

## **Audible Product Teardown**

### **1. Goal**

#### **Practice structured teardown to sharpen product judgment**

- Objective: identify core users, evaluate UX & engagement, map business model, surface improvements.
- Success metric: produce structured, insight-driven teardown (not actual business results).

### **2. About the Product**

#### **Audible dominates global audiobooks (~60% share), but faces pressure from Spotify and other entrants.**

- Overview: Subsidiary of Amazon; audiobooks, podcasts, exclusive originals.

Audible started as a product in 1990s, then was taken over by Amazon around 2008. It is like an online library, to which you subscribe and get one credit per month, which you can use for purchasing a book and keep it with you forever.

- Users: busy professionals, students, multitaskers; also authors & narrators (supply side).

Everybody wants to be productive and with the busy life of today, people don't have time to read books even when they would want to. So, listening to a book while doing their chores or while commuting seems like a beautiful solution.

- JTBD:
  - Core: "Read a book / gain knowledge while multitasking."
  - Related: commute, chores, productivity.
  - Emotional: feel productive, smart use of time.

- Market: ~60% share in global audiobooks; growing ~25% CAGR; India = high growth.

Audible is a market leader worldwide with other players trying to snatch a share of this growing market. The audio consumption market is surging like anything and the market is expanding to the demand for regional or local content (books or podcasts) and also content translated to such languages. Also, there has been an increase in supply too due to the advent of AI narration, however, skepticism persists over its acceptance and loss of human touch in the tone of narration.

- Competitors: Spotify, Apple Books, Google Play Books, Blinkist.
- Trends: surge in audio consumption, AI narration, regional/localized demand.
- Business model: subscription (1 credit/month, keep forever); evolving royalty model tied to user activity.

Subscription based. Keep content forever. One credit per month. However, the new evolving model boils down to this: each Audible subscriber is assigned a “value,” based on their subscription plan, their purchases and activity on the app. This value is then divided between the titles they consume each month. For the credit-free titles, a royalty will only be paid if a certain consumption threshold is reached (varying depending on the length of the book). The new model could potentially help Audible better compete with competitors, particularly Spotify. It also might translate into users spending more time on the app.

### 3. UX & Engagement

**Onboarding is smooth with free trials, but weak discovery after credits risks churn.**

- Steps: Amazon SSO → free trial → choose credit → sample → first listen.
- Strength: risk-free trial + cross-sell from Amazon.
- Friction: limited visibility of free/credit-free titles → drop-off risk.

Onboarding is smooth and the trial offers from multiple sources (providing 2-3 months free) encourages people to try the app. However, once the trial is over or the free credit is used or even when people are generally browsing for titles, it becomes really difficult to find titles that can be listened to for free. It may increase the churn rate at this step.

**Core listening loop is sticky via credits, but recs lack freshness and regional depth.**

- Browse/search → sample → listen → review/share → queue next.
- Engagement hooks: credits, recommendations, badges, collections
- Retention: library building, subscriptions, personalized suggestions.
- Pain points: repetitive recs, limited Hindi/regional content, hard to find free content after credit use.

The badges and collections are rarely used and hardly seen being shared on social media. But they do provide a nudge to keep listening. An incoming credit definitely keeps the user

hooked but the recommendations are not up to the mark. Sometimes, the same titles are repeated and it becomes increasingly bad if the user is listening to a language that doesn't have many titles in the audible library. Also, one of the points of hard churn can be when the user has read his free credit purchased book and there is time in new credit being loaded in the account. Here the user would want to easily search for titles that can be listened to for free but that doesn't happen easily. There are no filters like this. Also, there are no filters or direct ways to search for books of a particular language. It is too deep down the UX that is almost impossible to discover.

*To validate observed UX issues, I analyzed ~30k Google Play reviews. Four recurring themes emerged, each mapped to recommendations and metrics.*

