



# Development and Evaluation of a Model-Based UI Prototyping Experimentation Approach



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## **Abstract**

User Interface (UI) is one of the essential aspects of software applications since it associates end-users with the applications' functionality. Therefore, the software is successful from the end user's perspective if it facilitates good interaction between users and the system. However, the traditional UI prototyping techniques do not provide an easy exploration of alternative designs or efficient evaluation of user feedback. Hence, for obtaining user feedback, UI experimentation can be an effective approach. UI experimentation involves creating different UI variants and testing them with users to gather feedback on their usability and functionality. This process can help identify and address any issues or areas for improvement before the final product is released. By incorporating user feedback into the design process, software developers can increase the likelihood of creating a successful product that meets the needs and expectations of their target audience. Currently, UI prototyping and experimentation are developed in a non-systematic manner, leading to inefficient and inconsistent results. Therefore, a model-based approach to UI prototyping and experimentation is necessary based on a predefined model.

In this thesis, we conduct design science research to develop a UI prototyping tool tailored for User Experience (UX) designers with the provision to conduct UI experiments. This tool will give designers valuable insights into user preferences and behaviors, allowing them to refine and optimize their designs iteratively. In the first step, we identify the problem of UI prototyping and experimentation in the software development process. Second, we suggest conceptualizing a solution by developing Design Principles (DPs). Third, we build a prototyping tool using the LEAN development cycle, a popular methodology in software development, allowing us to develop and iterate quickly. Fourth, we evaluate the prototype through reviews and usability testing using a user study with 15 participants. Fifth, we gain design knowledge from the feedback of the participants of our user study, which suggest further iterations of the DPs. Finally, we conclude that the developed tool and the proposed DPs can significantly improve the effectiveness and efficiency of UX designers in creating successful software products. At the same time, the tool can also enable early user feedback, crucial in today's rapidly evolving market, impacting academic and practical applications.



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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

This chapter aims to provide an introduction to the main topics and objectives of this master thesis. First, we present the motivation behind our work (see section 1.1), highlighting the importance of UI design in software development and the challenges that arise in this context. Then, we define three problem statements (see section 1.2) related to UI prototyping and UI experimentation. Next, we explain our research approach (see section 1.3) methodology and define the Research Question (RQ) that guides our investigation. After that, we describe our solution approach (see section 1.4), consisting of a systematic study using an iterative development cycle. Finally, we outline the structure of the thesis (see section 1.5), providing an overview of the main chapters and their contents.

### **1.1 Motivation**

Over the last decade, software development had a tremendous impact with increasing customer demand and requirements [1], further increasing product complexity and ambiguity, significantly impacting software development. As a result, it is increasingly more work for developers to assess user requirements and opinions, leading to biases towards certain requirements and overlooking user needs. Therefore, to meet these requirements, developers have devised various techniques to obtain early user feedback from potential customers [2]. At the same time, traditional UI prototyping tools rely on manual and time-consuming processes, making it difficult to obtain early user feedback in the product development phase [3]. Therefore, the developers have devised different techniques to meet this requirement criteria, including new approaches to UI prototyping.

Early user feedback from potential customers in the industry is crucial for creating successful software products, given the growing market uncertainties and consumers' desire for integrated solutions to their issues [4]. Therefore, giving users a “partially functioning”

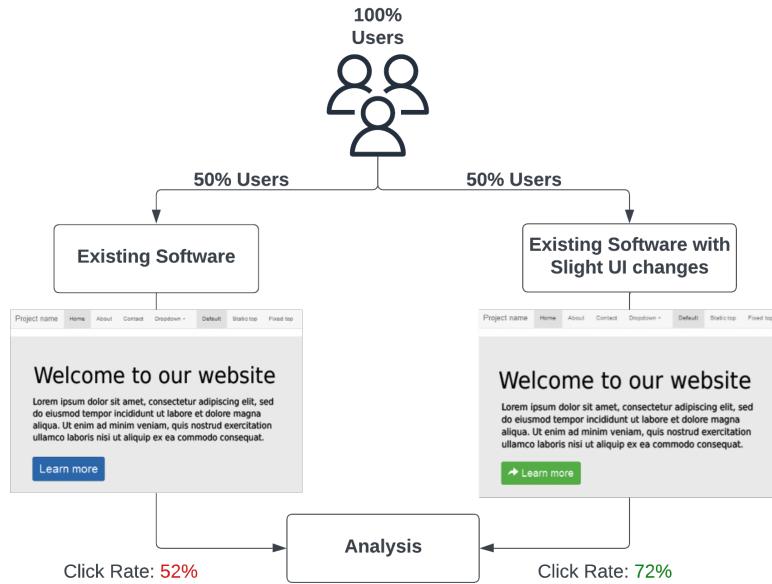


Fig. 1.1 UI Experimentation Overview [2]

system is the most excellent method to determine their requirements and suggestions [5]. This ensures that the developers with high uncertainties in the early product development phase can improve the product by testing the underlying assumptions [6]. Developers can use this feedback to validate the most critical assumptions about the software product. This validation can decide whether to add, remove or update a feature [7].

This process of determining the best fit for the product through user feedback is called UI experimentation or split testing. In split testing (see figure 1.1), the UX designers design different UI variants (e.g., buttons with different colors), and the developer integrates these variants and assigns them to a distinct group of users. As per some evaluation criteria (e.g., more clicks on the button), the variant with better results is deployed for the entire population or all the users. Software products have shown the benefits of conducting experiments in many use cases with incremental product improvement [8]. There has been an increase in interest in the types of experimentation that can take place in product development. So, an experiment can be valuable when it improves the software products. However, many UI experimentation techniques [8, 7] usually involve only quantitative analysis, which has several disadvantages. One of the main drawbacks of using only quantitative analysis is that it fails to provide insights into the underlying reasons for user behavior [9]. For example, a high bounce rate on a particular page could be due to several factors, such as poor navigation, slow loading times, or unappealing design [10]. Without qualitative feedback, it can be challenging to pinpoint the exact cause of the problem and make the necessary improvements [11]. Based on these identified challenges, we define problem statements in the next section.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The motivation section shows some gaps in software development between the developers and the designers. This section aims to highlight the three problems that arise during software development, their corresponding problem statements and a brief solution.

**Problem 1:** Developing software products that meet customers' needs is crucial for software companies as it is challenging to determine user requirements [7]. UX designers face a significant problem as they must design software products catering to users' expectations and preferences. However, it is difficult to know whether the designed product will meet users' expectations without a reliable way to test user responses. This challenge is worsened by user requirements and preferences constantly changing, requiring designers to iterate on their designs. Therefore, finding a solution to test designs and gather user feedback to build software products that meet users' requirements is necessary.

**Problem 2:** Most often, the software application collects data from the experiments. Some data is used in qualitative analysis, while others are in quantitative analysis. Many companies fail to reap the benefits of using both qualitative and quantitative analysis [9]. Similarly, not all the data is used in the analysis phase reducing the software applications to improve based on customer feedback [12]. Therefore, finding a solution that combines qualitative and quantitative data analysis is necessary.

**Problem 3:** The traditional iterative development approach is based on designing, prototyping, and testing multiple software product versions before arriving at a final version that meets the users' requirements [7]. However, this approach can be time-consuming and inefficient in UI prototyping and experimentation as this approach can result in biased decision-making, where developers may ignore valuable feedback from users, resulting in suboptimal results. Therefore, finding a solution for a more efficient and effective approach to UI prototyping and experimentation that overcomes these challenges and ensures optimal design choices is necessary.

## 1.3 Research Approach

The problems identified in the previous section highlight the need for a research approach that can help address them effectively. Therefore, in this section, we define RQs and highlight our research approach. We also define the meanings of Design Requirement (DR), Design Principle (DP), and Design Feature (DF), which are used in further sections. Our research approach aims to provide a systematic way of developing software products that meet customer needs while minimizing the risk of developing features that may not be useful to end users.

**RQ1:** *What are the most effective techniques and methods for incorporating qualitative and quantitative user feedback into the design process of UI prototypes to improve UX?*

**RQ2:** *How to develop a software tool suitable for UX designers to conduct experiments on UI prototypes iteratively?*

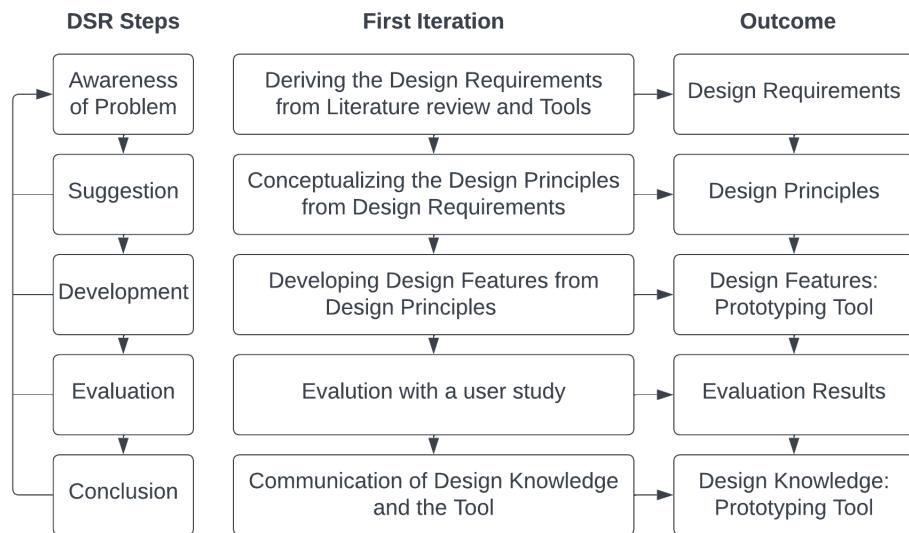


Fig. 1.2 Design Science Research Cycle [13]

Design Science Research (DSR) aims to provide prescriptive knowledge about the design of artifacts, such as software techniques, models, or concepts [13]. It follows a rigorous problem identification, solution design, implementation, and evaluation process, aiming to produce useful and effective artifacts that address real-world problems [14]. The approach combines rigorous scientific methods and practical considerations to ensure that the artifacts developed are theoretically sound and useful in practice. It is an iterative approach involving a problem-solving cycle of developing a solution, evaluating it, and refining it based on

feedback. In our research, we will conduct the *first* iteration (see figure 1.2) of DSR to develop and evaluate a solution that addresses the identified problems and answer the RQs.

The DSR approach consists of five steps (see figure 1.2), starting with problem awareness, where we define the problem and gain an understanding of it through studying relevant literature and tools. The outcome of this step is the identification of DRs. In the second step, we concretize the DRs to develop DPs that serve as guidelines for designing the artifact. In the third step, we create DFs that should be available in the artifact and build the tool. In the fourth step, we evaluate the tool through a user study to gather feedback and results. Finally, in the fifth step, we improve our tool and re-iterate the DPs based on the feedback. Through this iterative approach, we aim to develop an effective and user-friendly UI prototyping tool that addresses the problems identified in software development.

**Design Requirements:** In DSR, DRs refer to the general, high-level requirements that a design must meet to succeed [15]. These requirements are typically derived from the RQs identified as relevant to the problem. These DRs provide a broad framework for the design process and help to ensure that the design solution addresses the key issues and challenges identified in the research problem. They can also help guide the evaluation of the design solution and ensure that the solution is grounded in the DPs identified as necessary.

**Design Principles:** In DSR, DPs refer to specific, detailed guidelines that a design must follow to be successful [15]. These principles are derived from the abstract DRs identified as relevant to the research problem and provide more specific guidance on how the design should be implemented. DPs can also be defined as the codification of our knowledge during the design study while identifying the DRs. Concrete DPs are essential in DSR as they help ensure that the design solution meets the needs and goals of the research problem and is grounded in the DPs we identified as necessary.

**Design Features:** In DSR, DFs refer to the characteristics of the artifacts or solutions created through the process [15]. These DFs provide a means of evaluating the solution's effectiveness and can serve as guidelines for others who may want to adopt or modify the solution. DFs typically include both functional and non-functional aspects of the solution. Functional features relate to the specific capabilities and functionalities that the solution provides whereas, non-functional features relate to characteristics such as usability, scalability, etc. By explicitly specifying these DFs, DSR researchers can ensure that their solutions are aligned with the stakeholders' needs and meet the necessary standards of quality and effectiveness.

## 1.4 Solution Overview

After identifying the research approach in the previous section, we now present the solution overview of our approach using the LEAN development cycle [16]. Normally, the designers should be able to create UI prototypes and experiments on their own with a set of users. Since we do not have a large set of users for testing the prototypes, we use supervised task-based usability testing [17]. The fundamental principle of task-based usability testing is to have the users attempt to use the prototypes to do certain activities or tasks (e.g., Locate a comedy movie) and get feedback (e.g., the time required for the task to be completed by the user). We propose to use a no-code approach to achieve this. This approach helps to have a UI for the designers to understand, develop, and create experiments and tasks with the software prototypes [18]. So, the designers would be able to create the UI prototypes and their variants, assign them to the users in an experiment, get feedback from the users and decide on the best prototype without writing any code. At the same time, the no-code has become more accessible for model-driven development [19]. Therefore, we plan to create models for the UI prototypes and have the feasibility for creating experiments and tasks. Because of using the models, it is easier to store the prototypes in the database and conduct experiments with the users.

