

TINARIWEN

CULTURE + MUSIC



PROBLEM SPACE

PROBLEM SPACE

AN EXPLORATION

An exploration of how one can make the act of listening to music—a unisensory and often passive activity—a richer, more engaging, and more robust experience through the means of a multi-sensory product ecosystem.

The internet has offered more platforms and avenues to discover music, but for the same reason, there is less opportunity to connect and engage with an act. Can design help connect artists and fans on a deeper level?

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Tinariwen's mission has always been to share their unique nomadic culture and story with the world. Not everyone has the opportunity to visit the desert or attend concerts, but a familiarity with the band members and their culture and history greatly enhances the appreciation of the artists and their music. How can we bring this added experience to listeners in their own localities?

PROBLEM SPACE

TARGET USERS

Listeners: novices and fans

People with interest in experiencing
different cultures

PROBLEM SPACE

GOALS

- 1st Tier:** Design a more multi-sensory experience of listening to music
- 2nd Tier:** Introduce listeners to the unique Touareg culture and way of life, and thereby enhance how fans experience Tinariwen's music
- 3rd Tier:** Help artists and fans connect on a deeper level by satisfying the objectives of both groups

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH: APPROACH

RESEARCH APPROACH

RESEARCH GROUPS

Novices

Fans

Touareg people

Tinariwen

RESEARCH APPROACH

RESEARCH GOALS

From **novices**, I hoped to learn how novices respond to the music having never heard it before, and whether listening to the music sparked any further interest in learning more about the band or the culture.

From **fans**, I hoped to learn how they got introduced to the music, what got them hooked, their level of interaction with the band, platforms they use, and what value they get from listening to the music.

RESEARCH APPROACH

RESEARCH GOALS, CONT'D.

From the **Touareg**, I hoped to gain perspective on what they perceive to be the most important aspects of the culture and what they would like people to know about them.

From **Tinariwen**, I intended to learn about the message they want to convey through their music and which elements of their culture they most value.

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH: METHODS

RESEARCH METHODS

NOVICES

Have a preliminary listening party with people both familiar and unfamiliar with the music. Play Tinariwen's music and project video/images of the band and Touareg culture during the event. Afterwards, hand out a [survey](#) asking people whether they liked the music, their gut responses to what they heard and saw, and if there is anything more they would like to learn about the band based on the experience.

RESEARCH METHODS

FANS

Give them [questionnaires](#) to learn how they got introduced to the music, what got them hooked, their level of interaction with the band, platforms they use, and what value they get from listening to the music.

RESEARCH METHODS

TOUAREG

Interview or send [questionnaires](#) to Touareg friends to get their thoughts on the most important aspects of the culture and what they would like people to know about them.

Research Touareg culture more to identify artifacts that could be easily shared.

RESEARCH METHODS

TINARIWEN

Read and listen to interviews to identify what aspects of their culture they are most eager to share.

Read liner notes to albums.

Ask/[interview them](#) in person, if possible, about the message they want to convey, and try to share that with listeners.

RESEARCH METHODS

CULTURE

Online research about particular aspects of culture

Reach out to Touareg friends for specific questions

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH: OUTCOMES

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

NOVICES

Twenty responses from Listening Party on April 2 in
the Design Grad Studio



Photo taken at listening party

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

NOVICES, CONT'D.

Reactions to music

- calming
- relaxing
- meditative
- chill
- peaceful
- content
- free
- journeys
- longing, yearning
- in their element
- hopeful
- rhythmic, harmonious

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

NOVICES, CONT'D.

What they were curious about

- the culture, lifestyle, and traditions
- band's objectives
- what music means to the the band
- instruments
- where th band is from
- lyrics
- the message
- individual stories and philosophies

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

FANS

Eleven responses, ranging from super-fans to casual listeners

- Reactions to music
- What they were drawn to
- Which platforms they most interact with
- Level of engagement and fandom

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

FANS, CONT'D.

Reactions to music

- authentic
- an escape
- spoke to me
- great rhythm
- relaxing
- intriguing
- music from home

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

FANS, CONT'D.

Drawn to

- rhythms, groove
- story
- ancient traditions and modern instruments
- lyrics
- emotion in music
- aesthetic
- simplicity

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

FANS, CONT'D.

Platforms and engagement

- Most follow on Facebook
- Most did at least some research into the band or culture
- Only half were interested in learning **even more** about the culture
- More people download music than buy CDs/LPs

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

TOUAREG

Five responses (four by email; one by phone)

- Significance of Tinariwen to the Touareg
- Culture / traditions
- What they value and want to share

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

TOUAREG, CONT'D.

Significance of Tinariwen

- ambassadors for Touareg
- giving them a voice
- source of pride as people and culture
- speak to their struggles
- everyone relates

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

TOUAREG, CONT'D.

Culture, traditions, what they want to share

- freedom
- simplicity
- sense of hospitality and other values
- their plight and cause

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

TINARIWEN

Eighteen media interviews, and brief in-person interviews with two band members

- their message
- their history
- their music
- their values
- the political situation

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

TINARIWEN: THE MESSAGE

The Touareg are a marginalized minority from the Sahara desert, who span across several countries. They have been fighting for their freedom and independence from the oppressive governments under which they live, but are also forced from their homes due to violence and lack of opportunity. They want to spread their message of equality and freedom, and make their cause known.

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

TINARIWEN: THE REGION



RESEARCH OUTCOMES

TINARIWEN: THE MUSIC

Tinariwen sing about universal themes of:

- loss
- love
- home
- nostalgia
- exile

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

TINARIWEN: THE VALUES

Tinariwen speak a lot about:

- universality of music
- their love for the desert and their home
- cultural values of simplicity
- the plight of the Touareg

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

GOALS

Through my research, I was able to identify what Tinariwen and their people wish to share with the world, and what their listeners wish to learn from them. The ultimate design goal, then, is to match these needs, and in so doing, establish a stronger connection between the artists and their audiences.

