Assessing the Effectiveness of "Story Binge" in Improving Story Engagement and Exploring its Functionality | User Research and Data Analysis

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Reviving the Love for Reading and Writing

In a world full of quick distractions, it's important to get people excited about reading and writing again. Many find it hard to make time for these activities nowadays, despite having a strong desire to rekindle their interest in them, including writing.

HYPOTHESIS:

- Users have a preference for short stories due to reduced attention spans in contemporary times.
- The majority of users opt to read stories on their phones rather than physical books.
- The assumption is that a significant portion of the target audience has an interest in reading and writing stories.

SECONDARY RESEARCH:

75% of adults in the United States read a book in some format over the last year

The latest survey from the Pew Research Center on book preferences indicates that traditional print remains the favored reading format for both adults and children. The survey also shows that:

- 32% of Americans claim they only read print books
- 33% say they read both print books and e-books
- 9% say they only read e-books
- 23% of the respondents said that they don't read books

35 percent of the world read more due to coronavirus

In March 2021, book and literature e-commerce sites worldwide recorded 1.51 billion visits, marking an 8.5% increase from February (pre-lockdown). Predictably, there has been a decline in physical book sales, with a preference for digital books.

People aged between 15 to 44 read for an average of 10 minutes or less per day

A notable observation in the research reveals that individuals within this particular age demographic exhibit a higher inclination towards television consumption than book reading. Furthermore, the pervasive influence of social media compounds this trend, leading to a significant reduction in the time allocated to reading.

The average attention span of a human has decreased from 12 seconds to 8.25 seconds in the last two decades.

Over the past two decades, there has been a substantial decline in the average attention span of adults, plummeting from 12 seconds in 2000 to a mere 8 seconds today—significantly less than that of a goldfish. This 33% decrease underscores a noteworthy shift in the ability to sustain focus. Alarmingly, research findings demonstrate that a mere 17% of page views endure for more than four seconds, highlighting the swift disinterest adults exhibit towards content that fails to captivate their attention promptly. This trend underscores the evolving challenge of engaging audiences in an era marked by increasingly fleeting attention spans.

TARGET AUDIENCE:
- **Book enthusiasts**
- **Ameteur writers**
- **Publishers**
- **Ages - 10+**

OVERVIEW:

"Story Binge" presents an accessible app tailored for today's fast-paced world, facilitating swift and engaging experiences in reading and writing, with a specific emphasis on short stories. The initial screens feature a user-friendly interface, ensuring seamless exploration and contribution of individual short stories. Through this platform, the goal is to inspire both budding and seasoned readers and writers, encouraging a rekindled interest in the art of storytelling in our digital age.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- To assess if the designed app effectively addresses the outlined challenges in the problem statement.
- To investigate if prioritizing short stories over longer narratives resonates with users, aligning with their preferences and needs.
- To focus on measuring the accessibility and ease-of-use of the app, ensuring users can engage with short stories effortlessly.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK:

1. Explore	2. Observe	3. Ideate	4. Verify
- Literature Review - Analytics Review - Initial Heuristic Analysis	- Field Study - User Surveys - User Interviews - Expert Interviews	- Tree Testing - Heuristic Analysis - 2	Usability Testing

1. EXPLORE : INITIAL HEURISTIC ANALYSIS

Conducted to understand if the initial designed screens are following the Usability Heuristics for UI from an expert to provide a seamless and accessible user experience.

No. of testers - 2

Age - 13+

Expertise - Familiar with the Principles of Usability Heuristics

INFERENCE:

Following the heuristic analysis, it has been identified that certain crucial points were missing in the initial designs and need to be rectified.

- Error prevention
- Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors
- Consistency and standards

2. OBSERVE : FIELD STUDY

Conducted a field study in a busy New York City subway during the evening, observing how people occupy their time without much phone network connectivity. The chosen setting provided insights into how individuals manage tasks during their busiest hours. My aim was to leverage these observations for potential advantages.

