

VSCO

App Research & Redesign

Merve Terece | 2023

Why VSCO?

I've been using VSCO for more than 4 years, and I must say that it has changed over time, leaving behind some contentious issues as VSCO chose an interface that is unlike anything that mass-market consumers would use

I became very curious and tried to unravel the controversies surrounding VSCO despite the fact that it is extremely successful in its field and has a long list of negative reviews

This is not a complete redesign but refinement of the app

Design Process



VSCO as a company wants to attract the GenZ and reduce the bounce rates making the app more user friendly keeping the user engaged into their social network

Business Goals

With a variety of presets, the app's primary use is for image editing, user wants the process more accessible and simple

User Goals

Overall study of company, user and keeping the other goals in mind, solving the gaps and improvising the opportunities

Project Goals

(1.1)

Company Research

Before directly moving onto user research I did some research why VSCO is made the way as we see today I reviewed some articles, blogs, videos, store reviews and interviews for the same



JOEL FLORY,
CEO & CO-FOUNDER

“When you walk into a museum, you don’t see the net worth of the artist,”

“You don’t see how many people have walked through the museum.
There’s not a space for people to write comments and leave stickers.
It’s a moment. It’s for you.”

If you’ve ever used VSCO, you’ve probably noticed that there aren’t any likes or comments or other features that every social media app has; instead, you just have a photo and a private moment.

VSCO might lose its distinctive identity as Instagram explores hiding likes in an effort to improve user health and other social media companies understand the value of safety, security, and mental wellness. However, Flory claims he wants other platforms to understand the significance of likes: **“I honestly hope everyone thinks about what’s good for people’s mental health and builds more products that have a positive impact than a negative impact.”**

“[Gen Z] knows what each platform is good for and what the downfalls of each are”

They actively invest in their creativity and mental health, and they look for environments where they can be themselves. It took me a long time in life to be able to express how I was feeling, so I find it interesting that they are even discussing mental health, anxiety, and depression while comparing cultures. They invest their time and money in businesses and causes that are important to them.

“On one hand, we were ahead of the curve. But I think we were just being true to who we are.”

Regardless of Flory’s ability to decode Gen Z, VSCO continues to be beloved by millions of teenagers and young adults worldwide. Younger than 25-year-olds make up 75% of VSCO’s registered users and 55% of its paying subscribers, giving the company a small foothold in the most sought-after market. In addition, according to the company’s own statistics, the hashtag #VSCO has been seen 450 million times on Instagram and 4 billion times on the hugely popular video-sharing app Tik Tok.

My Insights

Even though Joel fory and VSCO are able to decode the GenZ, which is indeed a difficult job.

But we can’t neglect the fact that this generation has the least attention span being very impatient, indecisive about everything they face. It is very important for the app to hold onto their customers especially new customers and offer them great user experience and engagement

I noticed that app lacks basic functionality features like swipe gestures while exploring someone’s profile, which indeed makes a great difference

(1.2)

App Reviews

1. Terrible interface design

★★★★☆ JosephfromToronto - Oct 2, 2016

Can't navigate - I regret spending money on the packs and the original VSCO cam.

2. Hard to navigate

★★★★☆ Jose R - Oct 3, 2016

Used to be so easy now I have to force quit the app to go back to my pictures

3. f*cking joke of an app

★★★★☆ TeeEhhh04 - Oct 4, 2016

Dont bother wasting your time or money on this pathetic piece of sh*t of an app. Fkcing brutal, so many fkn bugs and issues not to mention how stupid their design and layout are. Huge waste of time

4. Update sucks

★★★★☆ Champagne cupcakes - Oct 4, 2016

The new update is hard to navigate and the layout makes it complicated. Deleted the app.

“They’re trying to be too trendy with their minimal design approach and actually making the app a little harder to use than it should be. The icons in same places have no relation to what they do, and with no written labels its a little trial and error until you manage to do what you want”

“No one knows how to say their name. Their app is a UX nightmare. So their new identity is actually on brand-convoluted.”

COURTESY,
APPLE STORE

(1.3)

Competitive Analysis

Joel Flory wants VSCO to develop into a social network for creativity. I examined some of the industry's top rivals and evaluated each app's advantages and disadvantages.

	VSCO	Lightroom	Snapseed	PicsArt
Strengths	Allows user to collaborate real time	Easy UI, convenient, straight to the point	Focused on editing, no clutter, easy to use	Advanced editing & readymade presets
Weaknesses	Poor visual interface, no hierarchy, no labelling	No user engagement, not visually appealing	No user engagement, difficult in understanding new tools	Poor visual interface, Shabby, clumsy interface
Content	Unorganised and mismatched content	Overall great content but not much appealing and interactive	Based on editing completely, no user engagement	Unnecessary content, distracting tags
UX	Improper navigation and usability	Best usability in terms of editing, but poor UX for other features	Easy UX and navigation, easy flow	Disturbing ADs and complicated to use
Opportunities	Improving navigation, icons, interface, personalization	User engagement, and overall interaction	Tutorial section, more interactive features	Removing unnecessary tabs, making it more usable and easy

(2.1)

User Interviews

I interviewed a group of 10-12 VSCO users, to understand their past, present issues and complaints about the app

Few of the sample questions are below :

- How long you have been using VSCO?
- What are your first impressions of the app?
- What motivates you to use VSCO over other apps?
- Are you able to explore all features of the app? if not why?
- As a first time user, did you face any issues with navigation or UI of the app?
- What improvements or changes you feel can be made to improve the usage of the app?

I divided the research data from interviews into pain / gain points

Pain Points

- Mismatched feed on home page, resulting in switching to pinterest for inspirations
- Difficulty in navigating and figuring out editing tools, resulting in switching app
- Most of the features are hidden or not seen
- User are not able to utilize all feaures of the app
- Visually icon selection, placement and text is improper

Gain Points (user wants)

- User wants personalised feed as per their preference
- User wants to follow photographers within a specific expertise
- Features must be self explanatory
- Organisation of tools as per needs and priority