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

PRINCIPLES

WHAT I LEARNED

Visuals are a compelling entry point for an interest in the culture

Most people introduced to the music have some level of interest in learning more about Touareg culture

The Touareg value simplicity, silence, and freedom

WHAT THIS MEANS

Design should incorporate a lot of visuals of the people and landscape

Design solution must satisfy this curiosity by explaining basic aspects of the culture (ceremonies, dress, place, language, etc.)

Visual design should be minimalistic, spacious, and concise

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

PRINCIPLES, CONT'D.

WHAT I LEARNED

WHAT THIS MEANS

Most people engage with the band online

Design should have an online component

The plight of the Touareg is an important message expressed in the lyrics

Music and lyrics are an entry point to communicating the cause of the Touareg

Culture is sacred to the Touareg

Design and aesthetic should impart that sense of sacredness

CONCEPT EXPLORATION

CONCEPT EXPLORATION

BRAINSTORMING

Looking at pain points

| BAND | LISTENERS |
|---|--|
| Violence | Lack of understanding |
| Dying way of life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyrics • Culture |
| Being away from home | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics • Struggles |
| Advocating for a cause [not communicated] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story • Instruments |
| Communication barriers | Lack of interest? |
| “Suffering is a catalyst for art” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music is enough? • Don't care |
| True desert blues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't know how to find information • Don't have time—information overload |



CONCEPT EXPLORATION

BRAINSTORMING, CONT'D.

Framing: What do they care about?

LISTENERS

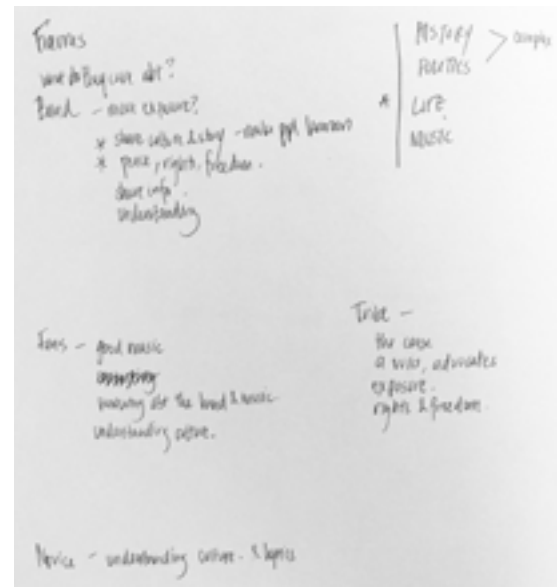
- Good music
- Knowing about the band and music
- Understanding the culture

TOUAREG

- The cause
- Having a voice and advocates
- Exposure
- Rights and freedom

BAND

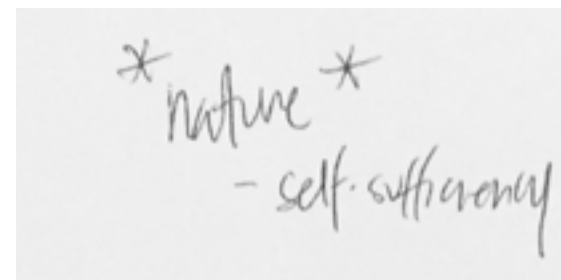
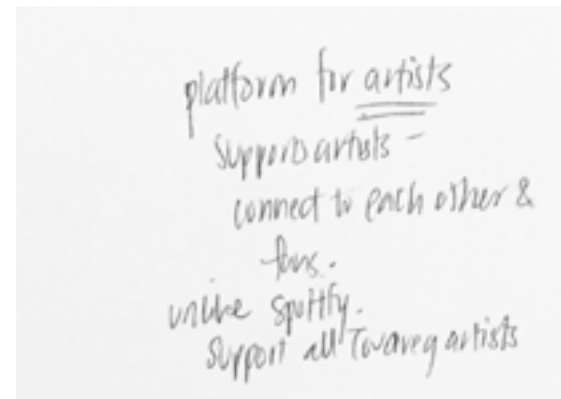
- More exposure
- Share culture and story; make themselves known
- peace, rights, freedom
- understanding



CONCEPT EXPLORATION

BRAINSTORMING, CONT'D.

Formulating ideas



CONCEPT EXPLORATION

FOUR CONCEPTS: I

CALL TO ACTION: Communicating the plight of the Touareg is of central importance to the Touareg and to Tinariwen. The ultimate purpose of the design solution would be to raise awareness and create a movement to help ease their suffering. A Call to Action would be a central feature of every component.

CONCEPT EXPLORATION

FOUR CONCEPTS: II

CULTURAL IMMERSION: The Touareg culture is rich and unique, yet due to being from such a remote region, it exists in relative obscurity. The design solution would create an interactive, immersive museum-like experience that provides exposure and explains features of the Touareg culture. The culture would be a central feature, with the music being secondary.

FOUR CONCEPTS: III

PLATFORM FOR ARTISTS: Music is a central part of Touareg culture, and there are several musical groups from the tribe, but they do not have the same global exposure as Tinariwen. The design solution would create a means for artists from the same part of the world to connect with each other and their fans, while also allowing artists from similar areas to share and represent their culture together. At the same time, fans gain exposure to different artists with similar sounds and styles.

CONCEPT EXPLORATION

FOUR CONCEPTS: IV

SHARE THE MUSIC: Most people who hear Tinariwen's unique musical style become curious about the band and the culture. Thus, the central focus of the design solution would be to create that initial exposure and introduce Tinariwen's music and band in unconventional and subtle ways, such as in cafes, cultural street festivals, house parties, etc.

CONCEPT EXPLORATION

FINAL CONCEPT

My final concept is a blend of my second (cultural immersion) and fourth (share the music) concepts. Based on my research, sharing the culture satisfied the need of both the band and the listeners, while the music provided a compelling entry-point for exposure to the culture. One without the other would not have been as engaging nor would it have satisfied the either group's needs to such an extent.

CONCEPT EXPLORATION

FINAL CONCEPT, CONT'D.

The design solution would employ the popularity of Tinariwen's music as an entry point, but the ultimate purpose would be to share the culture, traditions, and struggles with fans.

