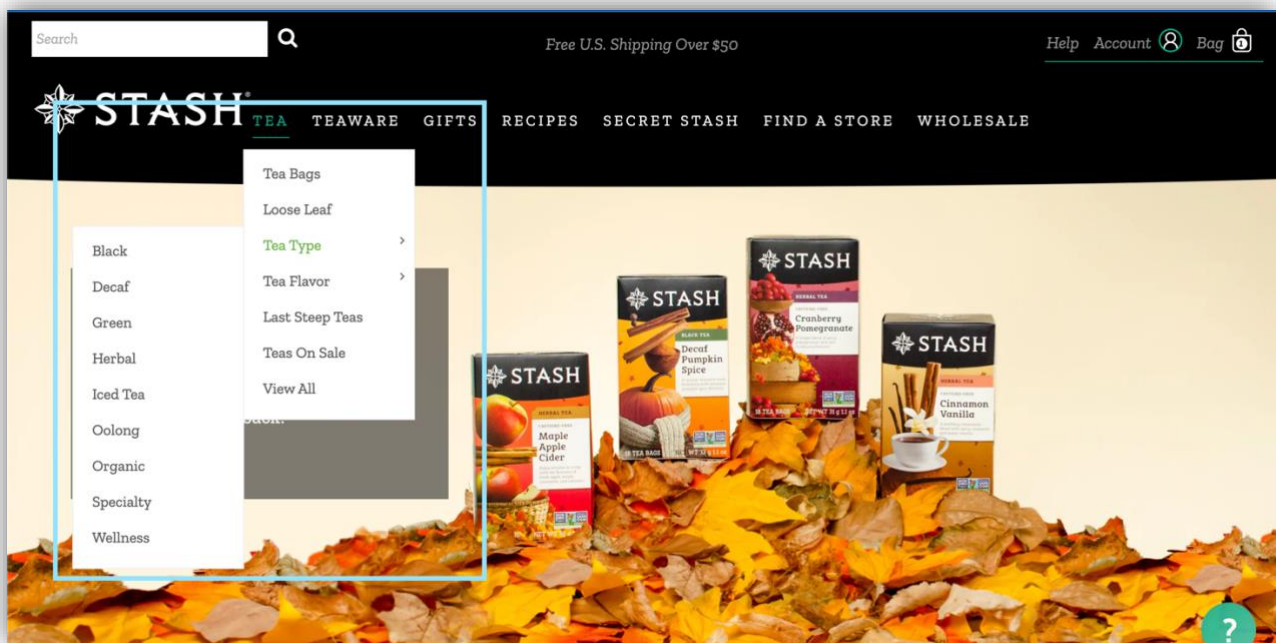


Stash Tea Website

Mapping Information Architecture

Overview

This report summarizes the content mapping exercise for the [Stash Tea website](#). The first step in the process was to [draw a site map](#) and include the top three levels of the navigation that a user interacts with when visiting the website. The top three levels include the global primary navigation and two levels down (Fig. 1.1)

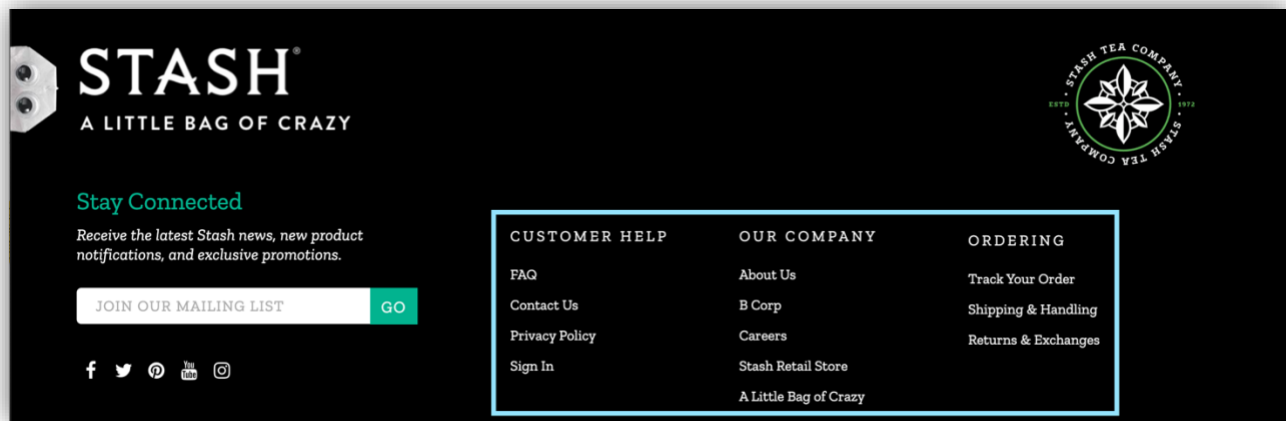


(Figure 1.1: Stash Tea website showing the three levels of global navigation mapped)

