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### The Best Snowboarding Buddy: Snowpes System

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# RIT

## **The Best Snowboarding Buddy: Snowpes System**

BY

**Peiwen He**

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master  
of Fine Arts in Visual Communication Design

School of Design  
College of Art and Design  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Rochester, NY  
April 28, 2021

## Committee Approval

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**Adam Smith**

Date

**Chief Advisor**

Associate Professor

Director of Visual Communication Design program

School of Design, College of Art and Design

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**Mike Strobert**

Date

**Associate Advisor**

Senior Lecturer

School of Design, College of Art and Design

## Abstract

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The mountain ski resorts are huge places, while the maps are difficult to read and remember. Due to the difference of languages and map signs across countries, it's difficult for people to locate themselves on a map. In addition, it can be difficult for a snowboarder to keep contact with their crew. It also makes asking for rescue take longer. For the snowboarders whose ears are occupied, it's dangerous when there's someone behind them closely. For novice snowboarders who snowboard alone, it is not easy for them to learn new tricks so that they may give up. The Snowpes system includes XR (Mixed Reality) snowboarding goggles and a camera drone. With Augmented Reality Head-Up Display (AR HUD) Technology, the Snowpes goggles can help snowboarders navigate through the big resorts safely and connect with their crew easily. The Snowpes goggles' VR (Virtual Reality) mode can help users feel more engaged in the snowboarding community. The Snowpes camera drone can follow the users automatically and it can be controlled by goggles with computer vision and spatial computing technology. Project Implementation includes developing digital 3D model design, Camera Drone HUD Design, Goggles HUD Design, HUD prototype, and a Promotion Video.

**Keywords** Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Head-Up Display, Drone, Snowboard Goggles

## Problem and Solution Statement

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Mountain ski resorts are a huge place. Paper trail maps snowboarders carry around are difficult to read and remember. And the important information, such as navigation, heartbeat, speed, and vertical drop, is not easy to access on the move. When snowboarders are doing the sports in a new place, especially overseas, it's hard for them to understand their surroundings intuitively through just a paper trail map. The different languages might also makes asking for rescue late. And they can't know where their snowboarding crew members are, so that they are more likely to lose contact with each others. When snowboarders are on the run, it is important to be aware of other skiers and snowboarders. But it's not possible for snowboarders to hear or focus on everyone. How might we design a system to help snowboarders understand themselves and their surroundings and create a safe and pleasant snowboarding experience for them?

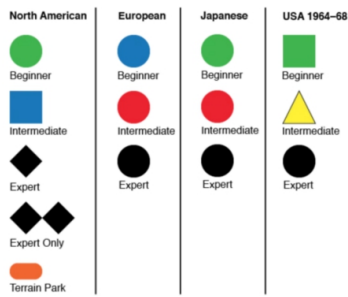
The Snowpes system includes snowboarding goggles, and a camera drone. Users can create a custom route easily by tapping the start and endpoint on a 3D trail map showed on the HUD. Moreover, users can choose a buddy to follow along with. They can also track their buddies and vehicles. The video gallery of Snowpes system collects the videos captured by the goggles camera and the camera drone, and there are also the VR tutorial videos and live snowboarding videos. Therefore, users can use the goggles' VR (Virtual Reality) mode to enjoy snowboarding anywhere. With Augmented Reality Head-Up Display (AR HUD) Technology, snowboarders will see the stats on their goggles' HUD and navigate themselves intuitively by switching to the goggles' AR mode. For safety reasons, there will be a visual warning when someone is trying to cut them off. Plus, there's also an emergency call button on the goggles. Project Implementation includes developing digital 3D model design, Camera Drone HUD Design, Goggles HUD Design, App prototype, and a Promotion Video.

## Main Body

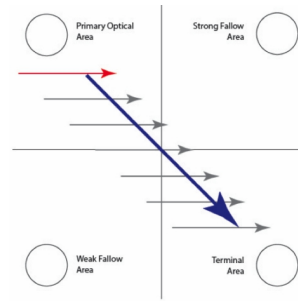
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It is important to be aware of other skiers and snowboarders, especially if they are behind you. But it's not possible for snowboarders to hear or focus on everyone. Over 5% – or 430 million people – of the world's population have disabling hearing loss (World Health Organization, 2020). In addition, most of the snowboarders who I interviewed says that they prefer to listen to music while doing the sports. It's dangerous for them if there's someone close behind them when snowboarding. To address this safety issue, Snowpes goggles apply a special orange AR visual warning to the HUD to tell them which side they need to watch out for. The reason that I choose safety orange to be the accent color for the goggles HUD because the ski resorts use safety orange color on their warning flags. The vivid reddish-orange is used to set objects apart from their surroundings, and there is a very strong complementary contrast between the vivid reddish and the color of the sky (Color Matters, 2021).

North America uses about five symbols to grade the trails, while Europe or Japan uses slightly different symbols to mark theirs (Fig.1), which might cause misunderstanding when snowboarders do the sports overseas. Moreover, Europe and Japan only use colors to mark the difficulty of a trail, which is not user-friendly to the color-blind snowboarders.



[Figure 1. The trail signs rate. Image downloaded track from <https://signsofthemountains.com/> in April 2021.]



[Figure 2. How our eyes down a page according to the Gutenberg diagram. Image downloaded from <https://www.tales.co.nz/> in April 2021.]

Worldwide, approximately “8% of men and 0.5% of women suffer from color blindness” (color vision deficiency, or CVD), which means that there are about 300 million color-blind people all over the world, almost the same as the entire population of America (Color Blind Awareness, 2020). By using bigger and animated shapes and colors, Snowpes HUD can not only inform users which levels the trails they are heading to but also help the color-blind users understand the European and Japanese trail signs. Our eyes follow a certain pattern when browsing a page. According to Figure 2. the Gutenberg Diagram divides the page into four quadrants. When it comes to design a HUD, it would be better if the secondary information is not placed on the primary optical area. Snowpes HUD puts the primary data on the primary optical area as well as the strong follow area, and tries to decrease distractions on the snow slopes. To test the balance, authentic and legibility of the HUD, I sketched the HUD designs on the Mylar sheets, and saw the ski resorts through the sheets. In this case, Snowpes can provide a more well-organized and efficient HUD for users with minimized distractions.

## Conclusion

Given the fact that ski mountain resorts are huge places, it’s easy to get lost and lose contact with other crew members. Besides, there are about 300 million color-blind people and 430 million deaf people all over the world. Goggles with AR HUD technology can help snowboarders navigate through the big resorts with more understanding of their surroundings and also help snowboard crews connect with each others. The 3D trail maps are designed for users to easily plan their route with simply tapping the start and end points. By using the safety orange visual warning, it would be safer for the ear-occupied snowboarders to know there’s someone behind them. Snowboarders, especially color-blind snowboarders can be well informed with bigger and animated shapes when snowboarding overseas. The system also provides users a more immersive experience anywhere with the technology of VR, camera drone and streaming. This system is aimed to give users a safe and pleasant snowboarding experience.

## Appendix A - Defence Slides



SNOWPES™ SYSTEM  
You Best Snowboarding Buddy

VCDE 2021 PEIWEN HE

SNOWPES  
Designed for snowboarders.

# 1.

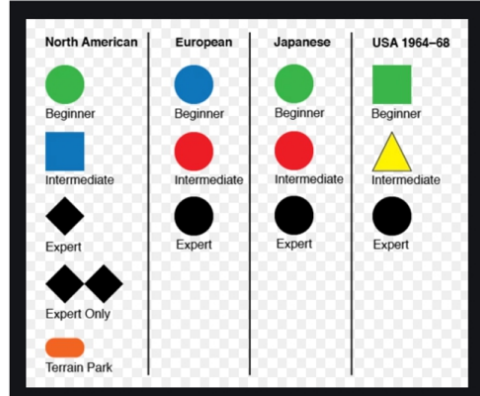
### Get Lost or Lose Contact

Mountain ski resorts are **huge places**, while **the maps are difficult to read and remember**. It's difficult for snowboarders to **locate** themselves on a map. It can also be difficult for a snowboarder to **keep contact** with their crew.



## 2.

**North America** uses about five symbols to grade the trails, while **Europe or Japan** uses slightly **different symbols** to mark theirs. The signs in Europe and Japan are **not user-friendly** to the **color-blind** snowboarders. While approximately "8% of men and 0.5% of women - **300 million people** - suffer from color blindness".



[Figure 1. The trail signs rate. Image downloaded from <https://signsofthemountains.com/> in April 2021.]

## 3.

### Hearing Loss

Over 5% - or **430 million people** - of the world's population have **disabling hearing loss**.





# 4.

## Private lesson can be expensive

It's **expensive** to learn snowboarding by **hiring a personal coach**. Private lesson can cost more than **\$100 a hour**.

