

SPOTIFY (iOS App)

Phase 2: User *Research*

Step 1: Interviews, Survey and Research Debrief

Section 1: **Research Objective & Methodology**

Research Objective

To understand how users currently discover and consume music on Spotify, and to test whether the main problems are:

1. A cluttered/repetitive experience in Home Page that creates decision overload:

Hypothesis

“Active Listeners struggle with choosing what to play due to cluttered and repetitive Home page recommendations when trying to find music for a mood, which leads to confusion, more skipping, and lower engagement.”

2. Weak and low-trust music discovery.

Hypothesis

“Discovery Based Listener struggle to find new music that fits their mood and taste when relying on Spotify recommendations, which leads to a lot of skipping, wasted time, and low trust in discovery.”

3. A trust gap in recommended content.

Hypothesis

“Active Listeners struggle with trusting that recommended tracks are authentic and high-quality, which leads to reduced exploration and increased dependency on familiar content”

A secondary goal was to stay open to new patterns/behavior that might emerge from user research.

Type	Method	Sample	What was used
Primary	User interviews	5 users	User Notes + Questions Asked
	User survey	17 responses	Quantitative signals from the survey Survey Conducted
Secondary	Platform Analysis	70+	Spotify Community Reddit Users

Section 2 **Insights from Users (The Evidence)**

Insight 1: Spotify is primarily a place to play known songs, not the place where discovery starts

Qualitative (User Quotes)

This pattern appears very consistently across the interviews:

What Users say?

- *Shiv: I discover music on Instagram, then come to Spotify to save it.*
- *Shreya: I rely on Instagram for discovery and use Spotify mainly to search and play songs I already know.*
- *Prateeksha: I find new music outside Spotify, then search for it on Spotify and add it to my playlists.*
- *Sourabh: My discovery starts from Instagram reels and movies; I use Spotify after I already know the song.*
- *Sejal: My music discovery is passive and happens through Instagram reels or public places; I use Spotify mainly for intentional listening.*

Qualitative (Survey Stats)

The survey strongly supports this:

- *For the last new song users liked, the most common first source was Instagram (Reels/posts) at 58.3%.*

- *YouTube was next at 16.7%.*
- *Spotify itself accounted for only 8.3%.*
- *Another 8.3% came from somewhere else, and 8.3% from movies/TV/public places.*

Observed Behavior

Users are not describing Spotify as their discovery engine. They describe it as the destination where they **save, replay, and organize** music they discovered elsewhere.

Insight 2: Discovery inside Spotify feels inconsistent and low trust

Qualitative (User Quotes)

This also shows up across nearly every interview:

What Users say?

- *Shiv: Spotify does not give me better recommendations even within the same genre I like.*
- *Shreya: The recommendation quality feels inconsistent to me; sometimes it's relevant, sometimes completely off.*
- *Prateeksha: The next-song recommendations are often not relevant for me; discovery feels weak compared to other platforms.*
- *Sejal: The recommendations feel irrelevant and unclear to me; I don't understand why these songs are being recommended.*

Quantitative: (Survey Stats)

The survey shows Spotify is not reliably helping users discover music they like:

- In the last 45 days, Spotify helped users discover a song they liked:
 - **Very often:** 25%
 - **Sometimes:** 33.3%
 - **Rarely:** 16.7%
 - **Never:** 25%

Observed Behavior

The issue is not just “discovery feature exists but is hidden.” Users experience Spotify’s recommendation quality as unreliable, which reduces trust and pushes them toward manual or external discovery paths.

Insight 3: Mood and context matter more than whether a song is objectively “good”

Qualitative (User Quotes)

This is one of the strongest patterns in the interviews:

What Users say?

- *Shreya: Even if a song is good, I skip it if it doesn’t match my current mood.*
- *Prateeksha: I expect the next song to match my current vibe; I don’t like it when it feels random.*
- *Sourabh: I prefer a consistent vibe like flowy, danceable, or fast; I explore artists more when the vibe stays consistent.*
- *Sejal: I expect recommendations to match my personal taste closely and also fit my current context.*

Quantitative (Survey Stats)

The survey supports this clearly:

When Spotify plays the next song, how often does it match the user’s mood/vibe?