No. of people - 20 (approx)

Age - 18+ (approx)

Reading books 10.5%

Talking to each 15.8%

Using Phones 36.8%

Sleeping / Idle 36.8%
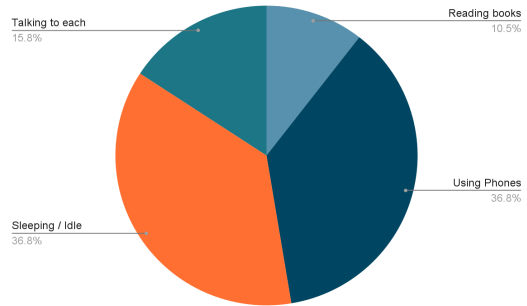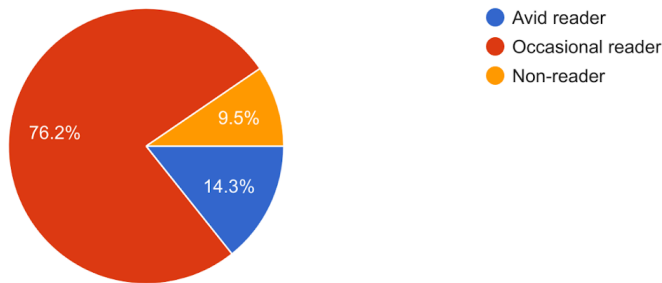
2. OBSERVE : USER SURVEYS

To collect information on overall user preferences for reading and writing, including their inclination towards short stories versus longer narratives, and to analyze the quantitative data statistics.
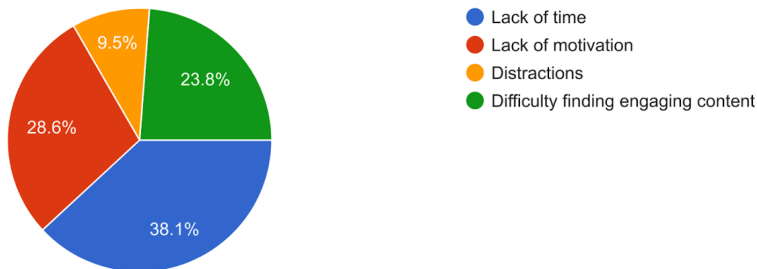
No. of people - 21

Age - 18+

Do you consider yourself an avid reader, occasional reader, or non-reader?
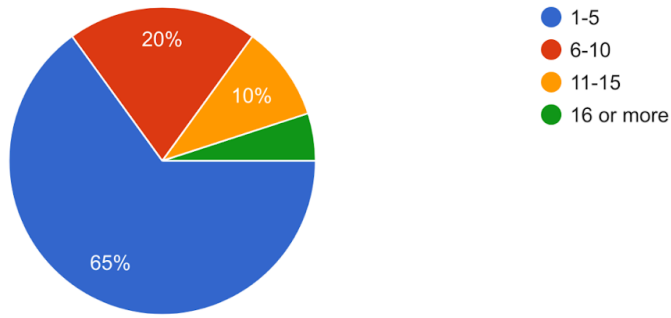21 responses

- ● Avid reader
- ● Occasional reader
- ● Non-reader

76.2%
9.5%
14.3%

What challenges, if any, do you currently face in finding time to read or write?
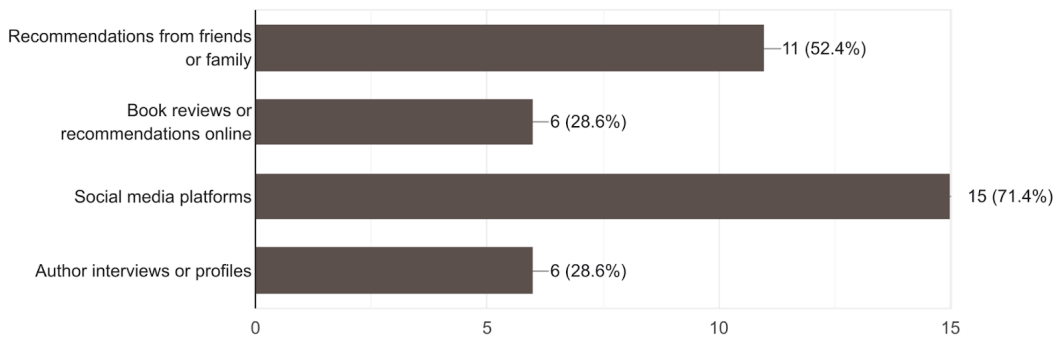21 responses