Private Lesson (Ski or Snowboard)*	One Person	Each Additional Person
One Hour	\$115	\$75
2 Hours	\$230	\$140
3 Hours	\$320	\$210
Full Day (6 hours)	\$600	\$400

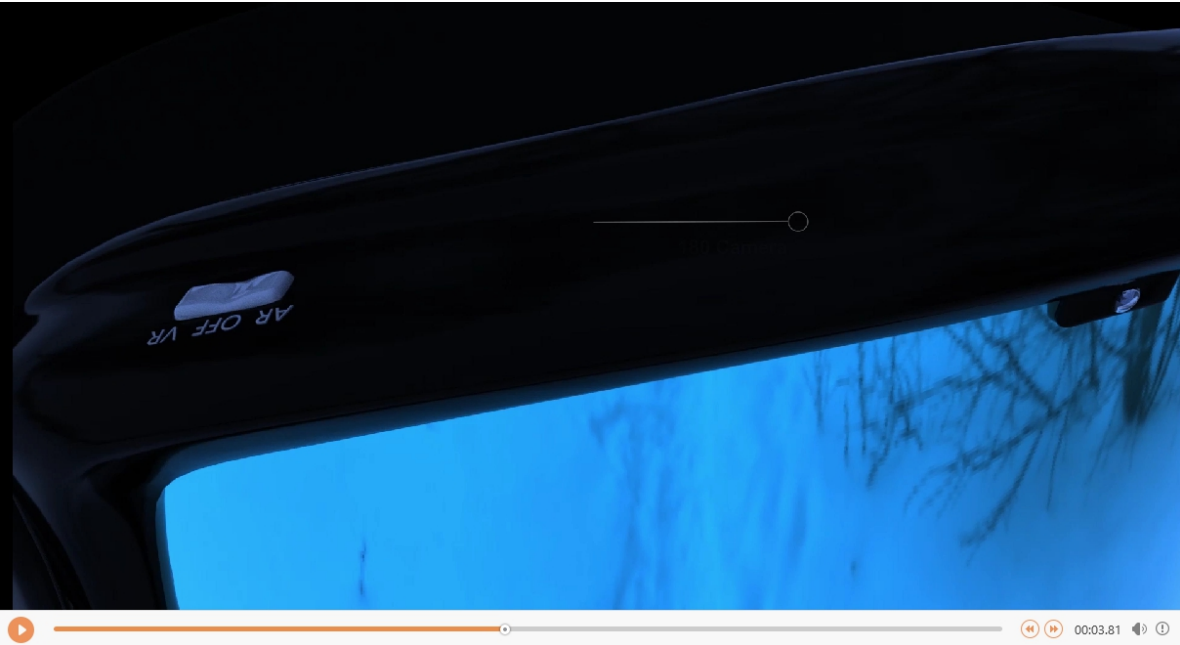
[Figure 2. Private Lessons Cost downloaded from <https://skibutternut.com/lessons-packages/lessons/private-lessons> in May 2021.]

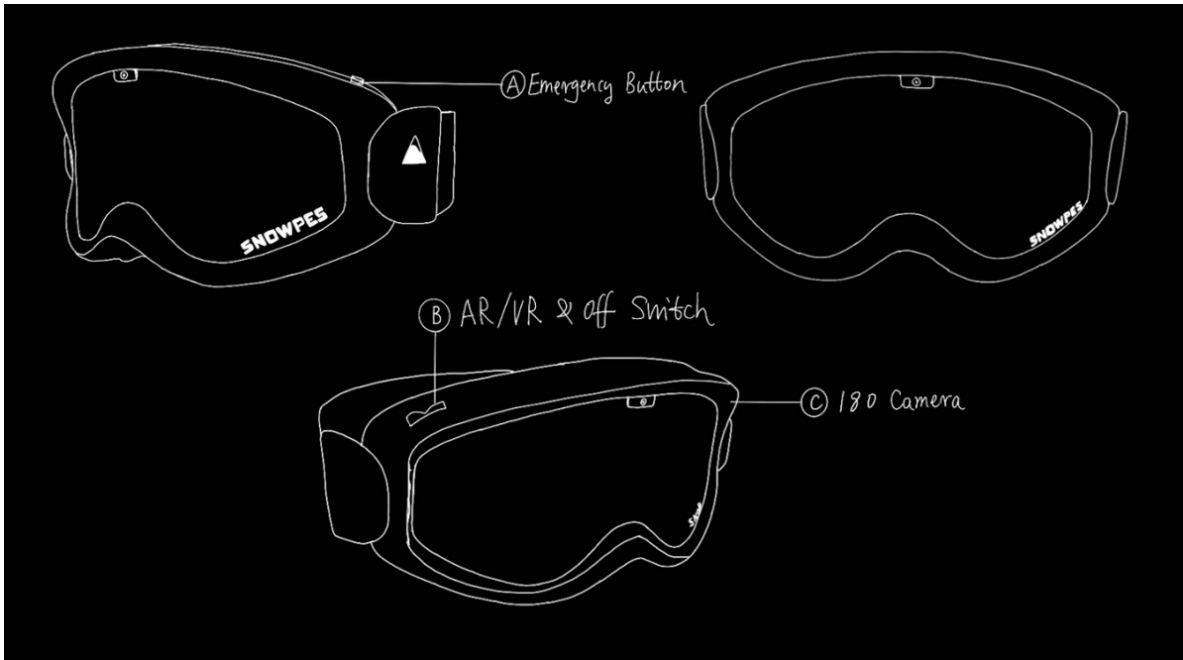
## The Solutions

Design a system to help snowboarders **navigate through the big resorts safely**, **connect with their crews easily**, and **feel more engaged** in the snowboarding community.

Snowpes system includes **XR snowboarding goggles**, and **a camera drone**.







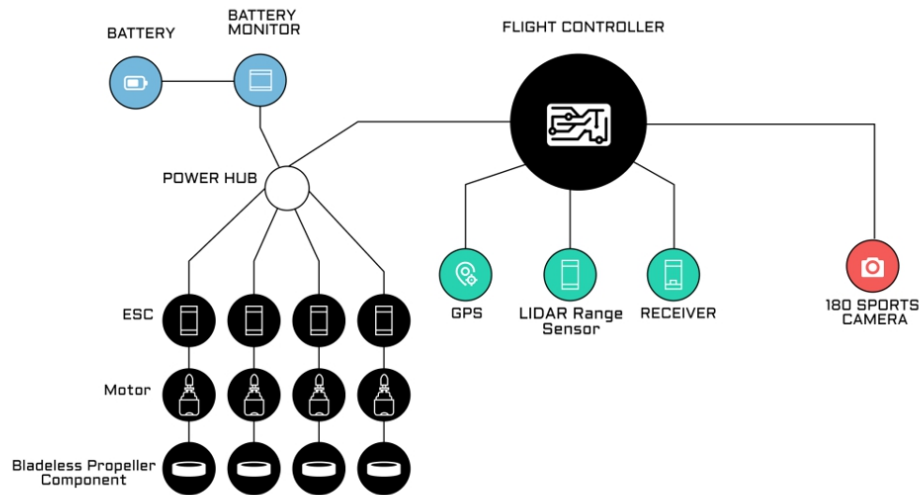
**SNOWPES**

Auto Tracking Target. Superb Computer Vision.  
Your Best Snowboarding Buddy.

Weight	Flight Time	Camera
1.5 kg	30 min	4K HDR / 180
Max Speed	Range	Size
100 mph	5 mile	20 x 25 x 5 cm

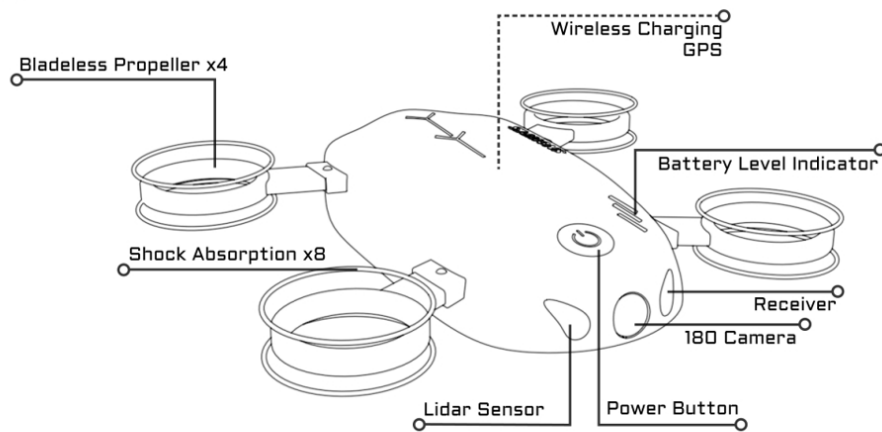
# Diagrams

## -Hardware Diagram



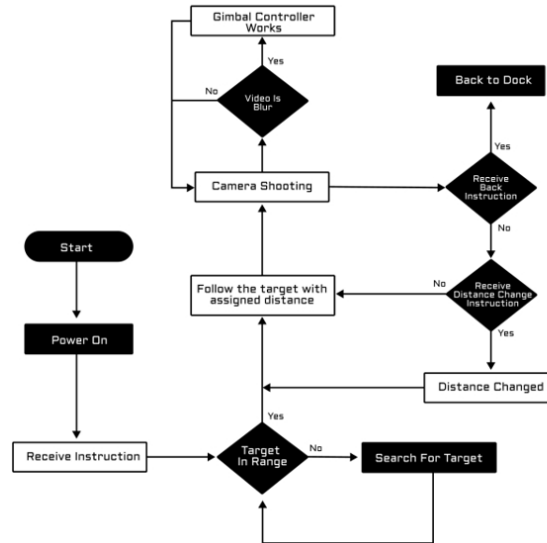
# Diagrams

## -Callout Diagram



# Diagrams

## -Software Diagram



## Users

Snowpes focuses on snowboarders. There are **4 insights** according to the interviews and research from snowboarders of various experience levels and countries.



### 1. Snowboarding Crew

- Plan their next run with Snowpes goggles **3D trail map**
- Know where their **crew members** are, and choose a member to **follow along**
- **Navigation** on Snowpes goggles **HUD**



### 2. Overseas Snowboarder

- Navigation with **the trail signs** which users can understand even they snowboard **overseas**
- **Call for help** with one button



### 3. Beginner Snowboarder

- **Learn new tricks** immersively with Snowpes goggles VR mode
- See other snowboarders **first person POV live video** with their goggles
- **Review their previous run** with videos captured by goggles and camera drone.