In addition to the top three levels of global navigation the other layers of navigation that were considered were also the global top navigation (Fig. 1.2) and the global footer navigation (Fig. 1.3).



(Figure 1.2: Stash Tea website global top navigation)



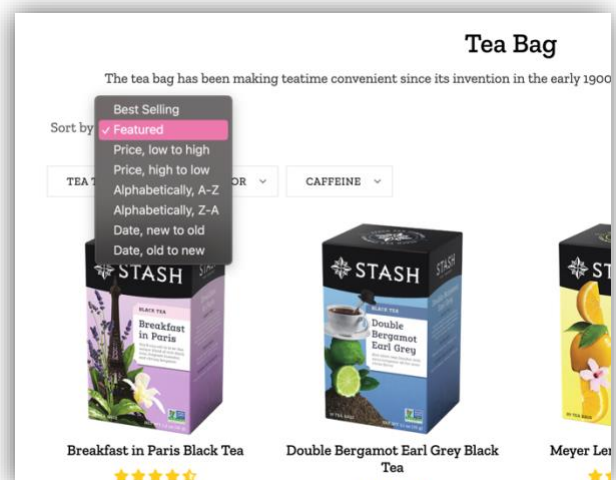
(Figure 1.3: Stash Tea website global footer navigation)

As the site map was drawn, there were [notes made in the document](#) to make call out any items that were of importance in the structure of the site. The following pages in the evaluation will discuss any organization schemes and organization structures. It will then discuss what is working well, what could be improved, and any final conclusions about the Stash Tea information architecture.

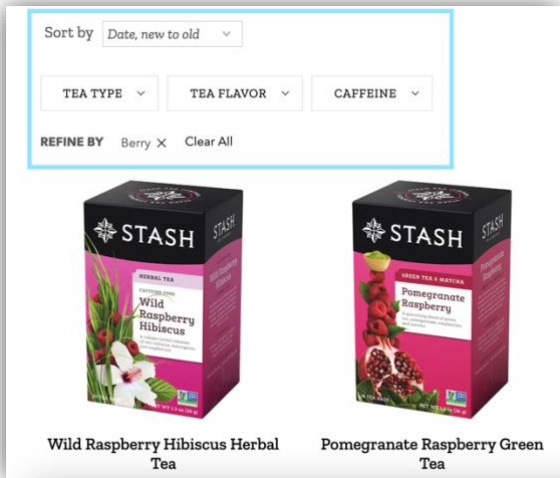
Organization Schemes

The Stash Tea website is an e-commerce website that promotes the purchase of Stash Tea products, teaware accessories, and offers other content to educate their website audience, as well as build a brand reputation with its customers. Stash Tea uses a Hybrid Organization Scheme throughout its pages. The global navigation (Fig. 1.1), top navigation (Fig. 1.2) and footer navigation (Fig. 1.3) use mostly an Ambiguous Scheme with all Topical except for one metaphor in the global nav (Fig. 1.1) with “Secret Stash” and another metaphor in the footer nav (Fig 1.2) with “A Little Bag of Crazy”. There is also one task-based schemes with “Track Your Order” which can also be found in the footer navigation (Fig. 1.3).

As a user works their way into the second and third tier of navigation within the website, they begin to encounter examples of an Exact Organization Schemes. The first introduction of an Exact Scheme is found when a user clicks into a product category page like Tea Bags. There is a “Sort By” function which is a drop down, but allows the user to sort alphabetically, chronologically by the date the product was added, or even by Price. The user can also further refine their search for a great Tea Bag by things like Tea Type, Tea Flavor, and Caffeine.