- ● Lack of time
- ● Lack of motivation
- ● Distractions
- ● Difficulty finding engaging content

9.5%
23.8%
28.6%
38.1%

On average, how many short stories do you read in a month (if applicable)?
20 responses

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16 or more

20%
10%
65%

How do you discover new stories to read?
21 responses

Recommendations from friends or family	11 (52.4%)
Book reviews or recommendations online	6 (28.6%)
Social media platforms	15 (71.4%)
Author interviews or profiles	6 (28.6%)

0   5   10   15
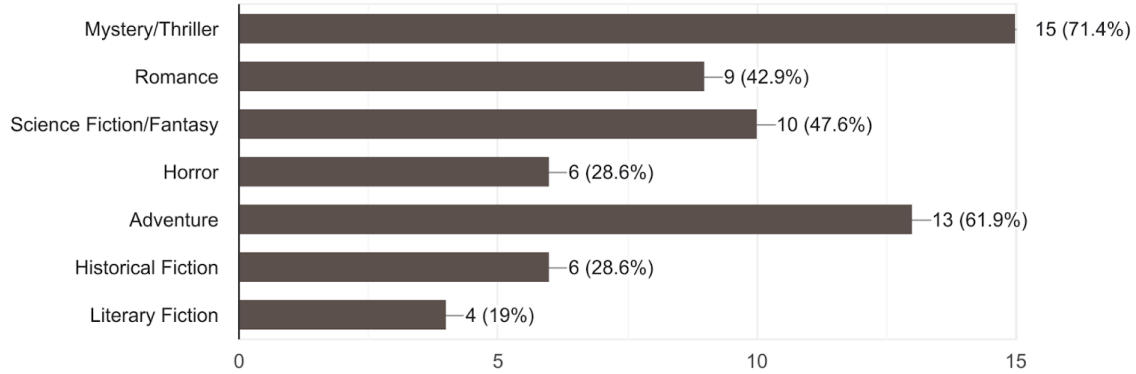
When given the choice, do you prefer reading short stories or longer narratives
21 responses

- Short stories
- Longer narratives
- No preference

14.3%
81%
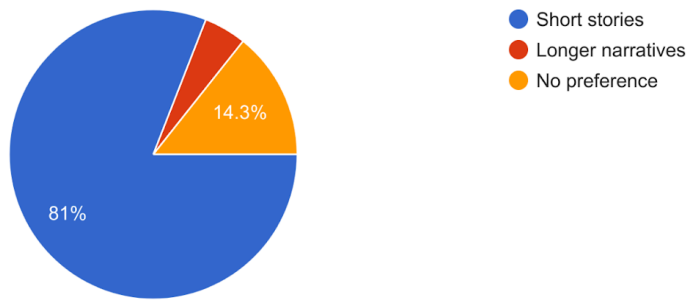
What genres of short stories are you most interested in? (Select all that apply)
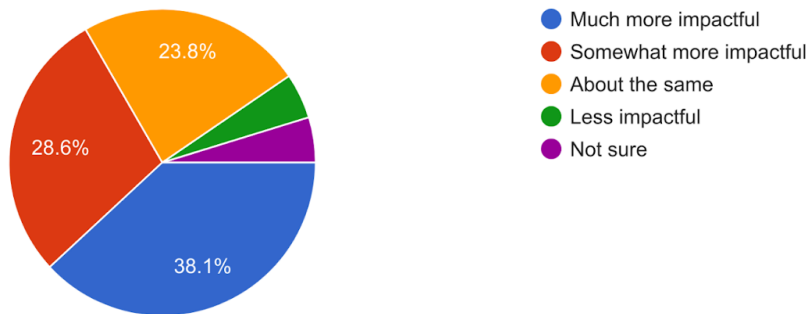21 responses