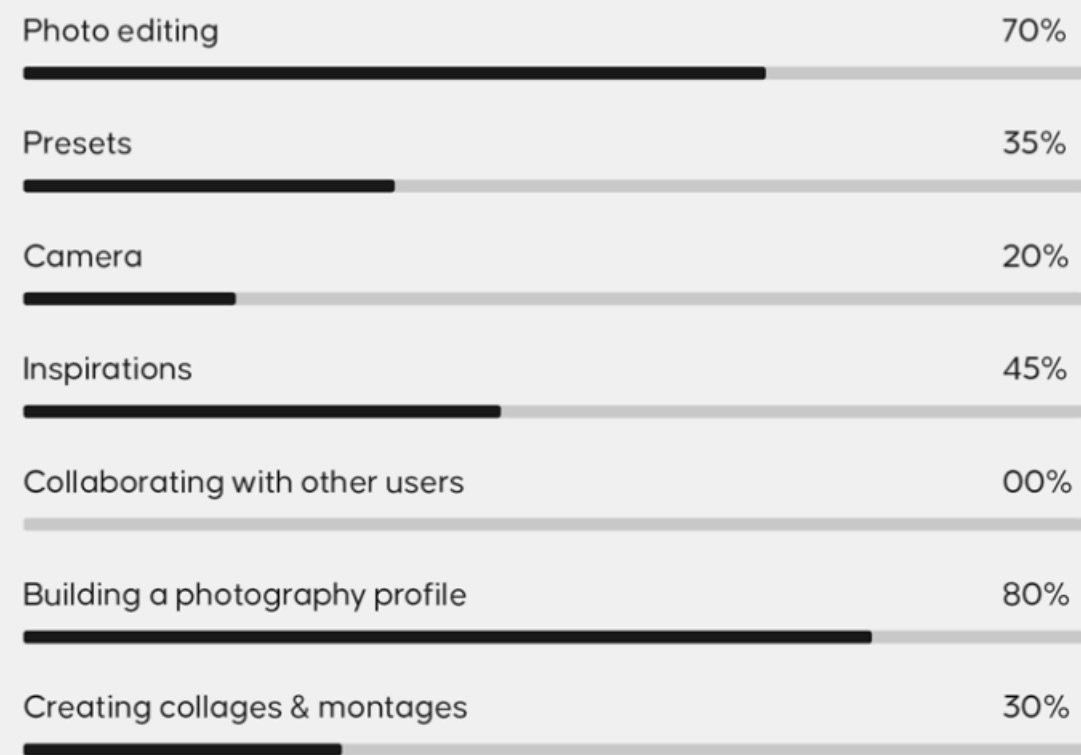
(2.2)

User Surveys

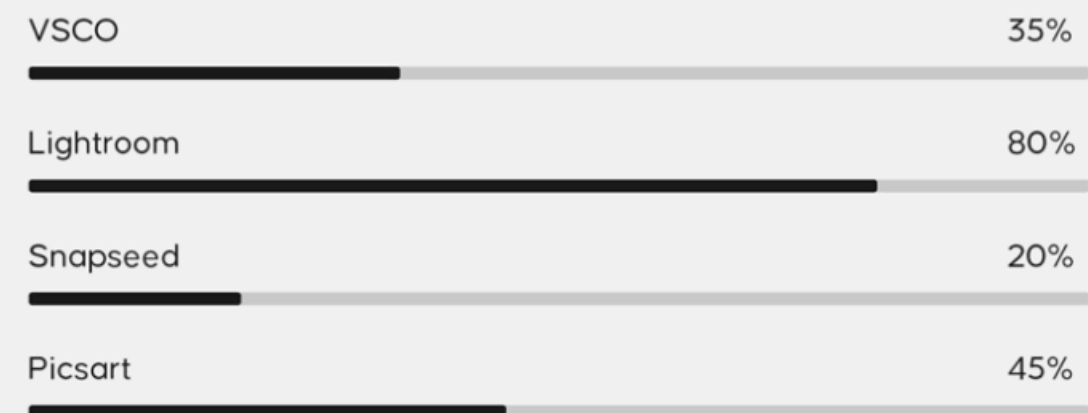
I surveyed more than 20+ VSCO users to solidify the research data from user interviews

Here are some graphs and charts :

For what all purpose do you use VSCO app?



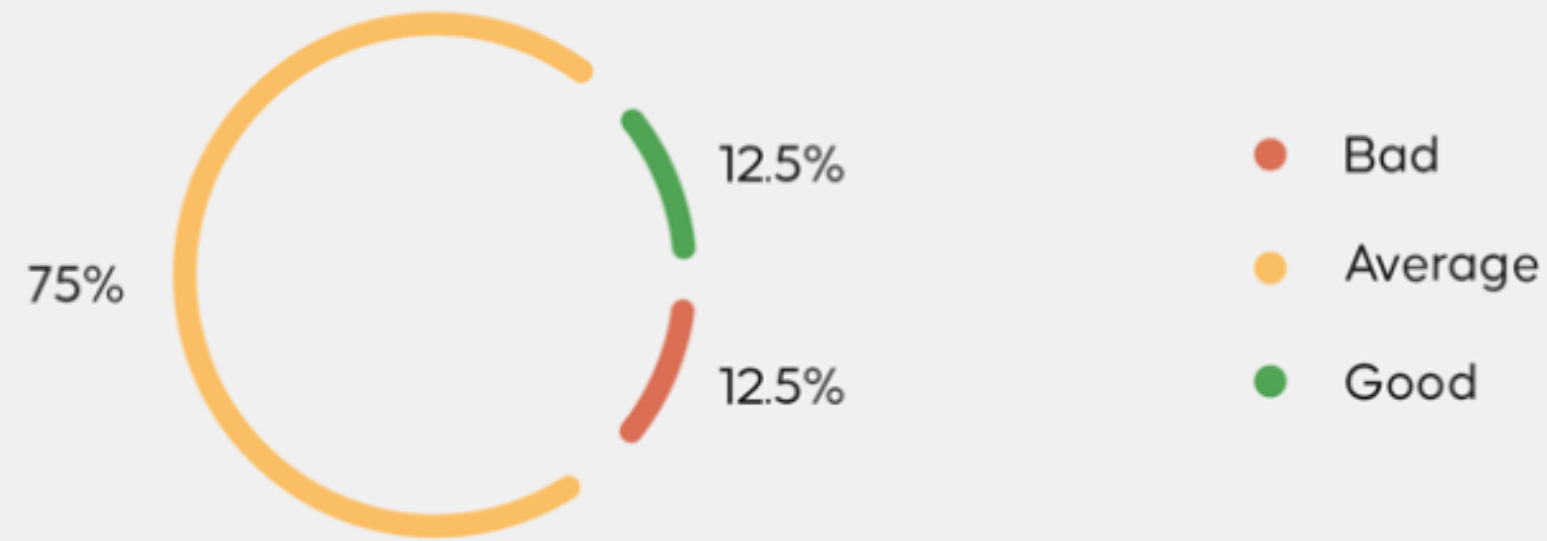
What applications do you use mostly for editing pictures?