UNDERSTANDING
THE LANDSCAPE

INTRODUCTION

Now that I had chosen my design concept, I set out to brainstorm components of the product ecosystem that would satisfy the design principles and the needs of stakeholders, while also keeping in line with the overarching concept. Before I could do that, though, I needed to better understand the landscape of the problem space as well as the landscape of interactions between the artists and their fans.

UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

MAPPING

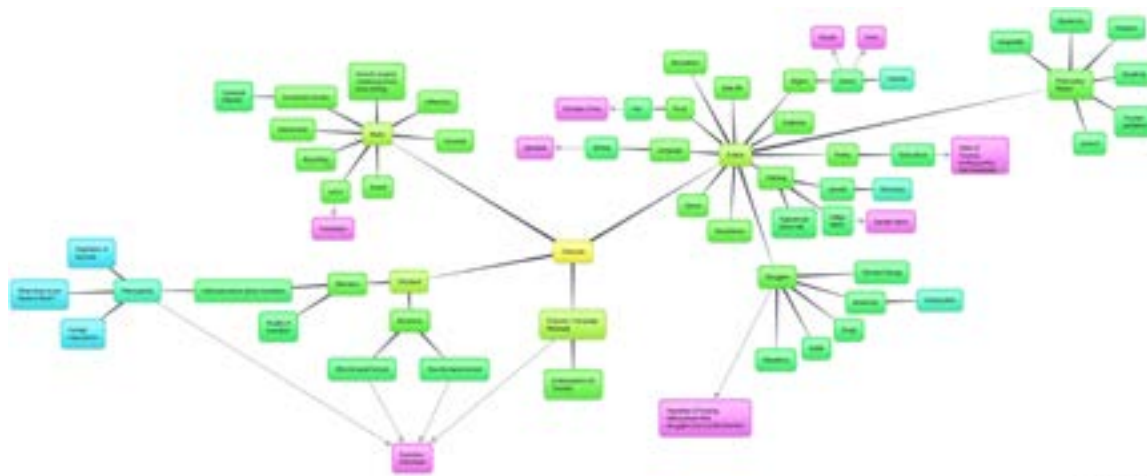
To begin, I mapped out all the concepts that arose during my research in order to organize and identify all the points that could potentially be addressed in the design solution. I then added bubbles in pink with some initial ideas for components related to various concepts.

This map also helped to organize the online component later on.

UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

MAPPING, CONT'D.

Click to view the full-size map.



UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

INTERACTION POINTS

I brainstormed moments in the “fandom” process to identify access points that could be expanded on:

HEAR MUSIC FOR THE FIRST TIME

- Online: Spotify, Facebook, YouTube
- From a friend
- At a festival with other artists

RESEARCH BAND

- Wikipedia and Google search
- Tinariwen website
- Facebook or social media

ENGAGEMENT

- Follow on social media / subscribe to emails
- Stream albums

PURCHASING AN ALBUM

- Physical CD
- Download

ATTEND A CONCERT



UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

INTERACTION POINTS, CONT'D.

The Territory Map offered insights into which points of interaction offer the most enriching level of engagement with Tinariwen. My research showed that the offline components—though arguably most engaging—were not as common among casual fans.

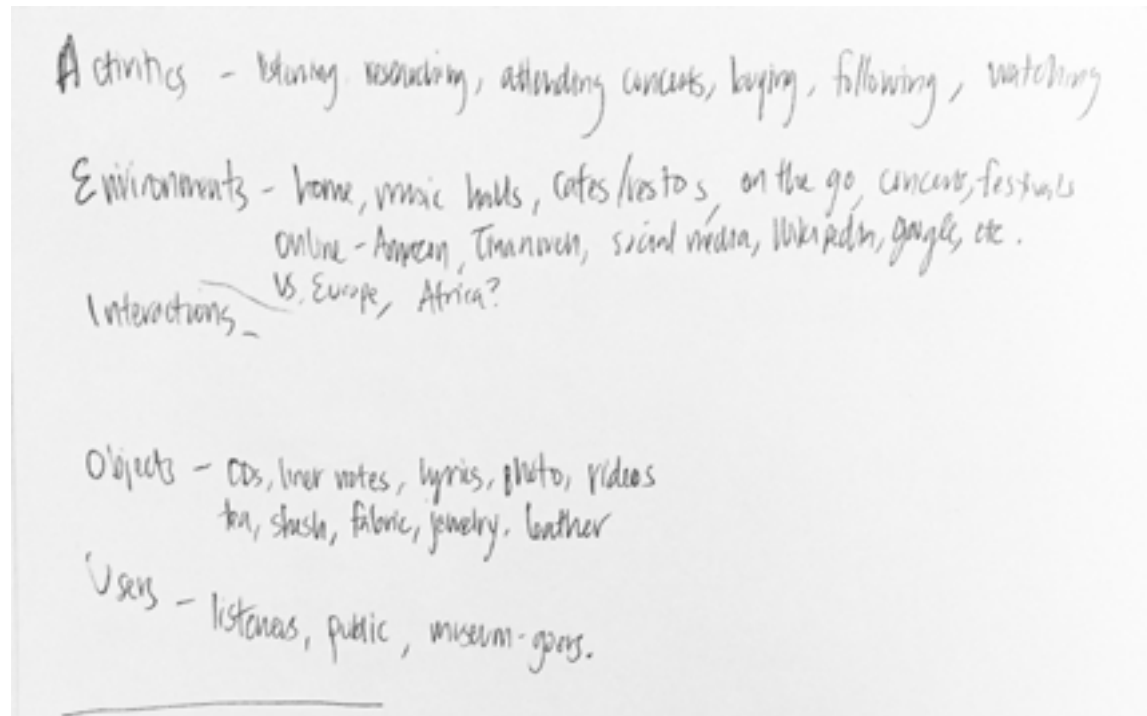


[Click to view full size](#)

UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

INTERACTION POINTS, CONT'D.

I looked at AEIOU points of potential interaction...



UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

INTERACTION POINTS, CONT'D.