Genre	Count (Percentage)
Mystery/Thriller	15 (71.4%)
Romance	9 (42.9%)
Science Fiction/Fantasy	10 (47.6%)
Horror	6 (28.6%)
Adventure	13 (61.9%)
Historical Fiction	6 (28.6%)
Literary Fiction	4 (19%)

How do you typically access and read stories?
21 responses

- Physical books — 19%
- E-books on a device (e.g., tablet, e-reader) — 23.8%
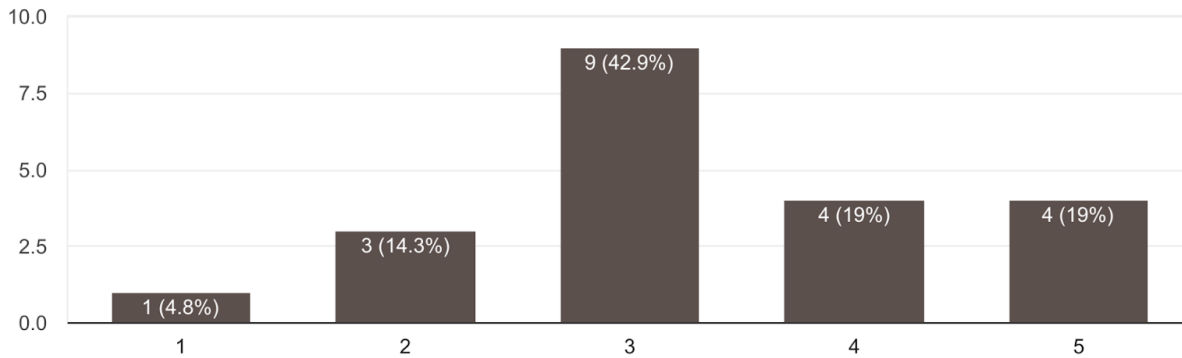- Online platforms or apps — 52.4%
- Audiobooks
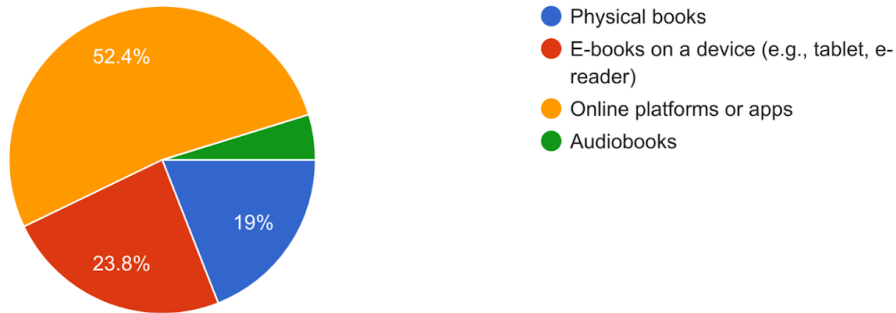
In your opinion, how impactful are short stories compared to longer narratives in terms of leaving a lasting impression or conveying a message?
21 responses

- Much more impactful — 38.1%
- Somewhat more impactful — 28.6%
- About the same — 23.8%
- Less impactful
- Not sure

How important is community engagement and interaction with other readers and writers to your overall reading and writing experience?

21 responses

DATA ANALYTICS:

- **81%** Prefer short stories.
- **66.7%** Mentioned the impact of short stories is more or less same or more impactful than long narratives
- **52.4%** Access online platforms or apps to read stories
- **81%** Feel that it's important to have a community interaction with other readers and writers

2. OBSERVE : USER INTERVIEWS and EXPERT INTERVIEWS

To obtain firsthand insights from potential users, observe their behavior and thoughts regarding reading and writing, and gather additional information about their overall experience with stories.