- **Most of the time:** 33.3%
- **Sometimes:** 41.7%
- **Rarely:** 16.7%
- **Never:** 8.3%

Observed Behavior

The main expectation is not just “recommend me songs I like.” It is closer to:

“Recommend the right song for my current mood and flow.”

This is a more dynamic job than static taste matching.

Insight 4: When recommendations fail, users fall back to manual control

Qualitative (User Quotes)

Interview users repeatedly described control-oriented workarounds:

What users say?

- *Shiv: I rely on my own playlists, manual search, and even searching by lyrics to find songs because discovering music on Spotify isn't easy for me.*
- *Shreya: I keep going back to the same artists I already know instead of exploring new ones.*
- *Prateeksha: I switch to YouTube or Instagram when I want to discover new music because Spotify doesn't help me enough with that.*
- *Sourabh: I use Spotify more like a music library to play and store songs rather than a place to explore new music*

Quantitative (Survey Stats)

This is one of the clearest survey signals I got:

When Spotify plays songs that don't match what users want, they usually:

- **Skip until I find something I like: 50%**
- **Go back to my own playlist: 25%**
- **Search for a specific song: 16.7%**
- **Switch to another app: 8.3%**

And for coping with mechanisms used for bad recommendations/discovery:

- **Use my own playlists instead: 75%**
- **Search songs manually: 66.7%**
- **Skip songs quickly until I find a good one: 58.3%**
- **Discover songs on Instagram and then search on Spotify: 50%**
- **Use YouTube or other apps to find songs: 25%**
- **I haven't tried anything: 0%**

Observed Behavior

When Spotify recommendations fail, users take control by skipping songs, using their own playlists, or searching manually. They rely on familiar artists and external platforms like Instagram or YouTube, treating Spotify more as a music library than a discovery tool.

Insight 5: Repetition is a real frustration, but it appears as a symptom of weak discovery/control rather than just a Home-page clutter problem (*This is where my selected Hypothesis is partially validated*)

Qualitative

My initial hypothesis that the Home page was cluttered and repetitive, causing decision overload. From the interviews, repetition does show up, but more often in these forms and not Directly Home page as an anchor:

- the same songs looping,
- recommendations not refreshing enough,
- playlists becoming stale,
- users getting bored even with liked songs,
- The next song breaking the intended flow.

Examples:

- *Prateeksha: Even songs I like, I end up skipping midway because I get bored from hearing them repeatedly.*
- *Sejal: Recommendations for me mostly stick to the same artists, which feels too narrow.*

Quantitative (Survey Stats)

Survey signals around frequency of discovery effort and desired fixes support this:

- Users try to find new songs:
 - **Every day:** 25%
 - **A few times a week:** 25%
 - **A few times a month:** 33.3%
 - **Rarely:** 16.7%

This suggests users do want freshness, but the product is not fully meeting that need internally.

Also, desired fixes include:

- **Better song recommendations:** 33.3%
- **Less repetition in songs:** 8.3%
- **Better way to discover new music:** 8.3%

Observed Behavior

Repetition is real, but my evidence supports it more strongly as a **recommendation freshness/control issue** than as a fully validated **Home page clutter** problem.

Section 3 Hypothesis Check (where we are now)

Inefficient and Low-Trust Discovery - Validated

Users do not rely on Spotify for discovering new music and instead use platforms like Instagram and YouTube. Spotify's recommendations are seen as inconsistent and often irrelevant, leading to low trust.

Cluttered and Repetitive Home Page - Partially Validated

This hypothesis is partially validated. Users do experience repetition, weak discovery freshness, and often return to their own playlists. However, this behavior is not directly linked to the Home page experience. Instead, the findings show that repetitive recommendations and poor surfacing of relevant content reduce user confidence in choosing what to play, leading them to rely more on known music rather than exploring new options.

Content Authenticity / AI-Generated Trust Gap - Invalidated

Users do not question whether music is AI-generated during everyday listening. Most listeners are unable to distinguish between AI-generated and human created music, and their preference is driven more by how the music feels + taste, rather than its source

DISCOVERED NEW

1. Playback-First Mental Model: Users struggle to discover new music on Spotify because they primarily perceive and use it as a platform for playing and managing songs they already know, leading to low engagement with its discovery features and limiting exposure to new content

2. Social-First Discovery Behavior: Users are unable to effectively discover new music within Spotify and instead rely on external platforms like Instagram and YouTube, resulting in fragmented discovery experiences and reduced engagement with Spotify's in-app exploration features.