<b>Issue from 30k Reviews</b>	<b>Recommendation (with Metric to Track)</b>
<b>Stability &amp; Performance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>64% of stability mentions negative</li> <li>Crashes, background playback errors, cold start delays</li> </ul>	<b>Prioritize reliability as a roadmap theme.</b> <i>Track: crash-free sessions %, cold-start time, page load P95, background playback correctness.</i> <i>Goal: ↑ stability → ↑ NPS &amp; retention.</i>
<b>Pricing &amp; Entitlements Confusing</b> <i>Users unclear if title is “included,” needs credit, or purchase</i>	<b>Clarify pricing at decision points.</b> <i>Inline badges: ✓ Included with Plus / ① Requires Credit / ₹ Requires Purchase.</i> <i>Add tooltip explaining Credits vs. Plus.</i> <i>Track: trial→paid conversion rate, refund requests.</i>
<b>Offline Listening Unreliable</b> <i>Downloads vanish or need re-download</i> <i>Sleep timer unreliable</i>	<b>Fix downloads &amp; offline UX.</b> <i>Persistent downloads, visible state (“Ready to play offline”).</i> <i>Reliable sleep timer.</i> <i>Track: % successful offline playbacks, listening hours/day (esp. commuters).</i>
<b>Discovery Weak &amp; Frustrating</b> <i>Poor filters (length, narrator, availability)</i> <i>Geo-restricted titles surface</i>	<b>Improve discovery &amp; filters.</b> <i>Add filters (availability, length, narrator, series). – Suppress or demote geo-restricted items.</i> <i>Track: audiobook starts/session, daily listens, satisfaction (CSAT).</i>

#### 4. Growth & Distribution

**Growth fueled by Amazon ecosystem and app offers, but real retention is all about habit formation.**

- Acquisition: Amazon Prime bundling, Kindle integration, app store ads, influencer partnerships.
- Growth loops: reviews → credibility, free trial → conversion, collections → repeat listening.
- Conversion funnel: awareness → free trial → first listen → paid sub → upgrade.
- Key metrics: trial → paid conversion, daily listening mins, churn %, LTV, new audiobook starts.

The above-mentioned acquisition points are definitely great but the offers on apps (Gpay, PayTM, Cred, etc.) really make it easier for a customer to try the app.

## **5. Strategic Lens**

**Strength lies in exclusive catalog + Amazon lock-in, but credit gating and limited regional content are key risks.**

### **Strengths:**

- Market leadership (60% share), Amazon brand equity.
- Large exclusive catalog; seamless ecosystem integration.

### **Weaknesses:**

- Credit gating → friction for casual users.

Credit-based access creates friction for casual users. While the subscription lowers entry barriers, once users exhaust their monthly credit, free content is harder to find, risking churn for light listeners.

- Limited non-English/regional/translated content.

This is a potential market that must be tapped into as early as possible. It is very easy to listen to anything in our native language while doing other work. A foreign language needs more effort.

### **Opportunities:**

- AI features (summaries, captions, personalization).

Like in Google Maps, there can be a short summarized section of reviews telling the highlights of the reviews. Also, a filter on reviews basis what people talk about like tone, story, narration, etc., so as to make it easier for the user to read reviews that matter to him.

Recommendation engine can be improved which is personalized but also nudges the user to discover new content and not bombard it with similar content.

- Expansion in emerging markets with localized pricing/content.

#### **Threats:**

- Spotify's aggressive entry with bundled audio.
- Competing attention from podcasts/music.
- Creator pushback on royalties.

The market is a growing one and new players are coming in and hence increasing competition for space. Apps like spotify can be a big challenge as the competition for audible is not only books but music too.

**Moat:** Amazon ecosystem lock-in, exclusive content, credit & own forever model.

#### **6. Potential Improvements (POV)**

**Surfacing free content, adding flexible subscription plans, AI-powered review discovery and integration with Amazon Prime can improve retention and engagement.**

##### **Fix discovery & personalization, experiment with flexible plans**

- UX Fix: Surface credit-free content → ↑ daily listens, ↓ churn.
- Feature: AI-generated short reviews → ↑ discovery & engagement.
- Model: Flexible subscription (annual, 6-month, tiered credits) → ↑ retention, ARPU.
- GTM: Regional content partnerships, educational tie-ups → ↑ new users.

##### **Business Model Tweaks**

- **Flexible subscription plans:** In high-growth, high-competition countries like India, monthly plans lead to quick churn as users trial and drop. Annual or 6-month plans reduce churn, lock in revenue, and spread CAC over a longer horizon → increasing LTV.

- **Prime integration:** Audible currently does not leverage Amazon Prime's ~200M global user base. Offering small benefits (extra credit, or limited monthly free listens) could dramatically increase Prime to Audible conversion and strengthen retention.

## **7. Reflection (Meta)**

**Applying JTBD, funnels, and SWOT highlighted gaps in metrics and user journey visualization.**

- Frameworks applied: JTBD, funnel, SWOT.
- Struggled with: mapping actual metrics, visualizing user journey.
- Next teardown: add real user interviews + deeper growth loop analysis.