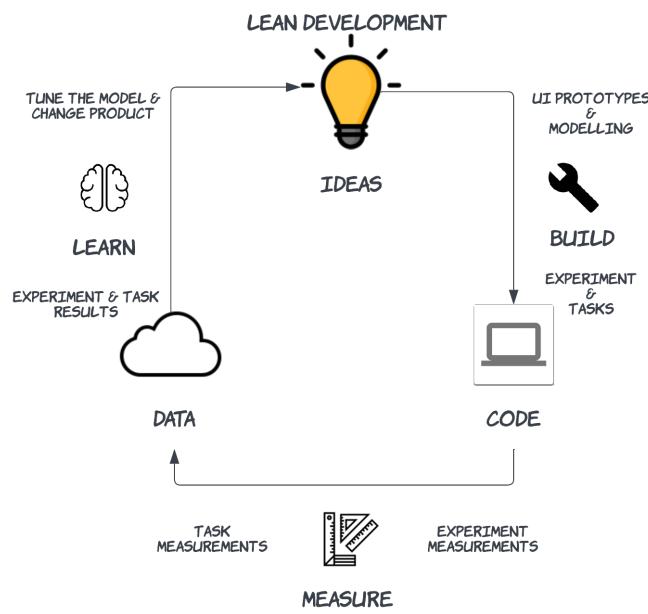


Fig. 1.3 LEAN Development Technique

In our solution, we adopt the LEAN development technique (see figure 1.3) for development as it is used to develop user-friendly products [20]. While this technique can be used for every product, there are also approaches specific to software products. LEAN development technique can be divided into the Build, Measure, and Learn phases.

In the *(1) building* phase, we develop the models for our approach and build a UI prototyping tool. We then add provisions to create UI experiments, user tasks and custom questionnaires to collect user feedback. Additionally, we include a provision to assign user participants to the UI variant in an experiment.

In the *(2) measurement* phase, after the completion of the experiment, we collect both the user feedback and the qualitative questionnaire results. Therefore, the feedback will be both qualitative and quantitative.

In the *(3) learning* phase, we analyze the experiment results and determine the better variant based on the feedback collected. Based on the findings, we will refine our model and develop the new UI prototypes. Our approach using the LEAN development cycle allows us to conduct iterative UI experimentation, leading to improved UI designs that better meet user needs.

As per figure 1.3, we complete one cycle of iteration and start a new one with the updated prototype.

## 1.5 Thesis Structure

The structure of our thesis is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of our research and solution approach. The (1) *Introduction* chapter includes a detailed analysis of the problem statement, motivation, research question, and our research and solution approach.

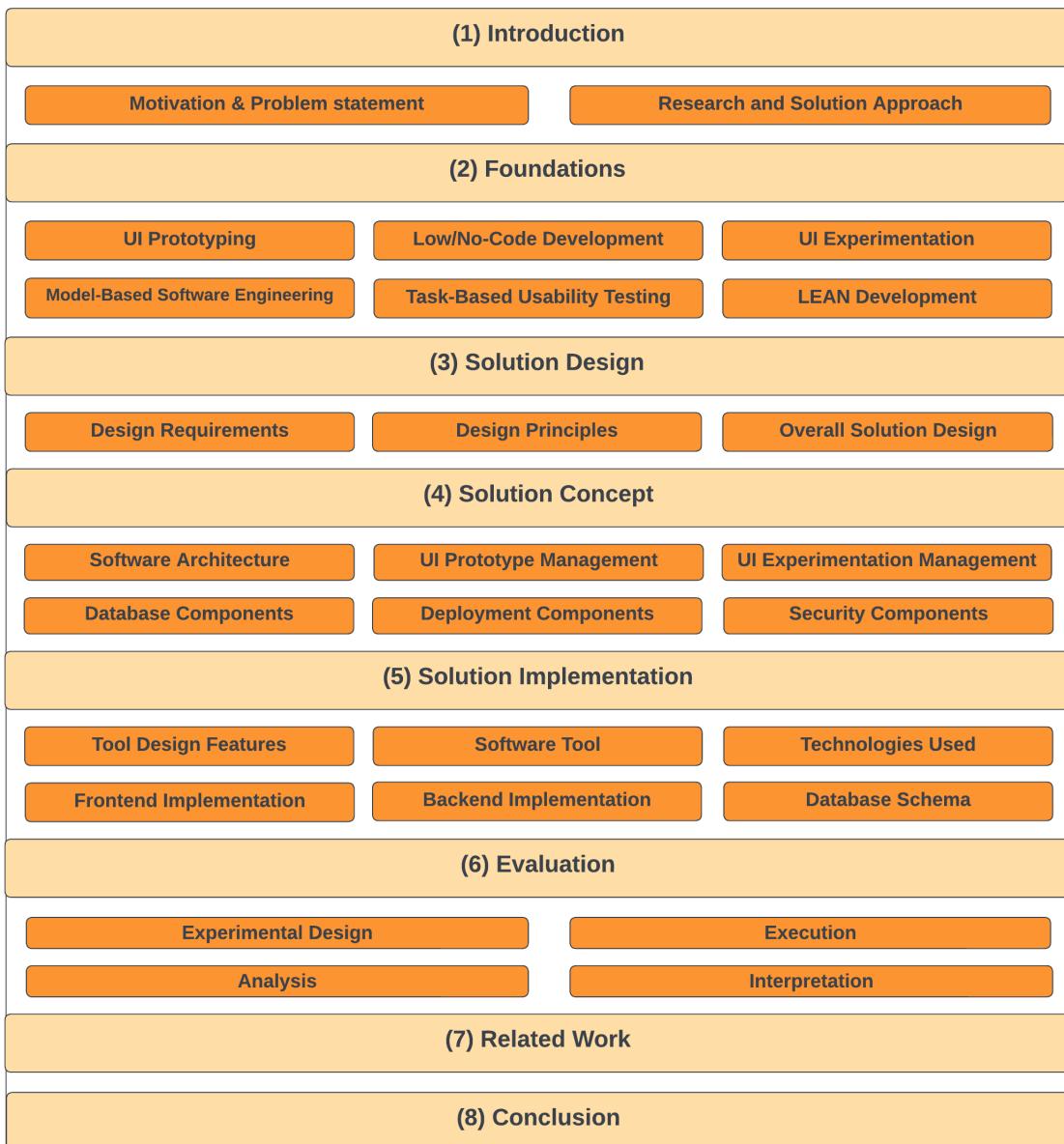


Fig. 1.4 Thesis Structure

Next, the (2) *Foundations* chapter is used to gain the knowledge required to understand the scope of our work, which includes UI prototyping, low/no-code development approach, model-based software engineering, task-based usability testing, UI experimentation, and

LEAN development. The (3) *Solution Design* chapter outlines the DRs, DPs, and overall solution design. Similarly, the (4) *Solution Concept* chapter presents the software architecture, UI prototype management, UI experimentation management, persistence components, deployment components, and security components. Next, the (5) *Solution Implementation* chapter provides detailed insights into the tool DFs, explains the software tool we developed, technologies used, frontend and backend implementation, and database schema. Next, the (6) *Evaluation* chapter showcases the user study, experimental design, execution, analysis, and interpretation. Next, the (7) *Related Work* chapter discusses current tools and state-of-the-art technologies and compares them with our DRs. Finally, the (8) *Conclusion* chapter summarizes our work, future work, and research contributions.



# Chapter 2

## Foundations

In the previous chapter, we defined the problems for software development and presented an overview of our solution. Consequently, this chapter is built upon the existing knowledge and theories developed in the field of Software Engineering. This chapter provides an overview of the relevant literature and identifies the key concepts and theories necessary for the research. Firstly, we discuss *UI Prototyping* (see section 2.1) explaining the creation of a UI simulation and testing for refining the design ideas and user requirements. Then, we explain *Low/No-code development approach* (see section 2.2) and citizen development of the software products. Then we describe the *Model-Based Software Engineering (MBSE)* approaches and meta-models (see section 2.3). We clarify *Task-Based Usability Testing* (see section 2.4) for reviewing and refining the product. Later we define the concept of *UI Experimentation* (see section 2.5) and *A/B testing*. Finally, we explain the *LEAN software development process* (see section 2.6), explaining the *Build, Measure and Learn* phases.

### 2.1 UI Prototyping

UI prototyping is a valuable tool for designers, allowing them to quickly and easily test and refine UI designs [21]. UI prototyping creates a simplified UI version to test and iterate on design ideas before building the final product. It also helps gather feedback from users and stakeholders [22] and identify any usability issues before investing significant time and resources into the final product. From paper to Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) code, everything could be a prototype, including various techniques like Paper Prototypes<sup>1</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup>**Paper prototyping:** It is a method of creating a preliminary version of a UI using paper and pen.

Wireframes<sup>2</sup>, Mockups<sup>3</sup>, and Interactive Prototypes<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, UI Prototypes can be classified as *High-Fidelity* and *Low-Fidelity* prototypes. Next, we compare high and low-fidelity prototyping based on its advantages and disadvantages [23].

**Low-Fidelity Prototypes:** *Low-fidelity* prototypes (see figure 2.1) usually have limited functions and little interaction prototyping effort. They mainly focus on explaining concepts, design alternatives, and screen layouts. Storyboard presentations, cards, proof-of-concept prototypes, paper prototypes, etc., come under this category. For instance, paper-based prototypes are simple, low-fidelity mockups that can be quickly and cheaply created using paper and pencil (see figure 2.1a). In this case, the UI designers use simple text, lines, and forms to hand-draw concepts. Instead of aesthetics, the focus is on speed and creative ideas. To simulate user flows (as shown in figure 2.1b), designers lay paper screens on the floor, table, or pinned to a board. Therefore, these prototypes emphasize communicating, educating, and informing rather than training, testing, and codification [24]. The advantages of low-fidelity prototypes are rapid development, lower development cost, addressing issues, and usefulness for a proof-of-concept [23]. Similarly, the disadvantages include limited error checking, difficulty with usability testing, navigation, flow limitation, etc.

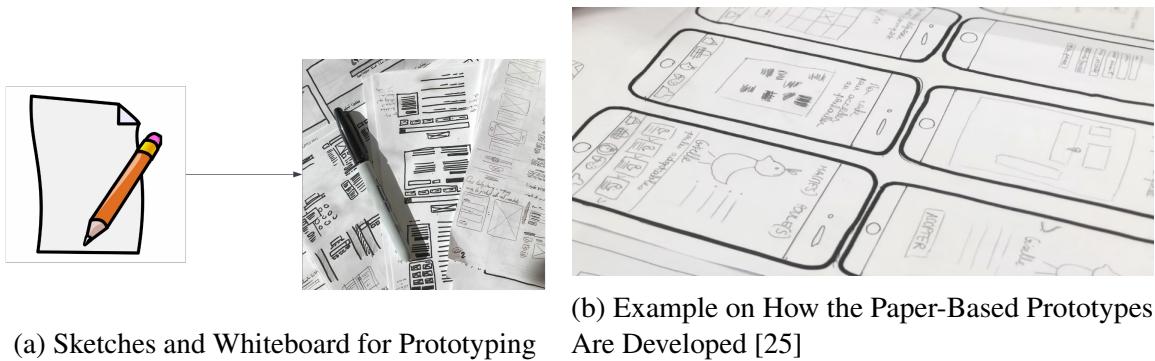


Fig. 2.1 Low-Fidelity Prototyping

**High-Fidelity Prototypes:** Contrary to low-fidelity prototypes, *high-fidelity* prototypes (see figure 2.2) have full functionality and focus on the logical flow between screens and the user models of the system [26]. These prototypes are detailed, interactive mockups of a UI

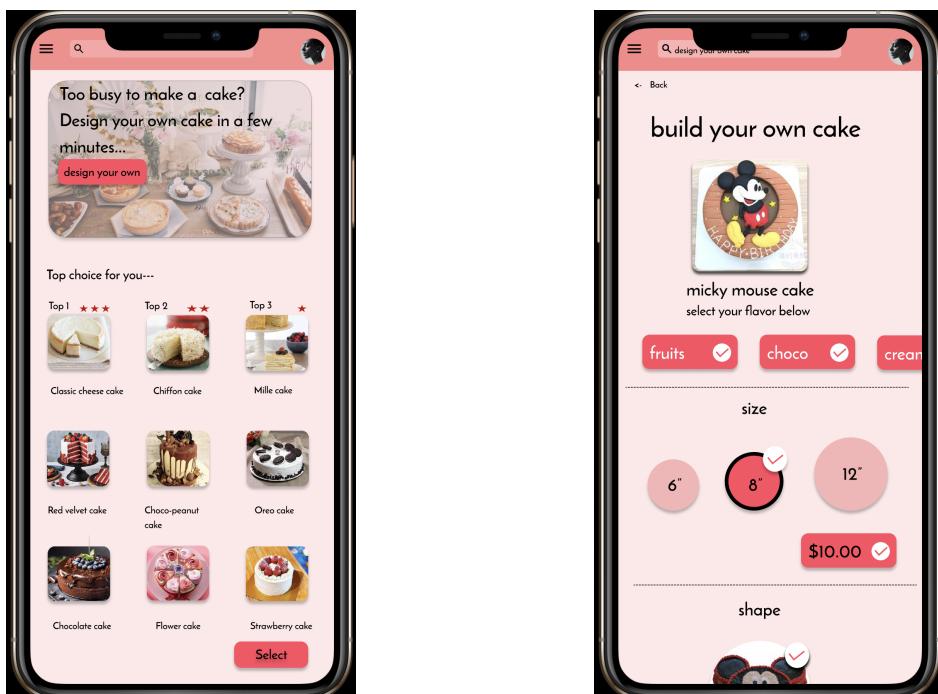
<sup>2</sup>**Wireframe:** A wireframe is an essential visual representation of the layout and structure of a product, showing the placement of text, images, and buttons.

<sup>3</sup>**Mockup:** A mockup is a more detailed version of a wireframe, typically created in color and with more realistic graphics and images.

<sup>4</sup>**Interactive Prototype:** An interactive prototype is a fully functional representation of a product, design, or feature.

designed to mimic the look and feel of the final product closely. High-fidelity prototypes are often created using interactive prototyping tools, which allow designers to create realistic, interactive mockups of UI designs [27]. These tools typically include a library of UI elements and templates and the ability to create interactive transitions and animations. The users can operate these prototypes, and the developers can collect information from the users through measurements. Some advantages of high-fidelity prototypes are that they are user-driven, used for navigation and tests, and can also serve as a marketing tool for attracting potential customers [23]. Therefore, these prototypes are typically more realistic and interactive than those created using other tools but may require more time and resources to develop and maintain. At the same time, high-fidelity prototypes allow designers and developers to test and refine complex UI concepts and interactions, ensuring the final product is user-friendly and practical.