...and brainstormed more specific areas of interaction to consider

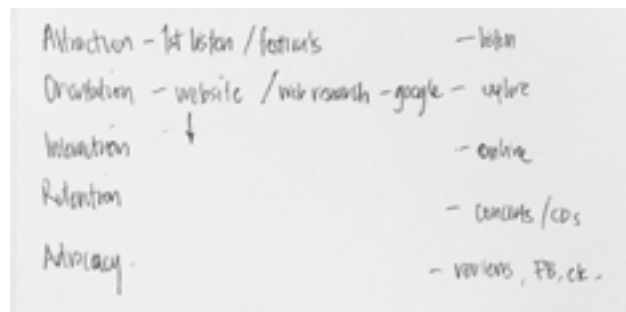
- Facebook, social media, YouTube
- Festivals: music & street
- Concerts: tabling for products
- Conflict Kitchen: sell wares, interviews, Lunch hour
- Instagram: more personal photos, off-stage
- Interviews
- Reddit sessions
- A blog
- Museums
- Events
- Website: press & reviews, pro access
- Communicate with / meet a Touareg
- TED: tell story in music form
- Similar to UNICEF "Children Like Me" book



UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

EXPERIENCE CYCLE

I also looked at Shelley Evenson's experience cycle and saw the first listen as the point of **Attraction**, initial research as **Orientation**, online as **Interaction**, **Retention** evidenced by purchases and concert attendance, and **Advocacy** as social media shares and reviews.



UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

CONSULTING EXPERTS

Because I myself am not Touareg, and sharing another culture was new territory for me, I wanted to speak with people who have done this type of work before. I reached out to both Dawn Weleski and Blaine Siegel from Conflict Kitchen, and Blaine agreed to meet with me to discuss my project.

In speaking with Blaine, I learned that just as food is an entry point for engaging people in difficult political conversations, music could also serve as an entry point for engaging people with a culture foreign to their own.

He said that Conflict Kitchen uses food to communicate their message.

Similarly, Tinariwen's music (namely their lyrics and poetry) serve as a means to communicate their message to the world.

I expressed my concern about wanting to do justice to a culture that was not my own, and he made it clear that whatever my solution, it should be a platform for **their** voice to be communicated, and that I should be careful not to give my own opinion or push my own agenda.

He also suggested that I develop my components in such a way that it removes the users from their everyday experiences.

BRAINSTORMING COMPONENTS

BRAINSTORMING COMPONENTS

INTRODUCTION

Based on my research, I knew that an online component would be a crucial access point to learning more about the Touareg culture, so I was more clear on what purpose the on-screen component would need to serve. The main task then was to brainstorm the physical component(s) that would work in tandem with the online one, and satisfy all the requirements and needs I had established.

As most of my brainstorming sessions were written words on a page, I have transcribed them here for the sake of legibility.

BRAINSTORMING COMPONENTS

WORD ASSOCIATIONS

- silence
- stillness
- desert
- fire
- guitars
- tea
- cigarettes
- camels
- poetry (lyrics)
- shesh
- outfits
- tiffinagh
- calabass
- atmosphere (no tech)
- nomadic
- concert halls & venues
- nighttime
- distance
- stars
- night sky
- philosophy
- minimalist
- visual
- striking presence
- Sahara
- French / Arabic
- music
- blues
- changing way of life
- rebellion
- “assouf” - longing
- blue men
- indigo
- Africa
- stark
- barren
- “empty spaces”
- “Welcome to the Desert”
- solitude
- calmness
- simplicity
- drums
- wandering

BRAINSTORMING COMPONENTS

IDEAS

- Listening party
- Caravan
- Event
- Web portal
- Booklet
- Poetry
- live Q&A sessions with the band
- Pop-up Conflict Kitchen-type shop
- Option to donate
- Cultural street festivals: attach to one
- Set up an actual tent
- Alphabet of Tifinagh
- Hand of Maryam jewelry
- Listening party box - dvd ?
- Interactive online space
- Blog: I mediate information to audience; journalism slant
- Include snippets of interviews
- Submit questions that Tinariwen will answer - video reply
- Reddit sessions - online chat with a Touareg
- Video of someone putting on a shesh
- Video how to make tea
- Pictures of their homes / village / gardens
- Skype with a Touareg - language lessons
- Raffle: win a trip to kidal
- Meditation tent
- Book of poetry
- Guide to hosting a listening party
- Recreate desert atmosphere
- Gallery event with photos of Tinariwen
- Postcards from Touareg
- Google hangout with the band
- Collection of images, quotes, and lyrics

BRAINSTORMING COMPONENTS

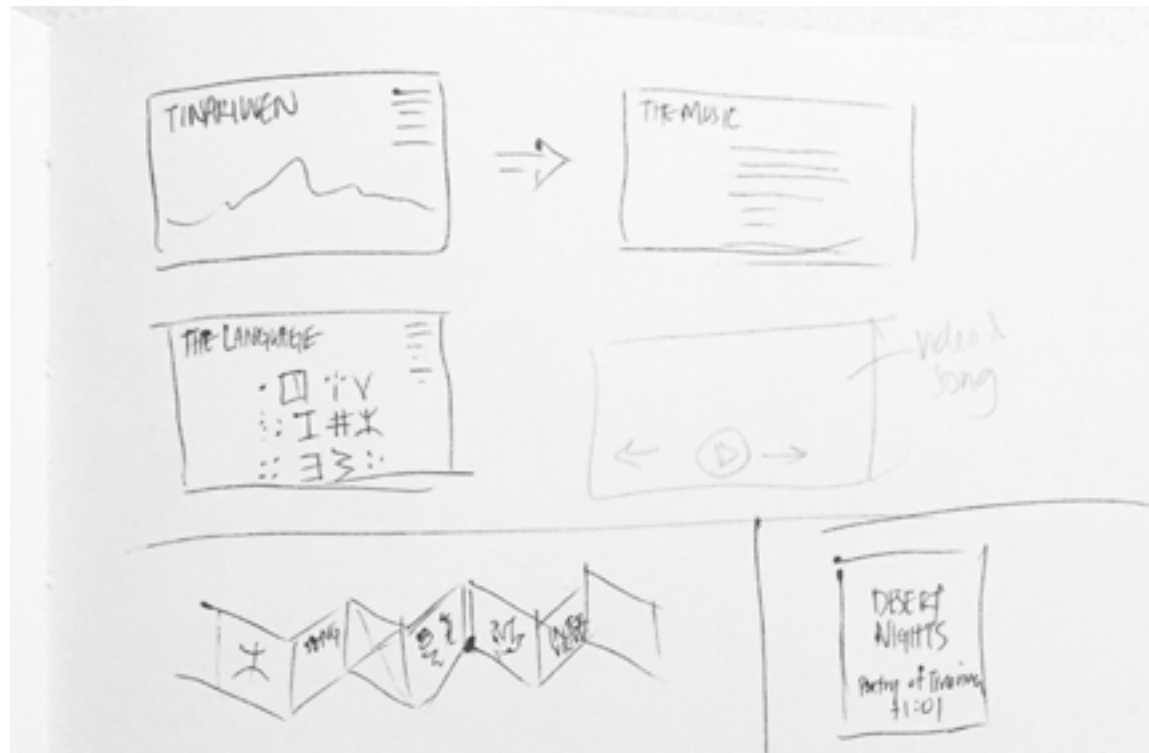
IDEAS, CONT'D.