3. Mood-Driven Evaluation: Users frequently disengage from Spotify's recommendations because they fail to match their real-time mood or context, making the listening experience feel irrelevant and reducing both trust and continued usage of discovery features.

Step 2: Sharpening Your Focus

Validated Problem	Competitor	What have they done?	What it tells you
Inefficient and Low-Trust Discovery Users do not rely on Spotify for discovering new music and instead use platforms like Instagram and YouTube. Spotify's recommendations are seen as inconsistent and often irrelevant, leading to low trust.	Apple Music	Apple Music addressed discovery using a mix of personalization, editorial curation, radio, charts, and artist signals. They introduced Discovery Station, personalized Home and New tabs, and cultural content, focusing on clear, controlled, and human-guided discovery.	Apple believes discovery is a trust and cultural problem, not just an algorithm problem. <i>Note: But it appears even with whatever Apple has done the problem still exists for user.</i>

Inefficient and Low-Trust Discovery - Validated Users do not rely on Spotify for discovering new music and instead use platforms like Instagram and YouTube. Spotify's recommendations are seen as inconsistent and often irrelevant, leading to low trust.	YouTube Music	YouTube Music addressed discovery using massive YouTube data, and multiple tools like personalized mixes, radio, AI playlist prompts, and Music Tuner controls. It also uses YouTube activity, trends, and Shorts to power discovery.	YouTube believes discovery is driven by scale, behavior, and culture. They rely on cross-platform signals; their own Youtube, not heavy curation. Trade-off: high relevance and trend awareness, but still inconsistent and less controlled, showing discovery is complex and hard to perfect.
Social-First Discovery Behavior: Users are unable to effectively discover new music within Spotify and instead rely on external platforms like Instagram and YouTube, resulting in fragmented discovery experiences and reduced engagement with Spotify's in-app exploration features.	YouTube Music	YouTube Music addressed this by integrating discovery with YouTube ecosystem signals, using Shorts (Samples tab), trends, and video content. Users can discover via short-form clips and directly play songs, reducing need for external platforms	YouTube removes cross-platform dependency by owning both social and music discovery. It shows discovery improves when content and music coexist.
Playback-First Mental Model: Users struggle to discover new music on Spotify because they primarily perceive and use it as a platform for playing and managing songs they already know, leading to low	YouTube Music	Built a discovery-first experience using Home feed, personalized mixes, and Samples tab where users scroll short video clips and directly play songs, making discovery continuous and not dependent on saved music.	YouTube shifts behavior by making discovery the default action. It shows changing the entry point (feed) reduces playback-first thinking, though it relies heavily on algorithms and can feel inconsistent.

engagement with its discovery features and limiting exposure to new content			
Mood-Driven Evaluation: Users frequently disengage from Spotify's recommendations because they fail to match their real-time mood or context, making the listening experience feel irrelevant and reducing both trust and continued usage of discovery features.	YouTube Music	Uses AI playlists, mood filters, Music Tuner, personalized mixes, and Samples (short-form discovery). Leverages YouTube behavior and trends to match mood/activity dynamically	YouTube treats discovery as intent- and mood-driven, not just history-based. It shows users need real-time control over context. Trade-off is reliance on user input and algorithms, which can still misinterpret mood despite flexibility.

Step 3 Clustering Problems and Finding Direction

Validated Problem	Short Label	Business Metric
Inefficient and Low-Trust Discovery Users do not rely on Spotify for discovering new music and instead use platforms like Instagram and YouTube. Spotify's recommendations are seen as inconsistent and often irrelevant, leading to low trust	Engagement	When recommendations feel wrong and don't improve, users lose trust. They stop using discovery features, go back to familiar playlists, and give fewer signals, which further worsens recommendations leading to lower usage and reduced engagement over time.
Social-First Discovery Behavior: Users are unable to effectively discover new music within Spotify and instead rely on external platforms like Instagram and YouTube, resulting in	Engagement	When users discover music on other platforms, they spend less time exploring in-app, reducing sessions, discovery interactions, and overall engagement. This also indirectly impacts

fragmented discovery experiences and reduced engagement with Spotify's in-app exploration features.		retention and long-term growth.
Playback-First Mental Model: Users struggle to discover new music on Spotify because they primarily perceive and use it as a platform for playing and managing songs they already know, leading to low engagement with its discovery features and limiting exposure to new content	Engagement	Users focus on playing known music instead of exploring, so discovery features get low usage. This reduces interaction depth, limits new content consumption, and lowers overall engagement growth.
Mood-Driven Evaluation: Users frequently disengage from Spotify's recommendations because they fail to match their real-time mood or context, making the listening experience feel irrelevant and reducing both trust and continued usage of discovery features.	Engagement	When recommendations don't match mood, users skip more and end sessions early. Poor session satisfaction reduces listening time, repeat sessions, and overall engagement.