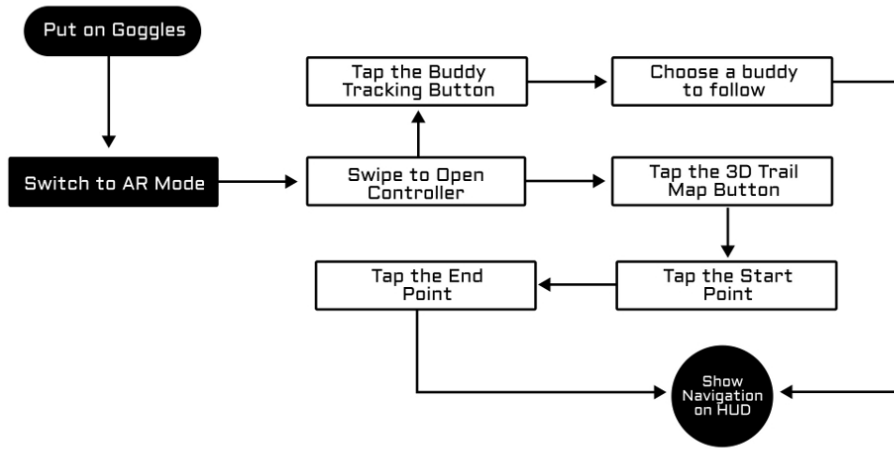


### 4. Ears-occupied Snowboarder

- Give **visual warnings** when there's someone trying to cut off the users.

User Flow 1

## Navigation on HUD

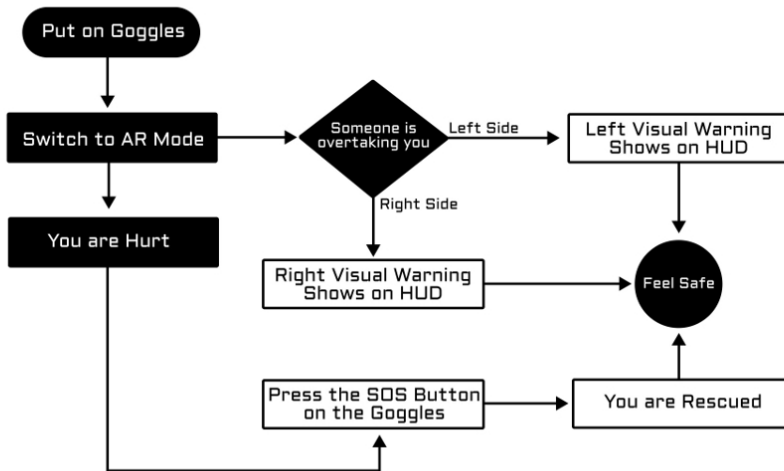


Peiwen He



User Flow 2

## Safety Guard For Users

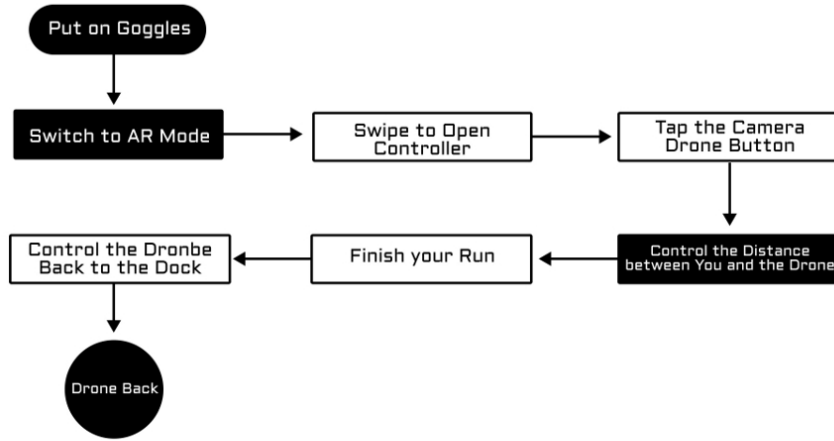


Peiwen He



User Flow 3

### Camera Drone Control

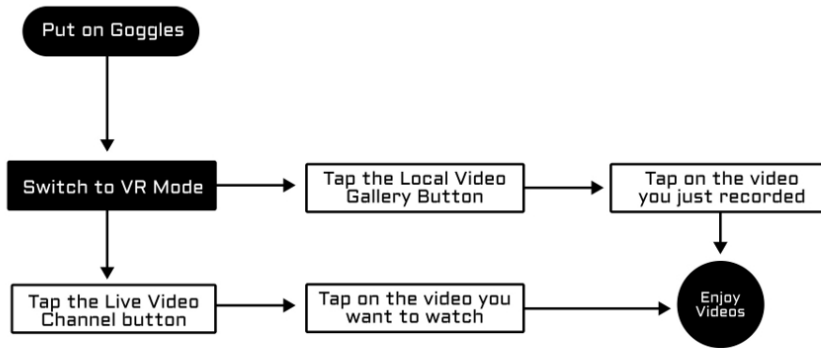


Peiwen He



User Flow 4

### Immersive Experience with Goggles



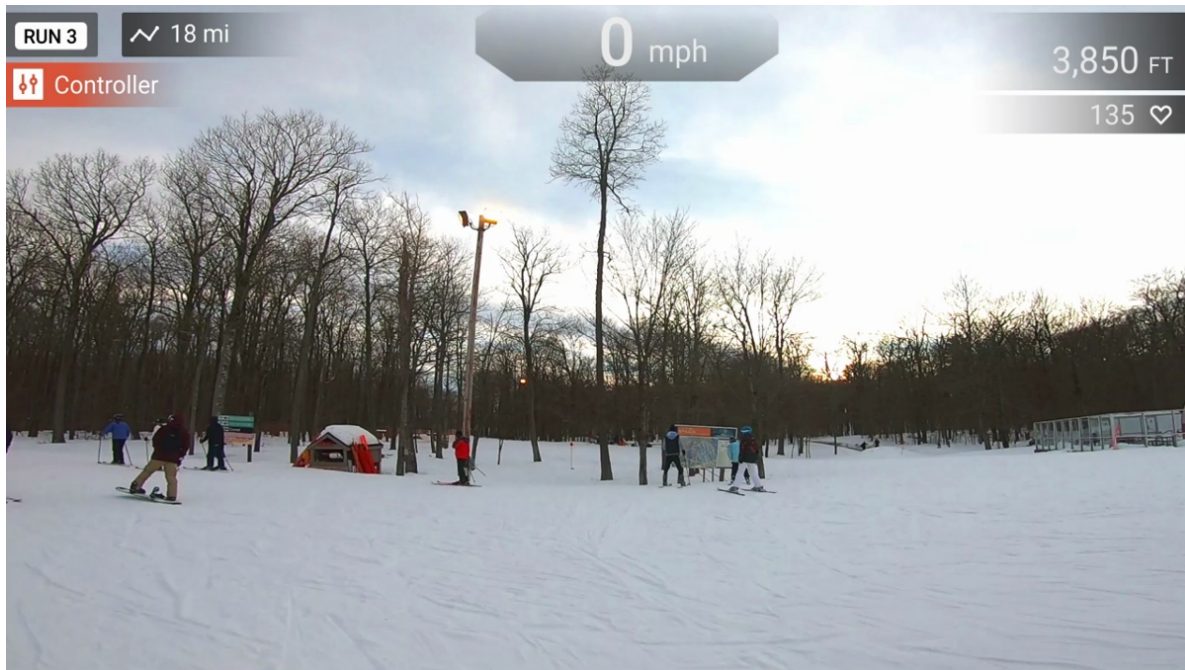
Peiwen He



# 1.

## Snowboarding Crew

"The trail maps are difficult to read and remember. It's easy to get lost and lose contact with my crew frequently."