No. of people - 06

Age - 18+

Tools : In- Person and Zoom

USER INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS:

Do you like to read? If so, when did you start and how did it happen?

Absolutely! My love for reading kicked off when I was a kid, thanks to my parents' nightly storytelling sessions. Those moments of imaginative tales set the stage for a lifelong reading adventure.

What do you find most enjoyable about reading?

It's escapism for me. Getting lost in different worlds, meeting intriguing characters, and experiencing diverse perspectives make reading an enchanting journey.

What inspires you to pick up a book?

Recommendations are a big motivator. If a friend raves about a book or I stumble upon an interesting synopsis, I'm all in. The promise of a good story or the chance to learn something new always piques my interest.

What genres of stories do you typically gravitate towards?

I'm a sucker for fiction, especially fantasy and historical fiction. But, surprise me with a gripping biography or some science-related adventure, and I'm hooked!

Do you prefer reading in print or digitally?

It's a tough call! While the convenience of digital reading is unbeatable, there's something magical about flipping through physical pages. I lean towards print when I want to savor the tangible experience.

What are the methods or platforms you use for reading stories?

My Kindle is my digital haven, and local bookstores are my go-to for print gems. Audiobooks are my sidekick during commutes – a multitasking dream!

How do you make time to read stories?

Ah, the challenge! Evenings and weekends are my sacred reading times. I've got this cozy reading nook at home that practically calls my name. It's all about setting the mood and claiming those hours as my reading haven.

What do you appreciate about short stories, and how do they impact you?

Short stories are like literary snacks – quick but fulfilling. Their brevity and the art of conveying a powerful message in a short space always amazes me. They linger in my thoughts, sparking reflection.

How do you think you could incorporate more reading into your routine?

I'm thinking of setting some fun reading challenges, mixing up genres, and sneaking in short reading breaks during the day. Making reading a seamless part of my routine is the goal!

Any book recommendations or recent favorites you'd like to share?

I recently dove into the book, The Little Prince, and it was a rollercoaster of emotions. Highly recommend it!

EXPERT INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS:

When and how did you get into writing?

I started writing stories when I was in school. I joined many contests and won, which encouraged me to keep writing as the years went by.

What do you enjoy about writing?

I love writing because it lets me express my thoughts and create something beautiful with words. Plus, seeing others read and enjoy my work, and sharing their own perspectives, brings me the most joy.

What inspires you to start writing?

I start writing when I find something small, interesting, and unique happening around me. I believe that every place and person has a story to tell. It's all about paying attention and learning more about those stories. That's what inspires me.

What kind of stories do you usually write?

I prefer short stories because I enjoy exploring a variety of tales rather than focusing on one big novel. It's where I feel most comfortable.

Could you tell me about the time you tried publishing your book of short stories?

Oh god, it was one of the busiest times in my life. I had this desire to publish my book of short stories but felt lost on where or how to begin. I didn't have many contacts to reach out to. At one point, I even considered creating a website to share my stories. Eventually, I started my own Instagram page dedicated to my stories. I used to post a story and also share prompts to engage better with my audience in the comments section. It's been some time since I last posted because my main job demands most of my time and energy.

Wow! How did it make you feel when you were interacting with your audience through the comments section in instagram?

It was an incredible feeling to know that there were people reading my work, and it motivated me to write even more. There were also occasions when I asked them for suggestions on what to write about, which helped me discover new topics too!

What tools or platforms do you usually use when you write?

I use Google Keep to jot down my ideas quickly, but I still prefer the traditional pen and paper. Later, I transfer them to my computer and edit using Microsoft Word. I later post my material on Facebook and Instagram.

