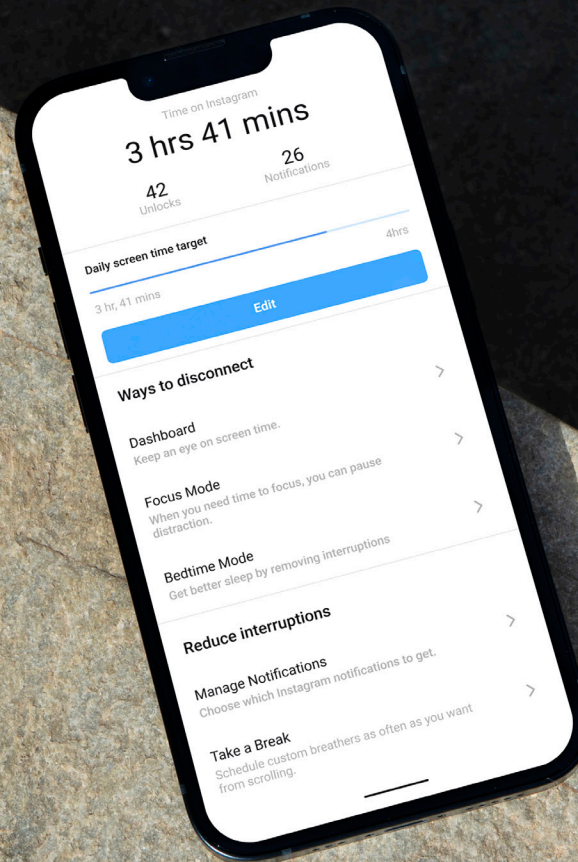# Dedesign Instagram

Beyond Attention Centric Design

1. A playbook
2. Dedesigning a social media app
3. Food for thought

Time on Instagram
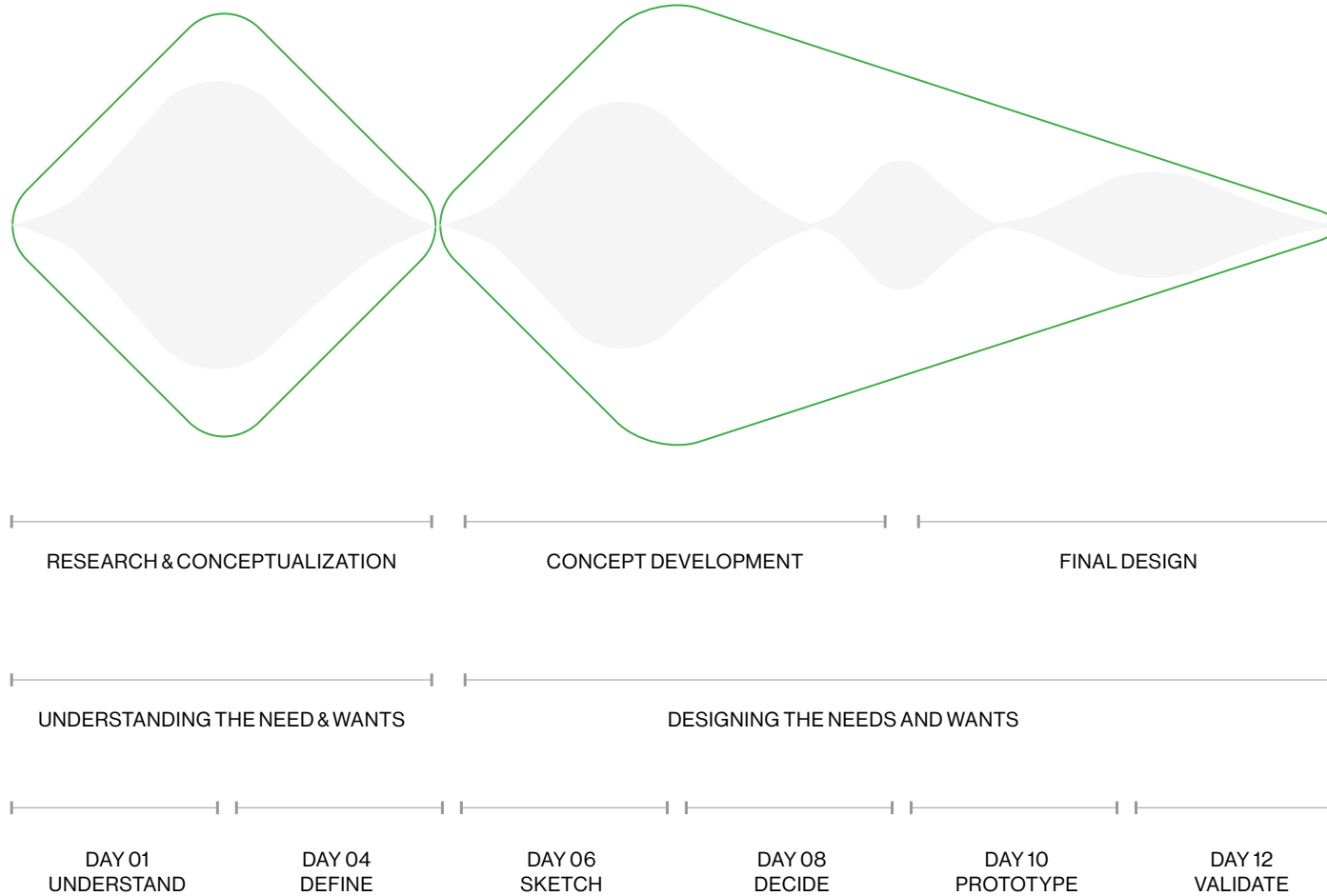
3 hrs 41 mins

42
Unlocks

26
Notifications

Daily screen time target   4hrs

3 hr, 41 mins   Edit

Ways to disconnect

Dashboard
Keep an eye on screen time.

Focus Mode
When you need time to focus, you can pause distraction.

Bedtime Mode
Get better sleep by removing interruptions

Reduce interruptions

Manage Notifications
Choose which Instagram notifications to get.

Take a Break
Schedule custom breathers as often as you want from scrolling.

sumeet.singh

A case study on dedesigning a conscious social media app Instagram.

STRATEGY FORMULATED TO ACHIEVE

RESEARCH & CONCEPTUALIZATION

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

FINAL DESIGN

UNDERSTANDING THE NEED & WANTS

DESIGNING THE NEEDS AND WANTS

DAY 01
UNDERSTAND

DAY 04
DEFINE

DAY 06
SKETCH

DAY 08
DECIDE

DAY 10
PROTOTYPE

DAY 12
VALIDATE

"There are only two industries that call their customers 'users':

illegal drugs and software."

Edward Tufte

BACKGROUND

Social media is perceived as a source of happiness today but often leads to stress and anxiety. And since we end up checking our phones every 4 minutes, 344 times a day, digital wellness has become more important than ever.

The biggest challenge, therefore, is to Design for Digital Wellness to:

1. Safeguard sanity in a hyperconnected world

2. Strike a balance between the real and reel life

3. Minimise information overload

WHY THIS PROJECT?

I have 2 reasons for my case:

1. BRIEF —

   I was going through a weird creative block, Luckily I stumbled across 'UXPLORER'22' organised by YUJ DESIGN, for which they had this brief 'Design for Digital Wellness'. However, there was one little problem — I saw this 1 week before the submission deadline.

2. COVID LOCKDOWN —

   Become flashpoints for conversations about mental health during COVID-19.

   One study found that high use of social media during COVID-19 lockdowns was correlated with worse mental health among Gen-Z. And I have personally felt the digital burnout.

CONSTRAINTS

1. To cover the major use cases and flows and mention a few edge cases.

2. Instagram has its design philosophies as an org. Not to break through those philosophies unless necessary. Essentially, simplicity is the key.

3. Considering Instagram's product and design teams work independently of Facebook's parent org.

4. This experience should not break or intervene with the visual social media ecosystem that Instagram is.

PROBLEM

Many young adults feel anxious and lack control over how much time they spend on Instagram.

*

EXPECTED OUTCOME:

A document highlighting issues along with suggestions for improvement.

GOALS

Desdesign to cultivate conscious Social Media.

1. USER GOALS:

    Enjoy quality content on the platform without feeling guilty.

2. BUSINESS GOALS:

    Provide best-suited content and services, neutralizing Dark Patterns.

SOLUTION

Provide best suited content and services, neutralising Dark Patterns.

1. Conduct a UX Audit of Instagram to evaluate flows in different scenarios and for different use cases.

2. Develop recommendations to improve the digital wellbeing flows and edge cases.

3. Design & develop test cases for A/B testing, to increase adoption of a new feature.

Why is it important for the business to solve the problem of users' lack of control over time spent on Instagram?

How will it benefit them?

When users felt that one company, in particular, was responsible for wasted time, users abandoned that product.

This will give people a sense of control over the algorithms that shape their experiences.

GLOSSARY

Common design and
digital wellbeing terms

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the ability to pay attention to what's he present moment.

Understand

Secondary Research

On average,
we pick up our
phones
58 times
per day

* 70% of sessions <2 min
* 25% of sessions are two to 10 min
* 5% of sessions are > 10min

This time adds up
to about
3 hours
and 15
minutes

Source: blog.rescuetime.com/screen-time-stats-2018

43% employees turn off
phone during work hours to cope
with distraction.

72%
feel that a lot of people have a lack of
control when using tech.

67 % of smartphone users compulsively
check their phone for messages, alerts, or calls -
even when they don't notice their phone ringing or
vibrating.

Source: Udemy In Depth: 2018 Workplace
Distraction Report

>36% millennials
and GenZ say they spend

+2hrs checking their
smartphones during the workday.