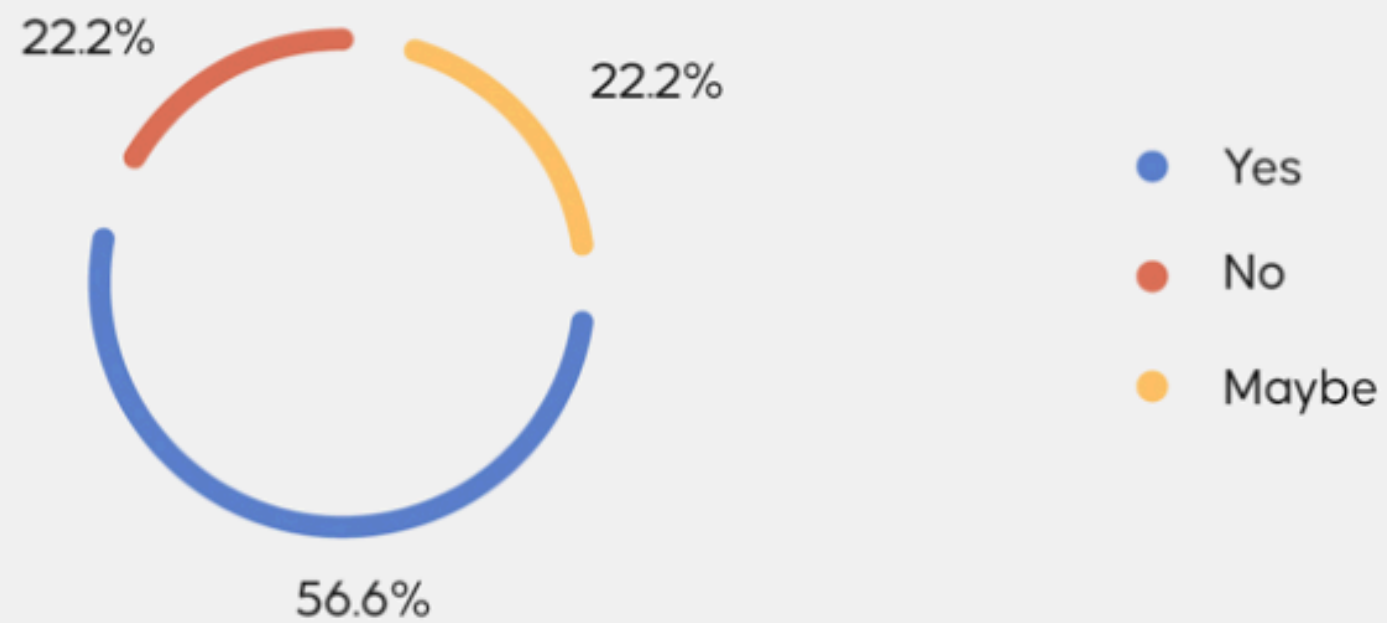
In which of the following parts are you lost and confused?



Rate your experience for uploading, editing and posting picture in one go



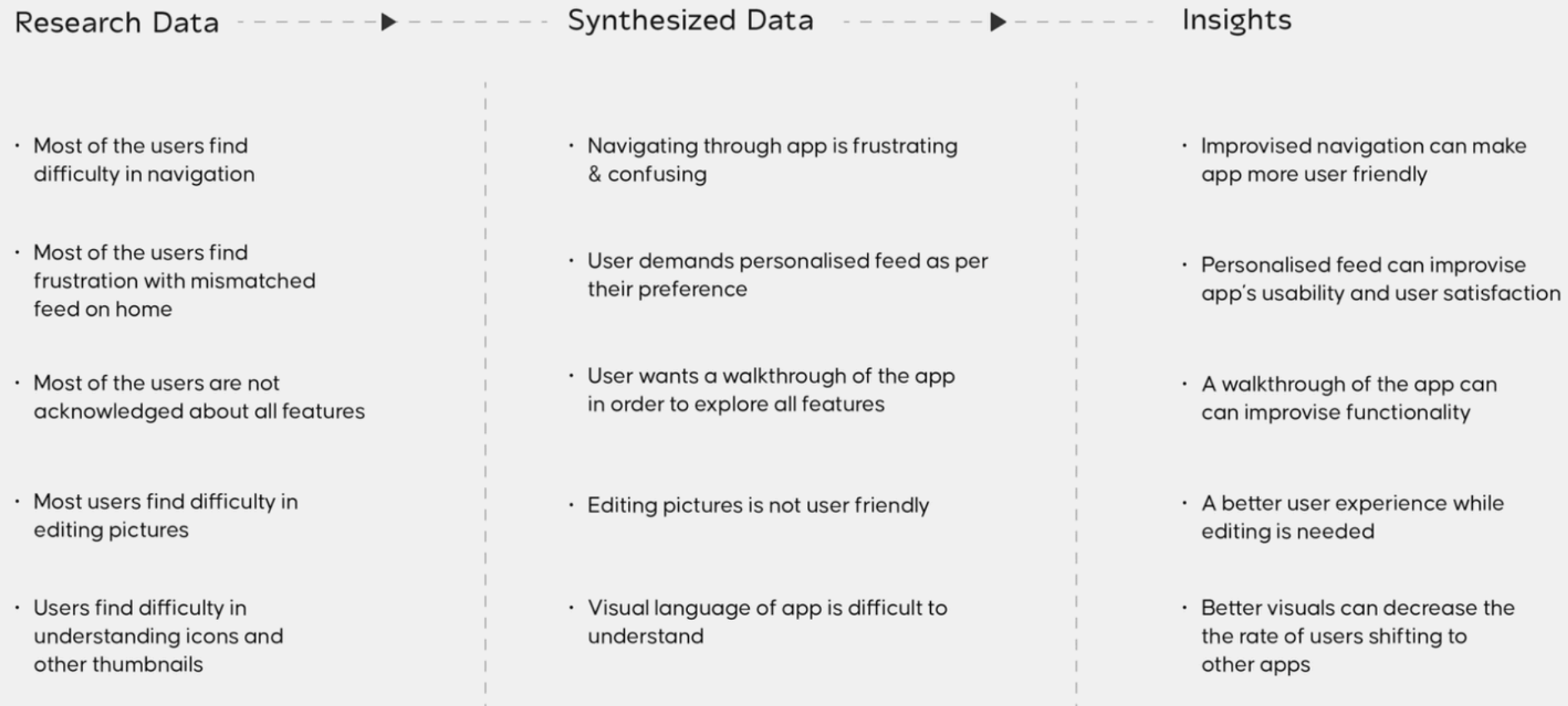
Do you think an app lesson or guide through should be offered to facilitate understandings?



(03)

Synthesis of Data

I combined the research information obtained from secondary and primary sources and further refined it to produce insights.