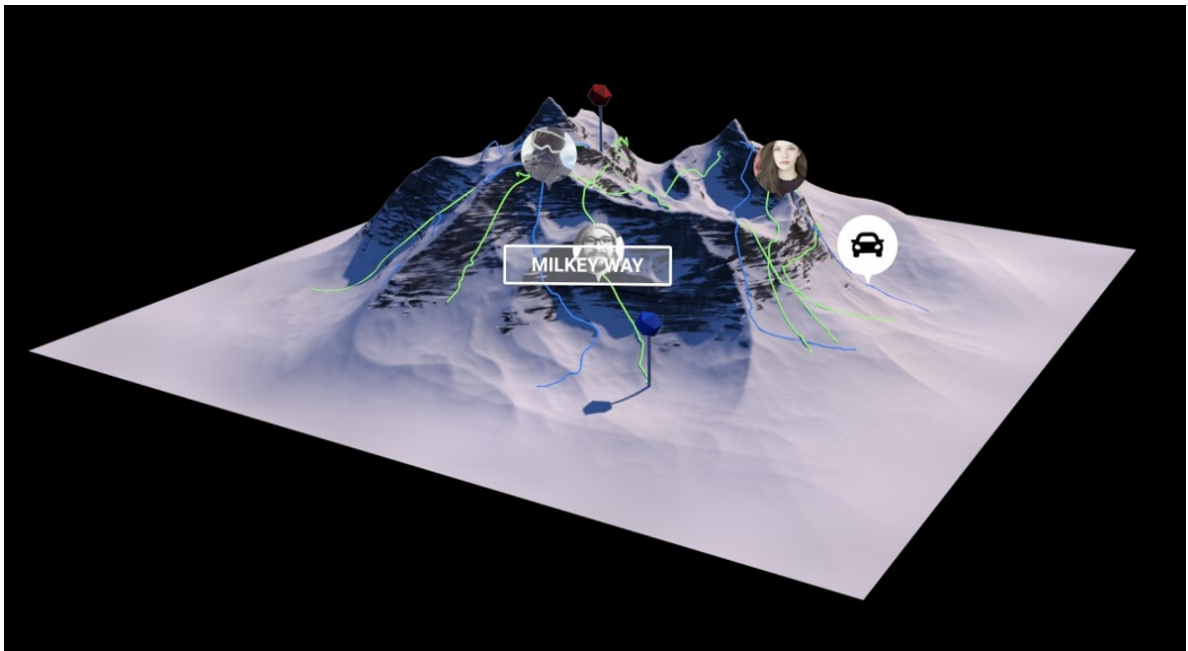


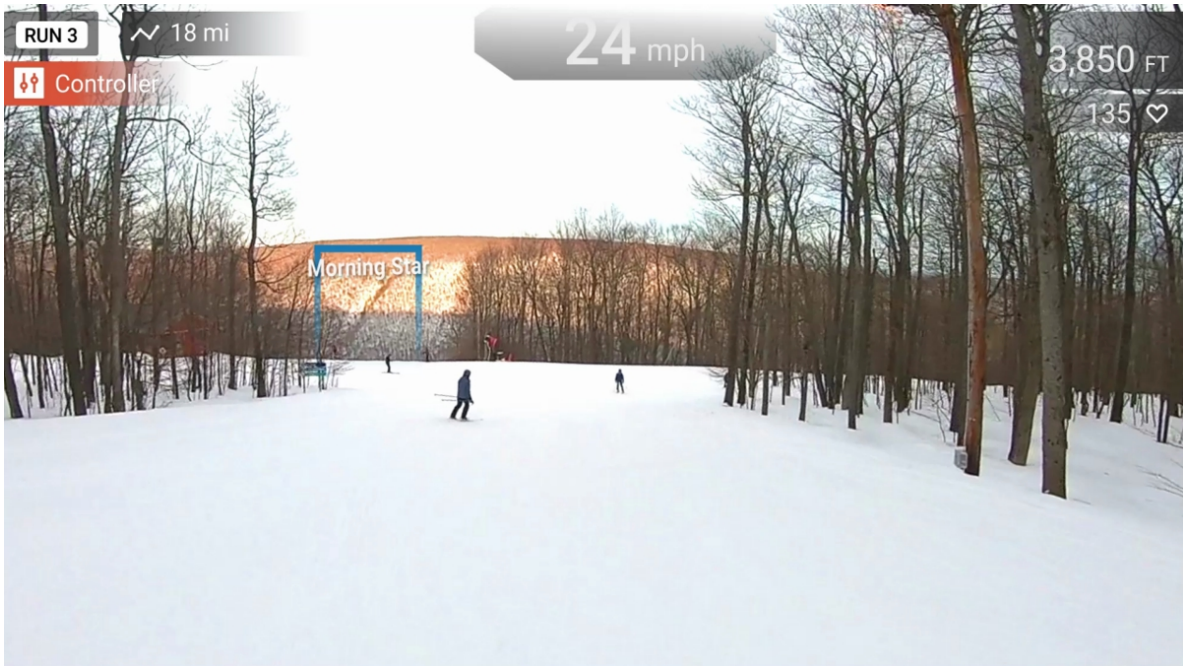
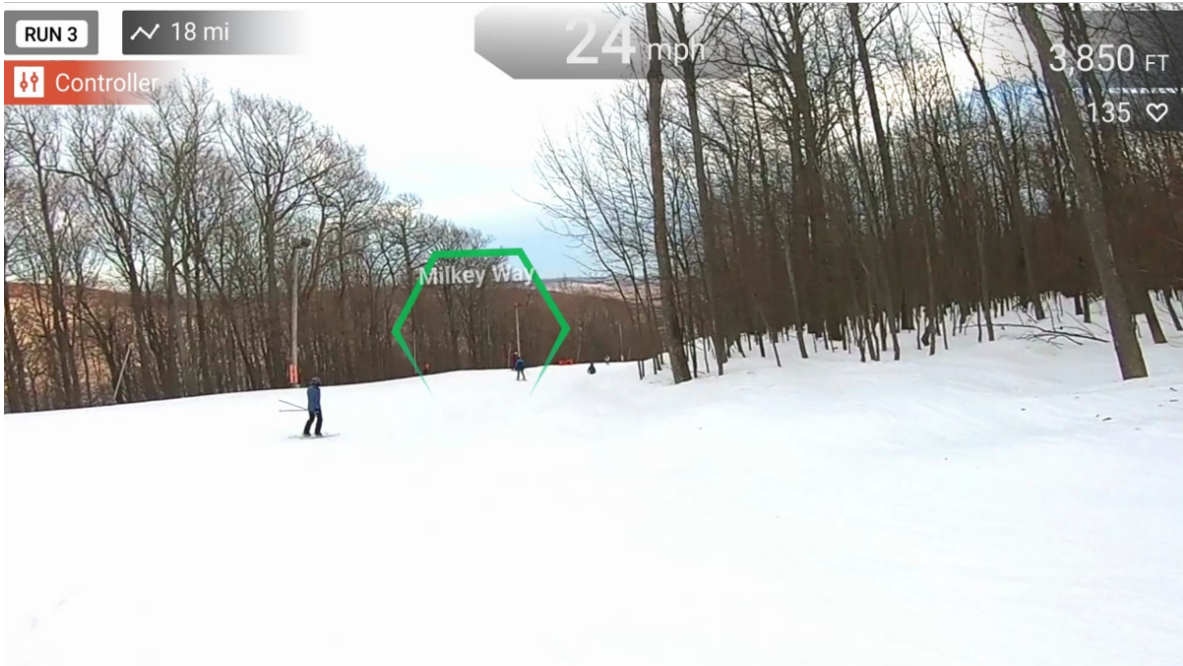


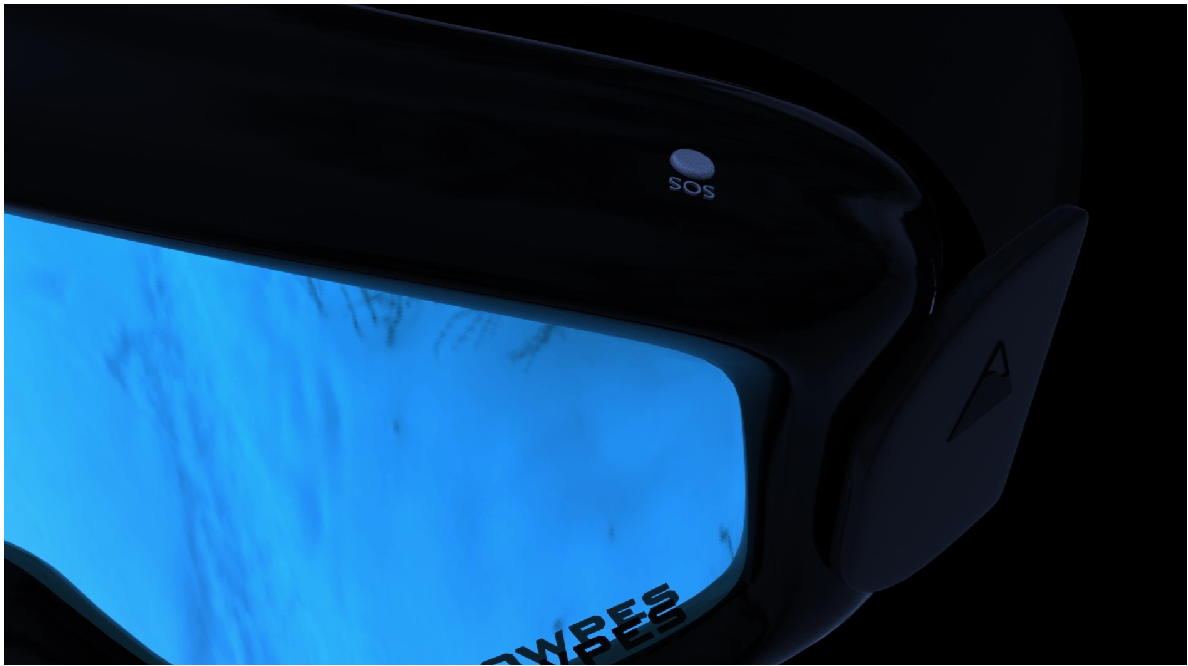
## 2.

### **Overseas Snowboarder**

" When I snowboard overseas, the different languages and map signs are a real pain. Especially when I need to call for help."



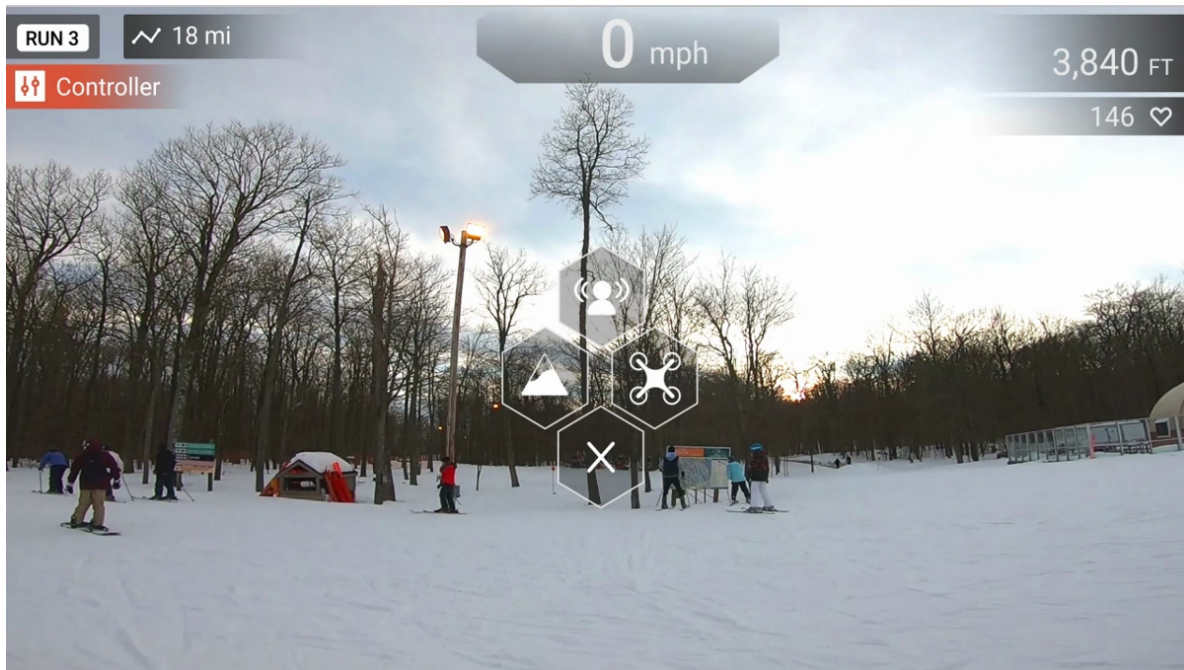




# 3.

## Beginner Snowboarder

"It's really expensive to take personal snowboarding lessons, and hard to teach myself with online videos. I wish I can be involved into snowboarding community quickly."