Overall, low-fidelity prototypes and high-fidelity prototypes are both valuable tools in the design process, and the choice between the two will depend on the specific needs and goals of the project.



(a) Prototyping Page of a Cake Company

(b) Prototyping Page to Customize a Cake

Fig. 2.2 High-Fidelity prototype: Model-Based UI Prototyping [28]

UI prototyping has been an evaluation and testing technique according to User-Centered Design (UCD) methodology since the 1990s [29]. The evaluation of prototypes by users provides crucial feedback in iterative approaches for Information Technology (IT) project

management, especially agile methodologies [30]. Therefore, to build an exemplary UI, a company can use this approach: develop a preliminary version of the UI, test it with people, and make as many revisions as possible (without building the actual software) [21].

Next, figure 2.3 shows a cycle representing the iterative development with prototypes. The designers start the process by developing the UI prototypes, which the stakeholders (e.g., customers and product managers) review. The UI prototypes are refined from the feedback received, reiterating the cycle. Therefore, designing UI prototypes enables designers and stakeholders to communicate more effectively. Similarly, an interactive prototype helps visualize design concepts and communicate new requirements and expectations about a prospective system. Iterative design requires multiple updates to the design's execution.

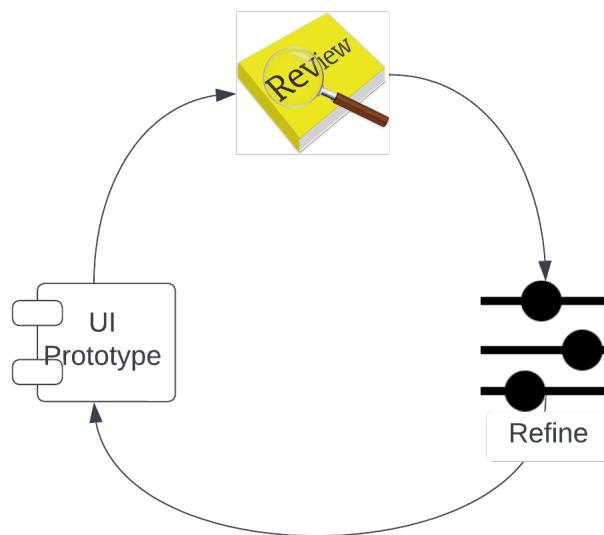


Fig. 2.3 Prototyping Steps for an Iterative Development

Since developing and updating the entire software system is complex and expensive, prototyping is a crucial step [31] in software development. Simultaneously, prototypes might exclude many requirements, making the software more accessible, smaller, and less expensive to construct and change [31]. Thus, the main difference between a prototype and a software application is that in a prototype, the screens are designed images with no additional capabilities to display the design and flow. Moreover, usability testing to validate user requirements and prototype functionality is a part of the evaluation process for UI prototypes [32]. Thus by using prototyping, there is usually more contact between the designers and users, resulting in fewer usability flaws and corrections at the end of development. And

finally, these mockups are then converted into actual UI elements in a software application, and a logical flow is established.

Overall, UI prototyping is an essential part of the design process. It allows designers and developers to quickly test and refine UI concepts, gather feedback from stakeholders and users, and identify any usability issues before investing significant time and resources into building the final product. Whether using low-fidelity prototypes to test basic layout and navigation concepts or high-fidelity prototypes to test complicated UI concepts and interactions, prototyping ensures that the final product is user-friendly and effective. By iterating and refining their prototypes throughout the design process, designers can create better, more intuitive products that meet the needs of their users.

## 2.2 Low-Code / No-Code Development Approach

Low-code is a software development method using less human coding to enable users to construct and manage programs efficiently rather than writing extensive amounts of code [33]. It is a technique developers use to help non-developers design and develop software applications using a *Graphical User Interface (GUI)* supported by a *Low-Code Development Platform (LCDP)*. An LCDP allows developers to create, deploy, and manage applications quickly and easily using high-level programming languages and techniques such as model-driven and metadata-based programming [34]. It simplifies building and deploying applications using declarative programming abstractions and one-step deployments. LCDP provides pre-built components, templates, and other resources that companies can quickly assemble to create functional applications. These platforms are designed to accelerate the development process and enable companies to build and deploy custom software solutions quickly. Similarly, another technique called *No-code development* is supported by *No-Code Development Platform (NCDP)* [35]. Unlike low-code, no-code platforms require no programming skills because they offer drag-and-drop techniques for building the apps. The non-developers can easily pick up the components that fit the UI, drag-and-drop them to the screen, and finally create an entire application using this technique. Using the UI and ready-made automatic tools on these application development platforms, it is feasible to create apps relatively quickly. Due to its simplicity, flexibility, and low cost, companies have started using this platform to meet the high demands of software development and digitalization [33]. Additionally, its self-configurable components lower the expenses associated with initial installation, training, distribution, and maintenance [36].

**High-Level Architecture of LCDP:** As shown in figure 2.4, an LCDP is divided into small modules independent of the other components. Bock et al. [34] have classified these modules according to the three main approaches to systems development: *the static perspective*, *the functional perspective*, and *the dynamic view*.

**Static Perspective:** LCDPs typically allow data to be stored either in an internal Database Management System (DBMS) or external systems (see the first part of figure 2.4). Many features/components commonly found in LCDPs fall under the *static perspective*. Similarly, most LCDPs include a component for defining Data Structure (DS), usually provided as a conceptual modeling tool that uses a classical Data Modeling Language (DML) such as the Entity-Relationship (ER) Model or a Domain Specific Language (DSL). Some LCDPs allow DS to be defined only through UI-based dialogs or lists. For example, can upload a Comma Separated Value (CSV) file containing data that is persisted into the Database (DB) as per

the columns in the file. A common feature of LCDPs is the ability to access external data sources using various Application Programming Interface (API).

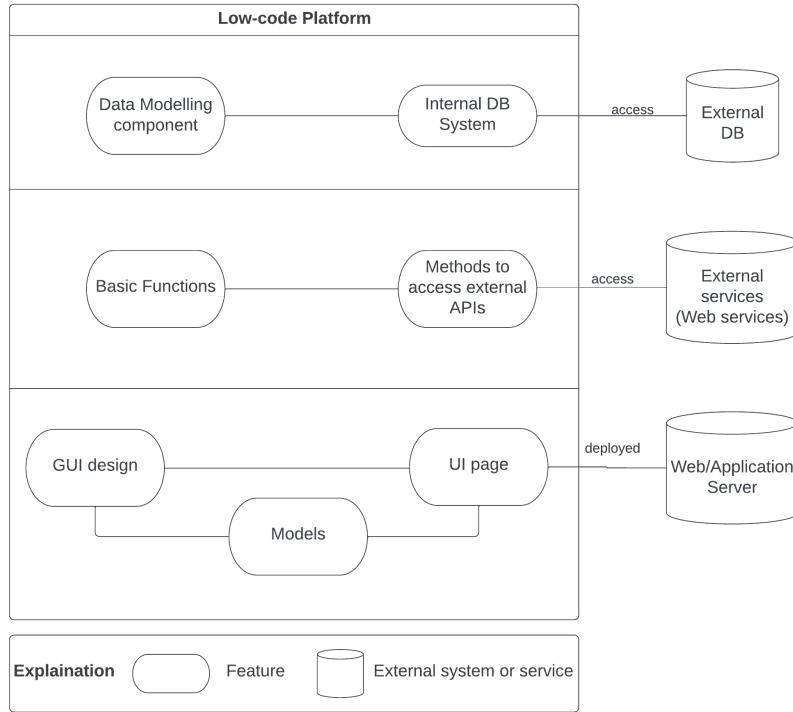


Fig. 2.4 High-Level Architecture of Low Code Development Platform

**Functional Perspective:** LCDPs also offer basic functional specifications (see the second part of figure 2.4). These typically include simple expression languages for decision rules and dialog-based methods for specifying program flow conditions. Each solution has a library of generic standard operations, such as mathematical functions. For example, LCDPs will enable the use of traditional approaches such as web services and Representational State Transfer (REST) services, and many modules provide support for a wide range of APIs from individual providers, such as Google APIs and social media APIs [34].

**Dynamic Perspective:** The LCDP also includes a GUI designer module (see the third part of 2.4), allowing GUIs to be developed and integrated with other implementation elements. The GUI designers module specifies pre-defined widgets, although the range varies. It is generally easy to link GUIs and DSs in most of these platforms, as it is optional to manually implement the Model-View-Controller (MVC) pattern. In addition, many of these platforms offer specific support for adapting the GUIs to different target environments, such as desktop

browsers, tablets, and smartphones [37]. Another common feature includes a component for defining roles and user rights, which is usually part of the platform's governing architecture and is deployed along with the custom application [33].

*Main Steps Of Low-Code App Development* as per [38]:

**Building:** In this step, the platform allows you to alter the provided code and add hand-written custom code to specify more complex features as you create the app step-by-step using visual editors and drag-and-drop interfaces. Modules, components, and chart-builders are already incorporated into low-code applications. Charts may be used to display data from modules, while modules are used to specify the type of data that will be stored in the app. Components and pages provide the type of user experience the app will have. These platforms also have a provision for automating repetitive tasks in the app.

**Testing:** Testing a software application is an integral part of the development cycle. However, the low-code development platform decreases the requirement for testing. Pre-build modules and components on low-code platforms are created with a certain level of application security. The developers of the low-code platform constantly monitor these modules, and they have previously gone through several unit tests. But, in a low-code platform, testing can be performed in several ways [39]:

- *Automated testing:* Some low-code platforms have built-in support for automated testing, which allows developers to create and run tests that validate the functionality of their applications.
- *Manual testing:* Even with automated testing, it is necessary to perform manual testing to ensure that an application functions correctly. In a low-code platform, manual testing can be achieved by developers or by dedicated testers who are responsible for verifying the functionality of the application.
- *User Acceptance testing (UAT):* In some cases, it may be necessary to involve end users in the testing process. This can be done through user acceptance testing, which consists in having end users test the application and provide feedback on its functionality and usability.

Overall, testing in a LCDP involves a combination of automated and manual testing, as well as performance and acceptance testing [39], to ensure that the application is functioning correctly and meets the needs of end users.

**Deploying:** In this step, the application is deployed across apps and to the final users. In LCDP, the packages for installation, configurations, and application setup are included. In terms of deployment, most of the considered solutions offer advanced support, although the specific forms vary. Some systems require the low-code platform environment to be installed on a web server to deploy individual applications. In contrast, others allow the developed solutions to be deployed as self-contained applications on various devices and machines. This means that the LCDP gives freedom to the users in deploying the applications for the customers with just one click.

*Docker*<sup>5</sup> is a widely used open software platform that allows applications to be deployed as containers. It supports libraries, system tools, code, and various runtimes, making it possible to build, test, deploy, and scale applications across multiple environments. In an LCDP, docker can be used to securely deploy frameworks, services, and platforms in separate containers that communicate with each other using protocols such as Message Queue Telemetry Transport (MQTT)<sup>6</sup> and REST<sup>7</sup>. Additionally, a variety of options are provided for developers with little programming experience, those with coding expertise and seasoned programmers who wish to expand the functionality of the current design [33].

Overall, low-code/no-code development platforms are valuable for organizations looking to build and deploy custom applications quickly and efficiently that can help organizations of all sizes and industries bring their ideas to life.

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<sup>5</sup>Website for Docker: <https://www.docker.com/>

<sup>6</sup>Website for MQTT: The Standard for IoT Messaging <https://mqtt.org/>

<sup>7</sup>Website for REST / RESTful API: <https://www.redhat.com/en/topics/api/what-is-a-rest-api>

## 2.3 Model-Based Software Engineering

MBSE refers to maintaining and developing software while reusing existing code. Similarly, Model Driven Software Engineering (MDSE) is the term used to cover various techniques for creating software using codified models. At the same time, for creating models, the Model Object Facility (MOF) has defined four levels separating the reality, models, meta-models, and meta-meta-models (as shown in figure 2.5).

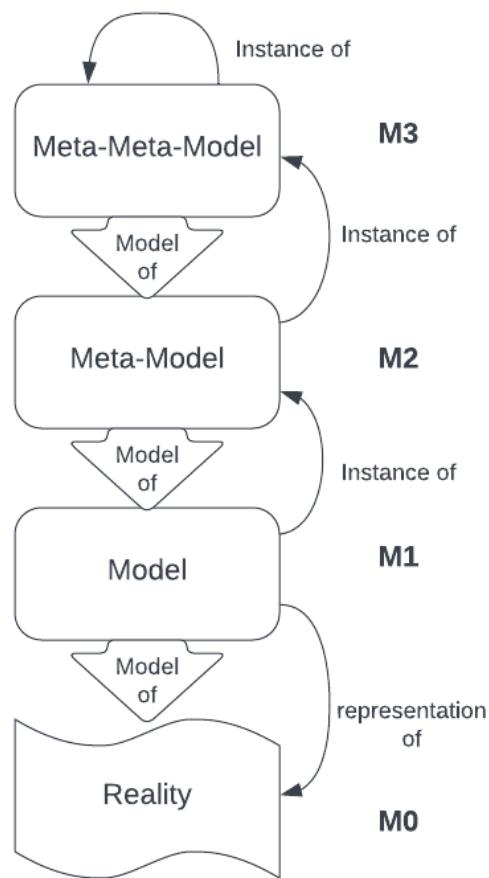


Fig. 2.5 Model Object Facility (MOF) levels

MOF is a standard that defines a meta-model for modeling information. It provides a common framework for creating and using models representing a system or part of a technique used to analyze design or document the procedure. MOF is part of the Object Management Group (OMG) [40] standards and is used in several different contexts, including software engineering, business process modeling, and enterprise architecture. It is based on

the Unified Modeling Language (UML)<sup>8</sup> standard notation for modeling software systems. MOF defines a standard set of concepts and notations for creating and using models, which can represent different aspects of a system. This includes concepts such as classes, attributes, operations, and relationships, which describe the system's structure and behavior.