(04)

User Groups

As per the insights & personas I created a set of group who share similar interests, goals and concerns

- **User group who uses app for its camera, editing pictures and posting images to create their photography portfolio**

05

NEXT / USER JOURNEY MAP

(05)

Use Cases

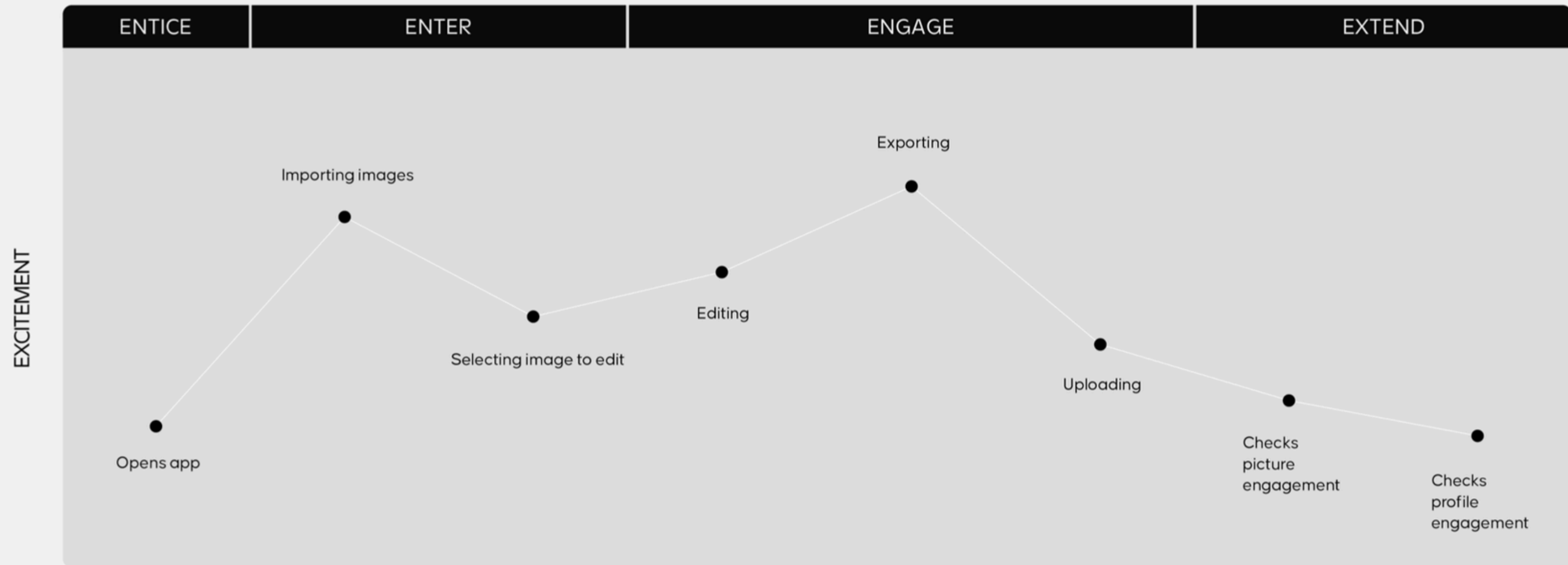
As per the user groups the app will be utilised in two prominent scenarios.

- **As a content creator & editor, I want to edit pictures and showcase my work, so that it benefits my skills and attracts clients**

(06)

User Journey Map

Keeping the use case in consideration, I mapped out a user journey map with its delights and opportunities



TOUCHPOINTS

START

IMPORTING IMAGES

EDITING, EXPORTING & UPLOADING

ENGAGEMENT

DELIGHTS

- Multiple selection of images
- Collection of all imported photographs from earlier

- Segregation of presets
- Preview options for preset application
- Precise control over any application of tools or effects
- Organization of tools and presets as per needs
- Quick export and upload

- View activity button on every post

OPPORTUNITIES

- Segregation of imported images in particular specified album as per need
- Easy selection and use of universal gestures
- Shortening process by removing preview mode

- Premium tools must be placed at last with less priority
- Simple info icon can be placed inside every tool for easier understanding
- Addition of undo/redo buttons replacing history panel
- A pop-up confirming application of preset
- Simple removal of a used preset
- Advanced exporting options
- Usage and placement of icon for uploading images

- Notifications on activity
- Placement of activity panel
- Placement of messaging panel
- Easy access to people and contacts

(07)

Ideations

After refining all of the data from all research methods, I came up with some ideation options which fixes the opportunities in the app

I divided the insights into 3 parts i.e. functionality, usability and overall experience

Functionality	Usability	Overall Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improvising the overall navigation (Prioritizing features)• Making the editing process easier (Visual improvement, addition of undo/redo)• Personalised content on home (Content sorting as per users needs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personalization for editing tools, features and feed• Streamlining the importing, editing & exporting process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing tutorial for app guidethrough• Use of proper icons, thumbnails, screen headings to make process understandable

(08)

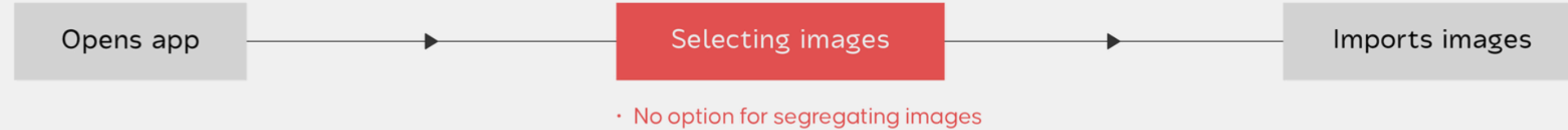
Task Flows

To identify the specific pain points users experience while using the app, I broke down the user journey into smaller tasks.

(8.1)

A user wants to import images and segregate them in albums

(EXISTING FLOW)



(8.2)

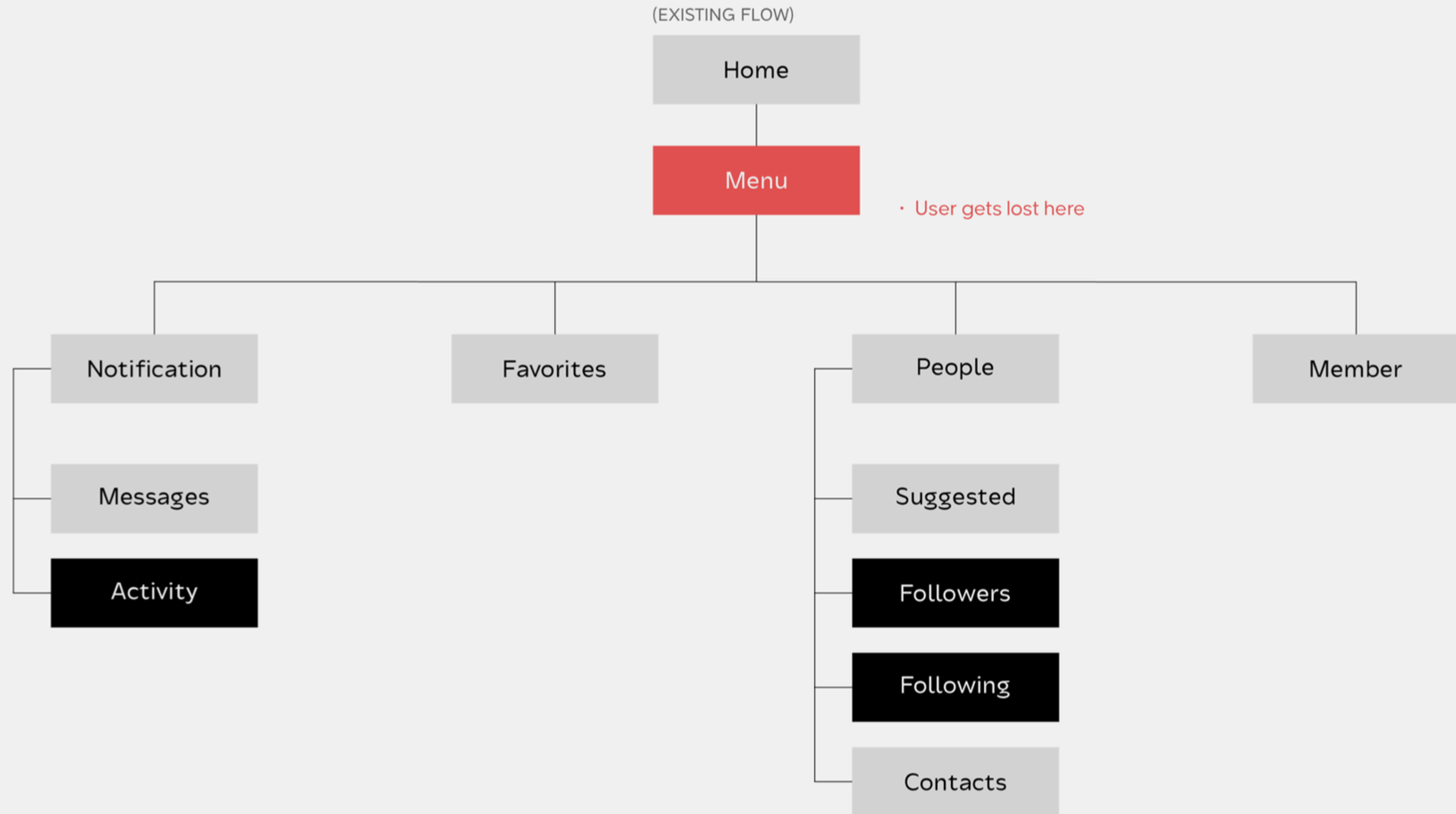
A user wants to add presets to his images and upload them to his profile