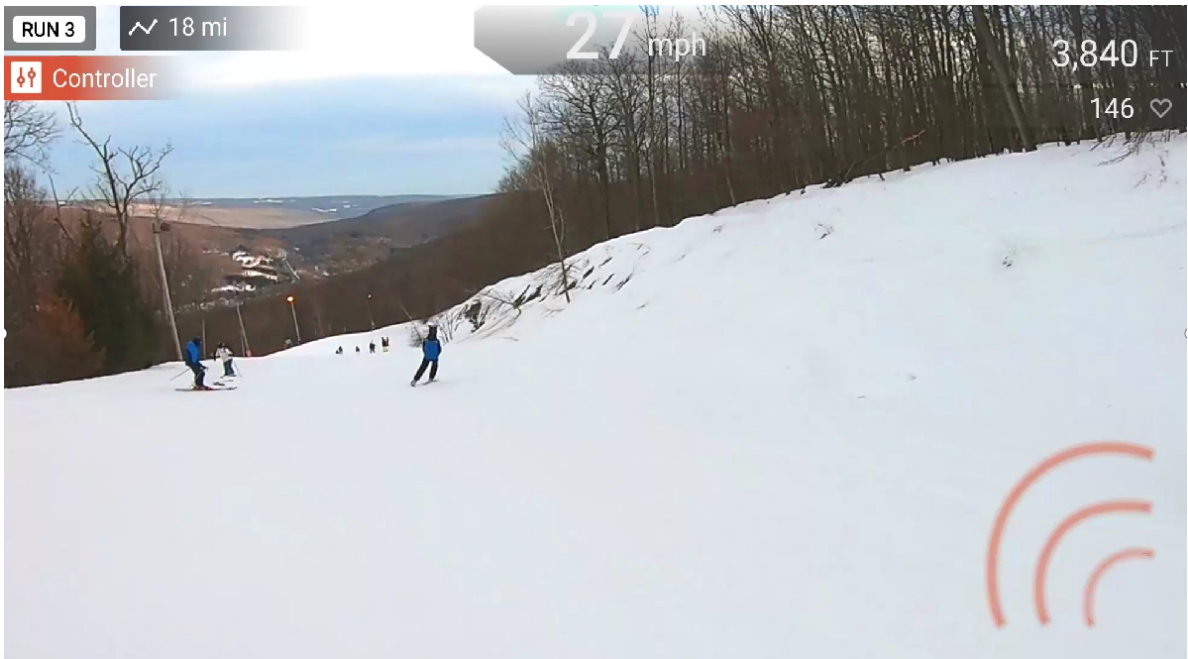




**4.**

**Ears-occupied Snowboarder**

"Listening to music helps me enjoy the sports more, but sometimes it can be dangerous when there's someone close behind me."



## Research

# 1.

### Color Selection - Safety Orange

The vivid reddish-orange is used to **set objects apart from their surroundings**, and there is a very **strong complementary contrast** between the vivid reddish and the color of the sky.

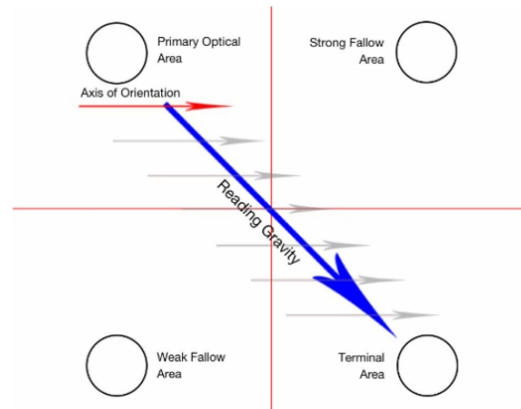


## Research

# 2.

### Reading Gravity

Our eyes follow **a certain pattern** when browsing. The **Gutenberg Diagram** divides the page into four quadrants. When it comes to design a HUD, it would be better if **the secondary information is not placed on the primary optical area**.

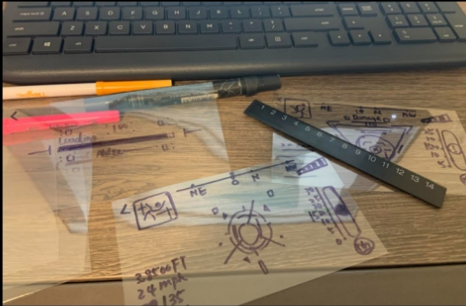


[Figure 3. The trail signs rate How our eyes track down a page according to the Gutenberg diagram. Image downloaded from <https://www.tales.co.nz/> in April 2021.]



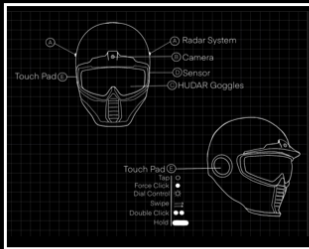
## HUD Testing

Use **Mylar Sheet** to **test and adjust** the **balance and legibility** of the HUD.

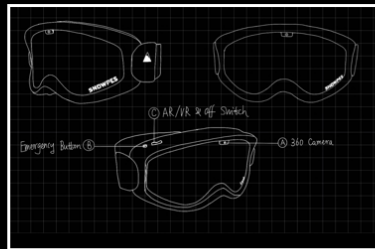


# 1.

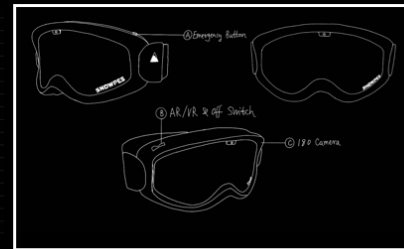
## Product Design Interactions - Snowpes Goggles



- **High Cost** to Buy
- **Long Learning Curve**
- Some Snowboarders **Only wear goggles**



- Might Push the **Wrong Button**
- 360 Camera is **too big**
- Consider **Computer Vision**



- **Final Version**
- Move the **Emergency Button** to the **Left Side**

# 1.

## Product Design Iterations - Snowpes Camera Drone



- It might **blend into the snow** too much



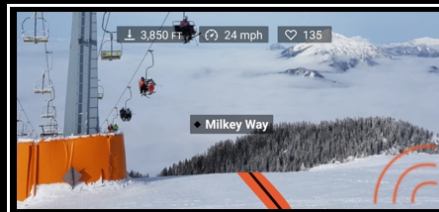
- Matte black is reading **too flat as a texture**  
- The location of the **LIDAR sensor** is missing



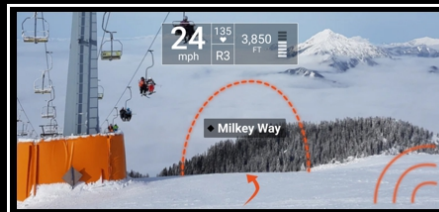
- **Final Version**  
- The **receiver** and **lidar sensor** are designed to seem like **the eyes of the drone**

# 2.

## Goggles HUD Iterations



- Try to **decrease the distraction** on the snow slopes



- **Hierarchy is not enough** for the data  
- **Avoid** using safety orange everywhere  
- Try **exaggerate** the **trail's symbol**



- **Final Version**  
- Use **Shapes and Colors** to mark the trails  
- Put **Primary Data** to the main area

# 3.

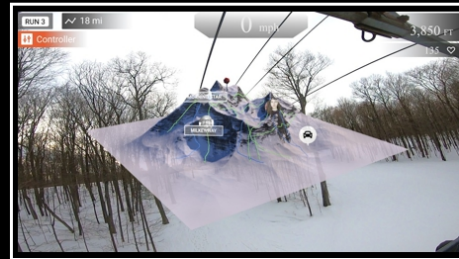
## Map Iterations



- Tap on a mobile phone can be hard when users on a lift



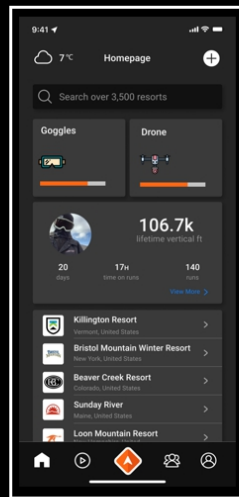
- It's not convenient to explore a map on mobile phones  
- Can't find out where users park their car