INFERENCE:

- **Offline Reading and Writing Feature:** The interviews underscore the importance of implementing an "Offline Reading and Writing" feature in the Story Binge application. This addition addresses the challenges users face with bad internet connectivity, ensuring they can access and use the application anytime, anywhere. This feature not only caters to users in diverse scenarios but also removes barriers to creativity, allowing them to capture inspiration without limitations.

- **Community Interaction and Recommendations:** The significance of community interaction and recommendations becomes evident in the interviews. Creating a space for users to share their stories and engage with prompts fosters a sense of community. The second interviewee's experience with audience interaction on Instagram demonstrates the positive impact on motivation and inspiration. Incorporating features that encourage user interaction and recommendations within the Story Binge application could enhance user engagement and satisfaction.

3.IDEATE : PERSONA AND EMPATHY MAPPING

Based on the insights gathered from interviews, creating a persona and outlining what users feel, think, say, and comprehending their challenges and desires.

Julia

29 years | Team Manager

"Julia lives with her family and has a full-time job. She really likes reading but doesn't have much time for it. She's trying to find ways to read more like she used to because she misses it."

SAYS

- I wish I had more time to read
- I am gonna start reading from this weekend!
- What should I read?
- Can you suggest some book?

DOES
- Plans and figures her schedule
- Asks her friends and family for suggestions
- Checks options online
- Goes to buy or order a book

THINKS
- When can I go buy a new book?
- I just want to read a book and relax!
- I miss the old days of just having my coffee and reading

FEELS
- Excited
- Happy
- Curious

3.IDEATE : TREE TESTING

Assigned two tasks to users to assess their preferred navigation and understand the reasoning behind their choices. Conducted to gain insights into the effectiveness and user-friendliness of the navigation structure.

No. of people - 7

Age - 18+

Tools : Optimal Workshop

TASKS:

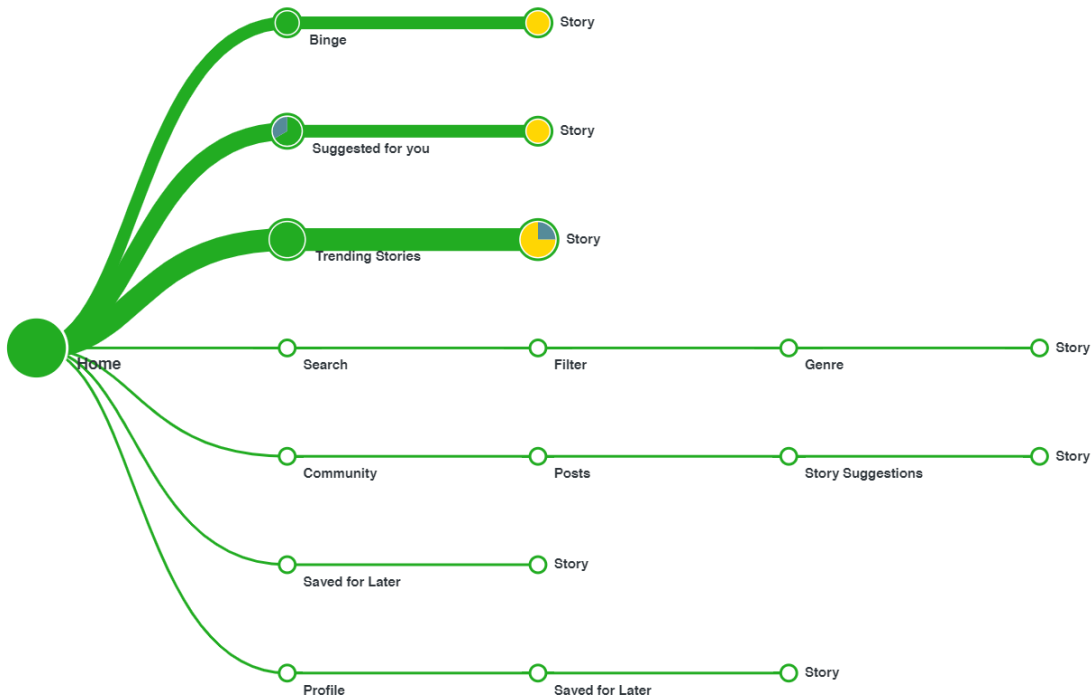**You're looking for a new story to read. Where do you go to find one?**
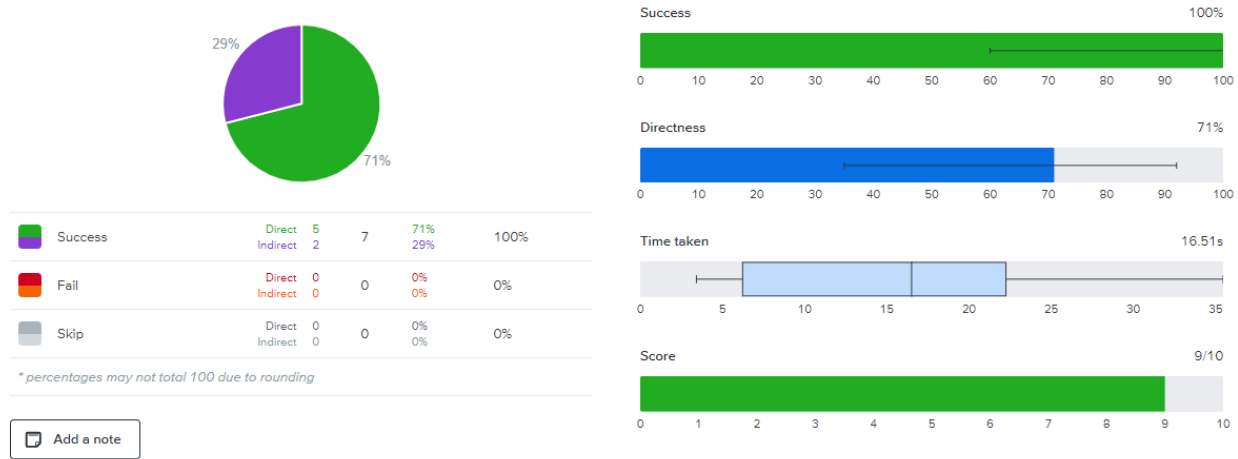
- ✓ Binge > *Story*
- ✓ Search > Filter > Genre > *Story*
- ✓ Suggested for you > *Story*
- ✓ Community > Posts > Story Suggestions > *Story*
- ✓ Trending Stories > *Story*
- ✓ Profile > Saved for Later > *Story*
- ✓ Saved for Later > *Story*

You've bookmarked a few stories for future reading. How would you access your saved stories?

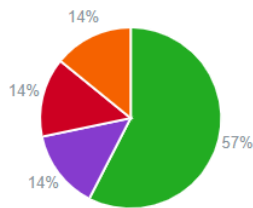✓ *Profile* ❯ *Saved for Later* ❯ *Story*

✓ *Saved for Later* ❯ *Story*

DATA ANALYTICS:

You're looking for a new story to read. Where do you go to find one?

■ Success	Direct 5 Indirect 2	7	71% 29%	100%
■ Fail	Direct 0 Indirect 0	0	0% 0%	0%
■ Skip	Direct 0 Indirect 0	0	0% 0%	0%

* percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

🗒 Add a note

Success		100%
Directness		71%
Time taken		16.51s
Score		9/10

Path		Participants	
→ Home › Binge › Story	2	33%	
→ Home › Suggested for you › Story	1	17%	
↗ Home › Suggested for you ‹ Home › Suggested for you › Story	1	17%	
↗ Home › Trending Stories › Story ‹ Trending Stories › Story	1	17%	
→ Home › Trending Stories › Story	1	17%	

You've bookmarked a few stories for future reading. How would you access your saved stories?