PEOPLE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Insights:

1. People spend more time on digital activities they believe have a negative impact on their wellbeing, and

2. Spend less time on digital activities with a positive impact.

Activity

Digital activities presented in ordered by engagement

Engagement

Participants who do this activity weekly

Participants perceptions

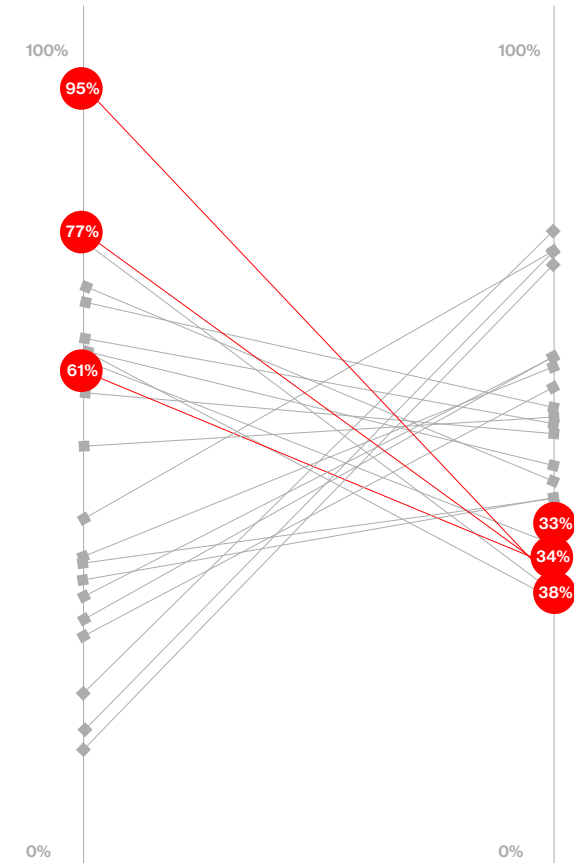Participants who believes this activity contributes positively to wellbeing

Checking phones for notifications
Passively scrolling through social media
Looking at content before sleep
Using search engines
Messaging others
Communicating via calls or emails
Browsing shopping Online
Dual-screening
Using Social media
Being on device during conversations
Watching videos
Reading news, magazines or about sports
Listening to music or audio
Streaming TV shows or movies
Working in documents
Playing games
Setting task or organizing
Video calling others
Taking or editing photos/videos
Reading books
Using health, fitness or wellbeing tools
Learning on educational apps or sites

100%   100%

95%

77%

61%

33%
34%
38%

0%   0%

Understand

Primary
Research

SETTING A SCENE

Defining users helps us get insight into the type of audience (target group) that utilizes the product.

It gives us a basic understanding of how the product is used in frequency, duration, location, etc.

Problem we are researching for	Our relationship with interactive technology has become increasingly harmful to our physical and mental health.
Target age groups	16-24 y/o
Gender ratio for research	60:40 (Male : Female)
Occupation of the group s we wanted to target	1. Fresh graduates 2. Highschool and College Students

CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY

I conducted contextual inquiry during the early discovery stages because

1. Is a mix of direct observation and interviews of a small user sample.

2. To gain a robust understanding of usage patterns and behaviors.

Contextual Setting

I asked 20 Gen-Z between the ages of 16 to 24, half in the Highschool/College Students and half Fresh graduates.

Tracking their smartphone behavior for two weeks, having them send screenshots of their weekly screen time, and then following up with 60-minute telephonic interviews allowed me to understand the penetration of social media.

Insights

Those 20 young people's phones showed that in the light of attention around well-being and privacy, young people are reflecting on their use of social media and the role different platforms play:

1. Instagram was the primary app. Every 20 had it and spent the most time on it daily.

2. Facebook has fallen out of favour, and Instagram has replaced it to an extent. Has become more of an organisational tool.

3. Twitter and Reddit have assumed the role of aggregators and personal curators for heavier broadcast users.
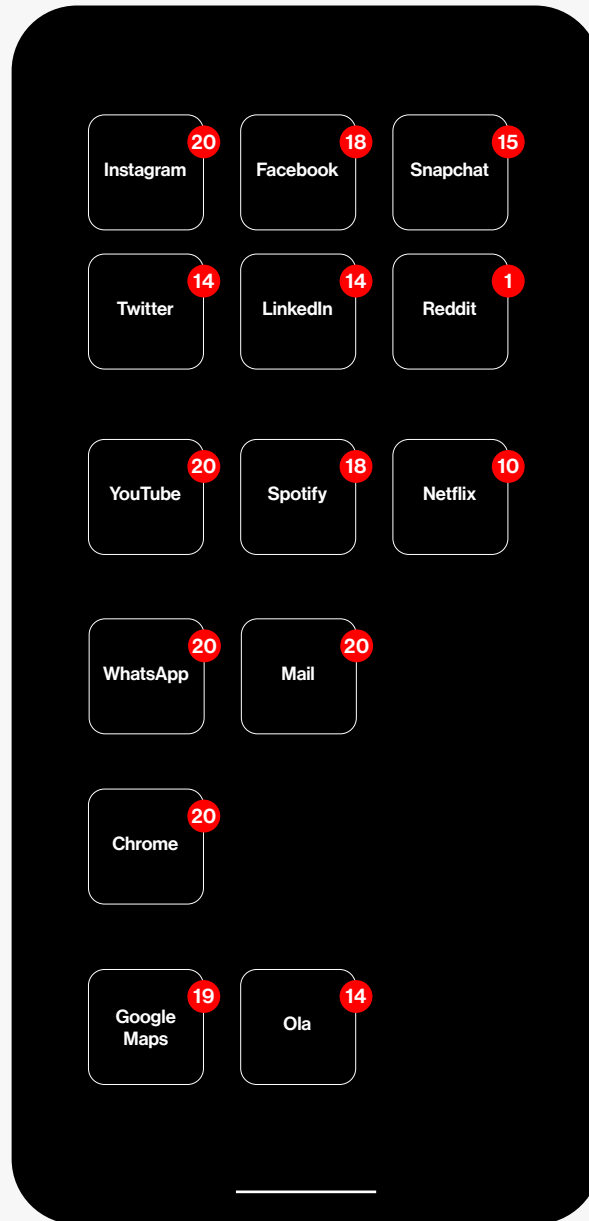
USAGE VS USERS

Usage
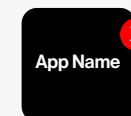Categories

Social
Media

Entertainment

Communication

Web
Surfing

Navigation

20 Instagram	18 Facebook	15 Snapchat
14 Twitter	14 LinkedIn	1 Reddit
20 YouTube	18 Spotify	10 Netflix
20 WhatsApp	20 Mail	
20 Chrome		
19 Google Maps	14 Ola	

Apps presented
are ordered by the
average number
of times per day
spent on app.

Number of
users found this
app using

X App Name

STATEMENTS FROM USERS

Loosely structured interviews over calls were conducted with users.

01

"I'll stay on my phone instead of going to sleep when I intend to."

02

"I feel like I'm missing something important at work if I don't check my phone."

03

"I get distracted when I'm with my friends and family."

04

"I tend to lose track of time when I'm on my phone."

05

"I am very sensitive, and after some point in time, I feel I want to throw my phone across the room."

06

"I feel overwhelmed by the amount of unread DMs I have."

07

"I feel the need to check my phone right away if it vibrates or makes a sound."

08

"Something I mindlessly click Instagram without knowing why."

09

"I spend more time on social media than I would like."

10

"I go to Instagram for 15min and feel trapped sometimes."

11

"I used to set timers for social media, but it doesn't work because I just ignore the timer."

12

"It sometimes becomes a lot to take and is draining."

13

"I feel bombarded with all these sounds and noises on Instagram which weren't bombarded before."

14

"I try to see what I wanna see by directly going to my favourite creator's feed and trying to ignore the rest."

15

"When I have exams, I delete social media from time to time because I know how easily I can get sucked in."

16

"I see people clicking pictures of their food while it's cold."

BEHAVIORAL
INSIGHTS

1. Timing the notification often determines whether the user will click on it (or even pay attention), as users often feel that notification distracts them from their work/important activities.

2. Often disable the notifications because they feel like their entire notification dropdown gets filled with them, making it difficult for them to view other important notifications.

3. The user doesn't want to waste time figuring out the message's urgency.

4. The user gets distracted more often by social media.

5. The user wants to change their behavior.

6. Users begin with a single intentional interaction followed by a series of unplanned interactions.

7. Feels being sucked deeper into your device. Push notifications are one of the biggest culprits.

Define

ARTICULATING BRAND CHARACTER OF INSTAGRAM

Background

Instagram

Instagram, owned by Facebook's parent company Meta, is a visual social media platform that revolves around photo and video content.

Mission and Vision Statement

"Give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together".

Tone of Voice

Celebrating Individuality
Unapologetic And Bold
Effortlessly Cool
Eternally Young

Active Users

2 billion monthly.

Motivation for the users

Primary users (on their consumer-facing app) are everyday people who want to remain digitally connected to their community.

UNDERSTANDING PRODUCT PORTFOLIO

Few Essential Features

Instagram Reels, short-form videos that are wildly popular with viewers.

1. Reels
2. Messenger
3. Stories
4. Posts Feed
5. IGTV
6. Shops
7. Filters (AR and standard)
8. Search and Explore
9. Live
10. Ads

Potential variable rewards on Instagram

1. Someone tagging us
2. New followers
3. Bottomless and intermittent news feed
4. Other people's stories
5. Who viewed your story
6. Someone reacting to your story
7. Someone going live
8. Explore feed
9. Shopping
10. Messaging
11. Filters
12. Post likes and comments
13. Not getting enough expected rewards (negative)
14. Feeling triggered by someone else's content (negative)

*

Receiving such a variety of stimuli allows us to build patterns and habits that make us invest in the product on a deeper level.

USER SETS

Defining users gives us a basic understanding of how the product is used in frequency, duration, location, etc.

It helps us design a solution that corresponds to the users' and businesses' needs and wants.

Users set fragmentation on the basis of

"Frequency and duration of engagement"

User sets created

1. [Passive User] = make a concerted effort and when something piques their interest, they search for it directly and care less.

2. [Hyperactive Users] = "snack" across social media apps, they schedule time throughout the day to scroll.
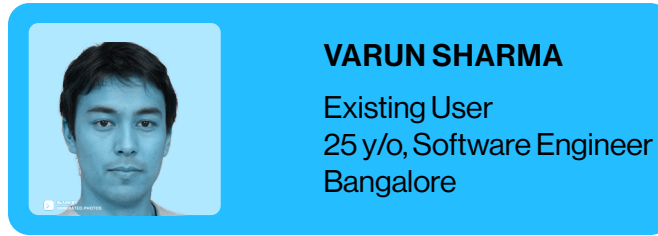
Context of use

1. While in Office/class
2. During meeting
3. While driving or walking
4. While at home
5. Concentrating on work

USER PERSONA

I associated colour to the persona card which reflected elements of the personality that I wanted to communicate.