(EXISTING FLOW)



(8.3)

A user wants to check his follow/following list and his latest profile activity

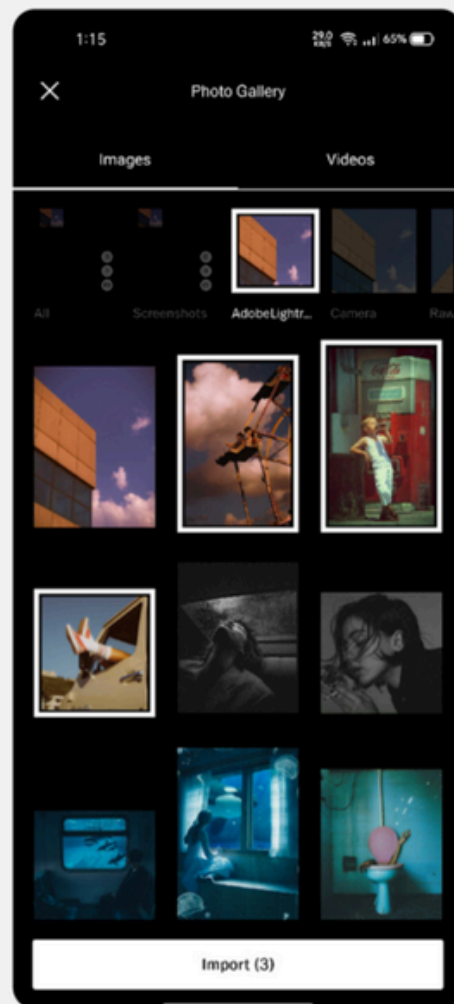


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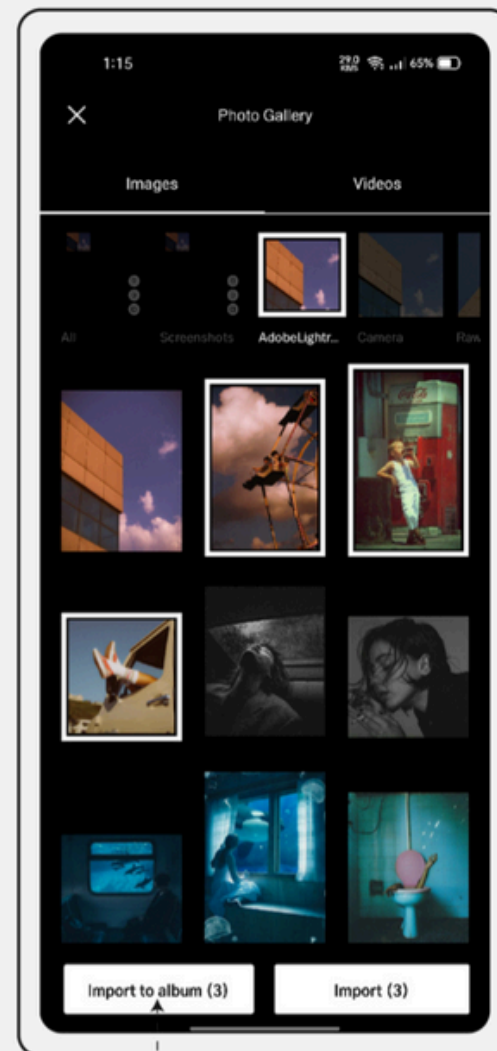
UI Design

After going through all research data I made refinements into the app's user interface

(BEFORE)

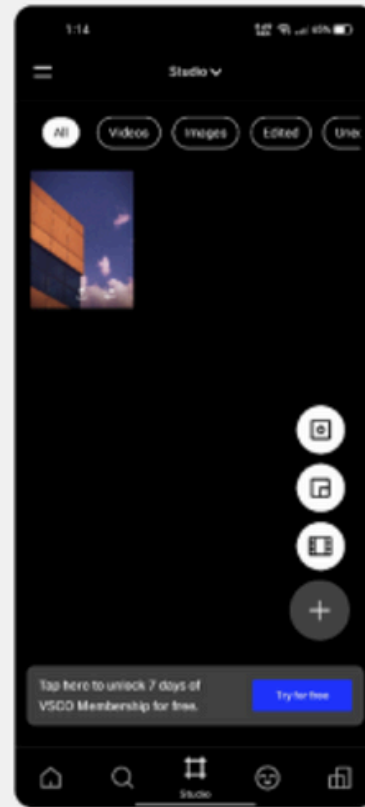


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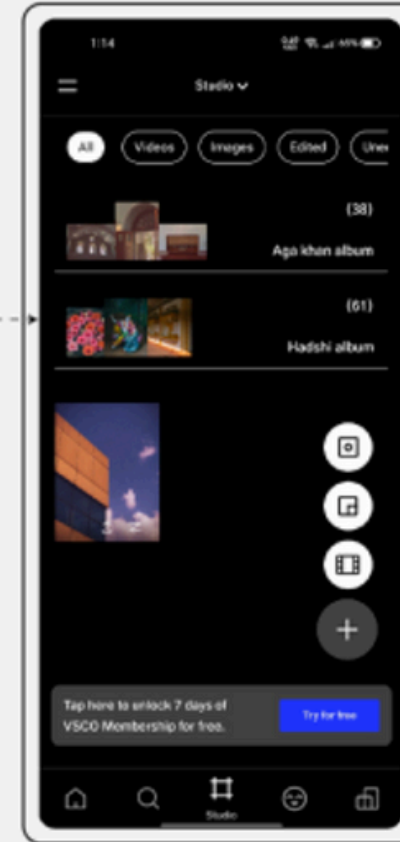
This button's addition enables you to organise your images as soon as you import them into the application.