		Direct			
🟩 Success		Direct 4	5	57%	71%
		Indirect 1		14%	
🟥 Fail		Direct 1	2	14%	29%
		Indirect 1		14%	
⬜ Skip		Direct 0	0	0%	0%
		Indirect 0		0%	

percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

Add a note

Success 71%

Directness 71%

Time taken 20.63s

Score 6/10
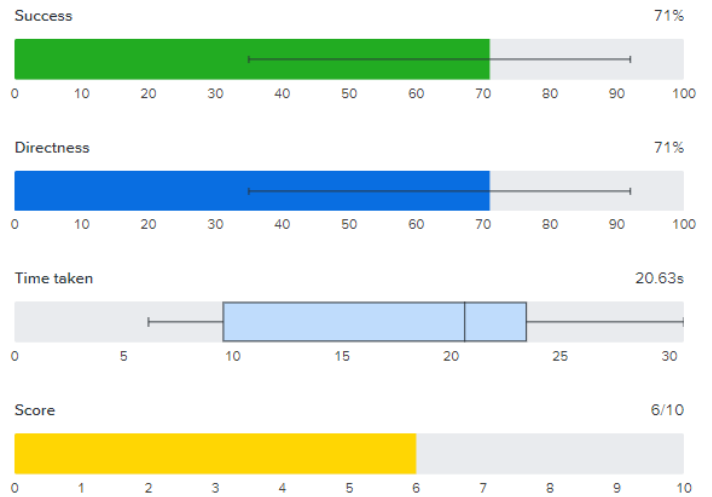
Path	Participants	
→ Home > Profile > Saved for Later > Story	2	29%
→ Home > Saved for Later > Story	2	29%
↗ Home > Saved for Later > Story < Home > Profile > Saved for Later > Story	1	14%
→ Home > Trending Stories > Story	1	14%
↘ Home > Binge > Story < Home > Search > Filter > Genre > Story < Home > Suggested for you > Story < Home > Trending Stories > Story	1	14%

3.IDEATE : HEURISTIC EVALUATION

To understand if the revised designed screens are following the Usability Heuristics for UI from an expert to provide a seamless and accessible user experience.

No. of people - 2

Age - 18+

Tools : Figma Prototype

INFERENCE:

- Prioritize easy accessibility for key features and tabs like "Binge," "Suggested for You," and "Trending Stories."
- Place the "Saved for Later" feature under the user's profile to align with the navigation pattern identified in tree testing.
- Implement clear error messages to guide users on resolving issues during their interaction with the application.
- Ensure notifications alert users to any application-related problems for prompt awareness and resolution.

4.IDEATE : USABILITY TESTING

To assess the feasibility of accessibility and user-friendliness of the redesigned screens for potential users, ensuring they can effectively utilize the application.

No. of people - 5

Age - 18+

Tools : Figma Prototype

TASKS:

Create account

Read the first story

Search for a particular story

DATA ANALYTICS:

Task 1: Account Creation

"Oh, this looks like a straightforward login process."

Task 2: Explore the First Story

"It was easy but I would prefer seeing the home screen and exploring different short stories first instead of directly jumping into reading my first story."

Task 3: Story Search

"The search option was up front but it was placed differently on different screens which I felt was a little confusing."

INFERENCE:
- The current design effectively facilitates a seamless onboarding experience.
- While users could easily read the first story, there is a notable preference for an initial exploration of the home screen to discover various short stories.
- The updated search option effectively addressed previous issues, providing a prominently displayed and straightforward experience. This adjustment contributed to a more user-friendly interaction, eliminating confusion previously reported by users.

PERSONAL INSIGHTS AND TAKEAWAYS

User-Centric Design:

Prioritizing user needs and preferences is foundational to effective design.

Holistic Understanding of Users:

Combining various research methods provides a comprehensive view of user experiences.

Data-Driven Decision-Making:

Data-driven decision-making enhances the objectivity and effectiveness of the design process.

Balancing Innovation and Usability:

Striking a balance between innovative design and usability is essential for a successful product.

Iterative Nature of Design:

Design is an iterative process, and continuous refinement is essential.

REFERENCES

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https://www.goldenstepsaba.com/resources/average-attention-span