**Meta-Models:** A meta-model is a model of a model or a simplified version of an actual model of a system of interest or a software application that formally represents the structure and behavior of a particular model type in a formal and standardized way. Meta-models are often used in Software Engineering (SE) to describe the structure and behavior of DSL or other modeling languages [41]. They can be used to understand how a model works or to improve the performance of a model by making it more efficient or accurate. Meta-models are often used in Model Driven Development (MDD), focusing on creating and using high-level abstractions to design and implement software systems [42]. Using meta-models, developers can create a high-level view of a system and then use that view to generate code automatically, which can help improve the development process's efficiency and reliability. A model is usually defined as an abstraction of real-world entities, and a meta-model is another abstraction of the models. Similarly, metamodeling is analyzing and developing the rules, theories, and models helpful in constructing meta-models.

The **M0 layer** refers to the physical system or systems that are being modeled. It represents the real-world or the physical components, subsystems, and techniques that comprise the overall system being designed or analyzed. It is the foundation upon which the other layers of the MBSE models are built.

The **M1 layer**, built on top of the M0 layer, represents the functional requirements and system behavior. The functional requirements include system inputs, outputs, and interfaces, and the system's behavior includes its response to different inputs and conditions.

The **M2 layer**, built on top of the M1 layer, represents the system's architecture and design. This layer describes how the system's components, subsystems, hardware, and software interact. The M2 layer includes detailed specifications and design constraints such as interfaces, protocols, and data structures.

Finally, the **M3 layer** represents the system's implementation and verification. It includes the system's specific design details and implementation plans, including the detailed design of its components, selecting particular hardware and software, and testing and validation plans. This layer ensures that the system is built according to the specifications and design constraints defined in the M2 layer and meets the functional requirements and behavior described in the M1 layer.

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<sup>8</sup>Website for UML: <https://www.uml.org/>

After considering the information above, the meta-model can be further developed and refined. There are two approaches to designing a meta-model: *Top-down and Bottom-up* [40]. In the top-down method, we start with the overall process and then break it down into smaller steps. In the bottom-up approach, we begin with the individual steps and group them into more extensive procedures. *Top-down development* of a meta-model involves starting with a high-level representation of the structure and behavior of the models that the meta-model will describe (see figure 2.5). This high-level representation (M3 from figure 2.5) might include the overall design of the models (e.g., the types of elements and relationships that are allowed) and the rules and constraints that must be followed when creating and using the models. Once the high-level structure of the meta-model has been defined, it can be further refined and expanded upon by adding lower-level details (M2 and M1, and M0 levels). They include the attributes and operations allowed for each element, how elements can be related, and the semantics of the relationships between elements.

*Bottom-up development* of a meta-model involves starting with the specific elements and relationships that will be included in the meta-model and gradually building up to a higher level of abstraction. Once the lower-level details of the meta-model have been defined, they can be organized and grouped into higher-level concepts and structures, such as classes, packages, or packages of packages, to form the overall design of the meta-model [40].

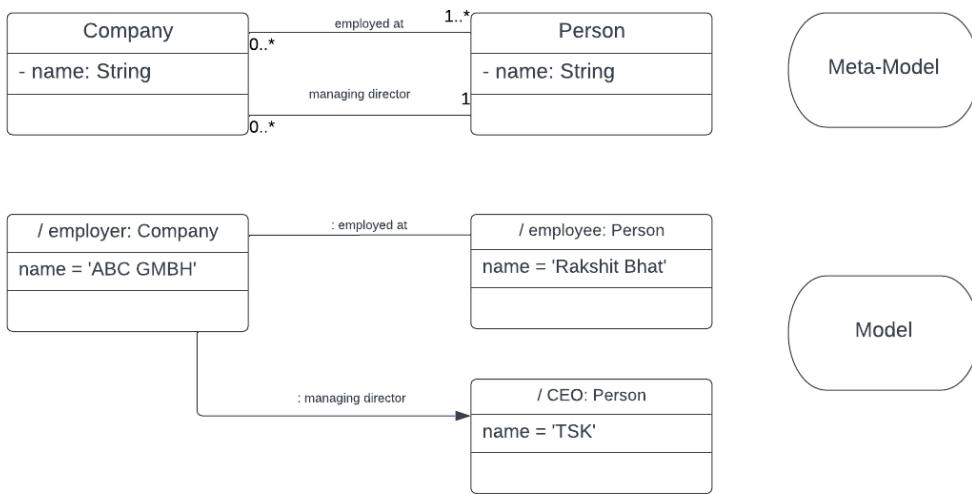


Fig. 2.6 Meta Models and Models

**Models:** As shown in figure 2.5, a *Model* is a simplified representation of the real-world or reality. Before any code is written, the model is a schematic that describes how the software

system should function. In software development, a model is a representation of a software system. It can be used to visualize the structure and behavior of a system or to analyze the system for potential issues or improvements. Models can take many forms, such as diagrams, graphs, or mathematical equations, and they can be created using various tools and techniques. Models are often used in MDD [42], focusing on creating and using high-level abstractions to design and implement software systems. In this approach, models are used as the primary source of design and implementation information, and the code is generated from the models using a code generator [43]. By using models, developers can better understand a system and identify potential problems or areas for improvement before they start writing code. From the example 2.6, we need to create models for every entity of reality (e.g., An employee and a CEO are both *Person* in the meta-model but are separate entities in models). Using models, various adaptive model-driven UI development systems are developed [44] and the authors defined twenty properties challenges for the model-driven UI and compared some tools that implement these properties. Similarly, modeling is a process and method of building models for some purpose or related to some domain. Therefore, models and modeling approaches are used to codify the UIs in different companies.

MBSE is a powerful approach to developing software that relies on using models to represent and analyze software systems. By using models to represent the various components and relationships within a software system, developers can more easily understand and analyze the system and make changes and updates more efficiently. However, these models do not emphasize offering visual notations to aid non-developers in creating such interfaces. Therefore, for our research, we use a recent method [43], which illustrates how to use low-code and model-driven approaches to close the gap between designers and developers.

## 2.4 Task-Based Usability Testing

The main focus of usability testing is that seeing someone use an interface is the best approach to determine what functions well and what doesn't. It would help if you offered the participants some assignments to observe them. The word "task" is commonly used to describe these assignments. Assigning tasks to the accurate number of participants can help determine the quality of the UI and the problems faced by the users. Overall, the UI design can be improved using the participants' feedback. Task-based usability testing is one way to determine the software's overall usability [45] by measuring the percentage of the tasks the users complete. These tasks need to be some scenarios, not just "*do something*", because it sets the users a stage for *why* they would perform the tasks. To get quality feedback from the participants, in [46], the authors provide *three good practices* and task-writing tips for designing better task scenarios.

**(1) Make the Task Realistic:** So, the participants should be able to execute the tasks which could be completed efficiently and with the freedom to make their own choices. The participants will attempt to accomplish the assignment without genuinely interacting with the interface if you ask them to do something they wouldn't typically do. Therefore, it is necessary to create realistic tasks.

**Task goal:** The goal is to offer some movies that the user should watch.

*Bad task:* Watch a movie containing the actor 'Mr. T' and actress 'Ms. K'.

*Good Task:* Watch a movie with more than 6.5/10 ratings.

In this example, the participants should be free to compare movies based on their criteria.

**(2) Make the Task Actionable:** Here, the participants should be told what they need to do rather than how they would do it. These types of tasks help us determine if the task isn't actionable enough. If the participants tell the moderator they cannot determine if they need to click on the link or if they are finding it hard to decide the next steps in a specific task, then it is a sign that the task needs to be more straightforward and actionable.

**Task goal:** The goal is to find a movie and show times.

*Bad Task:* You want to watch a movie Sunday afternoon. Go to the app and tell where you'd click next.

*Good Task:* Use the app to find a movie you'd be interested in watching on a Sunday afternoon.

**(3) Avoid Giving Clues and Describing the Steps:** There are frequent hints about how to use the interface or the software in step explanations. These tasks must be more balanced with the users' behavior and give less valuable results. The participants should expose the navigation and some features on their own, giving accurate feedback about the interface. But, at the same time, we should try to include the words used in the UIs as they help the users navigate smoothly and would not lead to some confusion.

**Task goal:** The goal is to change the user's movie preferences.

*Bad Task:* You want to change your movie preferences. Go to the website, sign-in, and change your movie preferences.

*Good Task:* Change your movie preferences from 'action' to 'comedy'.

Therefore, it is crucial to create a realistic test environment during usability testing [45]. It is also essential to provide the information required for the participant to complete the task without guiding them on specific actions. If the task scenario is unclear enough, the participant may ask for more information or confirm that they are on the correct path.

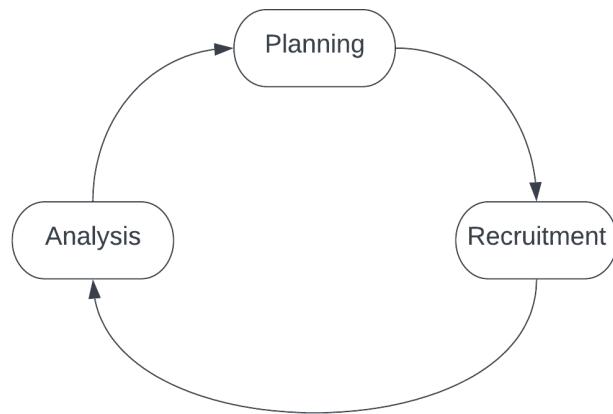


Fig. 2.7 Task-Based Usability Testing Steps

The fundamental principle of usability testing is to have actual users attempt to carry out essential tasks or assignments on your software, websites, mobile applications, or gadgets. For that, we divide task creation into three steps.

**Planning:** In usability testing, planning is an important step. In this step, we decide on a process that fits our research question, hypothesis, and metrics. It is beneficial if we use mixed-method services for a task-based usability study. The tasks and scenarios must be

well-defined in the planning phase. At the same time, we can create pre-study and post-study questions.

**Recruitment:** In this step, the users are assigned to the task as it is essential to select the correct number of user group sizes. There should be a proper way to interview the users before assigning them tasks so that the participants understand them correctly. The participants should also be able to ask questions or doubts while performing the honorarium tasks.

**Analysis:** Task-based studies analyze metrics, issues, and insights in great depth. For metrics, we calculate the task completion rates, task time, and task and test level perception questions. The problems that the participants encounter while performing the tasks need to be reported automatically to the development teams by sending screenshots, quotes, etc. There should also be a section to analyze some insights about the software that has worked well for the users while performing the tasks.

Overall, task-based usability testing is a tool for evaluating the usability and effectiveness of software systems. By focusing on specific tasks that users need to complete, we can gather valuable insights into how well the system supports these tasks and identify areas where we could improve the UX.

## 2.5 UI Experimentation

In this section, we discuss the role that UI experimentation plays in the software development process and how designers can “prototype with real data” to improve the usability of the UI. UI experimentation is a vital part of the design process for UI products. It involves testing different design solutions and variations to see which performs best in terms of usability, aesthetics, and other desired characteristics [8]. We can do this through various methods, such as usability testing, A/B testing, and rapid prototyping. UI experimentation allows designers to iterate and improve their designs by creating different *Software Variants* and gathering data and feedback from real users. It is an important part of creating user-centered designs that effectively meet the needs and expectations of the target audience [7]. UI experimentation helps product teams test out ideas early in the process with real-world consumers rather than settling on a single solution and executing it in the final phase [47].

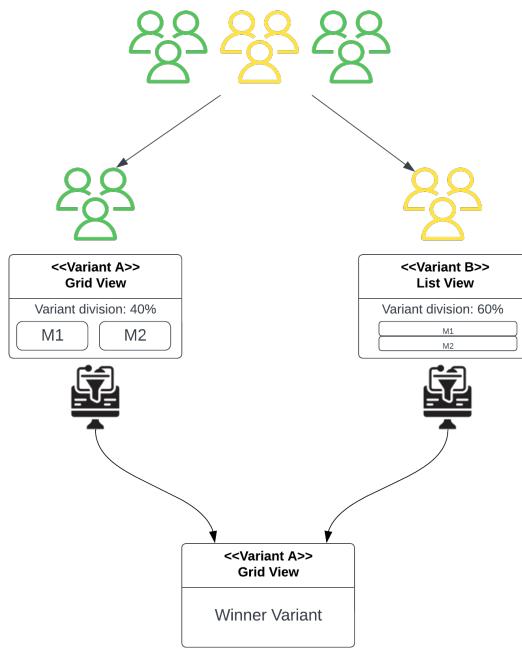


Fig. 2.8 A/B Testing

For conducting experimentation, various steps like *Users distribution*, *Continuous Experimentation (CE)*, *Variants distribution* exist.

**User distribution:** To conduct a successful experiment, the size of the study, or the number of participants, must be considered first. Statistics suggest that the more people you include in the investigation, the greater its statistical power, which impacts your level of confidence

in your findings [48]. Then, the participants should be allocated into groups at random. There are several levels of treatment given to each group (e.g., some prerequisites to the participants before experimenting). For assigning the subjects to groups, users are divided into a *between-subjects design* vs a *within-subjects design*. In a between-subjects design, individuals receive only one of the possible levels of an experimental treatment whereas, in a within-subjects design, every individual receives each of the experimental treatments consecutively, and their responses to each treatment are measured. In figure 2.8, a between-subject design is used where only one of the variants is assigned to the user.

**Continuous Experimentation and Variants distribution:** CE primarily aims to get users' feedback on the software product's evolution. As per figure 2.8, CE generally uses A/B testing in a primary case of comparing two variants, A and B, which are controlled and test variables respectively in an experiment. First, the users or the participants of the study are separated into groups and are assigned one of the two variants. Since we have GridView and the ListView, one group of the users are assigned with List and the other with Grid View (see figure 2.8). Then both users would be given some tasks (see Section 2.4), and the analysis of these tasks gives the winner among the variants. And in the end, developers make evidence-based decisions to direct the progress of their software by continuously measuring the results of multiple variants performed in an experimental context with actual users [49]. CE is an extension to the introduction of continuous integration and deployment, and all are summarized as constant software engineering [50]. Additionally, CE can help designers and developers stay up-to-date with the latest design trends and best practices. By regularly testing and iterating on the design, they can learn from the feedback they receive and incorporate new ideas and techniques into their design. This can help keep the product or service relevant and competitive [8].