Face used are created with an AI face generator.

VARUN SHARMA
Existing User
25 y/o, Software Engineer
Bangalore

Goals

1. Wants to spend less time staying connected online.
2. Doesn't want unnecessary distracting notifications.
3. Wants gentle reminders for when he spent too much time scrolling.

Frustrations

1. Gets distracted during office team discussions.
2. Needs to turn off his phone to get his work done and focus.
3. Finds it difficult to understand the new feature's functionality.
4. Social media notifications have him constantly checking her phone in the anticipation of work related notifications at home.

AASTHA PANDEY
New User
18 y/o, Student
Jaipur

Goals

1. She wants to have short breaks in between studies.
2. Want to control her distractions while working on projects.
3. Wants to see her favorite creator's posts and ignore the rest.

Frustrations

1. Need to uninstall social media apps during exams.
2. Feels overwhelmed by the amount of unread DMs.
3. Check her phone right away if it vibrates or makes a sound.
4. Mindlessly clicks Instagram without knowing why.
5. Feels FOMO if she doesn't check her phone.

MENTAL MODEL

Young Adults/
Genz (Ages 16–24)

1. Young adults tend to be **extremely confident in their own ability to navigate** digital interfaces, even when encountering radically new design patterns.

2. Prefer **content that is easy to scan**.

3. Are **sensitive to tone**. Feel insulted if they suspect the site is talking down to them, and will notice if the site is trying too hard to appear cool.

4. Are **skeptical of the information** presented. They demand more evidence to support claims than teenagers do.

5. As a consequence of their confidence, young adults are error prone when using interfaces. **They often click first, and ask questions later**.

6. They **rarely blame themselves** when things go wrong — unlike older users. They typically see usability issues as the fault of the site, and will sometimes criticize the organization that the site represents.

7. Many of these young adults grew up alongside Google. They're **quick to use Google** as a reference point for ease of use and simplicity.

WHAT DO WE HOPE FOR WHEN WE CLICK?

I discover how GenZ actually make choices.

Trust > Perceived Value > Usage

Most of the time, social media addiction can be considered a desperate choice and a lapse in the ability to choose.

e.g., "OMG I just spent 4 hours on Instagram.", is of either

1. A rational choice made in a bad situation (e.g., "Life sucks let's munch and watch cat videos.")

2. A rational choice made with a misunderstanding (e.g., "I thought I could spend just a few minutes!" or "I thought it'd make me popular and happy!").

Behavioral Insights

3 levels of emotional design (visceral, behavioral, and reflective) helped me understand how Genz pure love for the Instagram morphed into abhorrence.

They were a proud early adopter of the unique, cool, and aesthetic features. It helped them Connect with more people, build influence, and Discover content. But things went bad when it let me down emotionally.

Because of which when Genz felt that one company, in particular, was responsible for wasted time, users abandoned that product.

USER JOURNEY MAPPING

To direct the conceptualization at the user and to make sure the user is at the center of the solution, the following activities were mapped out throughout the day.

01

Checks update on phone right after waking up

02

Scrolls through social media while having breakfast

03

Looks up maps for traffic and ETD for work

04

Completes an OTT series while commuting

05

Gets distracted from notifications during a meeting

06

Non-work-related notifications lead to a loss of focus

07

Sets up a meeting on the day's event calendar

08

He got overwelled with the option while ordering food online

09

Constantly checks devices in anticipation of notifications

10

Messages his friends and hangs outs with his friends to watch a movie

11

Books a cab, goes out to have dinner with friends to catch up on what's happening

12

Browse online to plan and book a trip at the long weekend

13

Sets alarms for waking up the next day

14

He takes the device to bed to catch up on social media

Define

UX Audit

UX AUDIT

Conducted a UX Audit of
Instagram to evaluate flows
in different scenarios and for
different use cases.

Task	Conduct a UX Audit of Instagram to improve "Time Spent" flow, supporting digital wellbeing among digital native."
Evaluating the severity	To evaluate the severity of issues, I gave impact scores to different problems. 3 is the most severe and 1 is less severe.

Assessing Impact

1	Cosmetic	It is a suggestion
2	UX Friction	Causing frustration or delays
3	Task Blocker	Prevents task completion

Score system for assessing the severity
of usability issues.

01
USER FLOW FROM THE HOME TO "TIME SPENT".

To learn about Instagram's "Time Spent," the user has to click on

Profile > Hamburger > Your Activity > Time Spent.

Issue	High interaction cost and low discoverability of "Time spent" tool.
Violation	IA-issue: Lack of Accelerators, which might increase speed up the interaction for the native user. UI-issue: It looks too overwhelming/crowded to the user and might prevent users from completing their tasks.
Heuristics Metric Failed	• Flexibility and Efficiency of Use • Match between System and the Real World • Aesthetic and Minimalist Design
Severity	3, Task Blocker
Recommendation	1. Enable frequent users' shortcuts. 2. This will reduce the interaction cost from 4 clicks to 1 to view information at a glance. 3. Increases the discoverability of 'Time Spent.' 4. Improved Microcontent can provide valuable information and nudge users toward a desired action. 5. Design better nudges and place them at the right location.

Lack of Accelerators

Which might decrease speed up the interaction for the native user
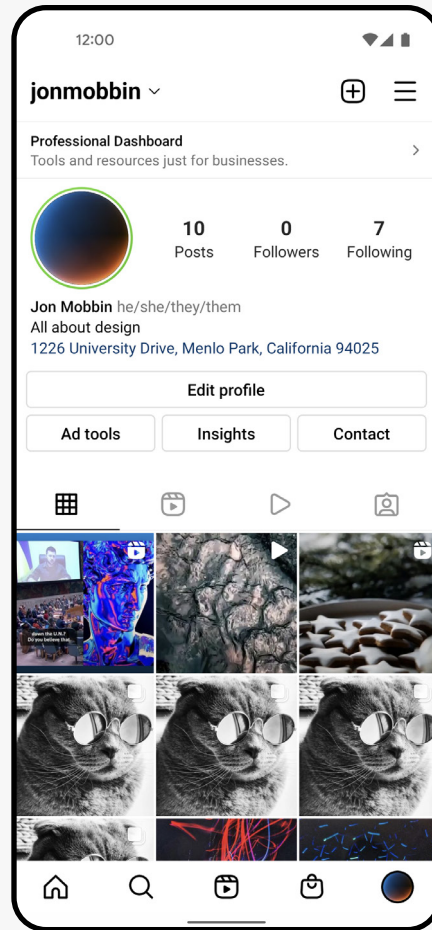
Lack of Information Scent

Making the information architecture unclear and, possibly, overwhelming for users
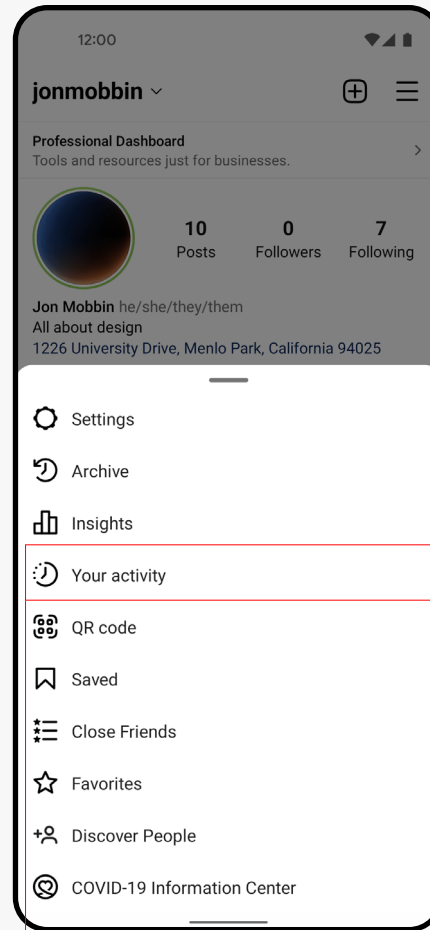
Low Discoverability

Time spent should not be a part of this list as it will give no visibility to users
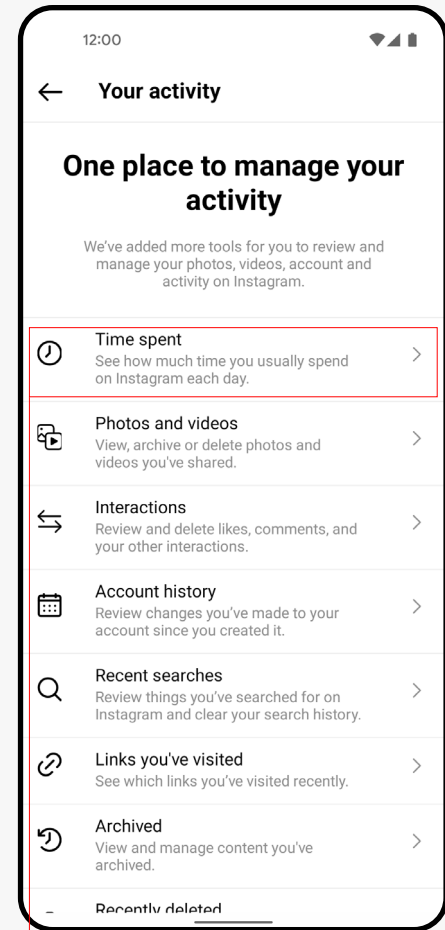
High Interaction Cost

