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Assignment: Extension on mobile UX patterns

Introduction

Nowadays, when it comes to mobile app design, identifying and understanding recurring user interface (or UI) patterns is essential for creating user-friendly experiences. This report aims to analyze three distinct UI patterns that are prevalent across two or more mobile applications. I use two apps for analysis for each pattern, so a total of 6 apps are examined. By examining screenshots and providing concise explanations, we will explore the practical application of these patterns and their significance in enhancing usability. Through this analysis, we will gain insights into how designers leverage these patterns to streamline interactions and improve user engagement, ultimately contributing to the success of the app.

Search button

Most of the applications available on both Android and IOS devices nowadays have a search button, and this can most easily be seen on social media or music player apps. The search button is usually located on the top or bottom of the application, often in the menu button navigation together with other features. Within the search button, the most recent search from the user is recorded, or some suggestions from the app's algorithm.

For this UI pattern, I will show two existing music player apps that have this feature: YouTube Music and ZingMP3 (which is a Vietnamese music player app).
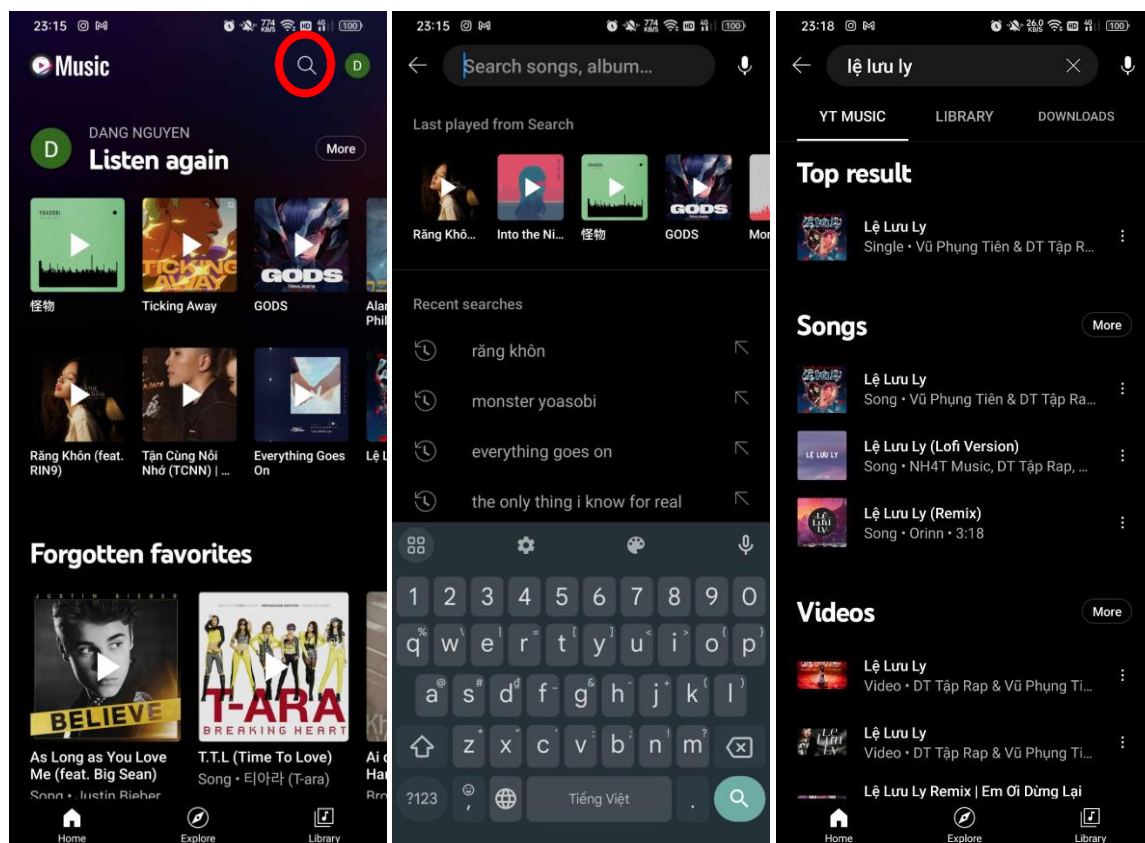

