

Jeremy Chu – INF2199

Thoughts on designing the story.

## **Data**

Ever since how-to-fix-a-toilet.com, I wanted to work with Google Trends data. And since food is a near and dear subject to many, what better way I thought than to look at the most searched for recipes and food items. I also got inspiration from using Google Mobility Data from Our World in Data (<https://ourworldindata.org/covid-mobility-trends>) and decided to use that to bolster the story.

As I was cleaning the data, I initially wanted to see if I could drill down the Google Mobility Report to map out the different districts and cities as well, however that proved to be beyond my technical capabilities so I decided to average by province instead.

## **Technical Struggles**

My initial design vision was a scrollytelling story. That soon proved too high a hurdle. With my sparse javascript skills and absolutely no d3.js experience, it became clear after a couple days of learning that making an animated chart that reacted to scrolls was beyond my capabilities. I then tried turning to Plotly and Dash as I had been using that for previous assignments. However, I found myself unable to design anything more than a basic dashboard and it just wasn't bringing my vision of a story to life.

So I turned to Tableau. With data cleaning done in Python. I can work with designing a very basic website, that I could then embed Tableau dashboards like Our World in Data on the side along with text. While it might not be a scrollytell, I could still go with a top down story progression with different interactive elements through using multiple dashboards. Tableau with all its issues also allowed me to provide that clean design look that I love.

What I ended up at is a very basic GitHub pages website with the Tableau dashboard embedded onto it. It is a sort of Pseudo-Scrollytell in which I don't include buttons or menu bars for navigation, forcing the reader to go down and read it. By using 3 dashboards, I hope to simulate the idea of a progressing story and deeper dives in the data.

## **Final Thoughts**

It is unfortunate that I didn't have enough time to learn enough d3.js and scrollama to build a scrollytelling site. Definitely something I want to work on and get one running. Google Trends data was a pain to work with because of how their popularity axis works and how relative the data is to the date range and highest popularity search terms. Google Trends also had a cap on 5 terms so I had to download multiple datasets. There were also a few kinks to work out with Tableau because my original versions had too long a load time, making them infeasible to be

embedded online. There were also troubles fitting the dashboards perfectly on the site itself, but they were luckily quickly resolved.

In terms of story development, the major challenge was choosing which search terms to use. I experimented with other random food items I could think of but ultimately I decided to stick with the terms provided by Google and Uber Eats. Unfortunately I could not dive deeper into Google Mobility data and split the provinces up even more. Tableau unfortunately did not seem like the right tool for working with a detailed Canadian map drill down. Nevertheless, having a week by week play through of provinces I believe still seemed to be a good experience. I definitely saw the limitations of Tableau through this exercise, but overall, I am content with the aesthetics of the story and dashboard for what this endeavour was.