Users must put a high mental and physical effort into interacting with an app to reach "Time Spent."
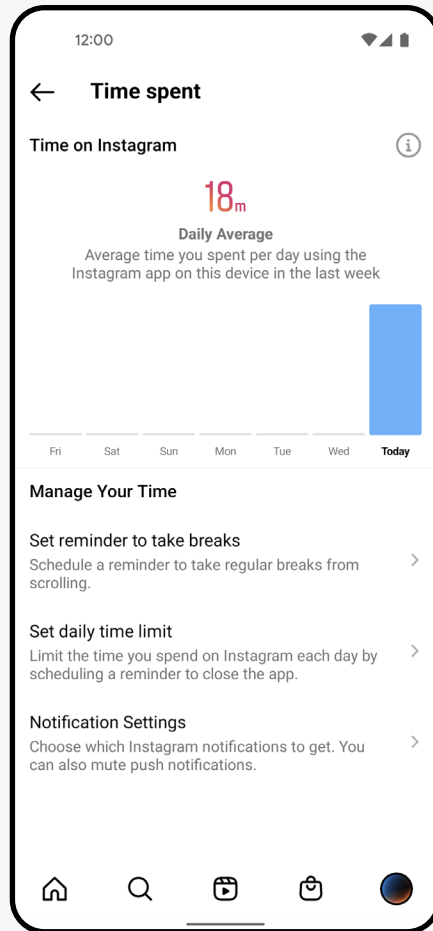
Missing Granular Data

What if the user wants to see granular data on time spent on each offerings: (Normal posts, Stories, IGTV and Reels)?
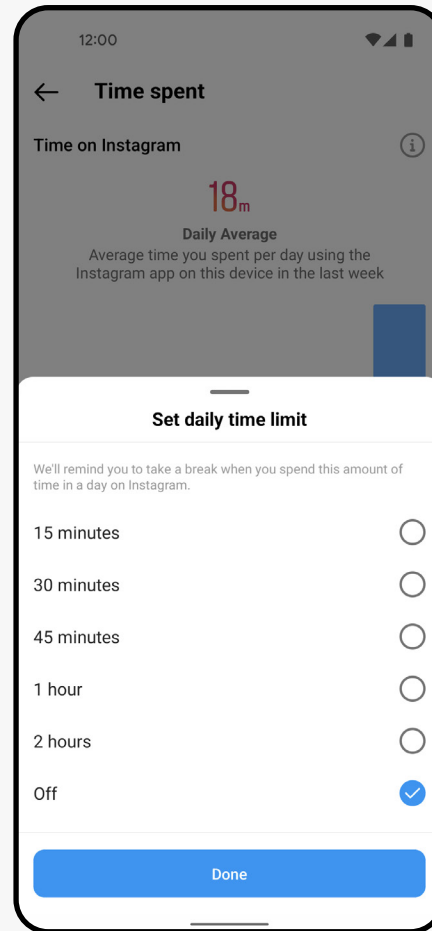
Min. Features and Tools

After arriving on this page, the user has no other tools other than putting up reminders and stopping notifications.
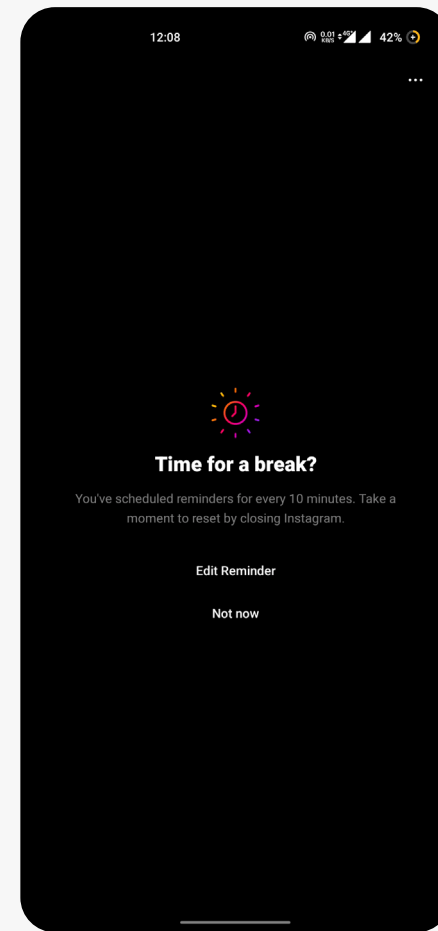
Reminder Blindness

People tend to ignore design elements that signal a reminder and intentionally skip.

Improved Microcontent

Can provide valuable information and nudge users toward a desired action.

HOW MIGHT WE STATEMENTS

01

How Might We

support and protect people's focus from unwanted disruptions?

02

How Might We

help people stay focused on a single task?

03

How Might We

support boundaries between work and online social life?

04

How Might We

decelerate the Dopamine Feedback Loop?

05

How Might We

ensure consumption of quality content rather than quantity?

06

How Might We

remind people to be aware of your surroundings while they're on the move?

07

How Might We

ensure the users understand the new feature's functionality without difficulty?

08

How Might We

help people break away from endless scrolling and put their devices down?

09

How Might We

increase the speed of the decision-making process for the application users?

10

How Might We

provide the users with maximum relevant content in a short time?

11

How Might We

set gentle reminders for when you've spent too much time scrolling aimlessly in a certain app?

12

How Might We

schedule non-urgent notifications to be delivered only when you're ready to engage in certain activities, such as responding to social media?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

GOAL

SOLUTION

Many young adults feel anxious and lack control over how much time they spend on Instagram.

To help reduce Instagram's "bad" use while moderating/ limiting its good use.

Provide best suited content and services, neutralising Dark Patterns.

Giving people more choices to interact with information.

Designing space for people to contemplate their actions.

Finding meaningful things to measure.

High-Fidelity

UI Design

Solution
New app is here!

See a complete picture of your relationship with Instagram and get tips and tools to help you achieve your personal sense of digital wellbeing, added as a concept feature to Instagram through which users can:

- Assess and Monitor Your Habits
- Set Healthy Boundaries
- Pause Distractions
- Focus Better
- Utilize Self-Control Tools

Time on Instagram
3 hrs 41 mins

42
Unlocks

26
Notifications

Daily screen time target — 4hrs

3 hr, 41 mins — Edit

Ways to disconnect >

Dashboard
Keep an eye on screen time. >

Focus Mode
When you need time to focus, you can pause distraction. >

Bedtime Mode
Get better sleep by removing interruptions

Reduce interruptions >

Manage Notifications
Choose which Instagram notifications to get. >

Take a Break
Schedule custom breathers as often as you want from scrolling.
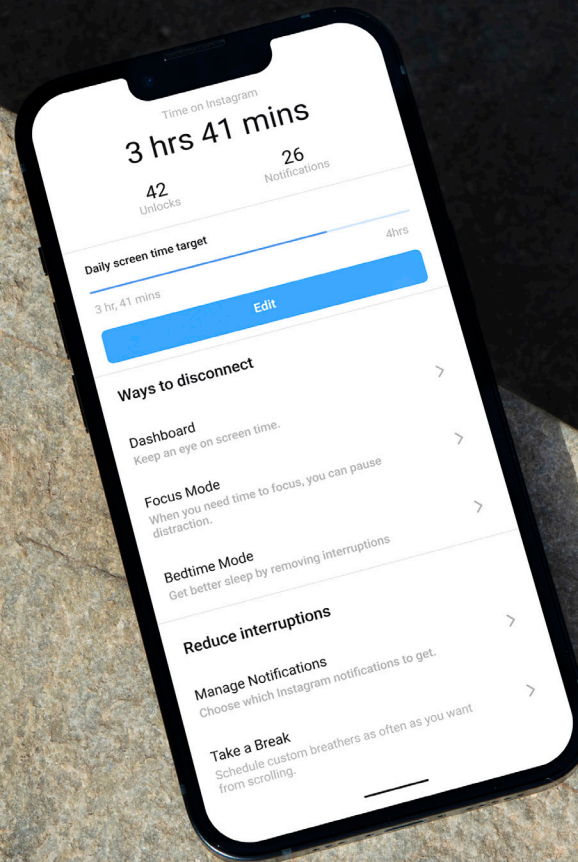
01

Brand new interface

Time Spent

We enjoy what we are familiar with.

For this reason, I decided to preserve the brand identity of Instagram and used to refresh key elements of "Time Spent" to celebrate the global community of creators on Instagram.

← Time spent

01.00

00.19

00.54
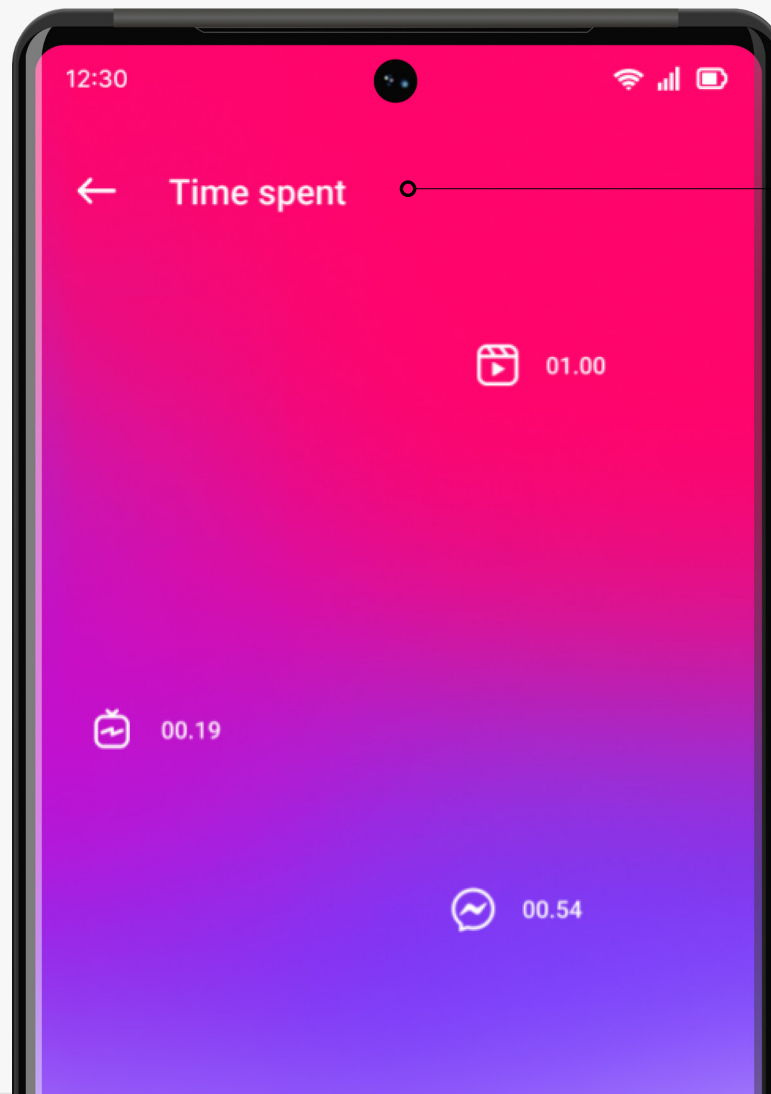
Mapping Time on Instagram

The gradient is one of Instagram's most recognizable elements.