Figure 1. Search button on YouTube Music and its sequel and additional features.
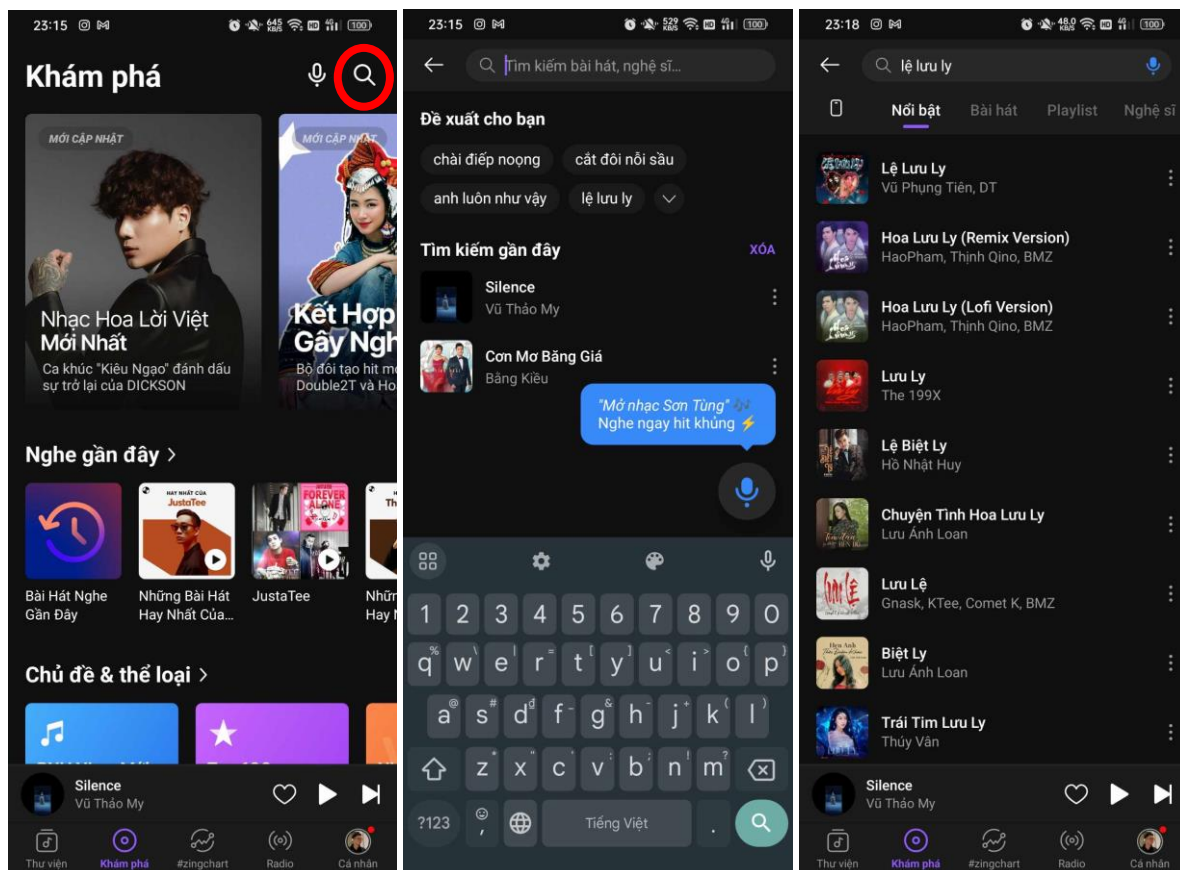
Figure 2. Search button on ZingMP3 and its sequel and additional features.

The search sequel is from left to right and this is applicable for both apps. Generally, the two apps are very similar in terms of how the search sequel works and some slight changes for the add-on features. In the first picture, the search button is located in the upper right corner of both apps and is indicated by the magnifying glass icon. By pressing it, it will lead to the search screen in Picture 2, with additional features like Recent searches (Tìm kiếm gần đây), Last played from Search, Suggestions for you (Đề xuất cho bạn), and a microphone icon indicating the speak-to-search feature. Finally, the app will give you the results screen (Picture 3), with additional features in the result navigation bar (which will be mentioned later in this report) as a form of filter like Top results, Songs, Playlists, Artists, etc.

Pros of the search button:

- It helps the users quickly find their wanted content or features based on the words or keywords provided.
- It keeps a search history for the users in case they still need to use it in the future.
- It learns the users' usage patterns, preferences, and search history to give them accurate recommendations and suggestions that might related to their needs.

Cons of the search button:

- It takes more screen real estate which might be a problem for smaller devices.
- Its ability to learn from the user and store their search history might cause privacy concerns and possible data breaches.

Navigation menu bar

Similar to the previous UI pattern, the navigation menu bar (or navigation bar) can be seen in most applications on mobile devices, especially on social media apps. The navigation bar is also located on the top or bottom of the application and has other features embedded in it. This UI pattern is important for mobile application development as this will help the users to quickly change from one activity (i.e. feature) to another.