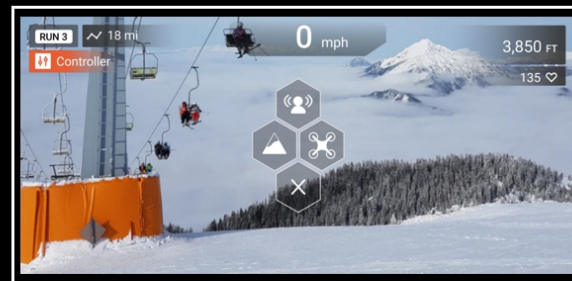
- Final Version  
- 3D Trail Map

# 4.

## Controller Iterations



- It's too cold to use mobile phones



- Final Version  
- Use Gesture to Open controller

# Conclusion.

"In the beginning, I just planned to design a cool HUD for me to not have to worry about the navigation or wait for my friends who are slower than me in mountain resorts. After thinking about **accessibility** and doing the research, I figured out that the people who need this is **more than I expected**. Snowpes system **is user-friendly to the deaf and the color-blind** users. This system can help users **navigate** through the big resorts **safely, connect** with their crews easily, and feel more **engaged** in the snowboarding community. "

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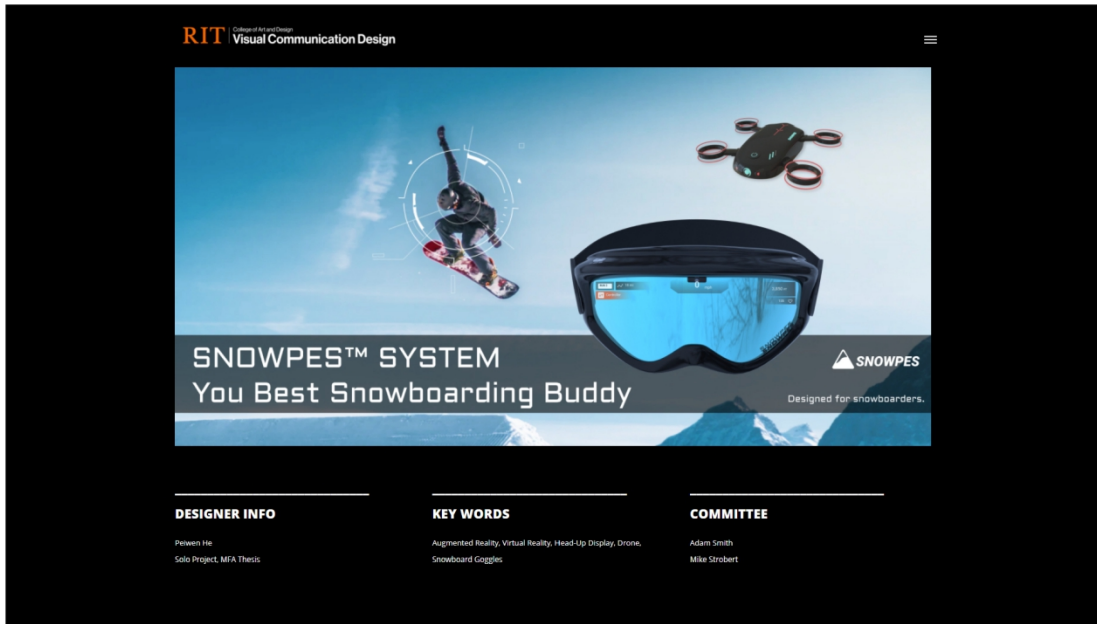
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<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss>.

# Appendix C

https://designed.cad.rit.edu/vcdthesis/project/peiwen-he-snowpes



RIT College of Architecture  
Visual Communication Design

SNOWPES™ SYSTEM  
You Best Snowboarding Buddy

Designed for snowboarders.

**DESIGNER INFO**  
Peiwen He  
Solo Project, MFA Thesis

**KEY WORDS**  
Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Head-Up Display, Drone,  
Snowboard Goggles

**COMMITTEE**  
Adam Smith  
Mike Strobert



Living young, wild & free



### The Problems

The mountain ski resorts are a huge place, so it's easy for snowboarders to **get lost** and **lose contact with their crew**, especially when they **snowboard overseas**.

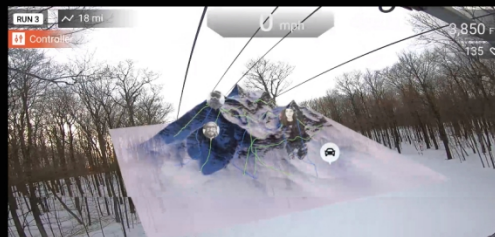
It's **dangerous** for the snowboarders whose **ears are occupied** while doing the sport when there's someone behind them closely trying to cut them off.

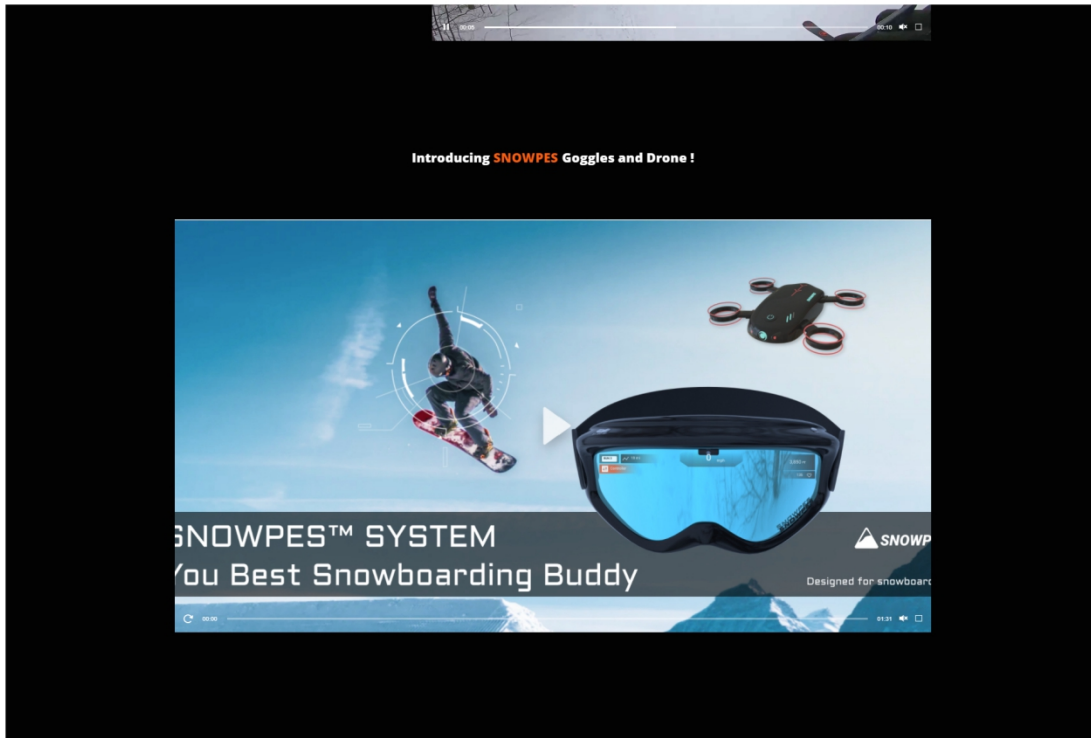
Hiring a **personal coach can be expensive**, and it's difficult to learn new tricks by just watching videos online, especially for beginner snowboarders.

### The Solutions

Design a system to help snowboarders **navigate through the big resorts safely**, **connect with their crews easily**, and **feel more engaged** in the snowboarding community.

Snowpes system includes **XR snowboarding goggles**, and a **camera drone**.





## Users

Snowpes focuses on snowboarders. There are **4 insights** according to the interviews and research from snowboarders of various experience levels and countries.



### 1. Snowboarding Crew

- Plan their next run with Snowpes goggles **3D trail map**

- Know where their **crew members** are, and choose a member to **follow along**

- **Navigation** on Snowpes goggles **HUD**



### 2. Overseas Snowboarder

- Navigation with the **trail signs** which users can understand even they snowboard **overseas**

- **Call for help** with one button



### 3. Beginner Snowboarder

- **Learn new tricks** immersively with Snowpes goggles **VR mode**

- See other snowboarders **first person POV live video** with their goggles

- **Review their previous run** with videos captured by goggles and camera drone



### 4. Ears-occupied Snowboarder

- Give **visual warnings** when there's someone trying to cut off the users

# 1.

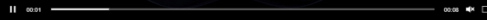
## Snowboarding Crew

"The trail maps are difficult to read and remember. It's easy to get lost and lose contact with my crew frequently."

### Snowpes Goggles

There's a **180 camera** in the front of the goggles, which allows you to see the trail from a different perspective.

Users can **toggle** between AR and **VR** goggles to control the goggles HUD with the **computer vision** technology.



### Switch Goggles Modes

Snowpops goggles have 3 mode - **AR**, **VR** and **Normal Mode**. Users can **change modes** by simply toggling the **switch** on the right side. Users can also switch off the HUD.

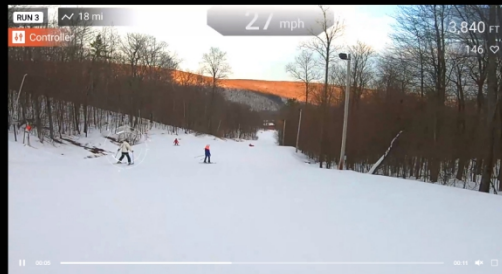


### Call out Goggles Controller

In Snowpops goggles AR mode, users can **swipe** to open the **goggles controller**, which allows users to **open 3D trail map**, **control camera drone** and **track their crew members**. The 180 camera on the front side of the goggles allows users to interact with the HUD by using the **computer vision** technology.

### Buddy Tracking

With goggles AR mode, users can **choose a crew member** to **follow along** without planning their own route.