Concept sketch of a listening party

BRAINSTORMING COMPONENTS

IDEAS, CONT'D.



Concept sketches for the web portal, poetry book, and photo booklet

EVALUATIVE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

I had a difficult time narrowing down my ideas for components, because they were all compelling to me in their own way. I decided to send out another brief survey to some of the listening party attendees to see which interactions they thought would be most compelling. I also consulted with a community arts organizer who was familiar with Tinariwen and also has worked with artists from across the world for the past several years.

EVALUATIVE RESEARCH

GENERAL SURVEY

I sent a survey to a few listening party attendees asking them which of the below interactions they would prefer. As predicted, the web portal received the best response, while the blog received the least favorable response.

1. Interactive web portal
2. Friend's party
3. Public event
4. Public event in a park
5. Street festival
6. A busy cafe / coffee shop
7. A blog
8. A Periscope live interview session
9. An image-heavy booklet

EVALUATIVE RESEARCH

CONSULTING EXPERTS

As I was exploring ways to connect listeners and artists on a deeper level, I spoke with Asad Jafri, a community arts organizer based in Chicago who has worked with artists across the world and who “utilizes the universal language of art to connect communities, cultures and people to transform interactions, perceptions, and collective consciousness.”¹

I discussed several of my ideas with him, and mentioned that I was concerned that users wouldn’t know how to interact with cultural artifacts if presented to them in a box. He argued that having something tangible that people can take with them, that they

wouldn’t be able to buy otherwise, could be a really meaningful artifact. He also mentioned that there is value in having someone else curate and shape one’s experience, and so the “listening party in a box” could be an effective means of introducing people to the culture and piquing their curiosity.

Since it isn’t possible to have Tinariwen directly interact with all of their fans, he suggested having Touareg people or other fans play the role of giving context to the music and culture. We also talked about how not having direct access to Tinariwen can in fact add to their mystique and the appeal.

¹ <http://asadaljafri.com/biography/>

EVALUATIVE RESEARCH

CRITIQUE SESSION

I was still playing with different ideas for a physical component and the idea of designing an event and was discussing different components during an in-class critique. I briefly mentioned the “listening party in a box,” and the response was positive from both classmates and the professors. I later thought more about the event I wanted to design, and decided that the box was more appropriate as it wasn’t as localized as an event and could be more easily shared with friends and fans across the world.

PERSONAS & SCENARIOS

PERSONAS AND SCENARIOS

MARK, A FAN

PROFILE: Mark, 28-year-old male. College graduate with a Master's degree, currently working as an engineer in Chicago. Income around \$75,000. Longtime girlfriend, no kids. Lives alone.

VALUES: Mark grew up in a diverse metropolitan city and enjoyed visiting The Field Museum and learning about people from different places and times. He loves to travel and explore different kinds of food and music. He believes that all these different experiences only enrich his life, and he doesn't miss any opportunities to discover and learn more. He lives alone and often invites his eclectic group of friends over for casual parties at his place. He spent a summer in college with Engineers without Borders

to develop water systems in Kenya.

GOALS: Mark is a curious and eager learner, who takes pride in knowing obscure facts about everything he comes across. Mark is very intelligent and absorbs information like a sponge, so though Wikipedia is often an entry-point for learning about a topic, it never suffices him; once his curiosity is piqued, he'll spend hours researching until he has exhausted all online resources. His favorite thing about living in Chicago and when traveling is having opportunities to meet people from all different countries and backgrounds.

FRUSTRATIONS: Mark is frustrated by the quality of informative websites

PERSONAS AND SCENARIOS

MARK, A FAN

online. They are either poorly designed or he doesn't know whether he can trust the information he is being given. He also feels like he has to piece together information from multiple websites, which takes up a lot of time.

SCENARIO: Mark is scrolling through his Facebook feed and received an update from the City of Chicago about the schedule for the upcoming World Music Festival. He sees that Tinariwen is one of the headliners, and is intrigued by the blurb about the band. He visits Tinariwen's Facebook page and scrolls through the timeline and photos. He is curious about their outfits and head

coverings, so does a quick Google search to find out more. He eventually lands on the band's website, where he watches a couple official videos and becomes even more fascinated by the striking images and desert culture. He goes through every page on the website to read the bio and all the information about different aspects of the culture and language. With a much better understanding and appreciation of who the band is, he visits the official shop to order the latest album, then goes back to Facebook to like Tinariwen's Facebook page and share the World Music Festival post on his own Timeline.

PERSONAS AND SCENARIOS

MARY, A NOVICE

PROFILE: Mary, 21-year-old female. College student in Austin, TX. Isn't in a relationship, but has a full social life with friends from college and her two roommates.