For this UI pattern, I will show two existing social media apps that have this feature: Facebook and Instagram.
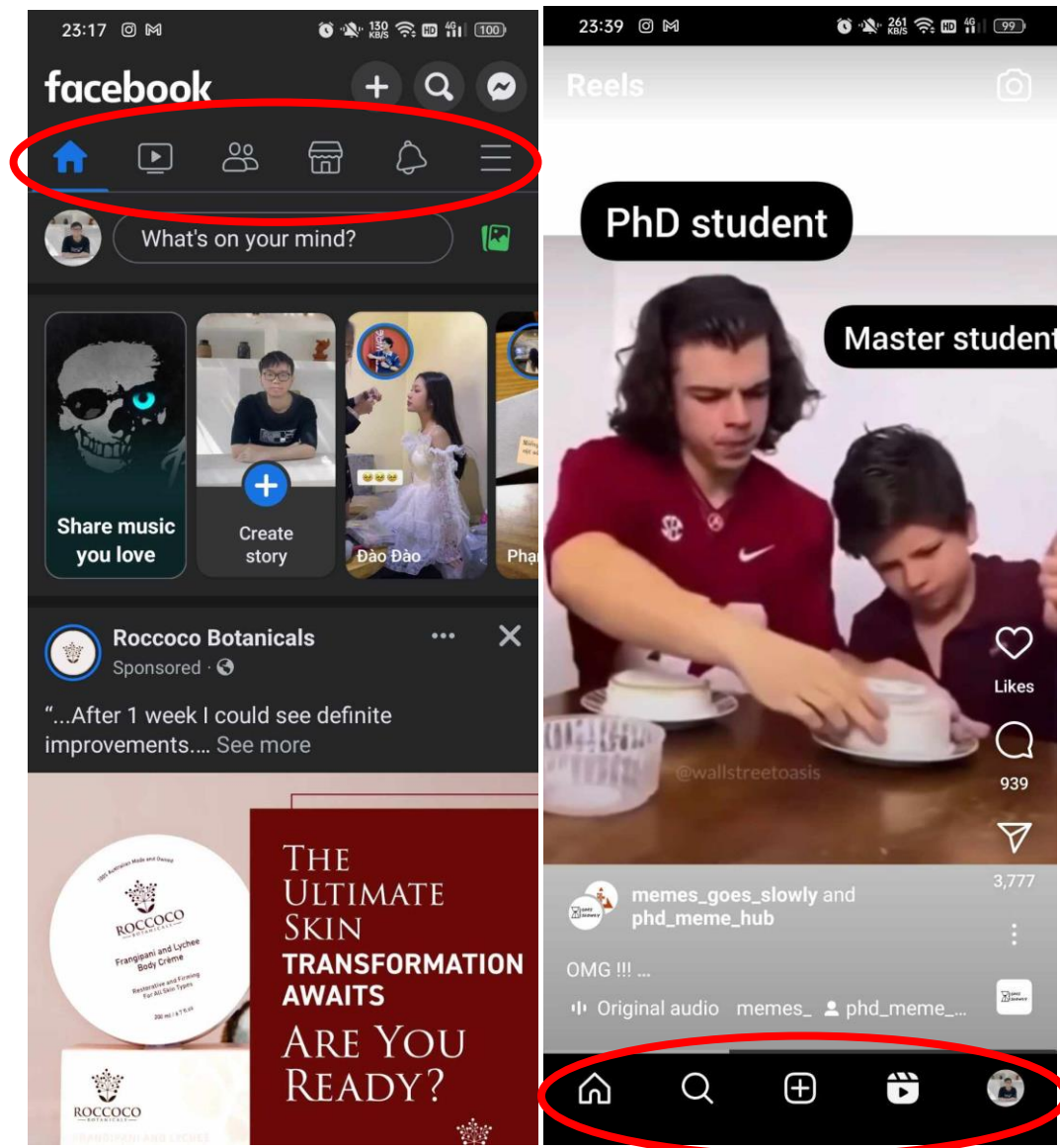

Figure 3. Navigation menu bar on Facebook (left picture) and Instagram (right picture).

For Facebook, the navigation menu bar is located at the top of the app while the Instagram one is located at the bottom. For Facebook, the blue-filled color icon will indicate which page the user is currently at, while Instagram uses the white-filled color icon. Other than that, their included features are pretty similar in essence, aside from some app-exclusive features like Facebook Marketplace.

Pros of the navigation menu bar:

- It indicates which activity/feature is currently on, thus increasing visibility.
- It includes most of the main features of the app for better convenience when navigating through the app

Cons of the navigation menu bar:

- It takes some screen real estate which might be a problem for smaller devices.
- It does not include all features of the app and is not customizable to your preference.

Read and Unread font

To indicate whether a message or an email was seen by the user or not, the font of the unread message/email tends to be bold and brighter for emphasis purposes. This UI pattern is most commonly used in email apps and messaging apps. For the email apps, the bright bold font applies only to the sender's name and the email's subject, while the content of the email remains in the original font.