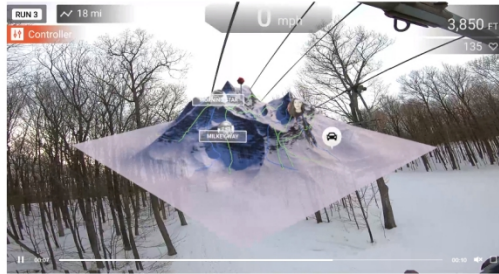




## 2.

### Overseas Snowboarder

" When I snowboard overseas, the different languages and map signs are a real pain. Especially when I need to call for help."

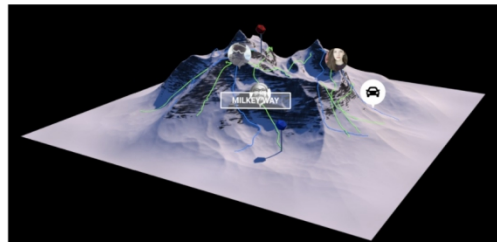


#### Plan Your Next Run

Swipe to open the controller, and open the **3D Trail Map**. Users can plan their next run by just **tapping the start point** and **end point** with an ease.

#### 3D Trail Map

Besides route planning, users are able to know **where their buddies are** and even **where they parked their cars**.

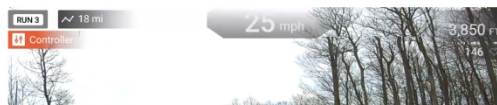


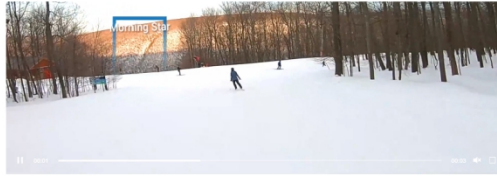
#### HUD Navigation - Green Path

The Snowpex goggles AR mode can guide users through the mountain resorts intuitively. Even though **the trail signs may be different in each countries**, the HUD uses **shapes and colors** to help users understand which **levels** the trails they are heading to, so that the **color-blind** users can understand it too.

#### HUD Navigation - Blue Path

The Snowpex goggles AR mode can **guide users through the mountain resorts intuitively**. In this example, snowboarders would know they are heading to the **intermediate level path**.





**HUD Navigation - Black Path**

The Snowpes goggles AR mode can **guide users through the mountain resorts intuitively**. In this example, snowboarders would know they are heading to the **Advanced level path**.

**Emergency Call**

When users are **snowboarding overseas**, the **language barrier** might cause severe consequences. With the Snowpes goggles, users can be **rescued in time** by simply pressing the **SOS button** on the left side of the goggles.



**3.**

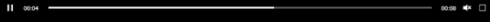
**Beginner Snowboarder**

"It's really expensive to take personal snowboarding lessons, and hard to teach myself with online videos. I wish I can be involved into snowboarding community quickly."

**Snowpes Camera Drone**

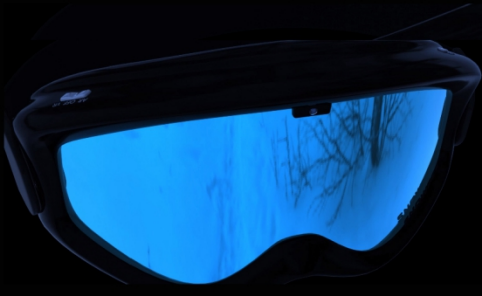
Snowpes Camera Drone can follow the users **automatically** with **assigned distance**, the **bladeless propellers** are safe to use in the resorts with the extra help of **orange shock absorbers**.





**Control Camera Drone**  
 Beginner snowboarders are able to control Snowpex camera drone to record their movements, and they can review the videos later on their goggles by switching to the VR mode.

**Switch to Goggles VR Mode**  
 Users is able to use the goggles VR Mode by simply pressing the toggle switch on the right side of the goggles.



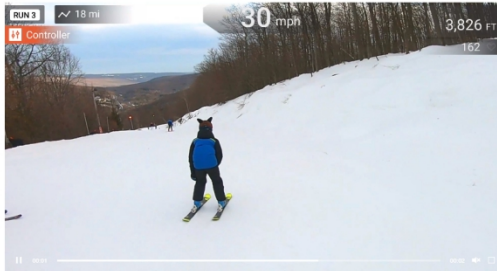
**Enjoy Others Live 1st-Person POV Video**  
 Beginner snowboarders can enjoy watching other snowboarders live videos captured by the Snowpex goggles' 180 camera to be better involved in the snowboarding community.



# 4.

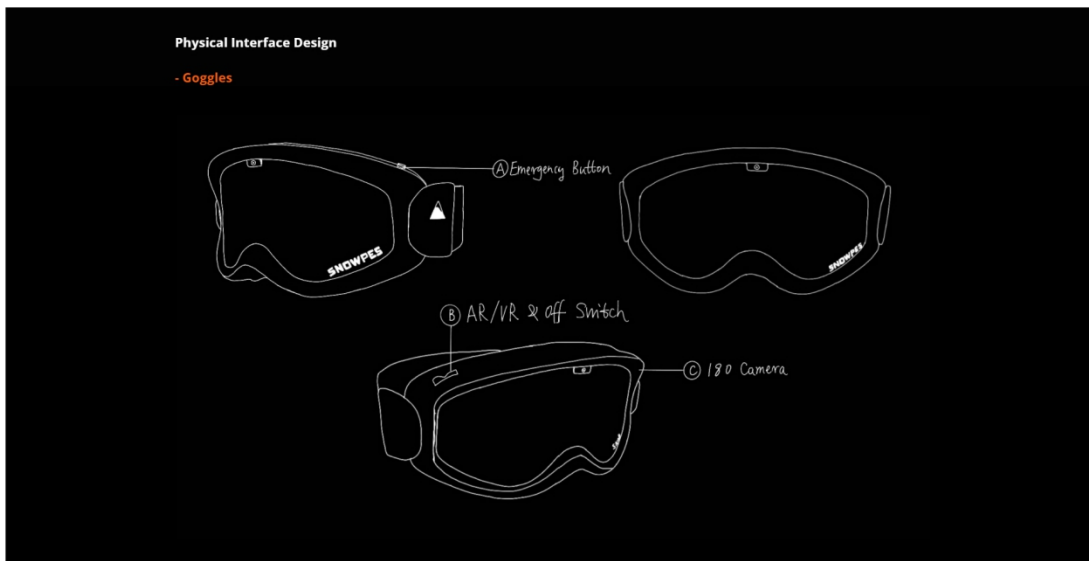
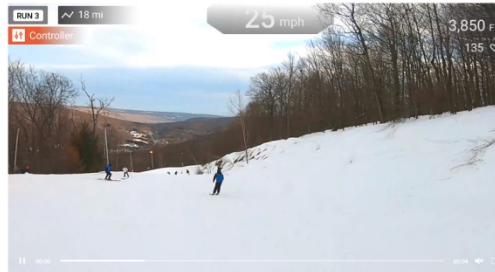
## Ears-occupied Snowboarder

"Listening to music helps me enjoy the sports more, but sometimes it can be dangerous when there's someone close behind me."



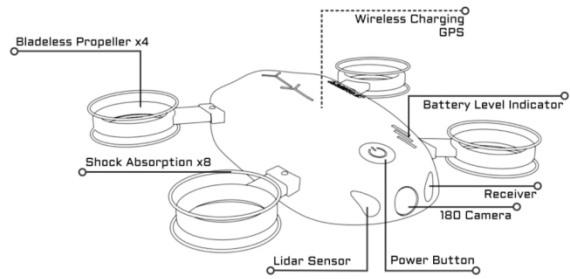
**Visual Warning - Left Side**  
Snowboarders whose ears are occupied can enjoy their run safely with visual warning showing when there's someone trying to cut them off from the left side.

**Visual Warning - Right Side**  
Snowboarders whose ears are occupied can enjoy their run safely with visual warning showing when there's someone trying to cut them off from the right side.