- Taking inspiration from their gradient, the design features colored circles which represent different Instagram features (Reels, Messenger, Stories, Posts Feed, etc).

- The circle size will increase according to the usage of the feature in the app.
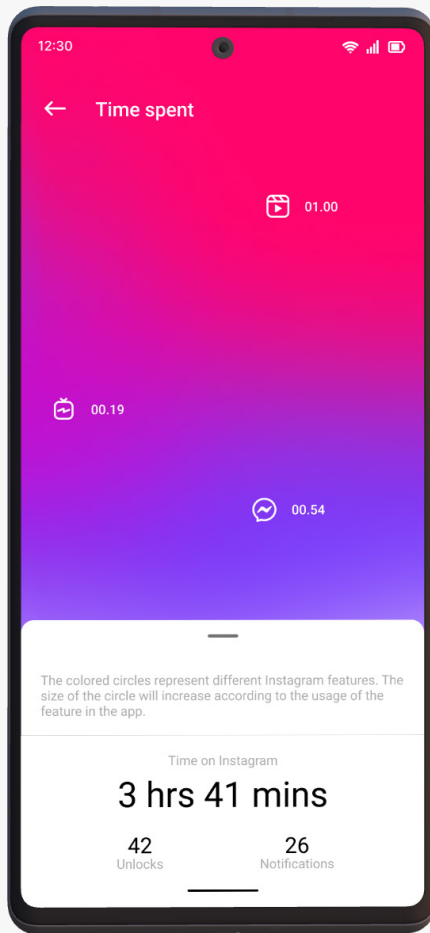
Get a quick picture of your relationship with Instagram

See your daily screen time, how many notifications you get, and how often you unlock your phone.
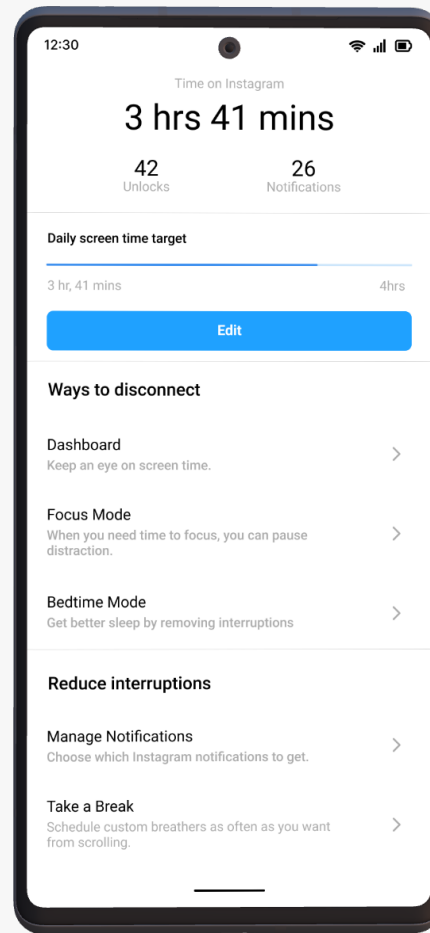
Fine-tune your digital habits with tips and tools

- Assess and Monitor Your Habits
- Set Healthy Boundaries
- Pause Distractions
- Focus Better
- Utilize Self-Control Tools
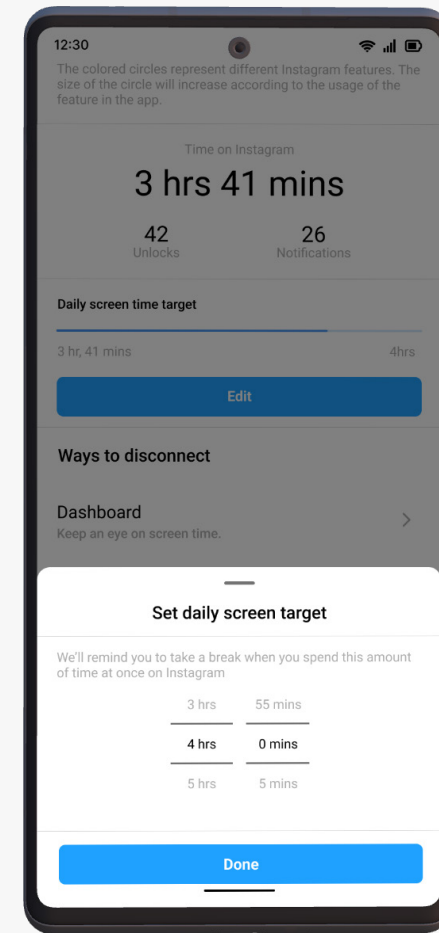
Set screen time target and track with a progress bar

Establish boundaries by deciding on duration you want to spend on Instagram.

02

Dashboard

The dashboard lets the user see granular data of time spent on each offering. (Normal posts, Stories, IGTV and Reels).

Bringing transparent design which is clear about intentions and honest in actions.
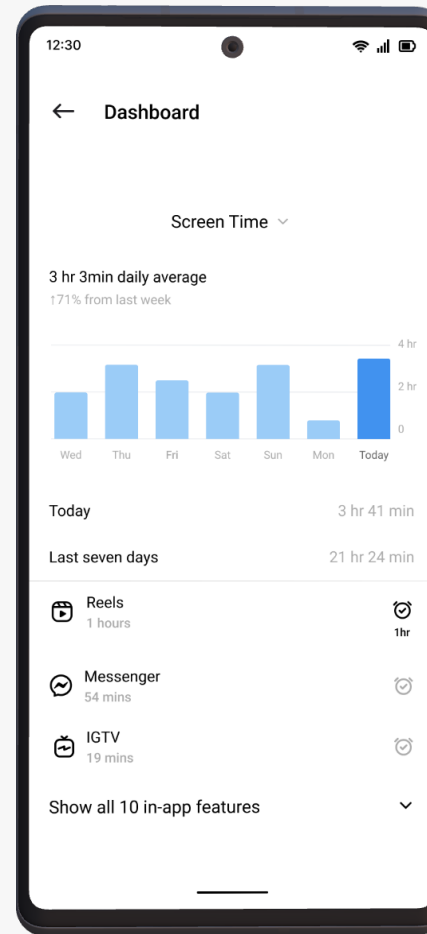
Bringing transparency to time spent on each feature

Discover how much time you've spent watching Reels videos today, yesterday, and over the past week.
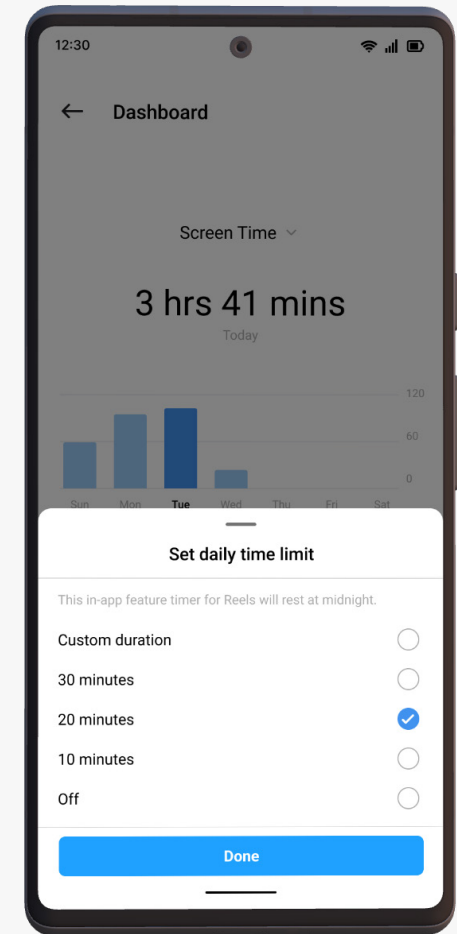
Reducing 'Decision Paralysis' by providing finite options

Breaking down the duration into limited options will help users set timers without the burden.

Sleep Better

Bedtime Mode

Bedtime mode helps you get better sleep at night. Only important calls can reach you.

Bringing thoughtful design using friction prevents unintentional choices and steers people toward healthier digital habits.
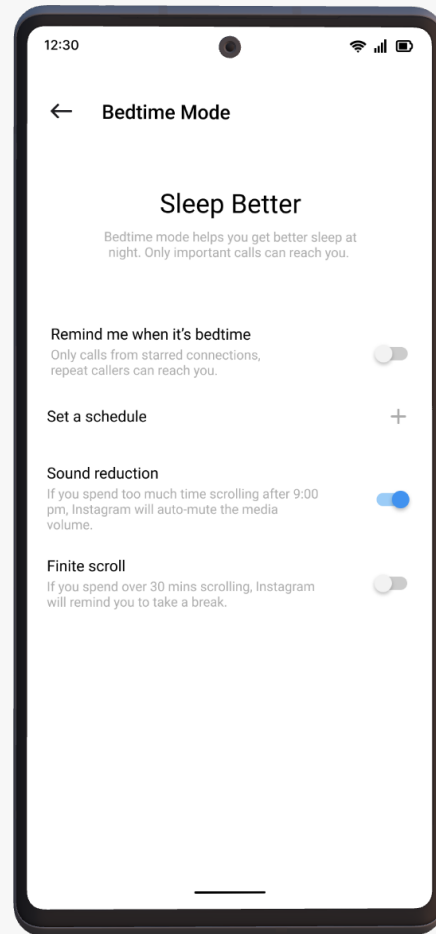
In Control

