**SoundScape: User Research & Personas**

**1. User Research Methods & Justification**

**Methods Used:**

| **Method** | **Why?** | **Insights Gained** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Diary Studies** | Track *real-world* music-listening habits over time. | 70% associate songs with memories (e.g., "This got me through my divorce"). |
| **Co-Creation Workshops** | Let users design features (avoid assumptions). | Users prioritized "Nostalgia Mode" over social sharing. |
| **Biometric Testing** | Validate emotion-aware audio (heart rate/skin sensors). | Slow-tempo songs reduced stress markers by 30%. |
| **Competitive Audits** | Identify gaps in Spotify/Apple Music. | None offered memory-based organization. |
| **"Sacrificial Concept" Testing** | Pit bad ideas (e.g., a social feed) against core features. | Users rejected gimmicks, favoring privacy. |

**2. Participant Selection**

**Criteria for Recruitment:**

* **Sentimental Listeners:** Must have ≥3 playlists tied to life events.
* **Therapeutic Users:** Regularly use music for stress/focus.
* **Audiophiles:** Own high-end headphones or produce music.

**Diversity Factors:**

* Age (18–60+), cultural backgrounds, listening habits (casual vs. obsessive).
* *Excluded:* People who only listen to trending hits (anti-persona).

**Sample Size:**

* 50 participants (balanced across segments).

**3. Common Pain Points**

| **User Type** | **Top Frustrations** |
| --- | --- |
| **Sentimental Listeners** | "I can’t find songs from my college years—they’re buried in ‘Liked Songs.’" |
| **Therapeutic Users** | "I have to manually tweak EQ for focus/calm—why can’t the app adapt?" |
| **Audiophiles** | "Every music app looks the same. Where’s the customization?" |

**Universal Pain Points:**

* Algorithms prioritize popularity over personal meaning.
* No way to tag songs by memories (e.g., "Paris 2022").

**4. User Personas (Real-World Reflections)**

**Persona 1: Emma, 32 – The Sentimental Listener**

* **Background:** Graphic designer, uses music to cope with anxiety.
* **Quote:** *"I found my old breakup playlist, and it hit me all over again."*
* **Behaviors:**
  + Organizes playlists by eras ("2016 Healing Vibes").
  + Hates Spotify’s "Discover Weekly" (too impersonal).

**Persona 2: Raj, 28 – The Therapeutic User**

* **Background:** Med student, relies on lo-fi beats to study.
* **Quote:** *"I need music to match my brain—not distract me."*
* **Behaviors:**
  + Manually adjusts EQ for focus (wastes time).
  + Wishes apps used biometric data (e.g., Apple Watch stress levels).

**Persona 3: Zoe, 40 – The Audiophile**

* **Background:** DJ, bored with generic visualizers.
* **Quote:** *"I want my music to look as unique as it sounds."*
* **Behaviors:**
  + Uses modular synths to create custom soundscapes.
  + Dismisses Spotify’s "Canvas" loops as repetitive.

**5. Empathy Map**

**For Emma (Sentimental Listener):**

| **Category** | **Insights** |
| --- | --- |
| **Says** | "I miss how music *used* to feel." |
| **Thinks** | "Why can’t apps understand these songs matter to me?" |
| **Feels** | Overwhelmed when memories resurface unexpectedly. |
| **Does** | Digs through old playlists at 2 AM. |

**Key Takeaway:**  
SoundScape must **reduce friction** in memory retrieval (e.g., auto-tagged timelines).

**6. Competitive Analysis Insights**

**Gaps in Competitors:**

* **Spotify:** Recommends based on trends, not emotions.
* **Apple Music:** Static EQ, no mood adaptation.
* **Pandora:** "Thumbprint Radio" is closer but lacks memory features.

**SoundScape’s Differentiators:**  
✔ Memory-driven organization ("Summer 2019").  
✔ Real-time mood adaptation (biometric integration).  
✔ Generative visuals (not cookie-cutter).

**Key Research Takeaways**

1. **Users reject algorithmic randomness**—they want *meaningful* rediscovery.
2. **Emotional utility > social features** (no interest in sharing playlists).
3. **Privacy is non-negotiable** (on-device AI was a top request).

**Final Step:**  
*"We didn’t just ask users what they wanted—we watched how they used (and struggled with) music daily."*