MOTIVATIONS: Friends, social life, having unique experiences to post to Instagram or Facebook, being a trend-setter or "innovator,"

VALUES: Mary is a music junkie and loves living in Austin, Texas because she can go to the SXSW festival every year. Because she is a student, she can't afford to attend big concerts, but she makes sure to save up for the SXSW festival and likes exploring new artists that perform in

Austin's music scene. She also discovers new music through Spotify, which she always has on during her commute to school and while studying. She is one of the few who still buys physical CDs; she takes pride in her CD collection and feels it is an extension of who she is, her personality, and her unique and eclectic tastes. She even makes "mix-tapes" from parties that she and her roommates host to share with her friends. Her Facebook timeline is filled links to songs that she discovered, and she has even gained a small following because of it.

Mary grew up in Phoenix, Arizona, and spends her breaks exploring the American southwest. She has an

PERSONAS AND SCENARIOS

MARY, A NOVICE

adventurous and free spirit; she loves taking spontaneous road trips with her friends and camping out in the desert to see the star-filled night sky. On these trips, she seeks out Native American craft and jewelry shops, and she has a collection of trinkets and souvenirs from her trips that she displays in her apartment.

She spends her free time in nature; her favorite spot is an open field in a local park where events like free moving screenings and concerts are sometimes held.

GOALS: Mary feels her ability to catch on to trends early is what sets her apart and

makes her valuable to her large group of friends. She is always searching for the next new experience or Instagrammable moment to share with her friends, both in the digital and real world.

FRUSTRATIONS: Mary's biggest frustration right now is that her schoolwork gets in the way of her going on adventures with her friends.

SCENARIO: Mary is listening to Spotify, and hears a song by Tinariwen. The name of the band sounds familiar from an SXSW festival a few years ago. She remembered seeing the band at the festival and liking their performance, so she checks to see if they'll be performing

PERSONAS AND SCENARIOS

MARY, A NOVICE

again this year, or at any concerts in Austin. Unfortunately they won't be, but she spends a few minutes going through their website and watching videos. The desert landscapes in the photos and videos remind her of her travels across the Southwest, and she is immediately transported to another place. She continues exploring the website, learning more about the culture and their lives in the desert. In looking through

the merchandise, she finds a "Welcome to the Desert" box and sees there is an Instagram hashtag for them. She looks through the Instagram feed and is inspired by photos of people having listening parties outside in nature. It's the perfect opportunity for her to share her new discovery with her friends while also simulating a getaway, so she orders the box.

DESIGNING
A SOLUTION

DESIGNING A SOLUTION

ON-SCREEN COMPONENT

PURPOSE: The online component should educate, inform, intrigue, communicate, and connect visitors with Tinariwen and the Touareg people. It engages the eyes and the ears.

DESIGNING A SOLUTION

ON-SCREEN COMPONENT

The online component is an immersive cultural experience linked to Tinariwen's existing website. It fits into the "Orient" phase of Shelley Evenson's Experience cycle. When listeners visit their website to research the music or the band, they will be invited to explore the web portal, which has detailed information about the music, the culture, the band, and the challenges the band is facing today.

The web portal satisfies the need for Tinariwen to communicate their culture and story with the world, while also satisfying listeners' needs to understand more about the music and the artists.

In designing the interface, I researched various immersive websites related to music, travel, and culture that received or were nominated for Webby awards. I found the most effective ones to have full-screen images, with very minimal icons and navigation bars. Based on my research, I knew that the visuals were an effective means of communicating the culture while also piquing curiosity, so I selected images that were particularly striking and impactful.

ON-SCREEN COMPONENT

The web portal site map is built off of the initial mapping done when determining the landscape of the problem. Doing this site map helped narrow down the navigation categories to Music, History, Culture, and Challenges.

The bubbles in grey were under consideration as interesting but not critical.

(map on next page)

DESIGNING A SOLUTION

ON-SCREEN COMPONENT

Rough sketches of web portal page layouts.



PHYSICAL COMPONENT

PURPOSE: The physical component should encourage users to slow down, talk, drink, listen, interact, share, feel, connect, and experience. It should be a multi-sensory experience that engages all five senses.

DESIGNING A SOLUTION

PHYSICAL COMPONENT

I have attended several of Tinariwen's concerts over the past ten years and had the fortune of spending time with them and other Touareg before and after concerts. Those experiences largely shaped my appreciation of Tinariwen as people and musicians, and I wanted to design a component that might give others a taste of that same experience.

This is what I hoped to achieve with a "listening party in a box." The box fits into nearly every phase of Shelley Evenson's Experience cycle. The

unique artifacts with the music help Connect and Attract party guests. The User Guide helps Orient; the physical components allow for Interaction, and also Extend and Retain as they serve as reminders and souvenirs, and the sharing component allows for Advocacy.

The Box allows for a deeper connection of the artists and fans. Fans are not passively listening to the music without understanding the deeper meaning to it, but are having a fully immersive and engaging experience with the music.

DESIGNING A SOLUTION

PHYSICAL COMPONENT

WHAT TO INCLUDE? Because cultures are so rich, it was difficult to narrow down what should be included in the box. Ultimately the decision came down to what could be sourced in Pittsburgh within a short time frame. If I had access to more of the cultural objects, however, I would have included additional items such as their jewelry or leather goods and a larger piece of indigo fabric.

DESIGNING A SOLUTION

PHYSICAL COMPONENT

Brainstorming ideas for the box

- User guide
- CD - greatest hits?
- Book of poetry
- Indigo and other fabric
- Green tea with recipe and tea glasses
- Candle that smells like cigarettes?
- Khomeissa - Touareg jewelry
- T-shirt
- Invitation to private Q&A session with Tinariwen
- Invitations - scale for 10, 20, or 50 ppl
- Pinterest board / Instagram feed - how ppl do party in a box
- Tifinagh magnetic alphabets
- Leather goods
- Accordion booklet with photos and quotes
- DVD
- Instructions on how to tie a 'shesh'
- Sand from the Sahara

*Tinariwen members smoke a lot of cigarettes

DESIGNING A SOLUTION

PHYSICAL COMPONENT

Ultimately I decided on the below elements for the box. I struggled with the element for smell (as the cigarette-candle was probably not appropriate), but did some research and found a journal article written about use of perfume and incense in Touareg culture, so decided to include incense sticks.