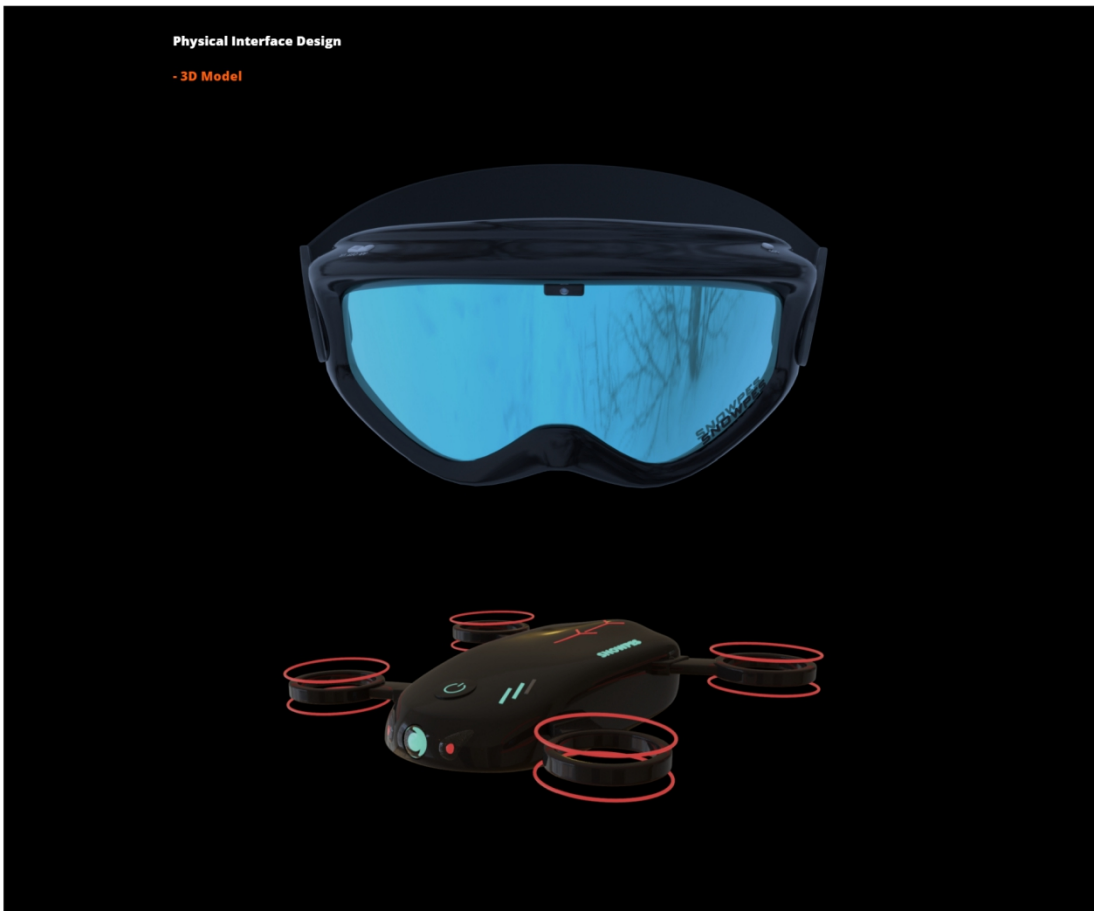
Physical Interface Design

- Camera Drone



Physical Interface Design

- 3D Model



## Research

# 1.

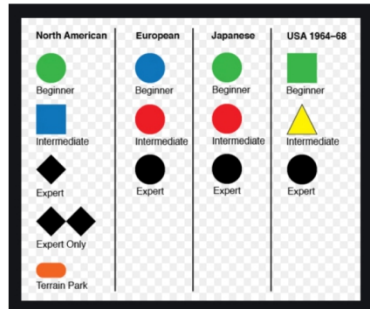
### Color Selection - Safety Orange

The vivid reddish-orange is used to **set objects apart from their surroundings**, and there is a very **strong complementary contrast** between the vivid reddish and the color of the sky.



# 2.

**North America** uses about five symbols to grade the trails, while **Europe or Japan** uses slightly **different symbols** to mark theirs. The signs in Europe and Japan are **not user-friendly** to the **color-blind** snowboarders. While approximately "8% of men and 0.5% of women - **300 million people** - suffer from color blindness".



Skip to toolbar

# 3.

Log Out

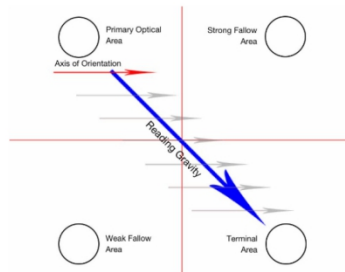
### Hearing Loss

Over 5% - or **430 million people** - of the world's population have **disabling hearing loss**.

# 4.

### Reading Gravity

Our eyes follow **a certain pattern** when browsing. The **Gutenberg Diagram** divides the page into four quadrants. When it comes to design a HUD, it would be better if **the secondary information** is **not placed on the primary optical area**.



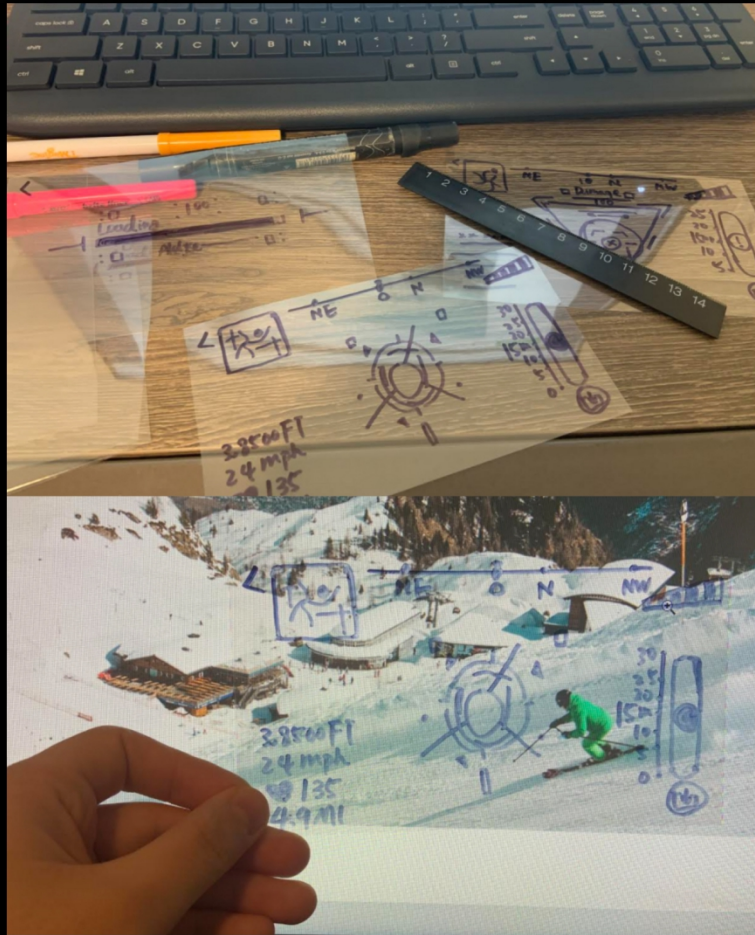
# 5.

Private lesson can be expensive

It's **expensive** to learn snowboarding by **hiring a personal coach**. Private lesson can cost more than **\$200** per hour.

### HUD Testing

Use **Mylar Sheet** to **test and adjust** the **balance and legibility** of the HUD.



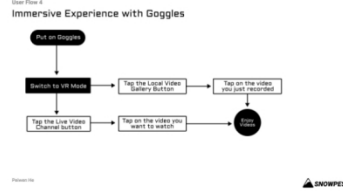
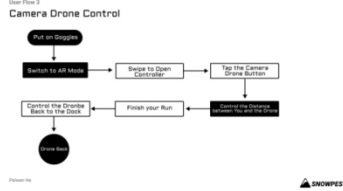
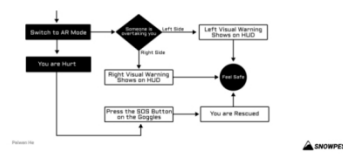
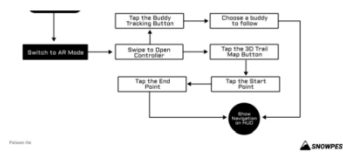
### Userflows

User Flow 1  
Navigation on HUD

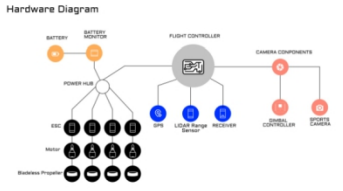
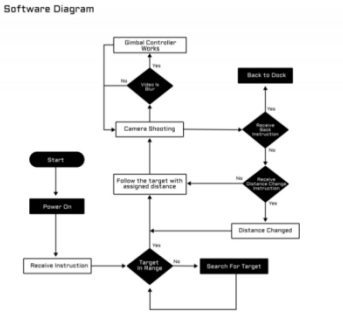
Put on Skis

User Flow 2  
Safety Guard For Users

Put on Skis

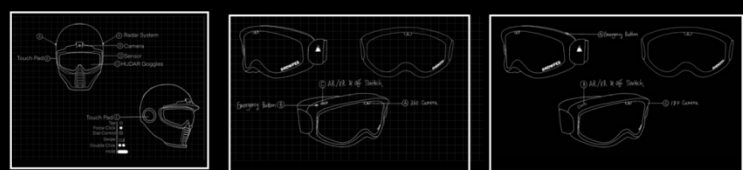


Diagrams - Snowpes Camera Drone



1.

Product Design Iterations - Snowpes Goggles



- High Cost to Buy
- Long Learning Curve
- Some Snowboarders Only wear goggles
- Might Push the Wrong Button
- 360 Camera is too big
- Consider Computer Vision
- Final Version
- Move the Emergency Button to the Left Side



# 1.

## Product Design Iterations - Snowpes Camera Drone



- It might **blend into the snow** too much



- Matte black is reading **too flat as a texture**  
- The location of the **LIDAR sensor** is missing



- **Final Version**  
- The **receiver and lidar sensor** are designed to seem like the **eyes of the drone**

# 2.

## Goggles HUD Iterations



- Try to **decrease the distraction** on the snow slopes



- **Hierarchy is not enough** for the data  
- Avoid using **safety orange** everywhere  
- Try **exaggerate the trail's symbol**



- **Final Version**  
- Use **Shapes and Colors** to mark the trails  
- Put **Primary Data** to the main area

# 3.

## Map Iterations



- It's **not convenient** to explore a map on mobile phones  
- Can't find out where users **park their car**





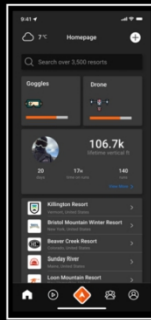
- Tap on a mobile phone can be hard when users on a lift



- Final Version  
- 3D Trail Map

# 4.

## Controller Iterations



- It's too cold to use mobile phones



- Final Version  
- Use Gesture to Open controller

# Conclusion.

"In the beginning, I just planned to design a cool HUD for me to not have to worry about the navigation or wait for my friends who are slower than me in mountain resorts. After thinking about **accessibility** and doing the research, I figured out that the people who need this is **more than I expected**. Snowpes system **is user-friendly to the deaf and the color-blind** users. This system can help users **navigate** through the big resorts **safely, connect** with their crews easily, and feel more **engaged** in the snowboarding community."

[Visit My Portfolio Site](#)

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Design Studies