Overall, CE is a critical approach to take when developing UIs for products and services. It allows designers and developers to gather valuable feedback and data and use it to improve their products' design and UX.

## 2.6 LEAN Development Process

LEAN development is a software development methodology that emphasizes continuous improvement and eliminating waste to deliver customer value as efficiently as possible. It is one method within Agile development [51]. It is based on the principles of the LEAN manufacturing method, which was developed by *Toyota* in the 1950s and aims to eliminate waste and maximize value in manufacturing processes [16]. LEAN development's primary objective was to reduce loss, minimize waste, and encourage sustainable production. And therefore, as an Minimum Viable Product (MVP), in LEAN development, the product has the essential elements necessary to launch successfully and does not have to include any additional components.

In software development, we can apply LEAN principles to various aspects of the development process, including requirements gathering, design, coding, testing, and deployment [51]. The goal is to minimize waste and optimize the use of resources to deliver high-quality software products that meet the customer's needs.

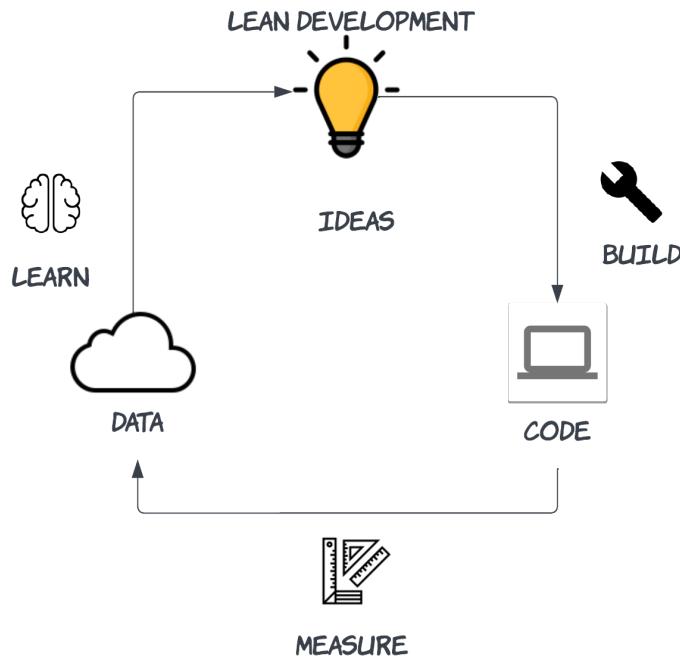


Fig. 2.9 LEAN Development Cycle<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Website of the image: <https://www.agile-academy.com/en/agile-dictionary/lean-development/>

**LEAN Development Cycle:** The LEAN development cycle often includes three phases: *Build, Measure, and Learn* (see figure 2.9). Steps like these are designed to help the development team continuously improve the product and development process.

**Build:** In the building phase of LEAN development, the development team works to build and deliver small increments of working software to the customer. This involves gathering requirements, designing, coding, testing, and deploying code [51]. The build phase's goal is to deliver customer requirements as quickly and efficiently as possible. To do this, the development team may follow model-driven development [52], continuous integration and delivery to ensure that the developed code meets the desired functionality and performance requirements.

**Measure:** In the measurement phase of LEAN development, the development team collects data on the product's performance and the development process to identify areas for improvement [51]. It involves collecting data on customer usage and feedback, as well as data on the performance and efficiency of the development process. The measure phase aims to understand how the product is being used and its impact on the customer. It also identifies any bottlenecks or inefficiencies in the development process. The development team may use various tools and techniques, such as user testing, customer surveys, analytics data, and performance monitoring tools, to collect this data [9, 11]. They may also conduct regular reviews of the development process to identify improvement areas.

**Learn:** In the learning phase of LEAN development, the development team uses the data collected in the measure phase to identify areas for improvement and make changes to the development process and the product [51]. It may involve making changes to the product roadmap, adjusting development practices, or implementing new tools or techniques [53]. The goal of the learning phase is to improve the product continuously and the development process to deliver value to the customer more efficiently and effectively.

The final step in the cycle (see figure 2.9) would be to repeat the process, starting with identifying customer requirements and iterating through the *Build, Measure, and Learn*<sup>9</sup> phases again. Thus, the development team can constantly improve the product and the development process to deliver value to the customer more efficiently and effectively.

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<sup>9</sup>Website of LEAN cycle: <https://www.einstein1.net/build-measure-learn/>

As per [51], there are some key practices in LEAN development. These principles can be used to guide the discussion on which product development practices might be suitable for an organization, based on its specific circumstances.

**Continuous delivery:** Continuous delivery is the practice of regularly delivering small increments of working software to the customer rather than waiting until the end of the project to have a complete product. This allows the customer to see the project's progress and will enable them to give feedback and make changes as the project progresses. Continuous delivery helps to ensure that the software being developed meets the customer's needs and reduces the risk of delivering a product that does not meet their requirements [53]. It also allows the development team to identify and fix problems early in the process, saving time and resources. To practice continuous delivery, the development team must have a process for automatically building, testing, and deploying code changes [54].

**Continuous improvement:** Improving build quality in LEAN development refers to continuously improving the quality of the software being developed through effective coding practices, testing, and quality assurance processes [55]. To improve the build quality, we can use *Code reviews* [51], i.e., conducting regular code review sessions to help identify problems early on and ensure that code meets standards for readability, maintainability, and performance. Similarly, implementing *Quality Assurance* processes, such as testing, to catch and fix defects before they reach the customer can help improve the overall quality of the product.

**LEAN planning:** It is a practice in LEAN development that focuses on maximizing value and minimizing waste in the software development process. It involves continuously prioritizing and re-evaluating the work based on customer feedback to ensure that the team is first working on the most valuable features. As per [56], LEAN planning aims to quickly identify and deliver the most valuable features to the customer while minimizing time and resources spent on non-critical tasks. This helps to ensure that the team is working on the right things and that the product meets the customer's needs.

In this way, LEAN development can help organizations deliver high-quality products to customers more efficiently and effectively.



# **Chapter 3**

## **Solution Design**

In the previous chapter, we defined various terminologies and concepts that we are using for our thesis. Consequently, this chapter presents the solution design for our systematic user feedback evaluation approach as per DSR. Firstly, we define the DRs (see section 3.1) to guide the development of our solution. Secondly, we concretize the DRs to derive a set of DPs (see section 3.2) for developing our prototype tool, ensuring that our solution is efficient, user-friendly, and effective in evaluating user feedback. Lastly, we present the overall solution design (see section 3.3) that tracks the DPs following the LEAN development cycle. The solution design comprises a set of phases, each with its corresponding DPs and goals, to ensure that the development of our prototype tool is systematic and efficient.

### **3.1 Design Requirements**

DRs in DSR are typically defined as a set of constraints and specifications that must be met by the design artifact to be considered a successful solution [57]. These are functional requirements, such as the features or capabilities the design/tool should have. In our findings of the DRs, we focus more on the functional requirements and ignore the non-functional. To derive a solution, we define the DRs with the help of the literature review and a comparison of some tools. For our research, we conducted a non-systematic literature review by reading research papers and looking at some renowned UI prototyping tools. The related literature is available in Appendix B. In this context, each DR refers to a generalized requirement that can be standardized and applied to future software applications. We covered many topics including *UI Prototyping*, *Low-Code/No-Code development*, *Model-Based Software Engineering*, *Continuous Experimentation*, *Task-Based Usability Testing*, and the *LEAN development process*. The following section presents *nine DRs* for our solution approach.

**DR1: Heterogeneous Users** states that *the approach should support diverse users with different needs, goals, and capabilities and integrate internal and external users.* It is supported by literature indicating that different users may have different requirements, preferences, and levels of technical expertise [6]. By including a diverse group of users, you can get a broader range of feedback and insights into how the software performs for different users [27] and reduces the biases among developers [58]. In this context, the users can be from internal sources, such as employees, or external sources, like Amazon Mechanical Turk<sup>1</sup> for using the software.

**DR2: Iterative Design** states that *the approach should have an iterative, incremental method and identify and address any technical issues or design flaws early in the development process.* It is supported by literature indicating that the iterative approach involves breaking down development into small, incremental work cycles rather than delivering a complete product all at once [51]. The key benefit of an iterative approach is that it allows the development team to get feedback from users and stakeholders early in the development process and make adjustments [7] to the product as needed.

**DR3: Easy Development** states that *the approach should be easy to develop and operable by non-technical individuals with different techniques to create applications without extensive programming knowledge.* It is supported by literature indicating that a tool should have a UI that helps non-technical individuals to build software without including the developers. It can be achieved if the tool provides drag-and-drop interfaces [35], reusable pre-built components [59] (e.g., buttons, textbox, and other UI components), and a logical flow (E.g., *Screen1* is followed by *Screen2* and so on.). We saw these features in many tools like Figma<sup>2</sup>, Invision<sup>3</sup>, and Axure<sup>4</sup>.

**DR4: Integrate Data Models** states that *the approach should easily integrate data models (incorporating Create Read Update Delete (CRUD) operations of data models) and iterate them using various UI elements on the screens.* It is supported by literature indicating that by using the tool, citizen developers can easily access and integrate data models from multiple sources, including databases, APIs, and external systems [18], without having to write complex code or build custom integrations from scratch [19]. It accelerates the development

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<sup>1</sup>Website of Amazon Mechanical Turk: <https://www.mturk.com/>

<sup>2</sup>Website of Figma Prototyping tool: <https://www.figma.com/>

<sup>3</sup>Website of Invision: <https://www.invisionapp.com/>

<sup>4</sup>Website of Axure Rapid Prototyping: <https://www.axure.com/>

process, reduces the risk of errors [34], and improves the software tool's overall quality. In many tools like Figma, Invision, and Axure, we saw the use of data models<sup>5</sup>.

**DR5: Classified UI variants** states that *the approach should create multiple UI variants or versions, each with distinct UI elements or features.* It is supported by literature indicating different users may have other preferences regarding how they interact with an application [1]. At the same time, we saw many tools like Google Optimize<sup>6</sup>, VWO<sup>7</sup>, Convertize<sup>8</sup>, and Freshmarketer<sup>9</sup> having provisions to create various UI variants or versions.

**DR6: Conduct UI Split tests** states that *the approach should conduct various UI split tests on the participants using different UI variants or versions.* It is supported by literature indicating that a product can be tested against different design solutions and variations [50] to see which variant performs the best in terms of usability, aesthetics, and other characteristics [8]. At the same time, continuously improve [49] the product based on the feedback of the best-fit variant.

**DR7: Construct User Scenarios** states that *the approach should observe and record how users interact with a software tool to evaluate the tool's ease of use.* It is supported by literature indicating that testing of the GUI of a software application is done using functional and usability tests [46]. This helps the developers to identify any usability issues [60] and improve them continuously [21]. And this helps identify and validate user requirements in the early stages of development [27].

**DR8: Collect Feedback** states that *the approach should gather various user feedbacks (such as user behavior patterns, click rates or open-ended questions) from the split tests.* It is supported by literature indicating that feedback can be collected while observing the participants performing the tasks [61], like asking open-ended questions about their overall experience. At the same time, it should automatically record any feedback that participants give and analyze it while looking for some pattern in the data [9].

**DR9: Aggregated Feedback** states that *the approach should collect the gathered feedback and aggregate them to make improvements to the application.* It is supported by literature

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<sup>5</sup>These tools either have their implementation or depend on some third-party data model tool.

<sup>6</sup>Website of Google Optimize: <https://marketingplatform.google.com/about/optimize/>

<sup>7</sup>Website of VWO: <https://vwo.com/de/>

<sup>8</sup>Website of Convertize: <https://www.convertize.com/>

<sup>9</sup>Website of Freshmarketer: <https://www.freshworks.com/crm/marketing/>

indicating that qualitative analysis gathers an in-depth understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations [62]. Whereas quantitative analysis measures and understands numerical data and helps identify patterns and trends [9]. An aggregation of the qualitative and quantitative analysis can provide a more complete picture of a situation and can be used to validate or disprove findings from one type of analysis [11].

**DR10: Improvement** states that *the approach should improve the prototypes from the results of the collected feedback in an iterative manner.* It is supported by literature indicating that visualization helps in prototyping by allowing the users to see and understand the design in a way that is easy to understand [63]. It also allows users to identify usability issues [21] early in the design process to make the end product user-friendly and easy to use by improving the prototype. In tools, various methods, like creating *Graphs, Charts, Plots*, etc. are used for visualization for improving the products.

## 3.2 Design Principles

DPs are guidelines or rules used to guide the design process in DSR [57]. They provide a framework for making design decisions [14] and help to ensure that the final solution meets the goals and objectives of the research. This section codifies our knowledge during the design study and derives DPs from abstract DRs in the iteration cycle of the DSR. The following shows the *nine* DPs for our *solution approach* that is built on the foundation of the mapped DRs (see figure 3.1).