(BEFORE)

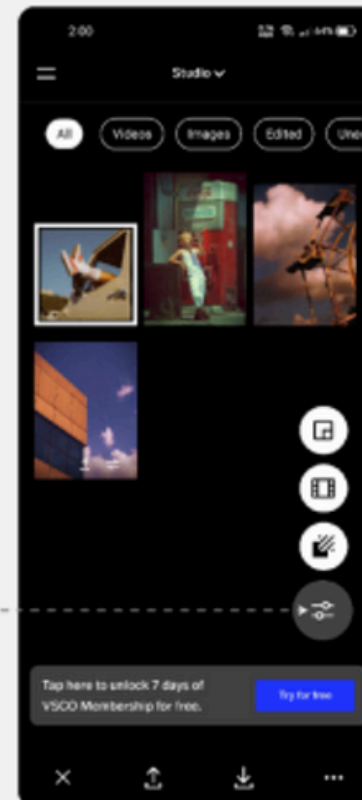


Apply presets to a lot of pictures simultaneously by organising them in an album.

(AFTER)

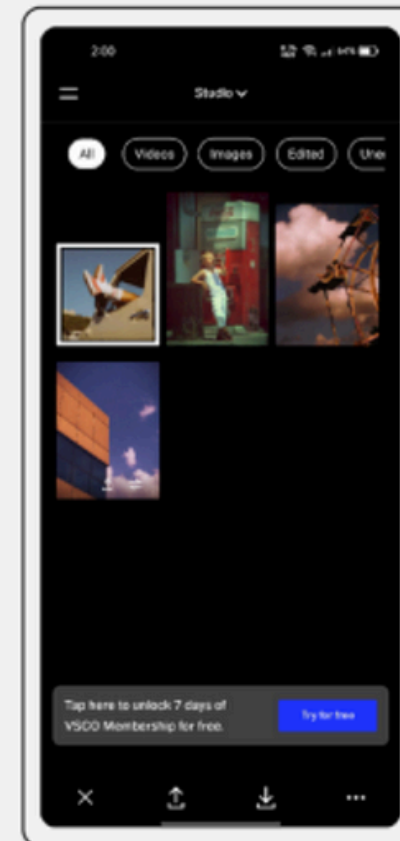


(BEFORE)



This icon must be clicked after choosing an image to open the editing panel, which causes confusion and a sense of being lost.

(AFTER)



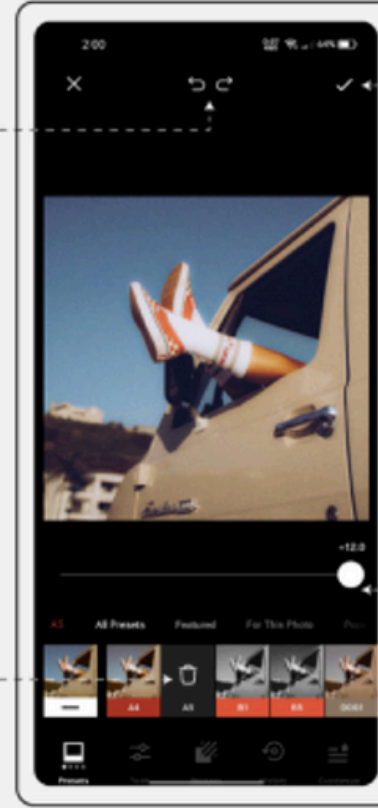
(BEFORE)



Addition of undo/redo buttons make it universal to use and understand

Using the trash can icon, you can quickly remove any presets.

(AFTER)



Using a tick mark to confirm before applying presets allows you to preview the settings before deciding.

Addition of sidebar lets you precisely control your preset value

(BEFORE)

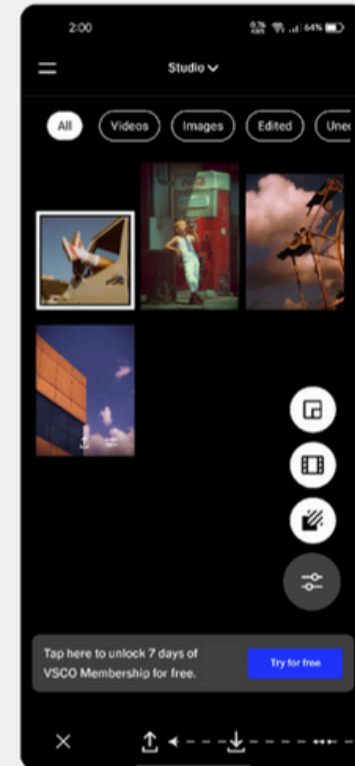
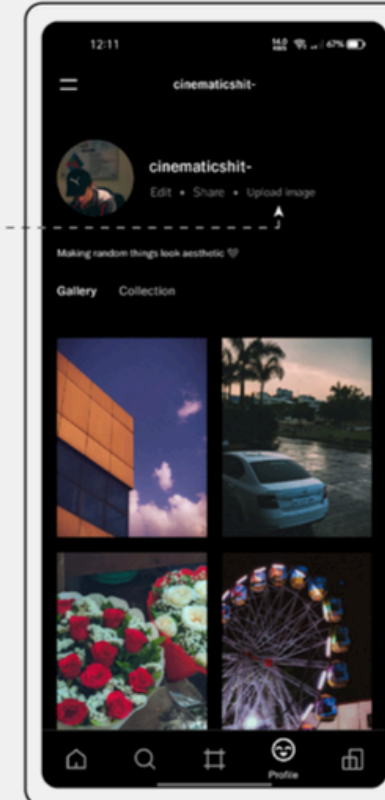


Photo uploading icon placed here does not give clear understanding of the task

(AFTER)



Addition of upload image option on profile screen gives you clear understanding

(BEFORE)