(Figure 1.4: Exact Organization Scheme/Sorting on the Product Category Pages)

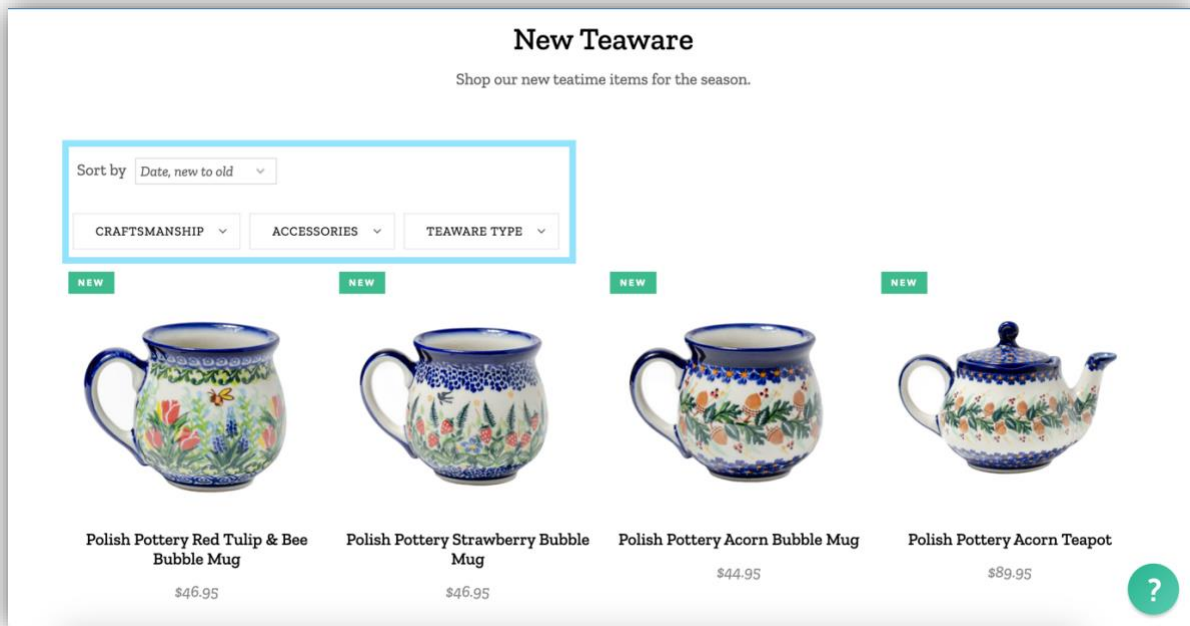


(Figure 1.5: Exact Organization Scheme/Sorting on the Product Category Pages)

Organization Structure

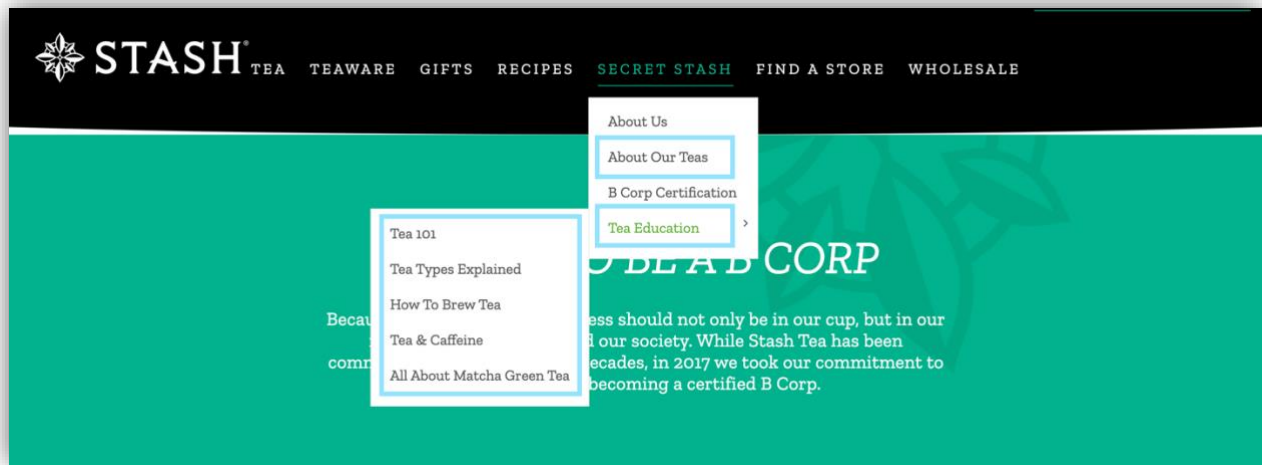
The Stash Tea website predominant organization structure is a Database Model. This can be seen in the use of chronological data and the categorical data associated with each product page. In the Polar Bear book by Rosenfeld, L., Morville, P., & Arango, J., the database model is described as, “data arranged for ease and speed of search and retrieval.” This was the intended use of the dates associated with when each product was added, as well as the metadata or tags on each product like Tea Type, Tea Flavor, and Caffeine. In Figure 1.5 the search results show a sort by date (new to old) as well as refinement by “Berry”.