Step 2: Decide Which Cluster to Focus on:

All the problems tie to Engagement Cluster Metrics and hence solving for Engagement Cluster.

Why Engagement Cluster?

All validated problems consistently show users exploring/discovering less, skipping more, or relying on familiar content. This directly reduces session time, discovery usage, and interaction depth clearly pointing to engagement as the most impacted metric.

Step 3: Goal Statement:

"Improve Engagement for Discovery Based Listeners"

Step 4 – Bringing your users to life

User Persona



Shreya - The Discovery Based Listener

Discovers music outside Spotify, expects perfect mood match, and uses Spotify mainly to play and save known songs.

Goals and Motivations

- Discover new songs that match exact mood or vibe
- Stay updated with trending or relevant music
- Quickly move from discovery to listening and saving
- Avoid wasting time on irrelevant or random recommendations

Behaviors

- Discovers music on Instagram, YouTube, reels, and movies; Spotify is not used for discovery
- Uses Spotify mainly to play, search, and save known songs or playlists
- Skips within 10–20 seconds if song doesn't match mood or vibe
- Rarely uses Spotify discovery features due to inconsistent recommendations

Frustrations

- “Recommendations feel very hit or miss - they often don't match my taste.”
- “I feel like discovery is actually better on Instagram and YouTube than on Spotify.”
- “I mostly use Spotify just to play songs I already know.”
- “If a song doesn't match my mood or taste, I skip it almost immediately.”
- “The next recommended song often breaks my vibe, and that really annoys me.”

Direct Quote

“I discover songs on Instagram or YouTube, then come to Spotify to search and save them.”

Relevance Check

Shreya, avoids Spotify discovery (because of low trust), relies on external platforms (Youtube, Instagram), uses Spotify only for known music (playback-first), and skips on mood mismatch - directly reducing in-app discovery usage and overall engagement.

Step 5 Finding your P0 – Problem Prioritization

The PIF Framework (Taking High, Medium, Low – Based on Interview/Survey Results)

Problem	P = Population	I = Intensity	F = Frequency	Total	Reasoning
Inefficient and Low-Trust Discovery Users do not rely on Spotify for discovering new music and instead use platforms like Instagram and YouTube. Spotify's recommendations are seen as inconsistent and often irrelevant, leading to low trust	5	3	1	9	Most users don't trust recommendations, so they skip or search manually. Happens often and breaks the discovery experience.
Social-First Discovery Behavior: Users are unable to effectively discover new music within Spotify and instead rely on external platforms like Instagram and YouTube, resulting	5	3	1	9	Users discover music outside Spotify (Instagram, YouTube). Spotify is not the starting point. This happens very frequently. They have adapted to this behavior.

in fragmented discovery experiences and reduced engagement with Spotify's in-app exploration features.					
Playback-First Mental Model: Users struggle to discover new music on Spotify because they primarily perceive and use it as a platform for playing and managing songs they already know, leading to low engagement with its discovery features and limiting exposure to new content	3	3	1	7	Many users stick to known songs instead of exploring. Shows low trust in discovery, but not universal across all sessions
Mood-Driven Evaluation: Users frequently disengage from Spotify's recommendations because they fail to match their real-time mood or context, making the listening experience feel irrelevant and reducing both trust and continued usage of discovery features.	3	3	1	7	Users expect songs to match their mood. When it fails, they skip or switch. Happens frequently during playback. But they still manage by listening to known songs.

P0 Problem Statement:

“Discovery-based listeners are struggling with discovering new music on Spotify because the recommendation system feels unreliable and does not consistently match their mood, vibe, or immediate listening intent. This leads to broken listening flow and low trust for users, reduced discovery interactions, fallback to external discovery, lower listening depth, and weaker engagement for Spotify.”