Giving people the control to add and manage positive friction results in more intentional choices.
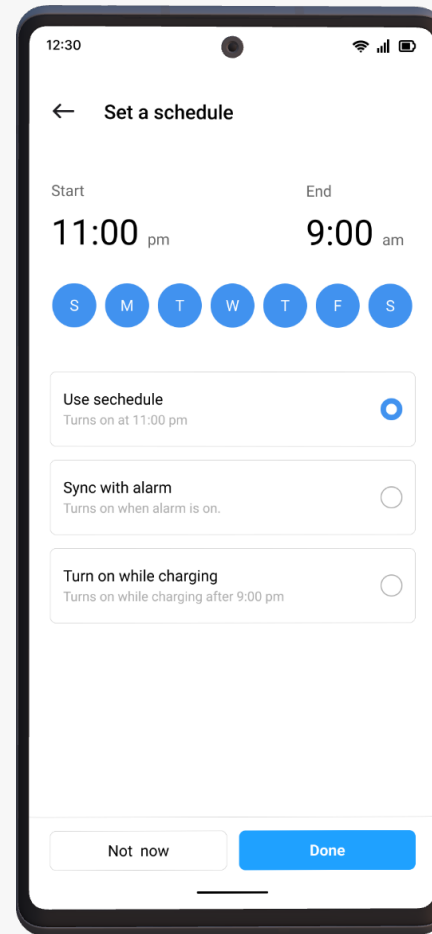
Contextual Adapting

Just as humans understand when and how it's appropriate to communicate with one another in context, bedtime mode also adapts to user context.
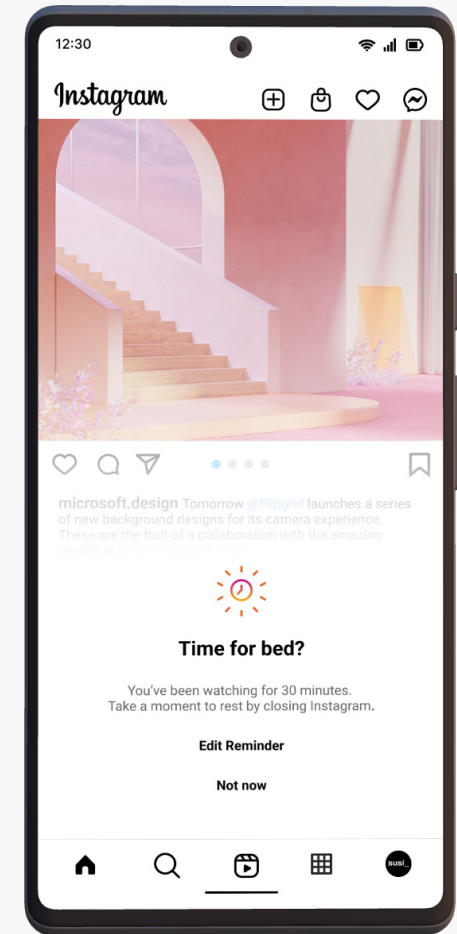
Manual Speed Bumps

Users can create an indicator to inform themselves when they should sleep to help curb zombie scrolling.

Pause Distraction

Focus Mode

Focus mode blocks distracting apps to help focus on things that matter.

Bringing empowering design lets users customize when and how they get notifications and can help keep attention on tasks.
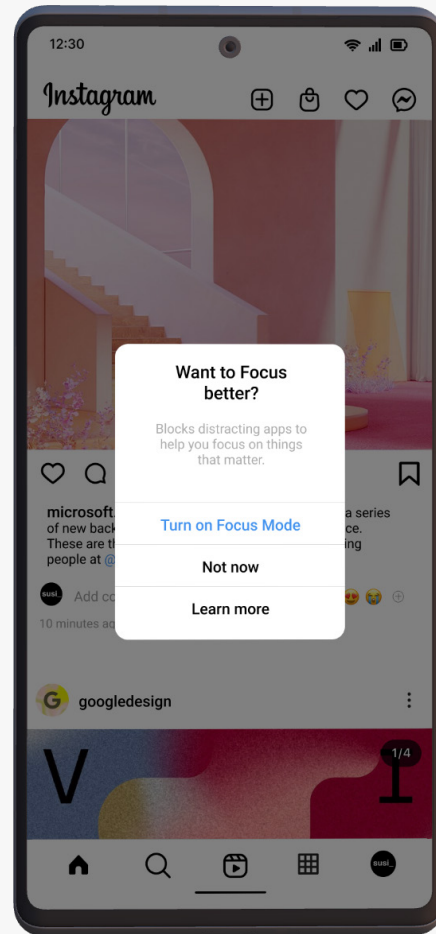
Invisible Until Needed

Designing better nudges and placing them at the right time/ location can act as entry points for new features.
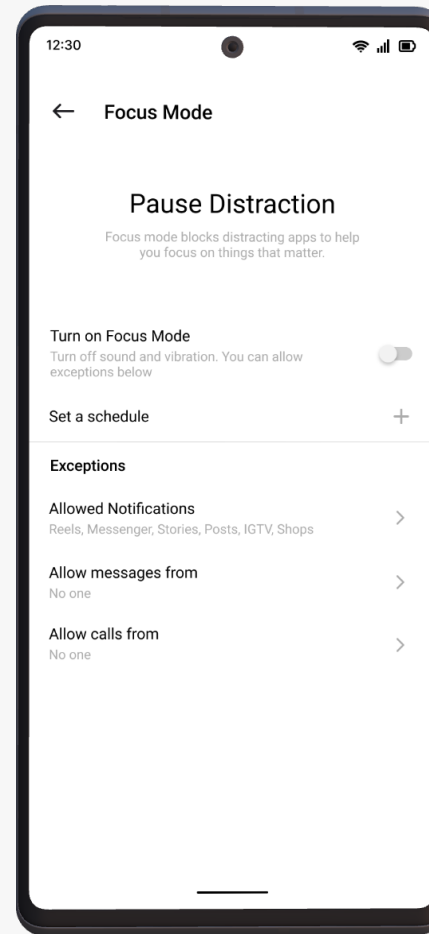
Designed for Personalization

Users can customize from whom, when, and how they can receive notifications to minimize unwanted interruptions.
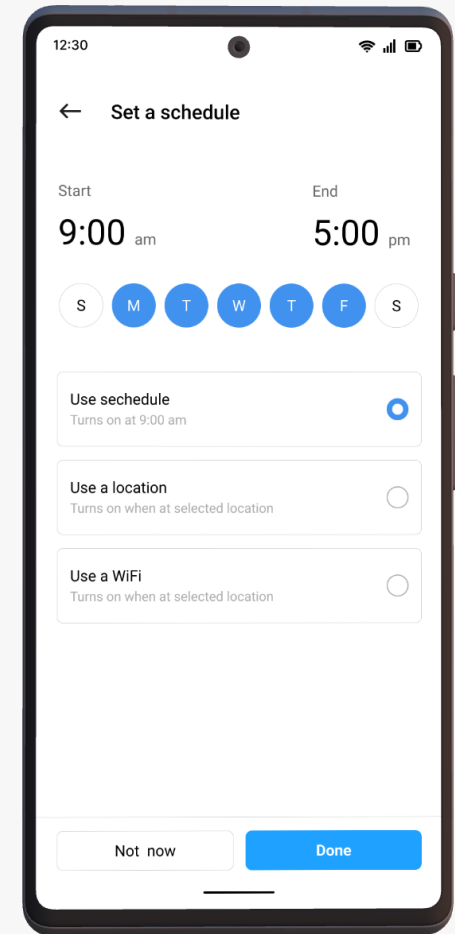
Contextual adapting and User Freedom

Giving people the control they need to manage distractions and letting them set boundaries while technology adapts to user context.

Control your notifications.

Notifications

Not every message is an urgent one. Bring respectful design that prioritizes people's time, attention, and overall digital well-being.
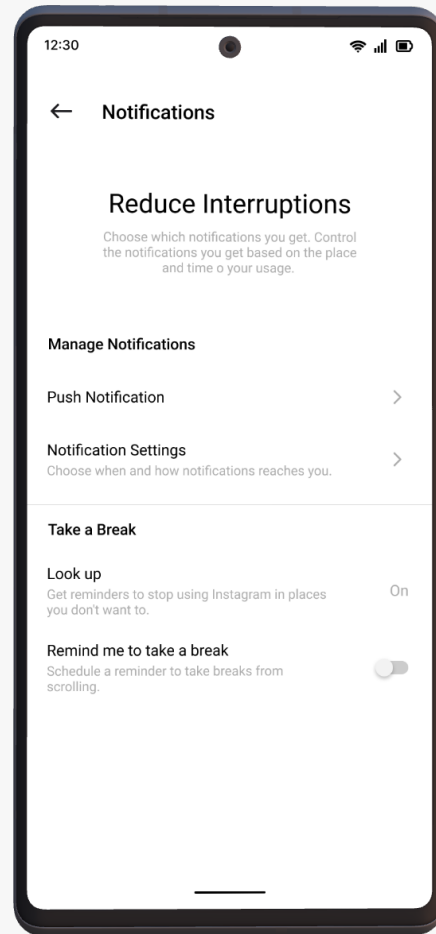
Allow for Personalization

Users can customize what, when, and how they receive notifications to minimize unwanted interruptions.
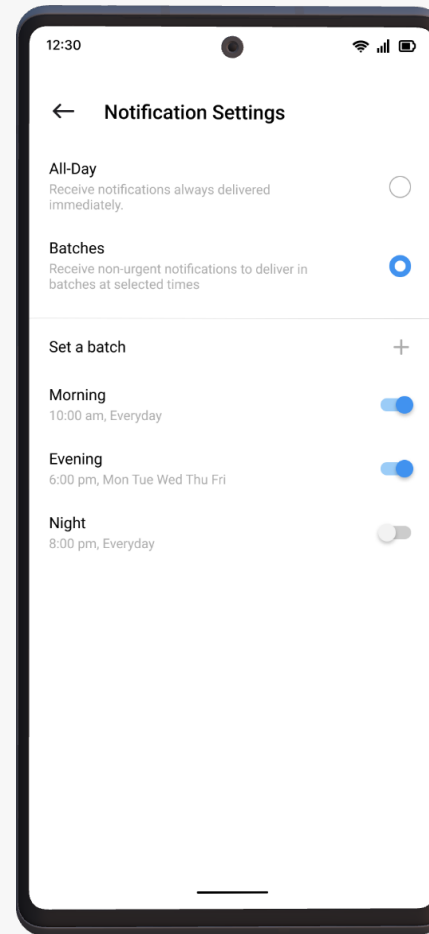
Notification Batching

Reduces Information overload. help separate non-urgent notifications to deliver in batches at selected times.
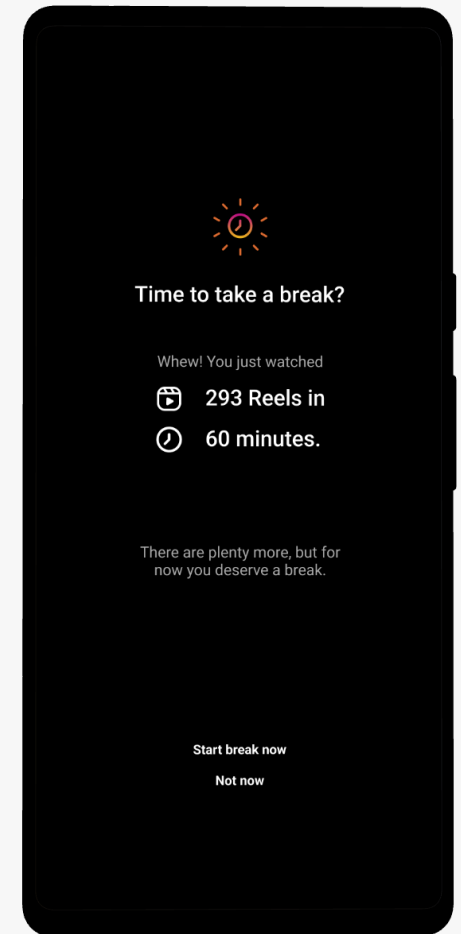
Improved Microcopy

Provides valuable information and nudges users toward a desired action.