The data base model can also be seen on groups of pages like Teaware (Fig. 1.6), when a user clicks navigates to Teaware and then child page “New Arrivals”, the Sort by is set to “Date, new to old” and then a user can then use the three refinement categories of Craftmanship, Accessories, and Teaware Type. The tags allow the product pages to be quickly collected and retrieved when a user clicks on the navigational label. The categories are another point of data associated with each Teaware Product page. The metadata allows seemingly unrelated pages to be pulled together under one similar category. For this page Stash Tea has also provided a visual flag “New” green flag that also tells the user which products are new additions to the website.

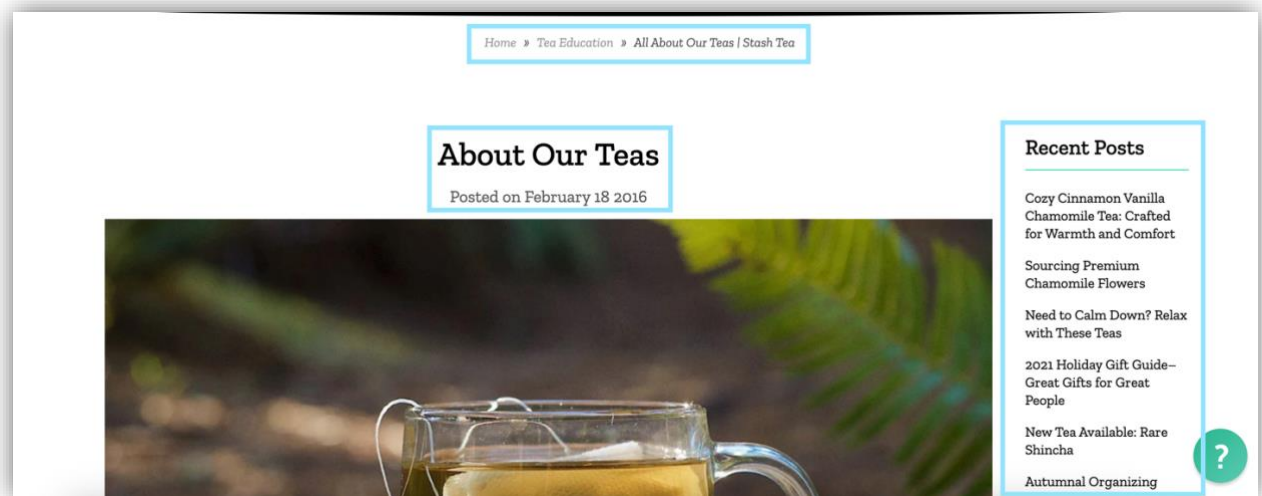


(Figure 1.6: Stash Tea website product pages database model example)

