

Design and validation of a journal app combined with expressive writing functions

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Abstract

This study presents the design and usability testing of a journal App enriched with expressive writing templates and creative prompts.

Expressive writing is a cost-effective and user-friendly method for enhancing mental health and self-improvement. Concurrently, telepsychiatric services are emerging as a significant trend, where expressive writing can be seamlessly integrated. Hence, this research aims to fuse expressive writing into digital writing platforms, ultimately selecting a journal App as the optimal medium.

Introduction & Background

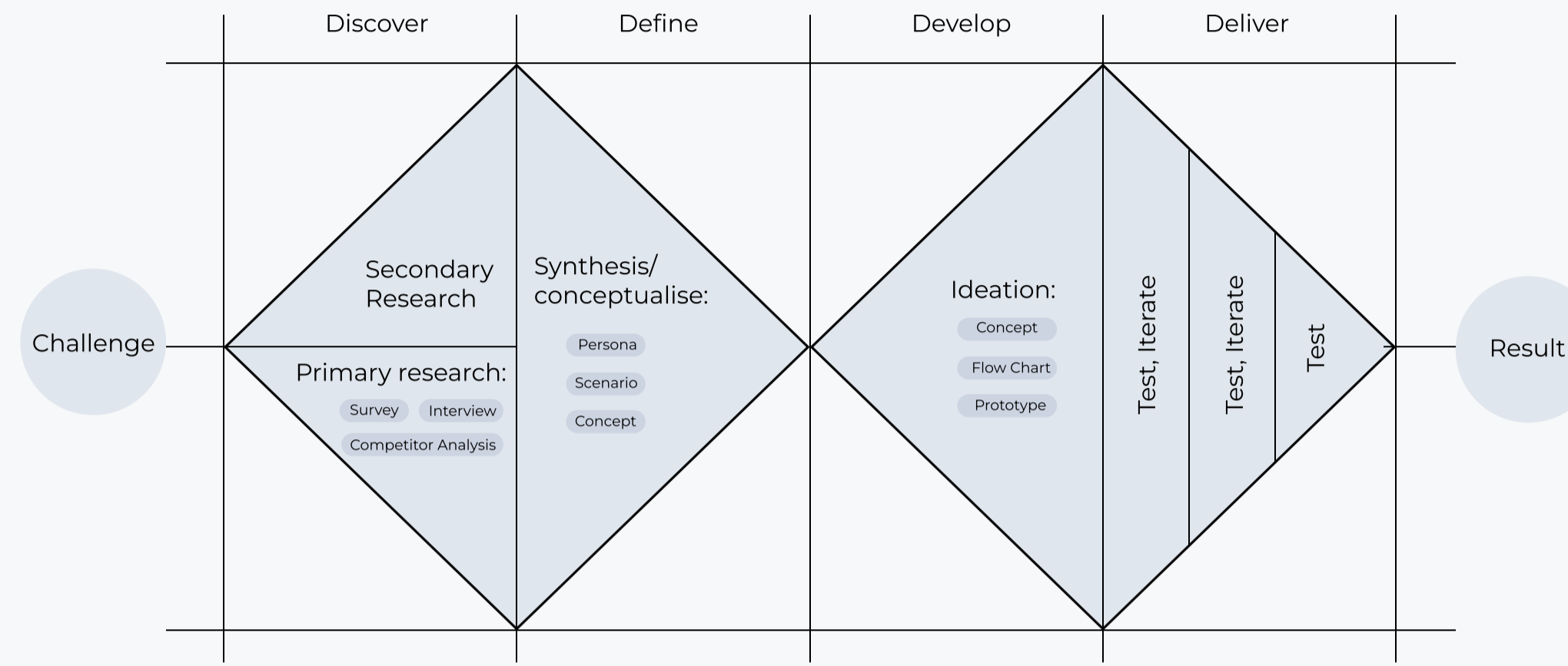
Background

Mental health challenges remain severe, with 17.0% of people suffering from common mental disorders. Young women aged 16-24 are especially at risk. Importantly, there is a high level of unmet need for treatment, especially among young people and low-income families. Digital psychiatry emerges as a key solution to address these disparities. The most commonly used intervention in digital mental health research is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Integrating digital platforms with CBT is expected to increase the accessibility and effectiveness of mental health care.

Expressive Writing

Expressive writing was originally designed as a treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and recent findings highlight its positive impact on physical and mental health. Integrating expressive writing into digital platforms promises to provide innovative avenues for holistic mental health care. Expressive writing is regarded as a time-efficient, cost-effective, effective, and manageable approach.

Study Methodology



Double Dimond

This research includes the whole process from research to design, iteration and test, so I chose to use the double diamond process to plan the entire design process.

This study refers to the template given by Design Council and the variant used in a user experience project by Singh Brar, S. in 2017.

Qualitative Analysis

Considering the sample size and research purpose, this study will use qualitative analysis to gain an in-depth understanding of user needs.