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Align Delivery with Urgency

Nudging

Designing better nudges and placing them at the right time/ location can prompt users toward the desired action.

Improved Microcontent can provide valuable information about the system status.
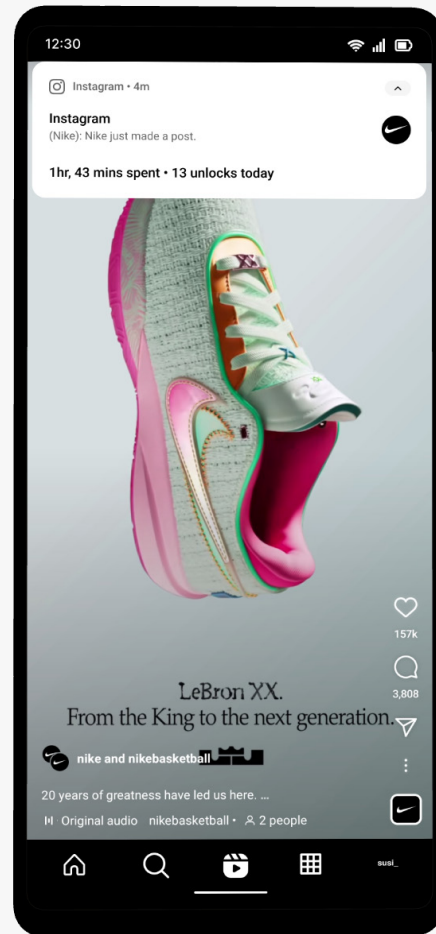
System Nudges

Usually, announce an event of potential interest and is not sparked by the user's action.
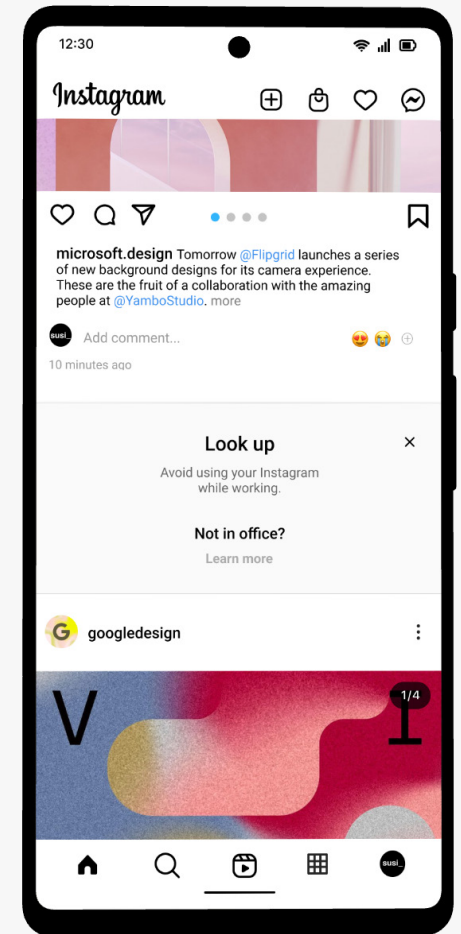
Push notifications

1. Action-required notifications
2. Passive notifications
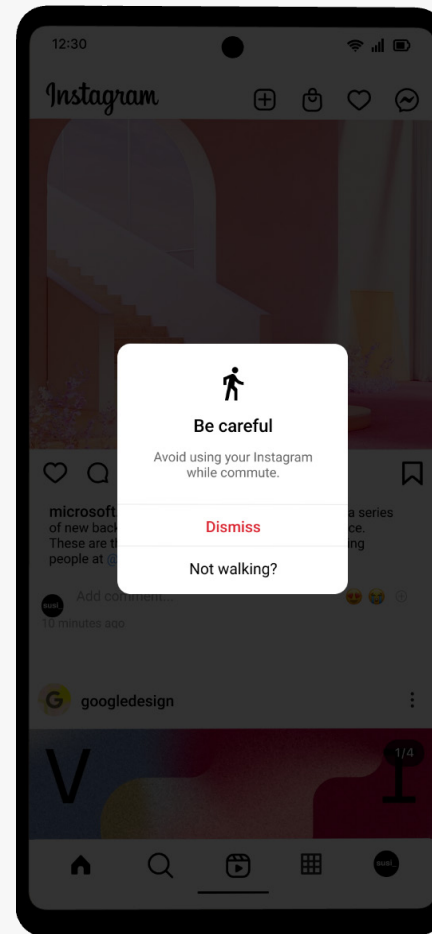
Contextual Nudges

Are tied to a user's action or input

- Activity-based
- Location-based
- Time-based

Passive Nudges

Not always present, but appear or change depending on certain conditions (user action or algorithmic trigger).

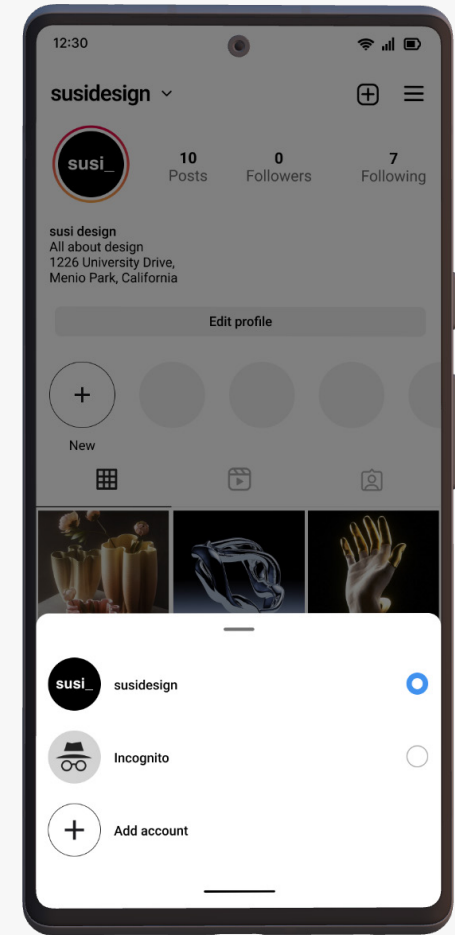- Reminders
- Indicators

Having control over the feed

In Control

Give people the control they need to manage the algorithms that shape their experiences.
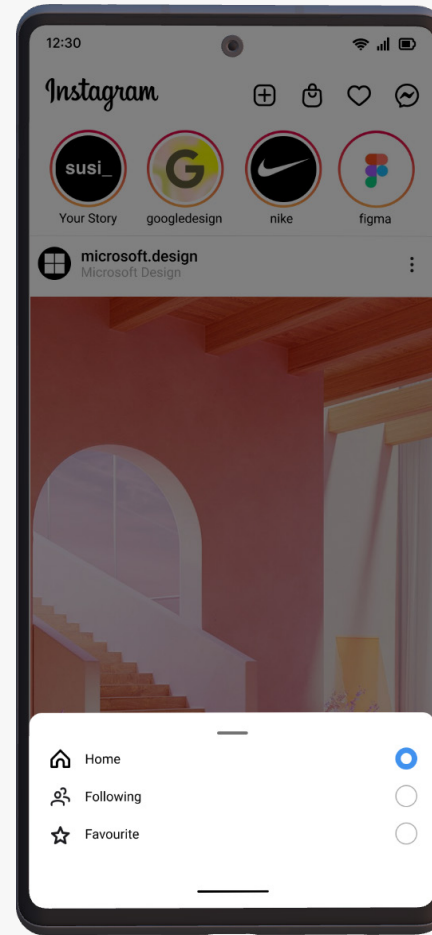
Giving Control

Giving more options to the users to control how they want to see the posts in their feeds.
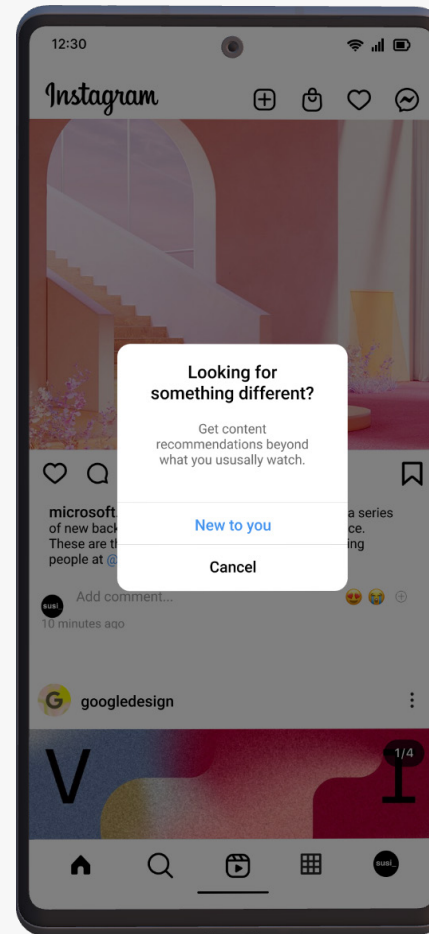