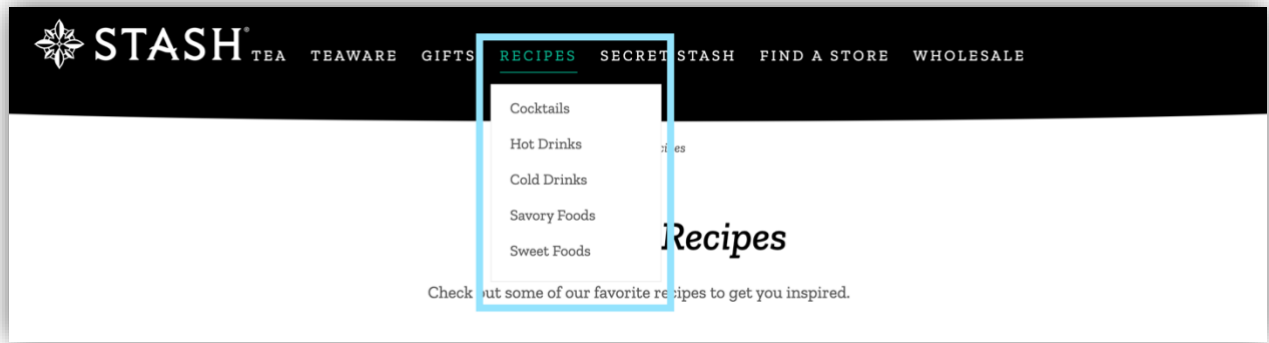
Stash Tea also uses the database model to their advantage to put forward more informational pages on the website with Categories to produce the more informational pages. The pages function like blog posts but are pulled forward into the Global Navigation to inform the user on topics like “About Our Teas” or “Tea Education” (Fig. 1.7). When a user clicks on these items, they are given a local navigational bar that provides other options on “Recent Posts” bringing forward that these aren’t pointed pages, but blog posts on the topics (Fig. 1.8). This also illustrates the use of metadata to build not only the categorical list, but some of the global navigational items which quickly curates and sort the posts and product pages for the shoppers and customers of Stash Tea. Blog posts are also used to present the information under “Recipes” for the user and they can further refine the search via the child pages for the global navigation item or by way of textual and iconic labels that are found below their favorite recipes at the top of the page.



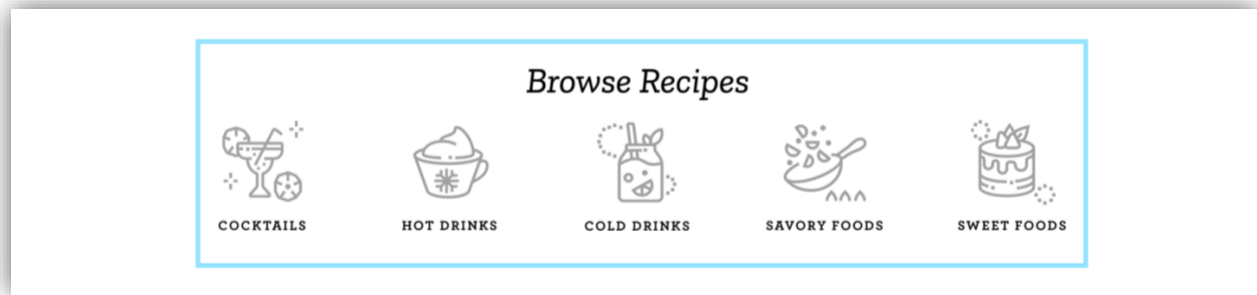
(Figure 1.7: Stash Tea website Secret Stash Pages)



(Figure 1.8: Stash Tea website Tea Education, Blog Posts used as Global Navigation)



(Figure 1.9: Stash Tea website Recipes, Blog Posts used as Global Navigation)



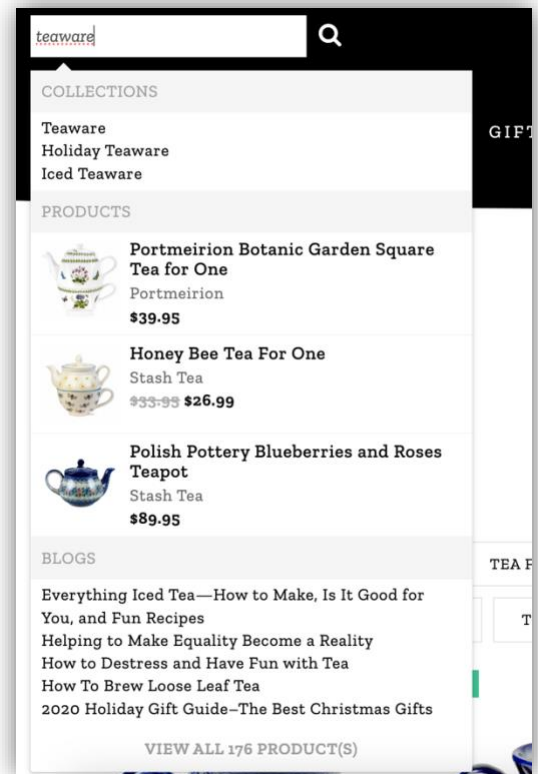
(Figure 1.10: Stash Tea website Recipes, Blog Posts and Textual and Iconic Labels within the page)

Finally, the database model can also be seen when the Search functionality is used on the site. Upon hitting the magnifying class (Fig. 1.11) a user can see that Stash Tea has divided the site into three overall sections or folders within the website.