- User Guide
- SOUND: CD/LP
- TOUCH: Indigo fabric
- TASTE: Green tea with recipe & tea glasses
- SMELL: Incense
- SIGHT: Poetry book
- Invitation to a private Q&A session with Tinariwen
- Magnetic Tifinagh alphabet

CREATING THE BOX

CREATING THE BOX

“WELCOME TO THE DESERT”

One of the lead singers of Tinariwen’s always begins his concerts in America with “You are welcome to the desert.” It’s apt, as the music has a way of transporting the listener to a faraway place. I felt the phrase was fitting for the box as well, as the artifacts are meant to immerse the user in a different environment, and provide some insight into what daily life might be like for the Touareg in the desert.

CREATING THE BOX

VISUALS

I wanted the visuals to align with the current branding and the spirit of Tinariwen so that the box had the appearance of being a realistic Tinariwen product. Tinariwen in Tamasheq means “empty spaces,” so their branding is very minimalistic and stark. Their photographer takes striking black and white photos that are wonderfully moody, almost like film noir. The nearly-black indigo fabric is also a common element in the look and feel of the Touareg, which is often contrasted by white robes and silver jewelry.

As mentioned above, I have been a fan of Tinariwen for the past ten years and have attended several of their concerts

over the years as well as time researching their culture, and so the visuals also reflect my personal experiences and my understanding of the music, culture, and band. When I think of Tinariwen, I visualize late-night concerts under bright lights, desert nights and dark skies punctuated by a bright white moon, the starkness of the desert landscape, and a certain melancholy called “assouf” in Tamasheq. As I was attempting to recreate the experience of being with the band, these are all concepts that influenced my visuals as well.

See a mood board of select images on the next page.

CREATING THE BOX

VISUALS: MOOD BOARD



CREATING THE BOX

USER GUIDE

I had initially planned to make the user guide a booklet, but I had already decided on the poetry book and wanted there to be a variety of interactions even with the print materials. Also, I thought it would be more user-friendly to be able to scan detailed information about all the elements in the box at once, so I made a [fold-out user guide](#). The outside pages have a welcome message, ideas for using the box, and the box contents. The inside contents include a brief explanation of the artifacts as well as “Ways to Share” them each.

CREATING THE BOX

THE FABRIC

The Touareg indigo fabric has a unique shimmer to it, so it was difficult to substitute another fabric in place. Thankfully, a friend of mine had a piece of fabric and was willing to mail it to me. It was smaller than I would have liked, but still felt it was important to include the authentic fabric and not a substitute.

CREATING THE BOX

GREEN TEA

Green tea is such a critical part of the Touareg culture, that it was the one element I knew I had to include. I bought two small tea glasses for the box and loose gunpowder green tea. I found a tea recipe online and modified it to suit a beginner's needs. Again, I wanted the print interactions to each be different, so I printed the recipe in an [accordian-style format](#).



CREATING THE BOX

GREEN TEA, CONT'D.

I decided to provide a mini tea set within the larger box to contain the tea and the recipe, so I bought a smaller box, which I painted a pearlescent white. I planned to stencil “Touareg Tea” directly on the cover of the box, but the stencil failed, leaving a bit of a mess on the box. The white-paper belly band was a last-minute solution to a last-minute catastrophe, but if I had the time and opportunity, I would re-do the stencil on the box.

As a final touch, I added gold washi tape to the edges of the box.

CREATING THE BOX

GREEN TEA, CONT'D.



Top left: Outside of box with belly-band.

Top right: Inside of box

Left: Failed stencil

CREATING THE BOX

INCENSE

I was able to find a journal article specifically about the importance of perfume and aromas in Touareg culture, and it mentioned that incense is used in various rituals and ceremonies. It specifically mentioned sandalwood and amber incense—both of which are readily available—so I bought incense sticks and included them in the box with a label.

CREATING THE BOX

POETRY BOOK

The Touareg come from an oral culture where poetry and eloquence is highly valued. Thus, their lyrics are not mere words, but actual poetry that speak of universal themes such as freedom, loss, love, home, nostalgia. They also speak to the struggles of the Touareg, which is why their music is often referred to as rebel music, or songs of the rebellion. Understanding the lyrics is critical to understanding the message that Tinariwen wants to convey, so

communicating the lyrics was an important element of the design solution.

The liner notes of Tinariwen CDs and LPs always include lyrics in English as well as the Tamasheq transliteration. However, I wanted to design a book that would read as a book of poetry, with the eloquence of the words being the central focus. I also didn't want to just recreate the liner notes in book form, so I only included the English translation of the poems.

CREATING THE BOX

POETRY BOOK, CONT'D.

I began by going through four albums and re-typing and [formatting all the lyrics](#) provided in the liner notes. I provided both the English translation of the song name as well as the Tamasheq, the album name, and the lyricist's name.

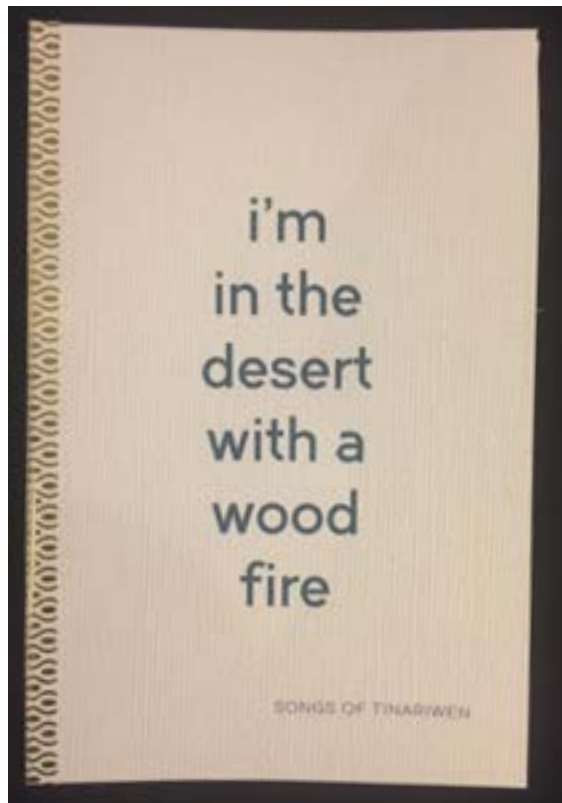
As I was only making one book, it wasn't cost-effective for me to have the book professionally printed and bound. So I printed and bound the book myself, creating a prototype first to ensure the binding would hold. To cover the binding, I printed a cover on textured pearlescent paper, scored the spine, and glued the

pages to the book cover. I covered the spine once more with gold washi tape to add an element of sparkle.