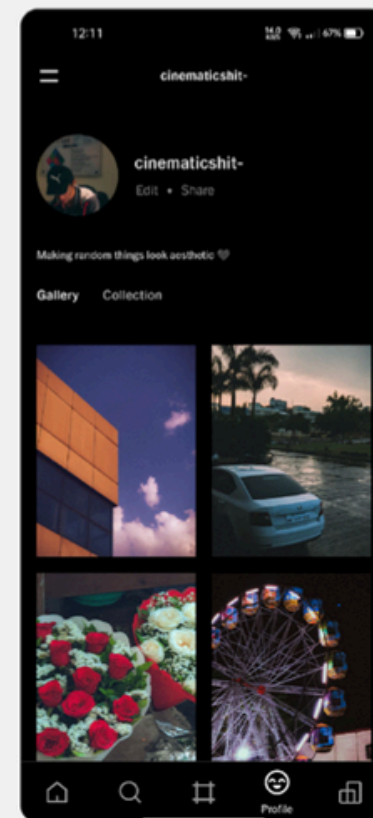


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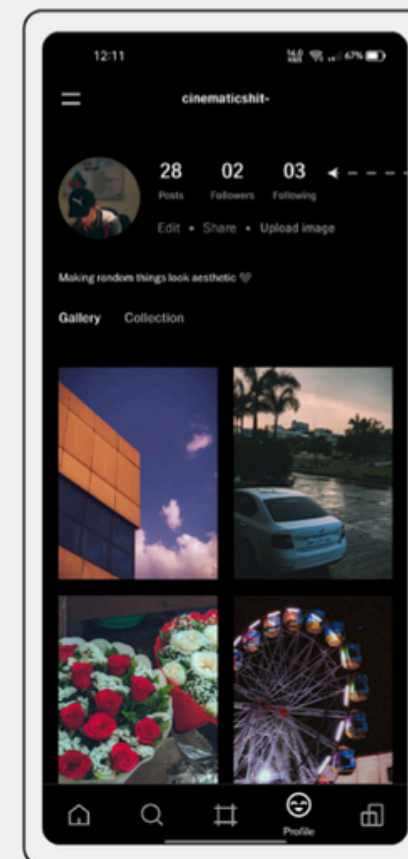


Activity tab placed on home screen for easy access, currently it is placed inside hamburger menu on home screen

(BEFORE)

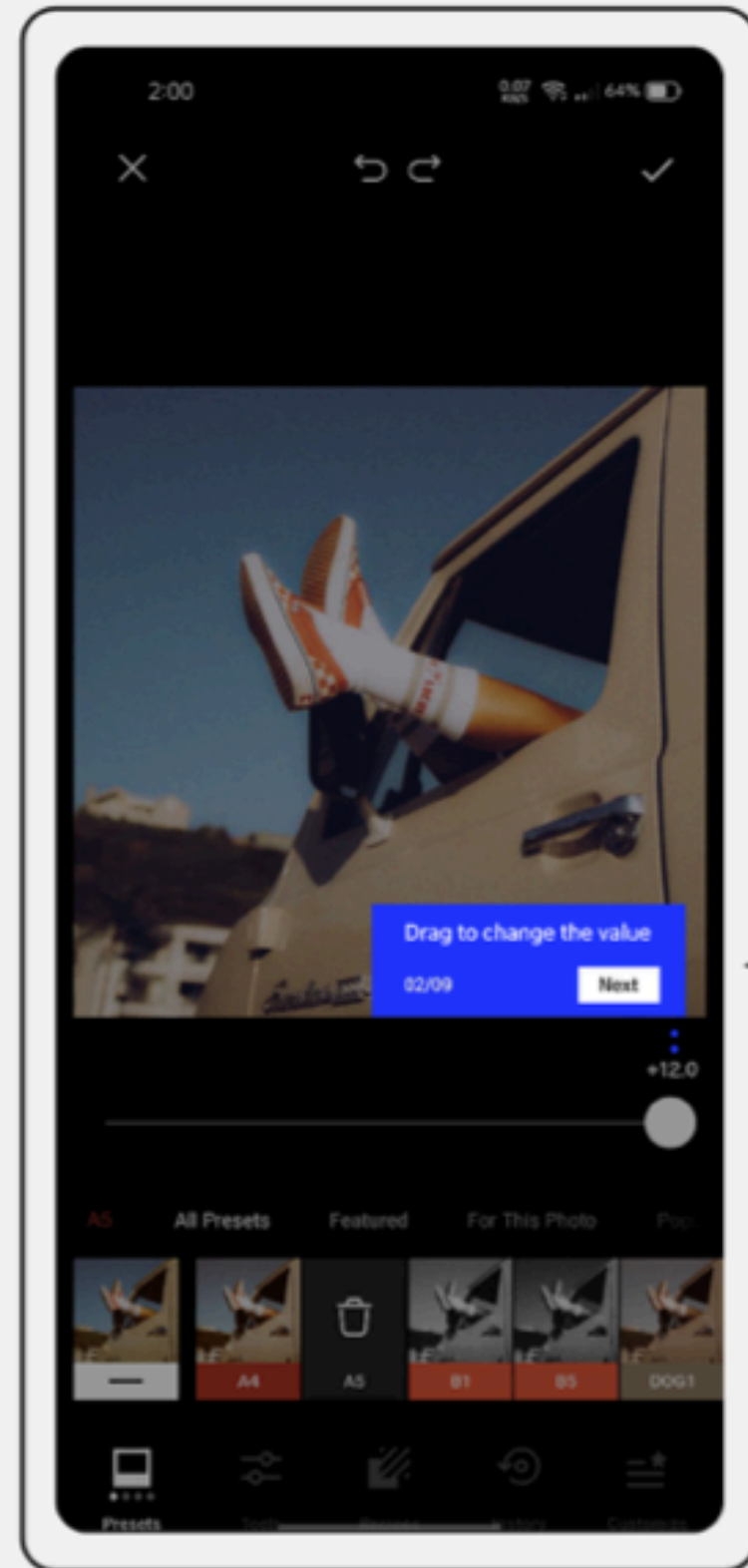


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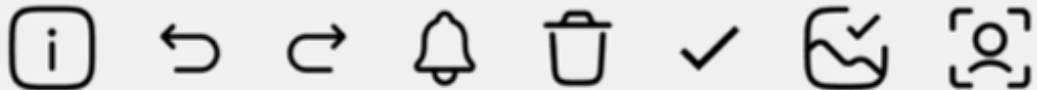
This is a better place to show your follow/following list, currently it is placed inside hamburger menu on home screen

Joel flory mentioned that he gives users' mental health a lot of thought, which is why the follow/following list is not displayed on the user's profile but rather in a spot that is rarely eye-catching.