- Collections
- Products
- Blogs

It is then further divided by the Categories or metadata applied to each page (Fig. 1.12). If nothing is entered into the search field a user can get a full list of all products on the website and how the content can be filtered.

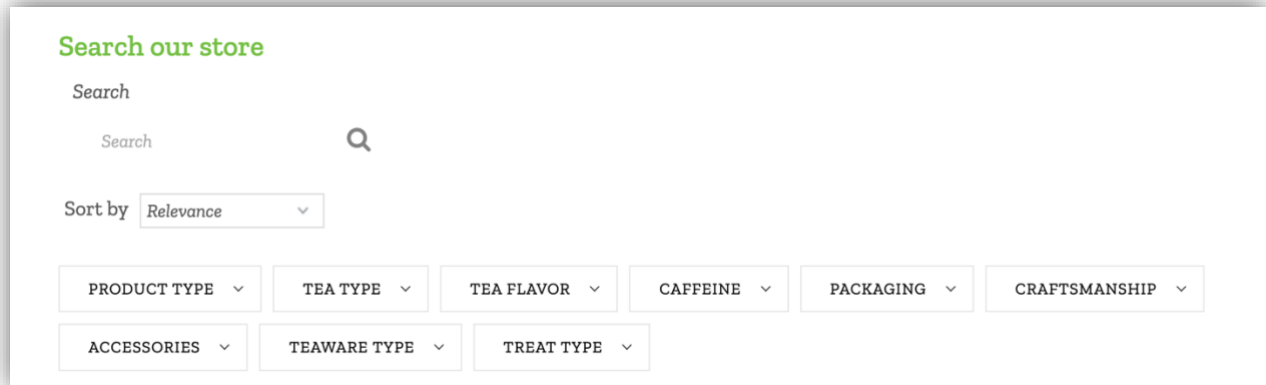
- Product Type
- Tea Type
- Tea Flavor
- Caffeine
- Packaging
- Craftsmanship
- Accessories



(Figure 1.11: Stash Tea Search Function and site structure)

- Teaware Type
- Treat Type

There are then further subcategories under each one of these that depending on the product page that the user is on or the division of content that the Stash Tea team would like to provide to the user they have the appropriate categories to pull forward the right mix of content for the user.



(Figure 1.12: Stash Tea website overall database category structure)

Analysis

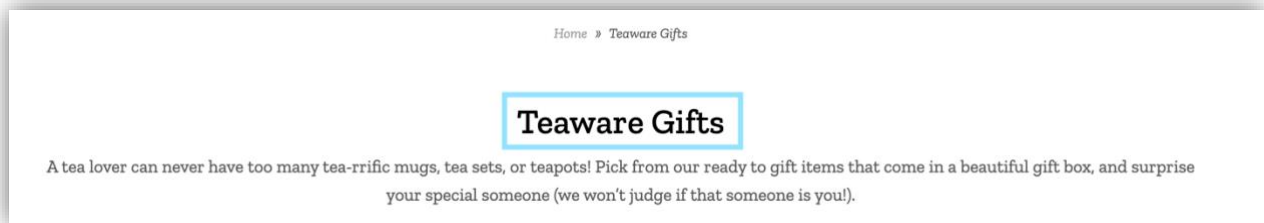
What's Working

Overall, the Stash Tea website provides an ease of navigation for the user to find the products or information about the brand that they may come to the site to find. They are using the database model to their advantage to pull together relevant content on the website and serve it to the user to help them uncover what they are looking to discover. They can dig deep on products via the categories associated with them and find the flavor of tea or teaware item. If a user is a frequent visitor, they can also set up an account and create subscriptions to ship their favorite products on a regular basis.