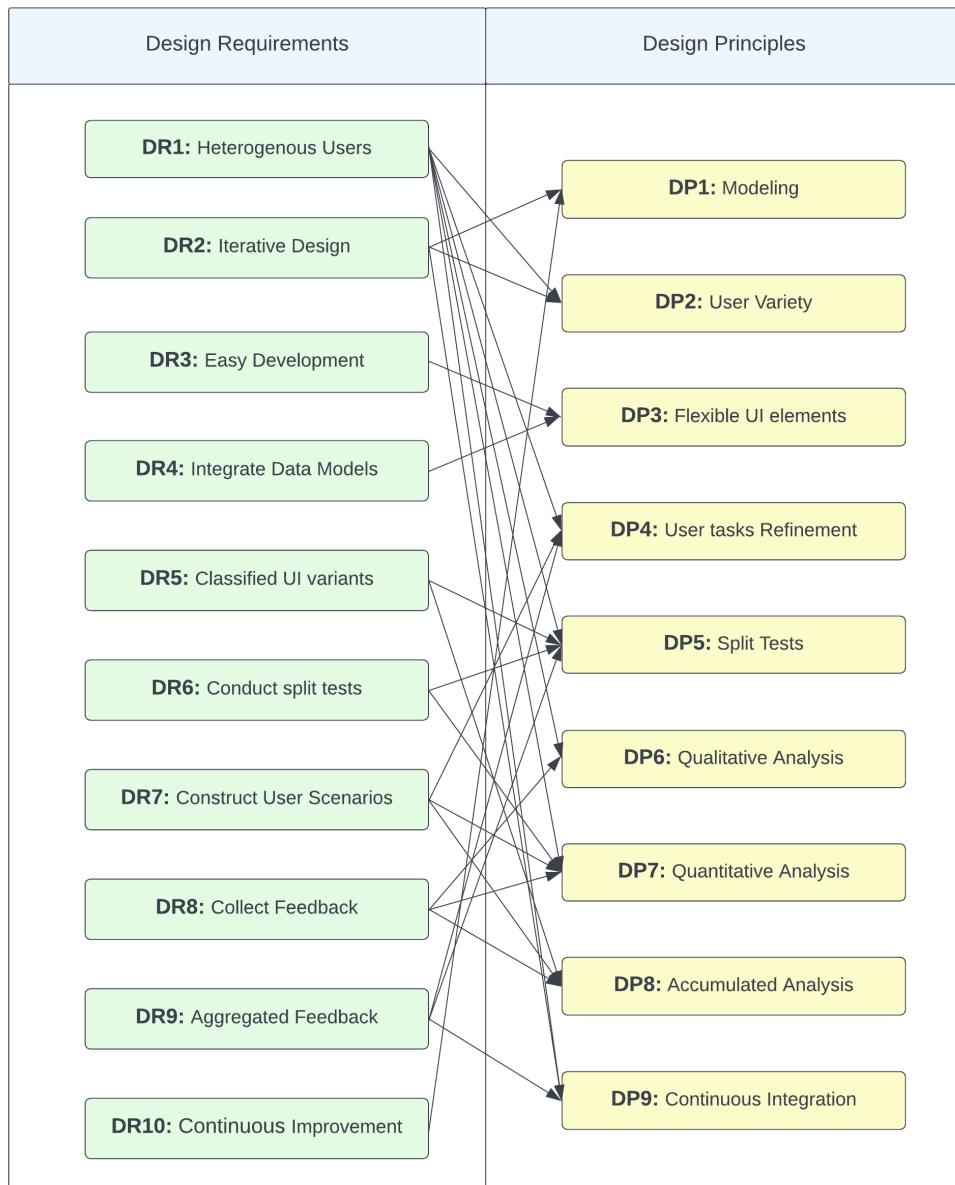


Fig. 3.1 A Map Between DRs and DPs

**DP1: Modeling:** *The solution approach is required to provide techniques for incorporating models that can be used to simplify and visualize the UI prototype so that developers can test its functionality and identify potential issues before the actual software is developed.*

Modeling increases transparency among various users, increasing their contribution to the product due to their excellent visualization and improvement capability (i.e., *DR10: Continuous Improvement*). Furthermore, modeling tools can automatically generate code or other documentation from the models, which can help reduce errors, improve efficiency, and decrease development time iteratively (i.e., *DR2: Iterative Design*).

**DP2: User Variety:** *The solution approach is required to provide techniques for incorporating diverse types of users, both the prototype creators, i.e., UX designers, and participants, i.e., users who participate in an experiment so that developers can engage with various users during the evaluation process.*

Developers have many unclear generalities early in the product development process [6] that they can clarify by testing the underlying assumptions using different types of users (i.e., *DR1: Heterogenous Users*) and involving various product users using an iterative design for continuous improvement (i.e., *DR2: Iterative Design*). This helps to gather the user requirements smoothly, thus improving the product's usability.

**DP3: Flexible UI Elements:** *The solution approach is required to provide techniques for incorporating a library of UI elements and interactive components that can be easily customized and used in the prototype so that developers can demonstrate how the UI will function.*

A UI Prototyping tool is helpful when different interactive (i.e., *DR3: Easy Development*) re-usable components are used while creating the prototypes and integrating various data models (i.e., *DR4: Integrate Data Models*). These elements can be pre-designed UI elements such as buttons, menus, forms, etc., and interactive components such as textboxes, checkboxes, etc. It helps to get more feedback from the users or the participants, improving the product's usability and functionality.

**DP4: User tasks Refinement:** *The solution approach is required to provide techniques for incorporating task creation that simulates real-world scenarios and workflows and assigns randomly to participants so that developers can collect and improve the UI prototype with the help of data.*

We can improve the usability of software by observing different users (i.e., *DR1: Heterogenous Users*) as they interact with the product and measuring how well they can ac-

complish specific tasks or goals (i.e., *DR7: Construct User Scenarios*). These tasks are some real-world scenarios and workflows, with clear instructions and defined success criteria. Moreover, the users can provide valuable insights into how easy or difficult it is to use the product and help identify areas where developers could improve the UI or design aggregating user feedback (i.e., *DR9: Aggregated Feedback*).

**DP5: Split Tests:** *The solution approach is required to provide techniques for incorporating the creation of different versions of UI prototypes and conduct tests to compare the performance of each version so that developers can make data-driven decisions about which UI design works best for their users.*

Split Tests (e.g., A/B tests) are performed on a randomly divided sample group of different users (i.e., *DR1: Heterogenous Users*) by exposing each group to the UI of different versions (i.e., *DR5: Classified UI variants & DR6: Conduct Split tests*) to find out the feature that is most usable and functional for the users. The test results are then used to determine which version is more effective by aggregating the feedback (i.e., *DR9: Aggregated Feedback*) from the user groups and finally optimizing the whole product.

**DP6: Qualitative Analysis:** *The solution approach is required to provide techniques for incorporating and analyzing qualitative feedback from participants so that developers can gain insights into the user experience and identify areas for improvement.*

We can conduct qualitative analysis systematically for examining non-numerical data to uncover patterns, themes, and insights from different users (i.e., *DR1: Heterogenous Users*). It can be achieved through various methods (i.e., *DR8: Collect Feedback*), such as content analysis or user feedback analysis, which involve coding, categorization, and interpretation of the data.

**DP7: Quantitative Analysis:** *The solution approach is required to provide techniques for incorporating quantitative analysis features so that developers can analyze and visualize data from A/B testing and other analytics for improving the UI prototype.*

We can conduct quantitative analysis systematically to test hypotheses, measure relationships between variables, and make statistical inferences about populations based on representative samples from different users (i.e., *DR1: Heterogenous Users*). It can be achieved by assigning tasks to various users in the study (i.e., *DR7: Construct User Scenarios*) and collecting their feedback (i.e., *DR8: Collect Feedback*) for their particular UI variant in the split test (i.e., *DR6: Conduct split tests*).

**DP8: Accumulated Analytics:** *The solution approach is required to provide techniques for incorporating different analytics and metrics so that developers can track the performance and behavior of the various UI prototype variants being tested.*

Performing various tests (e.g., usability testing) with diverse users (i.e., *DR1: Heterogeneous Users*) ensures that the software is accessible and easy to use for different groups of people with an accurate evaluation of the task provided to the users (i.e., *DR7: Construct User Scenarios*). Moreover, diversity in software development feedback mechanisms (i.e., *DR6: Collect Feedback*), received by testing different UI versions (i.e., *DR5: Classified UI variants*), helps ensure the software is inclusive and accessible.

**DP9: Continuous Integration:** *The solution approach is required to provide techniques for incorporating the tool's design into small, incremental phases in the software development process so that developers can improve software delivery and make product changes and improvements based on customer feedback.*

Using a continuous incremental approach, we can continuously improve software products by delivering value to customers as quickly as possible, constantly refining and improving the product, and delivering the product as soon as possible. Here, the iterative design should be used (i.e., *DR2: Iterative Design*) to get continuous feedback from various users (i.e., *DR1: Heterogenous Users*). The collected feedback should be a combination (i.e., *DR7: Aggregate Feedback*) of various feedback, helping significantly improve the application.

### 3.3 Overall Solution Design

As shown in figure 3.2, we conceptualize the solution design from our codified DPs. The software platform consists of two types of roles consisting of the users for creating the Prototyping tool (*UX Designers*) and the *Users or Participants* for testing the tool. In this section, we arrange our DPs using a LEAN development approach<sup>10</sup>, a cycle consisting of *Build, Measure, Learn* phases.

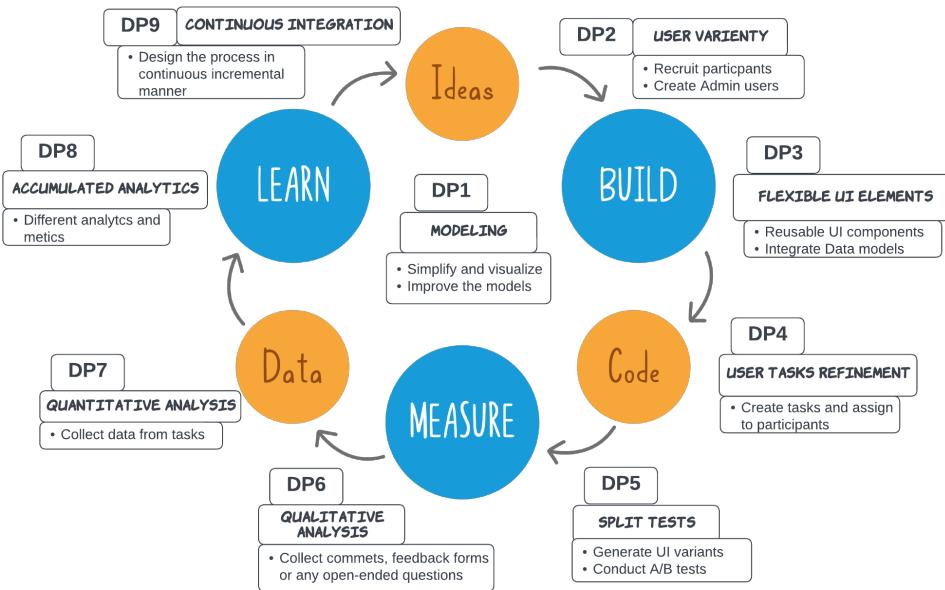


Fig. 3.2 Overall Solution Design for a UI Prototyping tool using LEAN principles<sup>10</sup>

In the LEAN development cycle, the whole process is done in a model-based approach (i.e., DP1) to improve the solution approach.

**Build:** Initially, different users register to our tool (i.e., DP2) having different rights. The UX designers build a UI prototype using various reusable UI components and create data models (i.e., DP3). Using the UI elements, these users make various screens and connect them to various data models to have a logical flow of the prototype. In the next step, they create various tasks simulating real-world scenarios, assign them randomly to participants and collect feedback (i.e., DP4). After creating the tasks, the UX designers create various UI variants or versions for creating split tests (i.e., DP5).

<sup>10</sup>Website for the LEAN development: <https://www.lean.org/explore-lean/product-process-development/>

**Measure:** In this phase, we measure the data we receive from the tasks by conducting qualitative (i.e., DP6) and quantitative (i.e., DP7) analysis. The quantitative analysis is done from the data the users collect from the tasks. Similarly, the qualitative analysis is done by collecting the comments, open-ended questions etc. after the task is finished.

**Learn:** In this phase, the data received from the analysis is processed and visualized. The data is processed by aggregating and combining the results of the qualitative and the quantitative analysis (i.e., DP8). Finally, the models are given feedback from the data analysis, improving the UI prototype and updating it with the winner variant (i.e., DP9) as the default UI. The refined product can be deployed for the entire population (or all the users) using the deployment module using a no-code development approach.

# Chapter 4

## Solution Concept

In the previous chapter, we defined different DRs and DPs for our solution approach. Consequently, this chapter presents the solution concept we developed to address these DRs and DPs. The solution concept comprises several components that work together to provide an effective and efficient solution. Firstly, we define the solution architecture (see section 4.1) based on the MVC architecture pattern. Secondly, we explain the UI prototyping component (see section 4.2), which manages the UI prototyping. Next, we present the UI experimentation component (see section 4.3) responsible for managing the experimentation of the UI, allowing us to test and evaluate different design choices and make data-driven decisions. After that, we discuss the database components (see section 4.4), which involve storing and retrieving data. We then explain the deployment components (see section 4.5) used to deploy the solution to the intended environment. Finally, we discuss the security components (see section 4.6) which ensure data security and authentication within the proposed solution.

