

Week 2 — Validating Problems and Setting Direction

1. User Research: Validating the Hypothesis

1.1 Objective

To validate the problem hypothesis around Spotify's intent and mood discovery experience and understand how users currently search for music, express intent, and experience emotional satisfaction (or frustration) with Spotify's recommendations.

1.2 Research Method

A short **user survey** (n = 11) was conducted among Spotify users aged 20–30. Questions explored usage frequency, discovery habits, emotional resonance, and switching behavior to other platforms.

[Survey Link: <https://forms.gle/jPvu4kz3meFh9kqy8>]

2. Key Patterns and Insights from User Survey

Theme	Insight	Supporting Evidence
Search is utilitarian, not expressive	Most users rely on direct keywords like song titles or artist names rather than describing their mood or intent. Spotify's search is used for retrieval, not	"I just write keywords in the search bar." / "I look up the song I want either by artist
Mood playlists feel	Curated "mood" or "activity" playlists are perceived as repetitive and lacking personalization, offering a	Average ratings around 3–4 on playlist relevance.
Low trust in Spotify's emotional	Users don't believe Spotify captures the <i>why</i> behind their listening choices — they feel understood for their taste, but not for their <i>state of mind</i> .	Average score ~2.5 on "Spotify understands my mood."
Frustration leads to silent	Users don't rage-quit; they quietly move to other apps like YouTube or try multiple searches,	"Go to another app," "Try another playlist," "Give up
Emotional payoff when	When Spotify does match the user's mood, it triggers a deep sense of connection and satisfaction,	Multiple "5" ratings and quotes like "Deeply
Loyalty erosion due to	Platforms like TikTok and YouTube are seen as better at delivering "vibe-first" discovery	3 respondents explicitly mentioned switching or

2.1 Summary Insight

Spotify users lack a natural and expressive way to communicate their **mood or intent** when searching for music. While personalization exists, it often feels **data-driven rather than emotion-aware**, leading to quiet frustration and users switching to other platforms for a more intuitive, "vibe-first" experience.

3. Spotify SWOT Analysis

3.1 Strengths

- **Massive Global User Base & Data Depth:** Over 600M active users across 180+ markets provide unparalleled behavioral data for personalization and innovation.
- **Extensive Content Library:** Millions of songs, podcasts, and growing non-music audio formats.
- **Freemium Model Success:** Strong acquisition funnel that converts free users to premium subscribers.
- **Strong Social Integration:** Features like Wrapped, Blend, and Jam create emotional connection and shareability.
- **Brand Equity & First-Mover Advantage:** Pioneer of mainstream streaming with high global recall.

3.2 Weaknesses

- **Recommendation & Discovery Limitations:** Algorithms risk feeling repetitive and predictable.
- **Lagging Feature Innovation:** Competitors like Apple and YouTube are innovating faster in discovery, innovative features, and experiences.
- **High Subscription Costs & Shrinking Freemium Value:** Reduces retention among price-sensitive users.
- **High Churn Risk:** Bundled competitors (Apple One, Amazon Prime) make Spotify less sticky.
- **Limited Revenue Diversification:** Reliance on subscriptions and ads; limited creator monetization.
- **Regional Restrictions:** Inconsistent catalog availability across geographies and licensing issues.

3.3 Opportunities

- **Innovative Engagement Features:** Add tools like karaoke, voice remixing, or AI-curated playlists to deepen interaction.
- **Expansion into New Audio Verticals:** Grow into wellness, education, gaming, and ambient experiences.

3.4 Threats

- **Intense Competitive Pressure:** Ecosystem bundling from Apple, YouTube, Amazon.

- **Discovery Saturation & Fatigue:** Users feel overwhelmed by auto-generated playlists.
- **Rising Royalty Costs:** Margin pressure from artist payouts and licensing negotiations.

4. Business Goal: Increasing User Engagement Through Intent-Aware Discovery

4.1 Linked Problem

Users are struggling to find music that matches their mood or intent because Spotify's search and discovery systems are built on **keywords and metadata**, not **emotional or contextual understanding**.

This leads to frustration, disengagement, and reduced listening time — directly impacting Spotify's **North Star metric: Time Spent Listening (TSL)**.

4.2 Chosen Business Lever — Engagement (Primary)

Spotify's success depends on **sustained engagement** — how long and how deeply users interact with the platform. A major engagement friction arises when users fail to find songs that match their current mood or vibe. By improving emotional and contextual accuracy in discovery, Spotify can increase:

- **Average listening time per user**
- **Songs streamed per session**
- **Overall satisfaction and immersion**

Goal Statement:

Improve engagement by increasing average listening time per user through more accurate, mood-aware discovery experiences that better reflect user intent.

4.3 Secondary Lever — Retention

When Spotify consistently delivers emotionally accurate music experiences, users feel understood and return more often.

Reducing discovery frustration strengthens **loyalty** and **habitual listening** over time.

5. User Personas

5.1 Persona 1 — Aisha Mehta: The Mood-Based Explorer

Aisha Mehta, 27, is a marketing professional from Mumbai who listens to Spotify almost every morning during her commute to work. Music is her way to block out noise, beat the Monday blues, and set her mood for the day. She wants songs that make her feel energized and motivated before reaching the office but also wants to explore new tracks instead of replaying old ones. However, mood-based playlists often feel generic and repetitive, leading her to skip through songs or switch

to YouTube when Spotify doesn’t “get her vibe.” Aisha wishes Spotify could better understand how she feels in the moment and suggest music that truly matches her energy — transforming her daily commute into an uplifting ritual.

5.2 Persona 2 — Rahul Verma: The Casual Seeker

Rahul Verma, 24, from Mumbai, listens to music casually and uses Spotify mostly for convenience rather than deep discovery. He often wishes he could find songs that truly match his mood, but when Spotify’s search fails, he retries with different keywords or turns to YouTube before returning to Spotify to play his new discoveries. Rahul represents users who value **ease and relevance** — he doesn’t need complexity, just a seamless way to find the right vibe quickly and without frustration.

6. Problem Prioritization (PIF Framework)

6.1 Problem List and Scoring

#	Problem	Popul ation (1–5)	Inte nsity (1– 5)	Frequ ency (1–5)	To tal (1 5)	Notes
1	Users can’t find songs that match their current mood or vibe	4	5	4	13	Most respondents said mood playlists feel generic; frustration evident in skipping or switching apps.
2	Spotify’s mood- or activity-based playlists feel repetitive and impersonal	4	4	4	12	Average playlist satisfaction 3–4/5; multiple users described them as “generic.”
3	Search system only recognizes keywords, not emotions or natural language	3	5	4	12	All users rely on literal keywords; none used expressive phrases.
4	Users silently switch to other apps (e.g., YouTube) when they can’t find the right music	3	4	3	10	3+ respondents mentioned this; indicates disengagement rather than open dissatisfaction.
5	Spotify’s recommendations feel repetitive, limiting discovery freshness	4	3	4	11	Users complained about hearing the same tracks repeatedly; emotional fatigue over time.

6.2 P0 Problem Selection

Users are struggling to find songs that match their current mood or vibe because Spotify’s search and discovery systems rely on literal keywords and static playlists rather than emotional or contextual understanding. This results in frustration, frequent switching to other apps, and reduced listening time — weakening Spotify’s engagement and emotional connection with its users.

6.3 Rationale

- **High Population:** Impacts both mood-driven and casual listeners.

- **High Intensity:** Emotionally dissatisfying; breaks immersion.
- **High Frequency:** Happens in most discovery sessions.
- **Direct KPI Link:** Reduces session duration and user satisfaction.