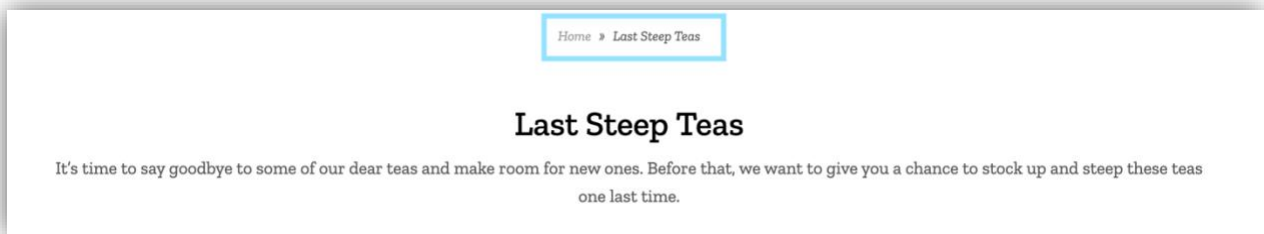
Other elements of the website structure that were well organized is the Global Footer Navigation. The overall labels provided in the footer navigation help to group the content into broader categories for the user:

- **Customer Help**
 - FAQ
 - Contact Us
 - Privacy Policy
 - Sign In
- **Our Company**
 - About Us
 - B Corp
 - Careers
 - Stash Retail Store
 - A Little Bag of Crazy
- **Ordering**
 - Track Your Order
 - Shipping & Handling
 - Returns & Exchange

The labels on each of the product pages were also helpful in providing local page information to guide the user. There are clear headings and a description on what the overall page grouping provides (Fig. 1.13) Another element that helps to orientate the user within the website are the breadcrumb trail found at the top of each of the pages (Fig. 1.14), this is a wayfinding mechanism, so if the user gets distracted and forgets the overall navigational item they clicked on this is a reminder of where they are in the architecture. Even for child pages like “Last Steep Teas” which the title may need a little explanation to a first-time user they get that explanation when with the page description below the heading (Fig. 1.14). All these local navigational or labeling elements help to provide a more organized experience for the user.



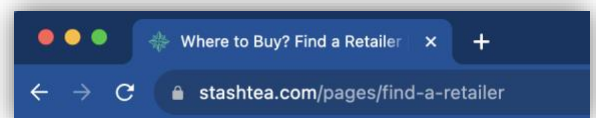
(Figure 1.13: Product Category Pages—Last Steep Teas found in Global Navigation under Teas)



(Figure 1.14: Stash Tea website overall database category structure)

What Can Be Improved

While the Stash Tea has a lot of great organization elements for the user there were some things that could be improved in the overall information architecture. The biggest item is there is a group of pages that fall into a section of the database labeled “pages”. With the address bar they can be identified by the address stashtea.com/pages/ and each singular page falls within the pages category. However, there is not anything that resides at the overall “stashtea.com/pages/” address. It could be a lost opportunity to organize the data in a better way. This organizational structure is probably not apparent to the user because the information is brought together in a clear way for them but could cause headaches for UX teams or other groups that work with the website or the content. Singular pages like “About Us”, “Find a Store”, “B Corp Certification” from the Global Navigation or “Help” from Top Global Nav or “FAQ” from the Footer



(Figure 1.15: Stash Tea website and “pages” section of the website—used for subpages)

Nav are all grouped under pages (Fig. 1.15). They could instead be brought up a level in the information architecture.

Other things that were captured in the exercise of mapping the information architecture is Stash Tea uses blog pages (Fig. 1.16) to build out certain informational pages for the user, but there is no “Blog” in the primary navigation. The user again if

they are paying attention when they navigate to the recipe section or Tea Education are presented with a Local Navigation (Fig. 1.8) on the right-hand side of the page that says, “Recent Posts”, but there is no mention of a blog in the primary navigation. This could confuse the user if they are coming to the site and thinking they will find a main page about this information. One consideration could be for Stash Tea to bring the blog forward as a navigational component so that structurally it makes more sense for the user. For the pages that provide more permanent and important company or product information they could be presented into more permanent pages in the architecture. This likely would be better from an SEO perspective for these pages and from website structure as well.