### 4.1 Software Architecture

In this section, we discuss the software architecture of our UI prototyping tool with provisions for split and task-based usability tests. The software tool uses the MVC architecture, with the main components being *UI Prototype Management* and *UI Experiment Management*. The models used in the architecture are the *UI Prototype* for prototyping and the *UI Experiment* for conducting the split tests. The diagram (see figure 4.1) shows the different modules and components of the UI prototyping tool and how they interact with each other during the execution of the tool. We chose the MVC architecture for this tool because it separates the application logic into three interconnected components. The model component represents the data and the business logic of the application. The view component represents the application's UI, and the controller component handles the user input and updates the model

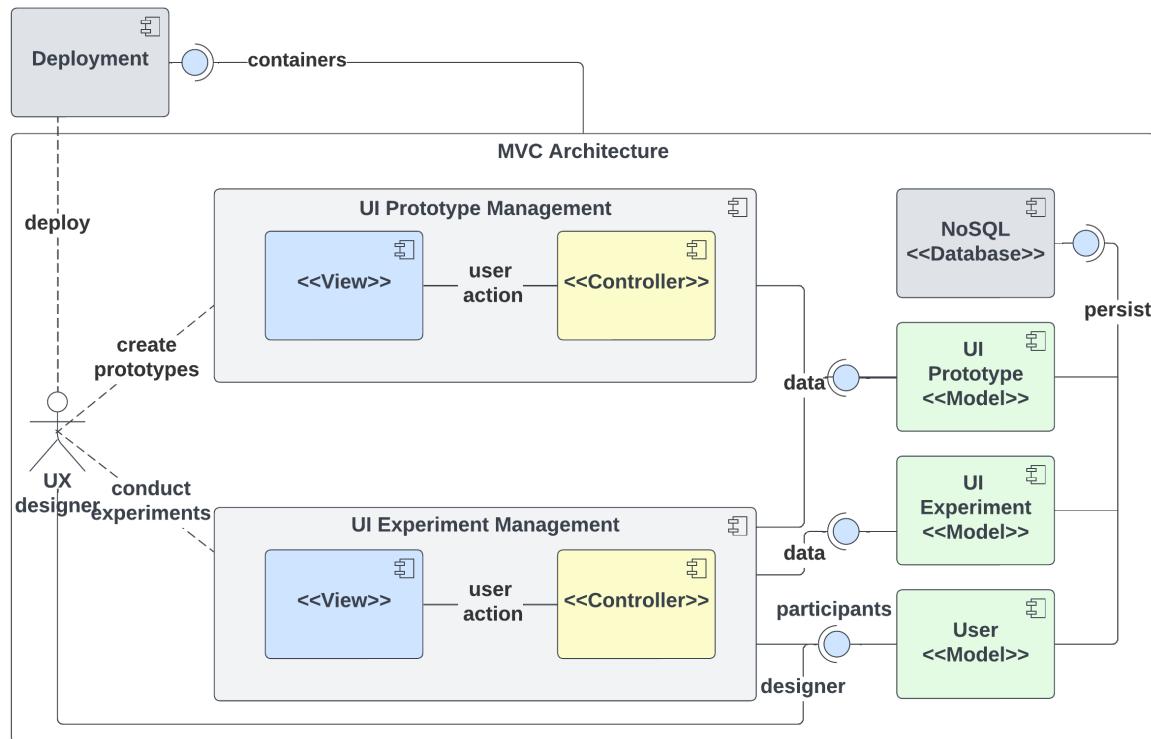


Fig. 4.1 MVC Architecture of our UI Prototyping tool

and the view. Separating these components allows for easier application maintenance, scalability, and modifiability.

As shown in figure 4.1, the *UI Prototype Management* component manages the prototyping process creating different UI screens and adding UI elements. Conversely, the *UI Experiment Management* component manages split tests and task-based usability tests. Both of these components contain the controller and the view and are explained in detail in the next sections. These controllers handle user input and update the models and views accordingly. The *UI Prototype* model is connected to the *UI Prototype Management* component, and the *UI Experiment* model is connected to the *UI Experiment Management* component. These models are responsible for providing data to their respective components. The prototyping data is stored in the DB using the *UI Prototype* model, and the UI experimentation data is stored in the DB using the *UI Experiment* model. At the same time, the results of the experiments also persisted in the DB using the UI prototyping model. Similarly, the *User* model is responsible for providing the user participants for the experiments component while providing a UX designer for executing our tool. As per the MVC architecture, the data is then persisted into the database using a service, at the same time, the user is also allowed to

do the CRUD operations. Finally, for the database, we use a *NoSQL* database that provides flexibility and scalability for applications with changing data requirements.

The *UX designers* are responsible for prototyping and creating UI experiments and scenarios. They can access all the tool's features and create, edit, and delete prototypes and experiments. Finally, for deployment, we have one component that includes all the files and dependencies required to run the application. This component contains the server-side code, the client-side code, and the necessary libraries and dependencies. The deployment component is responsible for packaging the application and deploying it to the target environment.

In summary, the software architecture for our UI prototyping tool is designed using the MVC architecture, with the details explained in the next sections. Similarly, the role of the UX designer, the user responsible for prototyping and creating user experiments and scenarios, is also described in the next section in detail.

## 4.2 UI Prototype Management

In our solution approach, we must have features for creating various UI prototypes. Therefore, using this component, we allow the UX designers to create UI prototypes as shown in figure 4.2. It consists of various sub-components for constructing UI elements, data models, and analyzing results.

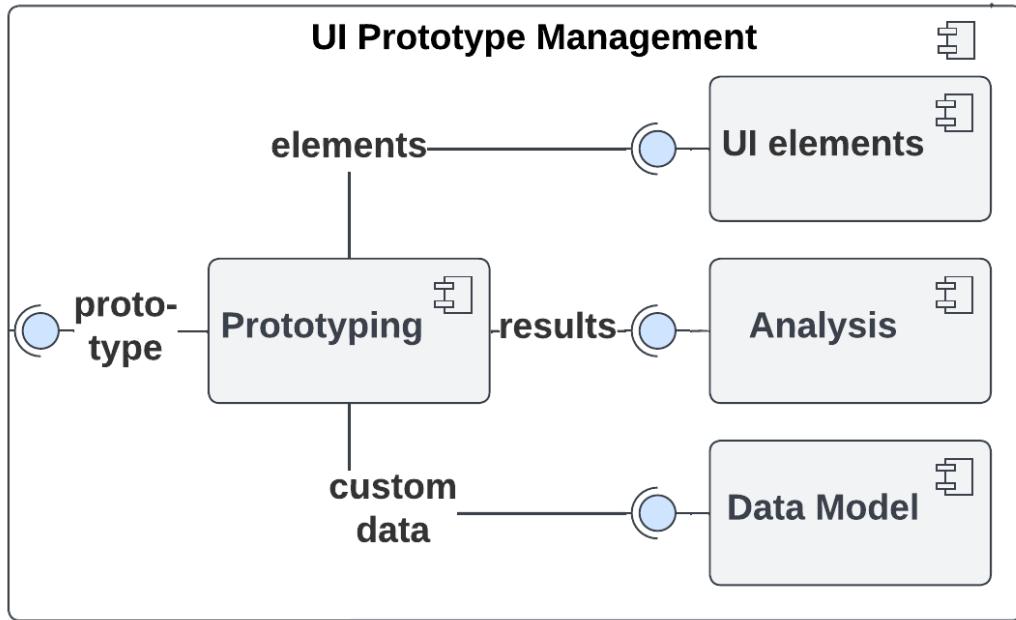


Fig. 4.2 Details of UI Prototyping Management connecting to a Database

**UI Elements:** The *UI elements* component of figure 4.2 provides a collection of reusable and flexible UI elements that can be easily used in creating new UI prototypes. These UI elements include buttons, input fields, dropdown menus, and many others, and are typically organized into categories for easy access and management. Each of our UI elements includes a range of properties that can be customized to meet the user's specific needs. Providing these options allows users to create prototypes that accurately represent their vision without being limited by the tool's capabilities. Therefore, this component is crucial for quickly and efficiently creating new UI prototypes as it eliminates the need for developers and designers to recreate the same UI elements whenever they start a new project.

**Data Model:** The *Data Model* component of figure 4.2 provides a way to customize the data used in iterating the design of the UI prototype. This component allows designers to define custom data models, which are then stored in a database and can be accessed and

manipulated using a model. Similarly, these models are defined by their UI prototypes, which can be used to simulate real-world data and test the UI design in different scenarios. With this component, users can create data models, which are then stored in a database and can be accessed and manipulated using a model. This component is essential for creating realistic and comprehensive UI prototypes that more closely resemble the final product and accurately reflect the end users' needs.

**Analysis:** The *Analysis* component of figure 4.2 provides a way to analyze the results of the experiments conducted by the UX designer. This component enables users to combine and aggregate the results of qualitative and quantitative analyses. This component allows designers to evaluate their UI prototypes' success, identify improvement areas, and make data-driven decisions about how to iterate and improve it. The analysis component can provide a range of data, including user feedback, metrics, and analytics, which can help designers to make informed decisions about the UI design. It allows users to iterate quickly on their designs based on the insights gained from the analysis, ensuring that the final product is optimized.

**Prototyping:** The *Prototyping* component of figure 4.2 requires using all the other components mentioned above. The central component provides a way to create, manage, and test UI prototypes. By integrating the UI elements, data models, and analysis components, designers can create highly effective UI prototypes that meet the needs of the end users. The prototyping component typically includes features like drag-and-drop UI design tools, data uploading features, and the ability to quickly iterate and experiment with different UI design ideas.

In summary, implementing a prototyping management component simplifies UI prototyping, and helps improve the effectiveness of the UI allowing the addition of UI elements and data models and enhancing the prototype.

## 4.3 UI Experimentation Management

In our solution approach, we must have features for creating various UI variants and conducting experiments of A/B testing. Therefore, as shown in figure 4.3, using this component, we allow the UX designers to develop experiments on the UI as defined in the UI prototype. It consists of various sub-components for constructing UI variants, assigning participants to experiments, managing participants' tasks, including qualitative questions, and collecting quantitative feedback.

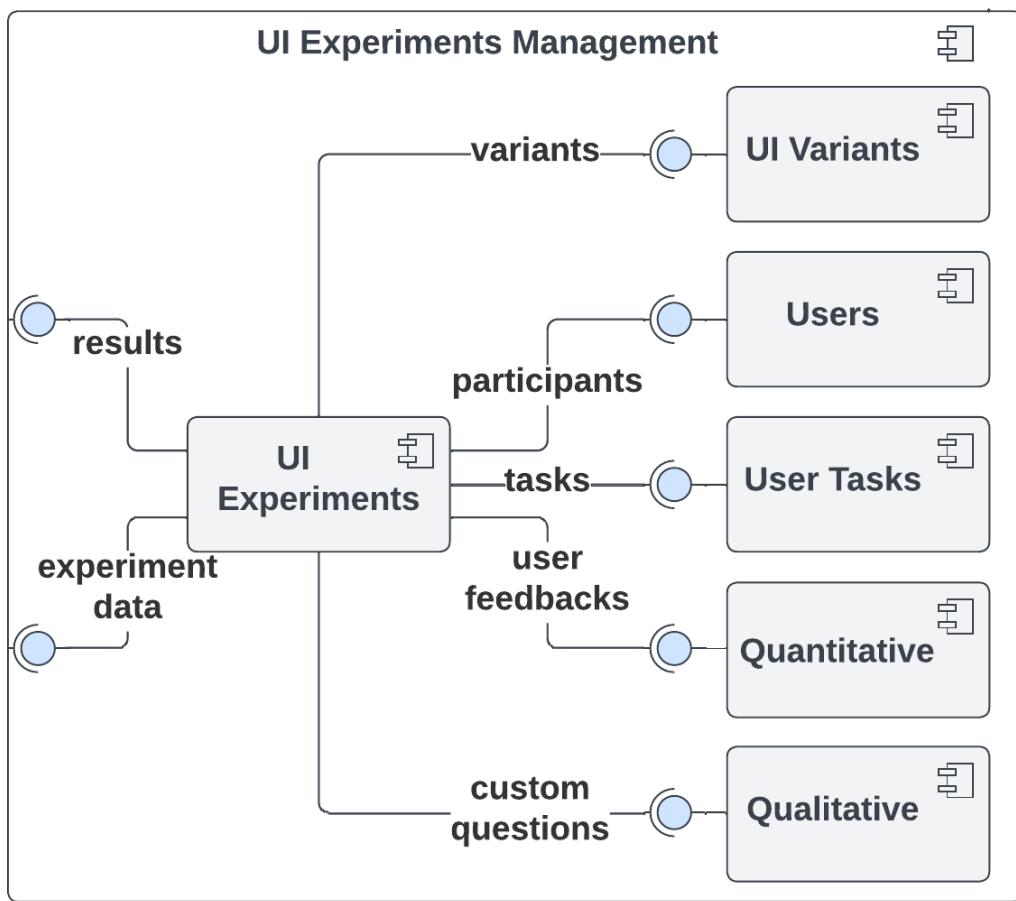


Fig. 4.3 Detailed diagram of UI Experiment Management

**UI Variants:** The *UI Variants* component of figure 4.3 allows the creation of multiple prototype variants, allowing for A/B testing and comparison between different design approaches. UX designers can easily customize these variants to create unique user experiences. This component provides a range of prototype variants that UX designers can customize to suit their specific needs. These variants can be created and saved in the system for easy

access and modification and reused across multiple experiments. This component ensures that designers have access to various UI variants that can be easily modified to test different hypotheses or design options.

**Users:** An important aspect while experimenting or A/B Testing is the users' participation. The *Users* component provides the ability to manage user participants in UI experiments. It enables UX designers to create user profiles with specific characteristics and demographics and assign them to particular experiments. This component also provides user management functionality, including adding, removing, and editing user profiles and the ability to group users for specific experiments.

**User Tasks:** The *User Tasks* component allows UX designers to create and manage tasks for participants to complete during UI experiments. These tasks can be customized to fit specific user scenarios and test different aspects of the UI design. This component provides a task management system for participants in UI experiments. It allows designers to create and assign tasks to specific users and track their progress and completion. Tasks can be simple, such as clicking on a button or filling out a form, or more complex, such as completing a series of steps or navigating a website. This component ensures the UX designer measures user performance and satisfaction by assigning tasks during the UI experimentation process.

**Quantitative:** The *Quantitative* component provides a mechanism for collecting user feedback on specific UI elements from tasks and experiments. This feedback can make data-driven decisions and inform future design iterations. This analysis can include metrics such as time to complete a task, success rates, or user satisfaction ratings. The feedback can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of different design options and identify improvement areas. This component ensures that designers have access to quantitative data that can be used to make informed decisions during the UI experimentation process.

**Qualitative:** The *Qualitative* component provides custom questions for the experiment and allows for gathering qualitative data from participants. These questions can be designed to gain insight into user perceptions, opinions, and attitudes toward the UI prototype. These questions can be used to gather qualitative feedback from participants, such as their opinions or impressions of the design, or to extract specific information, such as their understanding of a particular feature. This component ensures that designers can capture user feedback specific to the experiment. Moreover, this component complements the quantitative part and gives users a more holistic view of how they interact with their prototype.

**UI Experiments:** The *UI Experiments* component ties the above sub-components together, providing a seamless experience for conducting UI experiments. Integrating all these components allows for efficient management of UI experiments and provides data analysis capabilities for informed decision-making. This component ensures that designers have a streamlined way to manage the entire UI experimentation process, from UI variants creation to data analysis. It allows designers to create and execute experiments, assigning users, tasks, and prototype variants. Conversely, it provides an analysis of the results of the experiments, including both qualitative and quantitative data, and stores the data in a database for future use.