For this UI pattern, I will show two existing email-sending apps that have this feature: Gmail and Outlook.
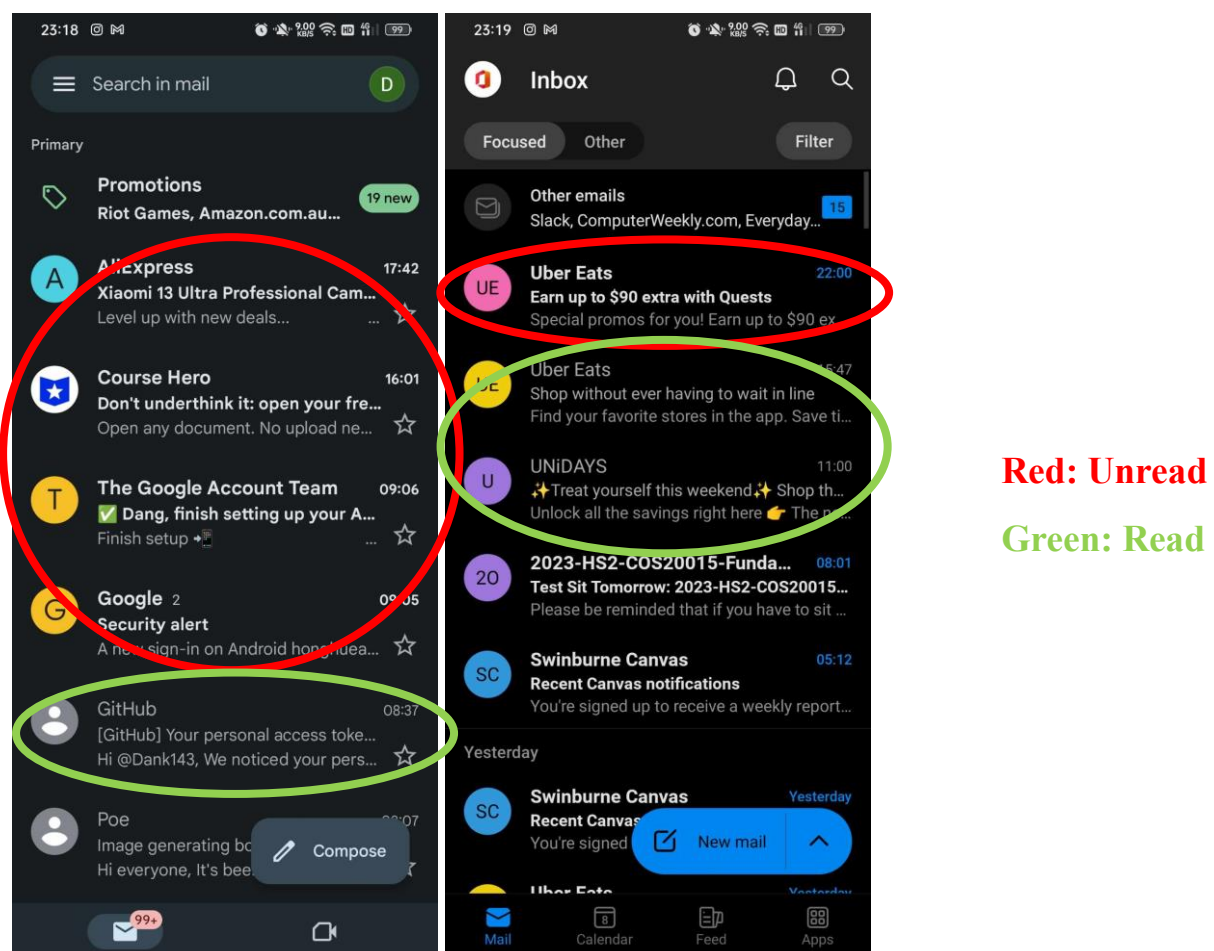

Figure 4. Read and unread font on Gmail (left picture) and Outlook (Right picture).

For both apps, all unread emails will have their senders' names and the emails' subjects in bold and brighter font, while the read ones are in the original font and dimmer. The only difference is that the Outlook app will have a bold, bright blue color font for the send time, while Gmail uses white color, which is similar to the sender's name and the email's subject.

Pros of the read and unread font:

- It helps users quickly identify and prioritize unread content based on the font.
- It helps users manage their emails more easily without remembering which emails they have already read

Cons of the read and unread font:

- It might not be beneficial for those who have eye-related problems.
- It might not be customizable based on the users' preferences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of three distinct UI patterns prevalent in multiple mobile apps has provided valuable insights into the principles of effective design in the world of mobile interfaces. These patterns, namely the **Search button**, Navigation menu bar, and **Read and Unread font**, have been illustrated through screenshots, highlighting their practical application and significance in improving user experiences. These patterns are fundamental for a better and more efficient UI, yet they still contain certain drawbacks that need to be considered before implementing them into the app.

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