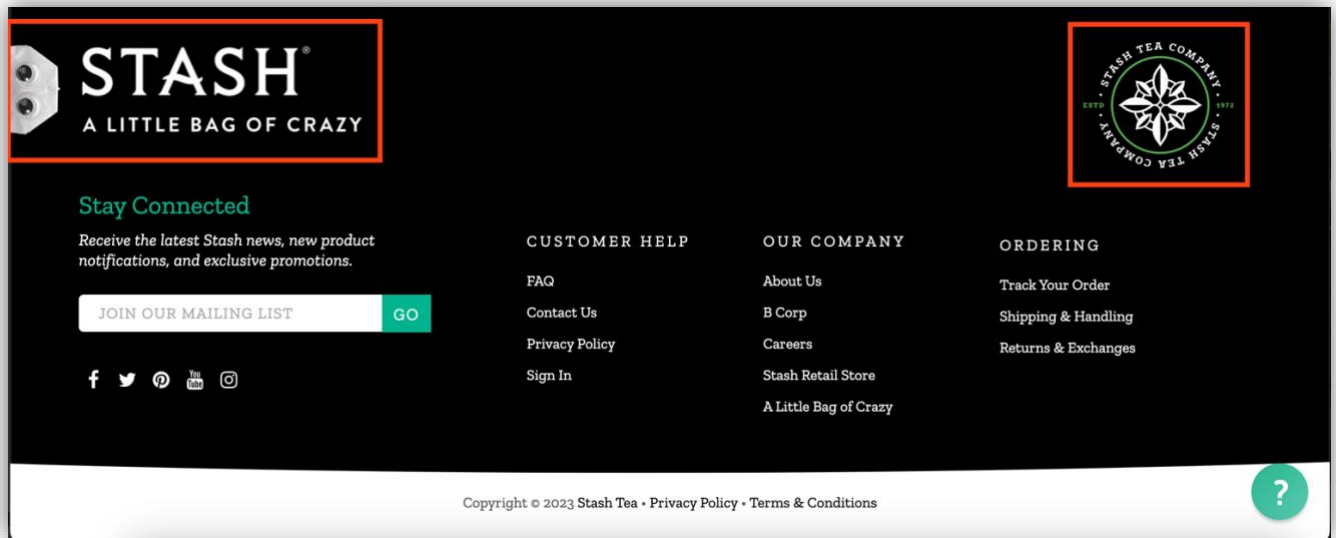


(Figure 1.16: Stash Tea website and “blogs” section of the website—used for subpages and education)

If Stash Tea did use the blog like a more traditional blog and bring it forward for the user, it could also benefit from a bit more organization when the user stumbles upon it. If the user finds themselves intrigued by some of the information contained in the blog there is no way to find what they are looking for except the “Recent Posts” local navigation (Fig. 1.8). One way to potentially improve this experience for the user is to provide filtering capabilities beyond “Recent Posts”. Perhaps they can search or filter the blog posts by subject and date. This would help a user find the content and allow Stash Tea to keep the user coming back for more educational information that they could engage with beyond what is brought forward as navigational components.

A few other minor things that were found in the website structure may need some explanation or further thought from Stash Tea are:

1. The global nav link, “Secret Stash” is not clickable, the other main navigation items will bring the user to a main category page, so why this also doesn’t bring the user to a higher-level content page. Perhaps this is the “About Us” page and all pages that are listed underneath are built as true child pages vs. a mix of blog and “pages”.
2. In the footer navigation “Stash a Little Bag of Crazy” image/icon (Fig. 1.15) brings you to the page “A Little Bag of Crazy”. This page is found in the Global Footer Navigation under the “Our Company” heading but does not maintain any of the other global navigation items once a user is on the page. A user must scroll down to the footer to find their way outside of this page. Further, you don’t really understand the context of the “Little Bag of Crazy” unless you read the company timeline that talks about in 2019 how/why this was added.
3. The Stash Tea logo in the Global Footer Navigation (Fig. 1.15) brings the user to the “About Us” page, not a bad decision, but could be unexpected.



(Figure 1.15: Stash Tea Global Footer Navigation – Iconic Navigational Elements)

Conclusion

Overall, the Stash Tea website provides a comprehensive experience for the user. At the surface before the content mapping exercise and to the average user there are minimal disruptions to the browsing experience. From an information architecture there are some tweaks that could be made to how the pages are organized to improve the organization going forward and potentially a few other small tweaks that could be made to bring it all together.

Site Map

Analysis based [this site map](#) developed by Mary Beth Berberich.

References

Rosenfeld, L., Morville, P., & Arango, J. (2015). *Information Architecture for Web and Beyond*, 4th Edition. O'Reilly.