Privacy and Anonymity

Giving people the control they need to manage privacy and anonymity.
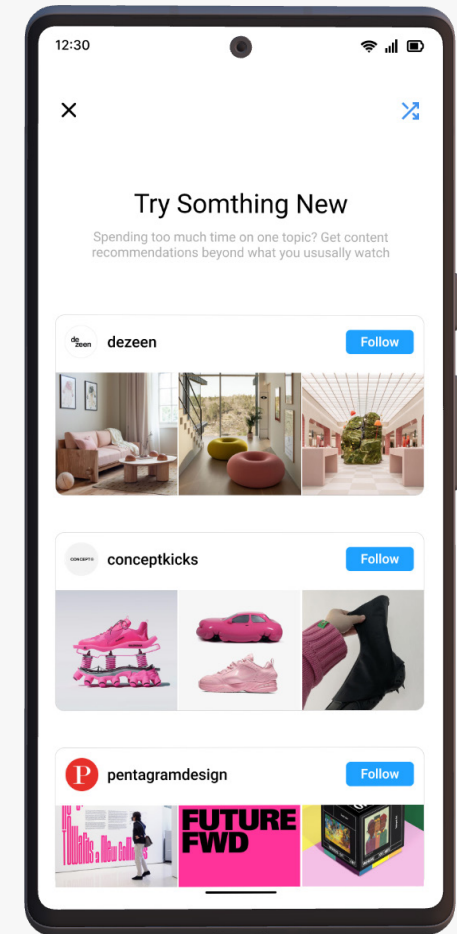
Stuck in a content rabbit hole?

Try Something New

Designing spaces that let you know you consumed too much time on that topic and suggest you explore another topic.

Invisible Until Needed

Algorithmic moderation lets users know if they hesitate to explore or get stuck in a content rabbit hole.

Real-Time Personalization

Designing to provide value aligned with users' needs at the right time using behavior profiling.
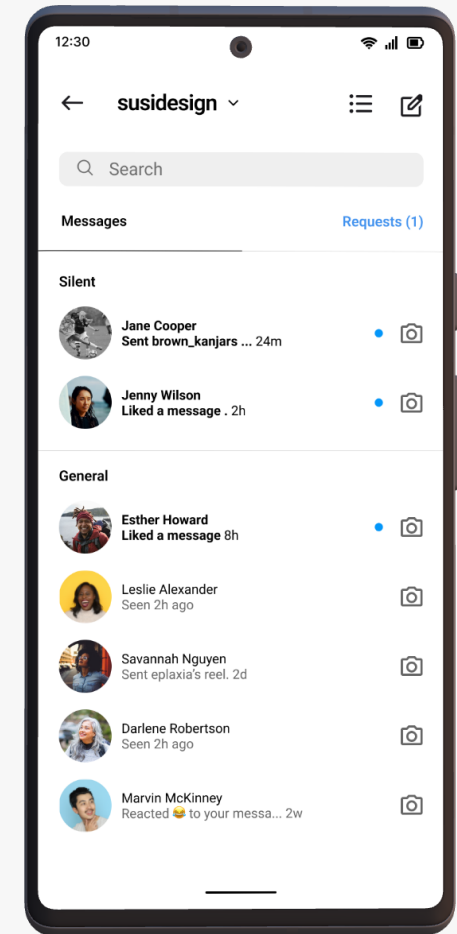
Align Delivery with Urgency.

Messaging

Not every message is an urgent one. The method in which we deliver a notification/message should align with its importance to minimize distraction.
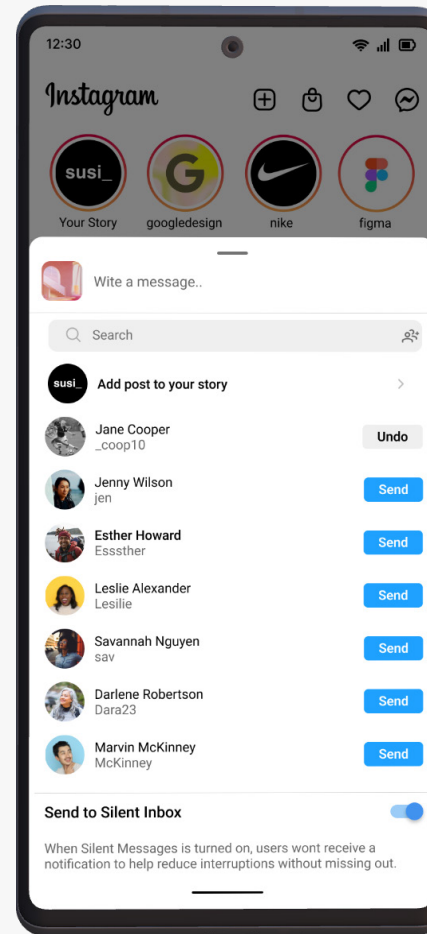
Option of Silent Inbox

Option like "send to a silent inbox" might move the burden of segregation and mindfulness onto the sender rather than the receiver.

Chunking Messages

Chunking text helps users understand the relationship between content elements and information hierarchy.

Reinforcing Feature Adoption

Entry points for new features

The trick for designing entry points for new features is making them navigable.

1. **Designing for Discoverability** is about placing key content and features in areas people are likely to see.

2. **Designing for Findability** is about placing that item in its expected place and having a strong Information Scent.
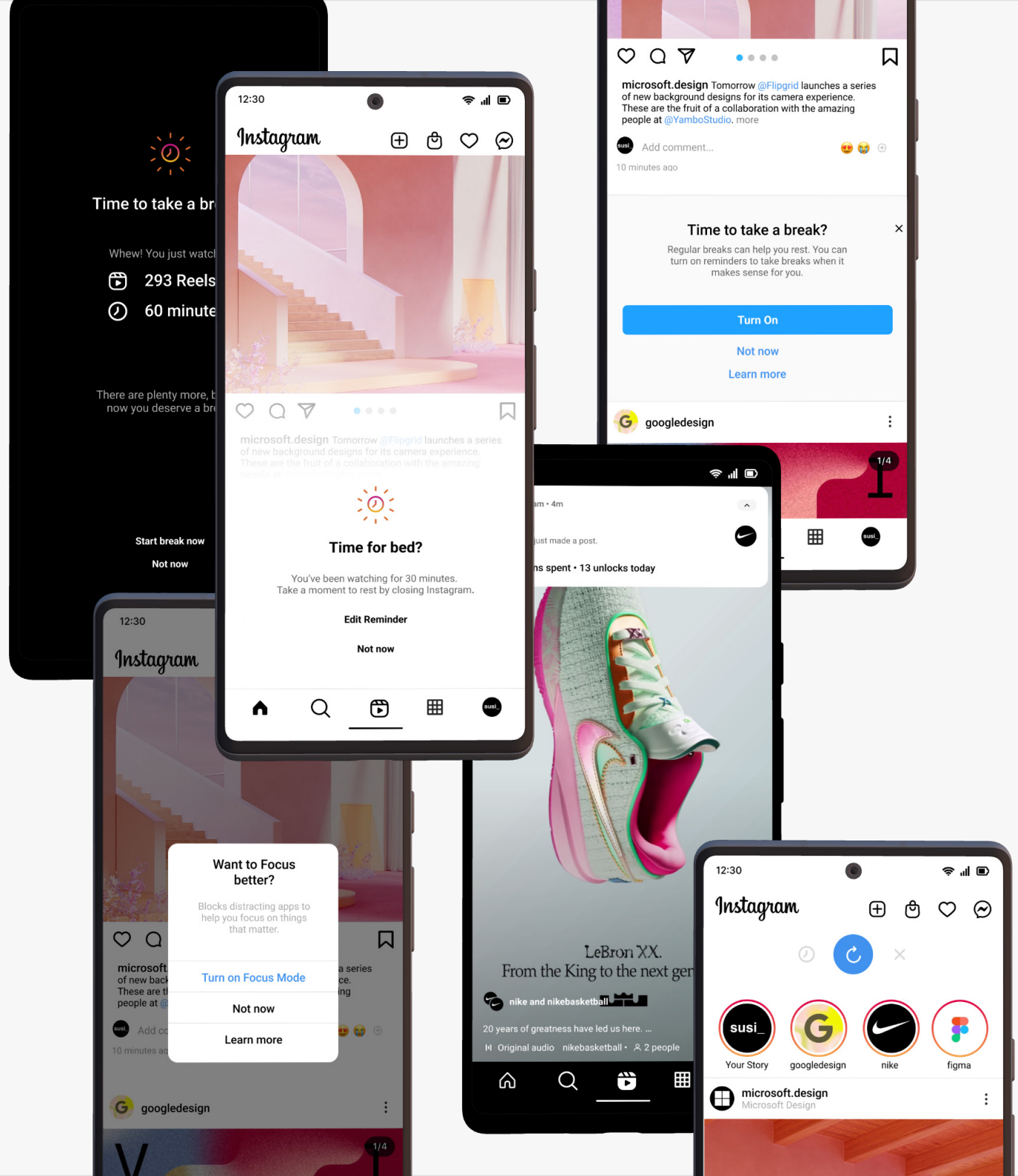
NEXT STEPS

1. Make an MVP & test it with users.
2. Improve the user flow based on feedback.
3. Improve the UI based on feedback.

PARKING LOT

1. Design & develop test cases for A/B testing to increase adoption of a new feature.
2. Explore new metrics that promote mindful use and meaningful engagement.
3. Design better system defaults, clear about intentions, honest in actions, and free of dark patterns.

MY LEARNINGS

1. I never knew; that observing an application closely can be so enlightening! I could've never guessed the number of insights I've gathered & how this experience can be used in future digital products.
2. I learned how to do Audits and the difference between Dark Patterns and Persuasive Patterns.
3. Documentation is essential in projects. This one will vary for the respective designer, but for someone like me, who can only do one thing at a time. It's crucial. It keeps my mind clear & focused on the work in front of me.

DESIGNED BY

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Thanks for stopping by!

Reach out to me on [Behance](#) & [Linkedin](#) for feedback & new opportunities. See you there!

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