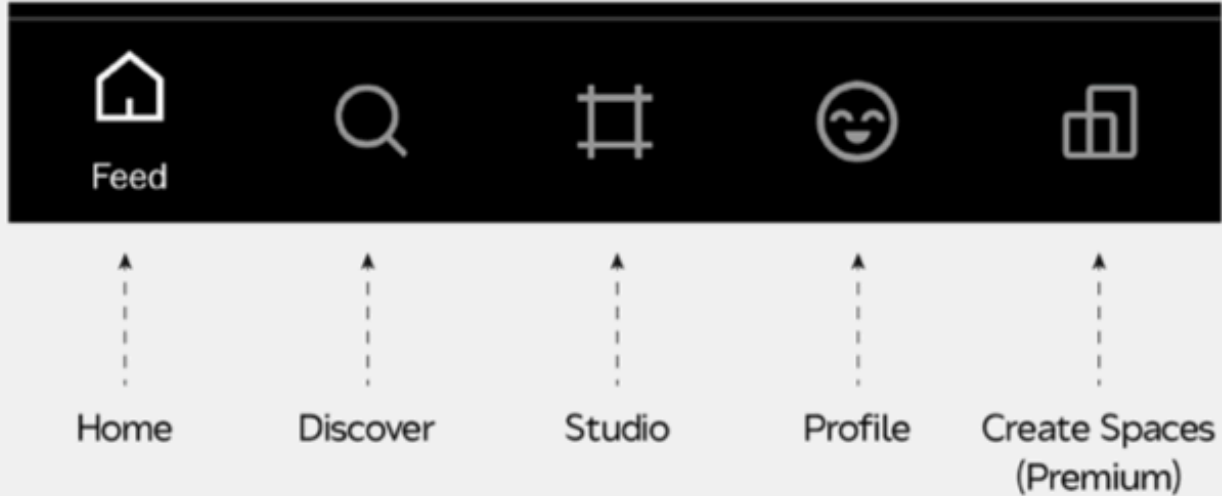


A step-by-step app guide will help you comprehend and explore all of the features of the app.

Use of Proper Iconography

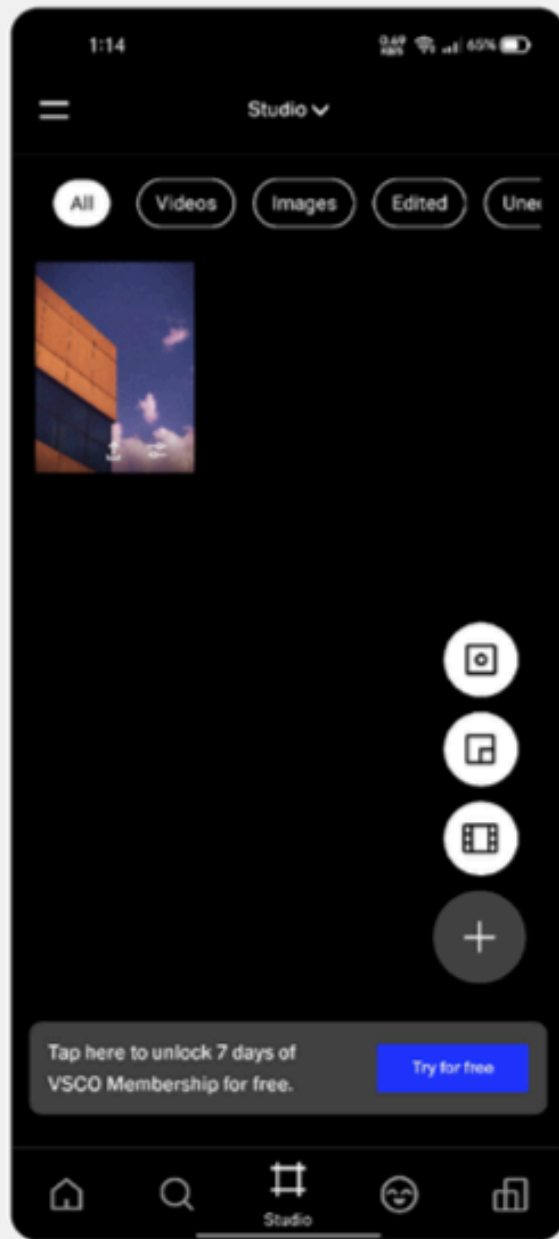


(CONFUSION IN ICONOGRAPHY)



(AFTER)





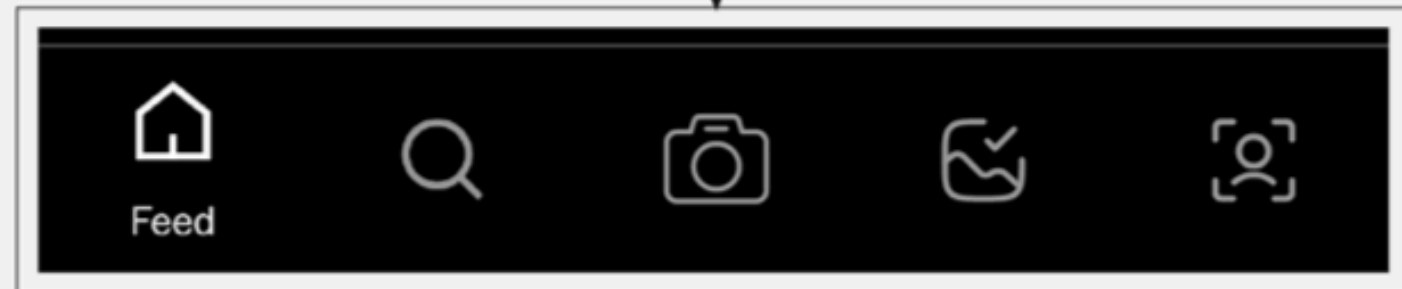
← The camera icon's current placement makes it a hidden feature and is confusing.

(BEFORE)



↑ Feature of 'create spaces' can be shifted to hamburger menu on home screen as it has less priority

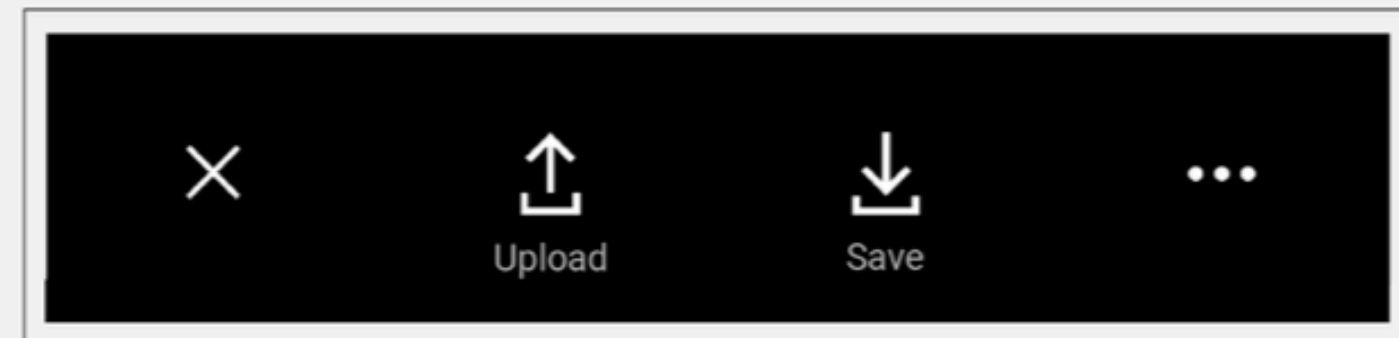
(AFTER)



(ICONS WITH NO LABELLING)



(AFTER)





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Thank You For Scrolling!