User Needs & Design

User need

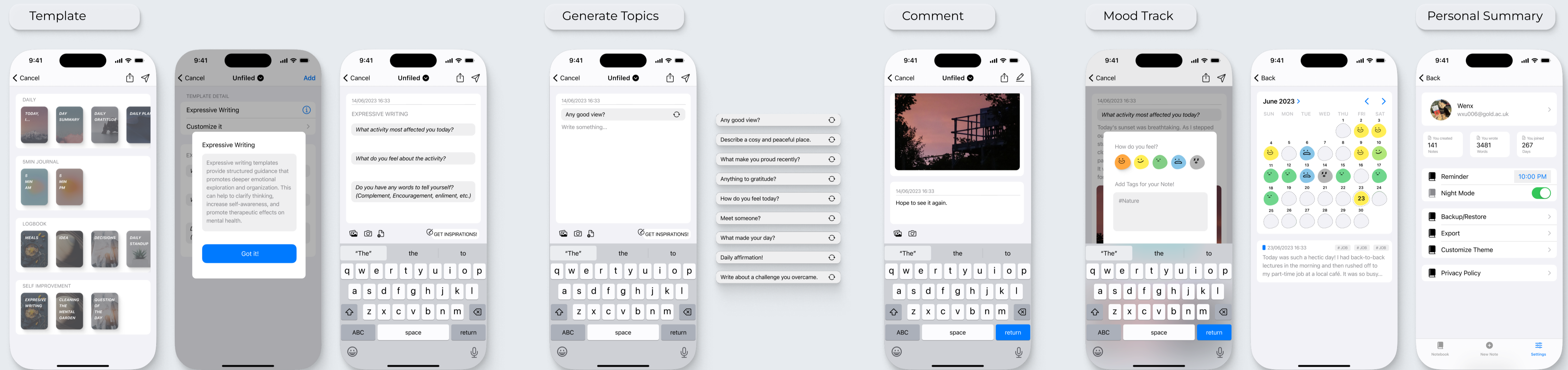
- A specific writing application for writing
- Simple interface style but allows users to customize or decorate
- Mood tracker
- Generative summaries to give users a sense of accomplishment

Function of Expressive Writing

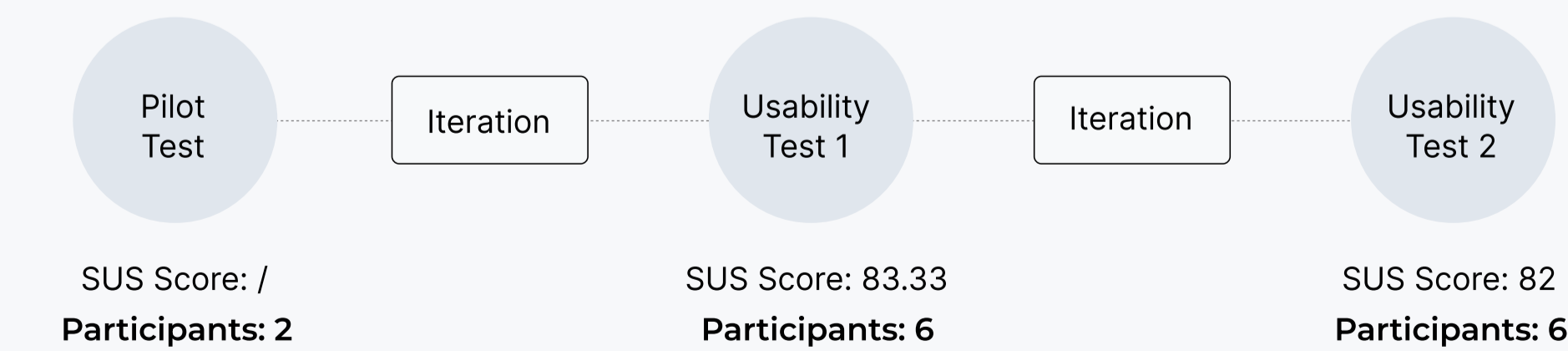
- A valid expressive writing template
- Inspire user with expressive writing topics (questions)

Concept

A journal app that incorporates expressive writing templates and provides topics



Testing & Evaluating



Participant	Post A Note
p1	pass
p2	pass

Participant	Post A Note	comment	Review
p1	1'00	comment	0'21
p2	2'43	edit+ comment	0'18
p3	1'26	edit+ comment	0'30
p4	0'54	edit+ comment	0'40
p5	0'51	edit+ comment	0'51
p6	2'04	comment/pass	0'20

Participant	Finish Guide	Post A Note	Review
p1	x	x	0'17
p2	2'07	1'10	0'37
p3	1'10	0'40	0'30
p4	0'40	1'00	0'23
p5	0'43	0'47	0'13
p6	0'45	1'22	0'15

Research Result

- It is confirmed that the usability of the whole APP is very high.
- Most users gave a high evaluation to the Get inspiration function, thinking that it is easy to use, interesting, and will be used frequently
- The template function and comment function are considered relatively common and not interesting enough

Conclusion & Future work

To answer the research question

- To achieve the effect of expressive writing: By introducing an effective expressive writing templates and providing users with generate expressive writing topics (questions) designed based on expressive writing therapy, users can complete the process of expressive writing and achieve expressive writing effects: Improving mental health.
- Have high user retention rates: According to the results of user research and competitive product analysis, use functions such as mood calendar, reminder, and annual summary to enhance the user's sense of accomplishment and enable users to use it for a long time

Constrains & Future work

Due to time constraints and recruitment challenges, this study was unable to conduct a diary study and thus could not validate the impact of using the app on mental health. Consequently, future work could focus on validating the therapeutic effectiveness of the app. Additionally, it's important to note that this app is not primarily centered around expressive writing templates and is intended for a general audience. As a result, its efficacy for sensitive groups or specific conditions cannot be fully ascertained. Further validation for these specific cases can be pursued in subsequent research.