I kept the book cover stark and simple, hearkening to e.e. cummings and keeping the title all lowercase. I own books of poetry in which the book title is also the name of a poem within the collection, and I felt the song title "I'm in the Desert with a Wood Fire" was an appropriate title for the mood and atmosphere of both their poetry and their music. It also matches the "Welcome to the Desert" theme of the box set well.

CREATING THE BOX

POETRY BOOK, CONT'D.



front cover



inside page

CREATING THE BOX

ALPHABET MAGNETS

The written form of the Touareg language is called Tifinagh, and it is one of the oldest scripts in the world, consisting of geometric shapes. It is still in use today, so I decided to create Tifinagh “alphabet magnets.”

This required some research, as there are variations of the script depending on which region of North Africa you are from. I wanted to stay true to the script that Tinariwen use, which took some time to match up.

Once I determined the alphabet they used, I had to do some additional digging to identify which letters correspond

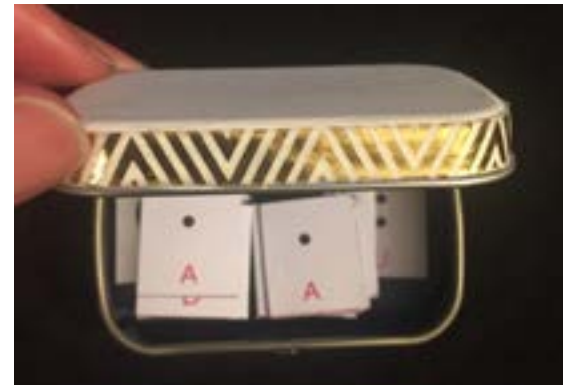
to the sounds common in the English alphabet. Because I can read Arabic, I found a Tifinagh-Arabic phonetic matching and discarded the letters that do not correspond to English sounds.

I then [recreated the alphabet](#) in Illustrator, and matched it the alphabets to the English letters. I printed strips of paper, adhered them to magnetic tape, and then cut out the individual letters. I made four sets total.

The magnet holder is made from an Altoids tin, painted white with a touch of gold washi tape.

CREATING THE BOX

ALPHABET MAGNETS, CONT'D.



CREATING THE BOX

THE BOX

Creating the outer box was the most laborious and time-intensive process. I bought a large photo box that would display all of the items without overlap.

I initially considered covering the box in paper, but in the end decided the paper may not lay as flat and smooth as I would like. I also knew that I didn't want any sheen on the box—I wanted it to be matte and dark like nighttime—and most paper would have reflected light.

I decided to buy chalky paint which didn't have any sheen at all to it. Straight black was too dark and flat, so I mixed it

with some grey to lighten it a bit. The box I bought came with the gold edge, so I used painter's tape to cover the gold.

Once the outer box was painted and dried, I recruited the help of my sister to cut out a stencil for the title. I bought an adhesive stencil, attached a printout of the title to the adhesive, had my sister cut out the stencil, and then applied the stencil to the box. I used a roller and white acrylic paint to paint the title on to the box. I tried applying glitter for an added touch of gold, but decided the box looked better dark and stark, like the desert night.

CREATING THE BOX

THE BOX, CONT'D.

The inside of the box was also painted, with a dark, deep blue. I printed out a photograph of a “khomeissa” (a typical symbol in Touareg culture), and applied it to the inside cover of the box. I again added some gold washi tape to keep with the theme.

Because the box was very deep, I created a false bottom out of foam core and painted that as well. I bought dark blue tissue paper and used it as a ‘bed’ for the items, and then carefully arranged all the items inside.

Labels were created for each item to aid in identification.



CREATING THE BOX

THE BOX, CONT'D.



CREATING THE BOX

THE BOX, CONT'D.



inside cover with "khomeissa"

PRODUCT ECOSYSTEM
FINAL COMPONENTS

PRODUCT ECOSYSTEM COMPONENTS

ONLINE

Web portal linked to Tinariwen's existing website, which offers additional information about the music, the band members and their history, the culture, and the challenges the Touareg are facing today.

PRODUCT ECOSYSTEM COMPONENTS

ONLINE, CONT'D



PRODUCT ECOSYSTEM COMPONENTS

TANGIBLE

A “Welcome to the Desert” deluxe CD set. Using Tinariwen’s music as entry point for exposure to the Touareg culture, the deluxe set is a “listening party in a box” that also includes tangible, interactive elements unique to Touareg culture.

PRODUCT ECOSYSTEM COMPONENTS

TANGIBLE, CONT'D.



PRODUCT ECOSYSTEM COMPONENTS

CONCEPT VIDEO



FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

IF I COULD...

With more time, I would have liked to develop the idea of a social media hashtag (#WelcomeToTheDesert) to share people's experiences with the box set. I had initially planned to include the concept in my video, but did not have enough time to build out mockups of Instagram and Pinterest screens in order to communicate the concept. Similarly, I had to leave out the idea of a private Q&A session because I did not have time to build out a mockup Q&A session for the video. These elements are still included in the User Guide, however.

I would have also liked to have greater involvement from the Touareg

community for this project. A constant concern throughout this project was wanting to represent the culture and their values accurately. Though several of my Touareg friends did respond to my initial survey, they were not responsive to follow-up questions. Those that speak English were traveling, busy with work, or busy with new babies in the family.

In an ideal world, I would have really liked to actually have a listening party to test out the box I made, too. I love event planning, so it would have been fun for me to organize, had I more time and resources.

END