In summary, implementing an experiments management component simplifies the A/B testing, helps improve the effectiveness of the UI, and allows you to manage and track the different interface variations.

## 4.4 Database Components

In our solution approach, we must have features for persisting the data in our database. Therefore, as shown in figure 4.4, using this component, we store the data from the models from our MVC architecture. In the component diagram, the database components are represented by *MongoDB* component and a *Persistence Infrastructure*.

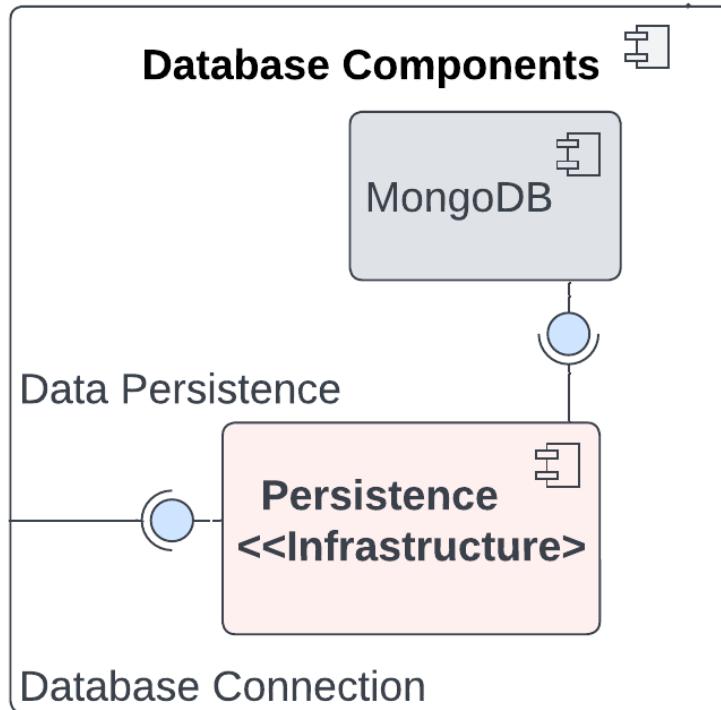


Fig. 4.4 Details of Database Management

**Persistence Infrastructure:** The *Persistence Infrastructure* component is responsible for ensuring that the data in the database is persistent and available for future use. Therefore, a persistence infrastructure is necessary for our software to manage a system's data storage and retrieval. It provides a layer of abstraction between the application and the database, which enables us to easily switch between different database types and optimize the data storage for our needs. The component ensures data consistency and reliability, even during system failures or errors. It provides a set of APIs and tools for data access and manipulation, including CRUD operations in the database.

**MongoDB:** *MongoDB* component represents the database components. It is a NoSQL database that stores data in collections instead of tables, allowing for flexible and scalable data storage. In our MVC architecture, MongoDB provides the application's database connection, allowing it to store and retrieve data. MongoDB is also known for its ability to handle large amounts of unstructured data, making it a popular choice for modern web applications.

In summary, when implementing a persistence infrastructure for a non-relational database like MongoDB, we developed the structure and functionality of the database and designed the persistence layer accordingly. Therefore, the system can store and retrieve data in an efficient, scalable, and reliable way.

## 4.5 Deployment Components

A deployment infrastructure is necessary for ensuring that the system is deployed and running in a secure, scalable, and reliable way. A deployment infrastructure is responsible for managing the deployment of components, ensuring that they are running on the appropriate servers or cloud-based environments, and monitoring their performance. We use a no-code approach and microservice architecture to simplify deployment infrastructure implementation. It allows for the creation of deployment pipelines and automates many of the processes involved in deploying components.

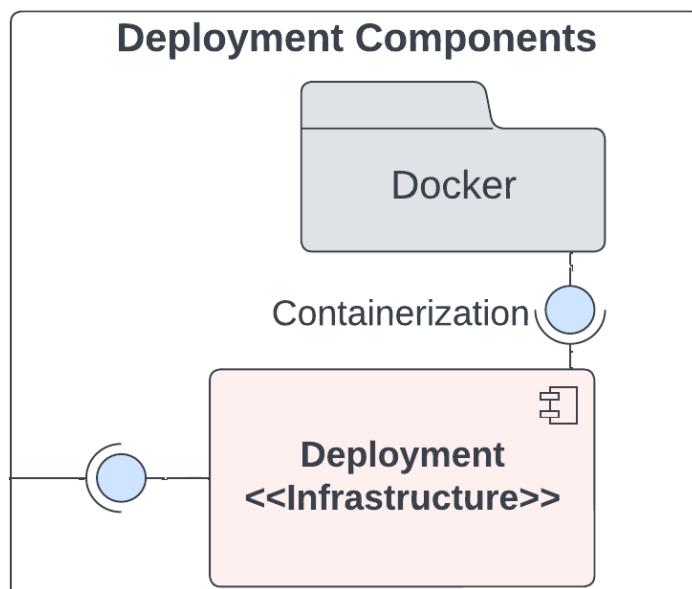


Fig. 4.5 Details of Deployment Components

**Deployment Infrastructure:** We use a no-code approach using code generation to simplify the implementation of our deployment infrastructure by automating many of the tasks involved in deploying the system. So, we define a set of rules and templates for automatic code generation and generate some reusable components as defined by the UI prototyping management. These components' implementation uses templates containing its code (e.g., for a button element defined in the UI prototype, a template is generated containing all its properties and logic). Then, the code generator takes input data, including configuration files, database schemas, and models of system components and their interactions. Finally, the code will be generated using the templates and rules defined in the previous steps, and we will containerize the generated code.

**Docker:** Containerization plays an even more important role in using a microservice architecture. It must support the deployment of many independent microservices that may be deployed across multiple servers or databases. From our component diagram (see figure 4.1), we first identify the system's microservices and their dependencies, such as database components, UI prototyping management, and UI experimentation management. It helps determine how the microservices should be deployed and how they should communicate. Next, we create Docker images for each microservice and its dependencies. Then, we define docker-compose files<sup>1</sup> in yaml<sup>2</sup> (see Appendix A) that describe how the docker containers should be deployed and connected. Finally, we build the *docker images* and deploy them as *docker containers*.

In summary, implementing a deployment infrastructure for a microservice architecture can simplify the deployment and management of microservices, making it easier to build and maintain complex systems.

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<sup>1</sup>A Docker Compose file is a YAML file that specifies the microservices, their dependencies, and how they should be deployed and connected.

<sup>2</sup>Website for YAML format: <https://www.redhat.com/en/topics/automation/what-is-yaml>

## 4.6 Security Components

Security infrastructure is essential to protect the system from unauthorized access and attacks. By implementing security measures, such as access control, we limit access to sensitive information and functions to only authorized users. Similarly, authentication is one of the fundamental security mechanisms used to verify the identity of users. Our security infrastructure, therefore, provides access control and some authentication mechanisms (see figure 4.6).

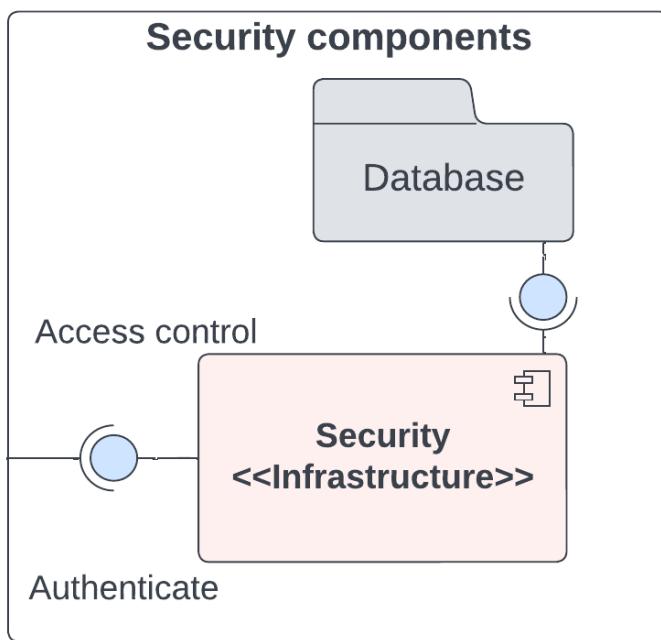


Fig. 4.6 Details of Security Components

**Security Infrastructure:** The *Security Infrastructure* provides access control and authentication mechanisms. Access control involves defining policies and rules determining who can access resources under what circumstances. Therefore we implement access control mechanisms using role-based access control (RBAC) and then allowing or denying access based on those roles or groups. So, we first identify the roles or groups requiring system access, including participants, UX designers, and other users<sup>3</sup>. Then we define the access rights (e.g., the UI prototyping management should only be accessible to the UX designers). Finally, we implement a mechanism that checks the user roles and then accesses the data or services accordingly.

<sup>3</sup>This may include different stakeholders like product managers, developers, etc.

Next, authentication involves verifying the identity of users and ensuring that they have the appropriate permissions to access the system. We provide an authentication mechanism using a password and username. It ensures that only authorized users can access our tool. Moreover, we define some validators for password strength to make sure the passwords are strong.

In summary, implementing a security infrastructure providing access control and authentication mechanisms for our tool can help prevent unauthorized access and protect sensitive data from being compromised.

# **Chapter 5**

## **Solution Implementation**

In the previous chapter, we displayed an architectural overview of our solution approach. Consequently, the solution implementation chapter of this thesis presents the details of how the proposed system was developed and implemented. Firstly, we define the DFs (see section 5.1) that focuses on designing and developing new artifacts, methods, or systems. Next, we explain our software tool (see section 5.2) which was developed using these DFs. Next, the description of the technology stack and development tools is explained (see section 5.3). The chapter includes a detailed explanation of the critical features and functionality of the system and the processes used in frontend implementation (see section 5.4), backend implementation (see section 5.5), and database implementation (see section 5.6). Through this chapter, we explain how we transformed the proposed solution into reality and its potential for real-world applications.

### **5.1 Tool Design Features**

The DSR aims to produce a tangible outcome, such as a new software tool, a process improvement, or a theoretical framework with the derived DFs. It often involves multiple cycles of design, evaluation, and redesign, allowing for constant improvement of the artifact. In the development step of the *DSR*, we derive the features of our software tool using the DFs. In this section, we translate each DPs (we defined in chapter 3) into a set of DFs that we can directly implement into the tool or solution approach and we describe the DFs for each of the derived DPs. As shown in the figure 5.1, we see that the DFs are divided according to the *LEAN* development cycle.

**Build:** In the building phase of the LEAN development cycle, based on the **DP1: Modeling**, the solution tool provides features for creating the models (*DF1*) useful for persisting data in the database and updating them (*DF2*) by iterating and improving the models with the results of the experiments. It helps to create our prototypes in a model-based approach and improve our prototypes by improving the models throughout the LEAN development cycle. With the **DP2: User Variety**, the key features of our solution tool for the UI prototyping tool include registration for diverse users using a registration form (*DF3*) and user management, i.e., features that enable team members to create and manage user accounts (*DF4*), assign different levels of access and permissions (*DF5*). The user module maintains all these features and also the user authentication, authorization, and user profile management. Next, based on the **DP3: Flexible UI Elements**, the UX designer prototypes using the features of our solution tool, which includes the creation of different screens (*DF6*) and reusable UI elements using a drag and drop interface (*DF7*). The tool also provides a feature to add custom data i.e., creating data models by uploading a CSV file (*DF8*), revising structures of data model table (*DF9*), adding and deleting data from the table (*DF10*). Next, based on the **DP4: User tasks Refinement**, the UX designer creates user tasks for the users using the features of our solution tool, which includes creating tasks for users depending on the data model (*DF11*) and independent of data models (*DF12*), and assign the task to the experiments (*DF13*).

**Measure:** In the measuring phase of the LEAN development cycle, based on the **DP5: Split Tests**, the UX designer would be able to create A/B tests or UI experimentation (*DF14*) using the features of our solution tool, which includes creating and modifying the experiments (*DF15*), creating and updating the UI variants (*DF16*), and modifying the variants' prototypes such that each variant has a unique view (*DF17*). Next, based on the **DP6: Qualitative Analysis**, the UX designer would be able to do qualitative analysis on the users using the features of our solution tool, which includes creating the custom qualitative questionnaire with options in the answering formats like *scale-based*, i.e., the users will have to choose from options 1 to 10 (*DF18*) and open-ended questions, i.e., the users will have the freedom to answer whatever they think (*DF19*). And, the user participants will answer these qualitative questions after finishing the tasks with a modal appearing with different questions (*DF20*). Similarly, based on the **DP7: Quantitative Analysis**, the UX designer creates quantitative analysis on the users using the features of our solution tool, which includes collecting the task data feedback, i.e., collecting the time taken to finish the task, number of unsuccessful attempts, the path taken by the users to complete the task, etc. (*DF21*), and aggregating these feedback data (*DF22*).

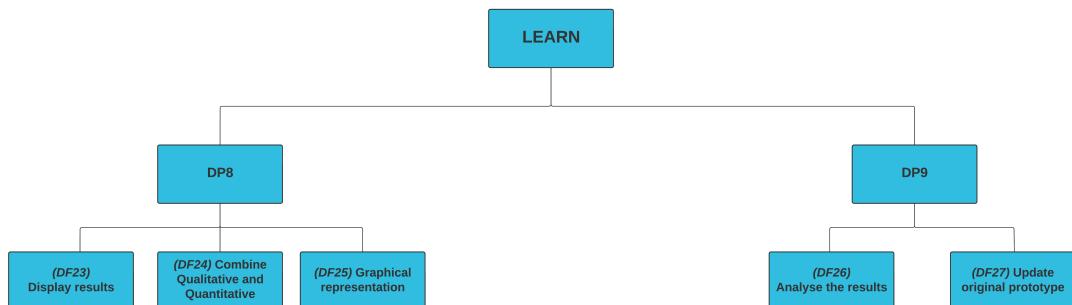
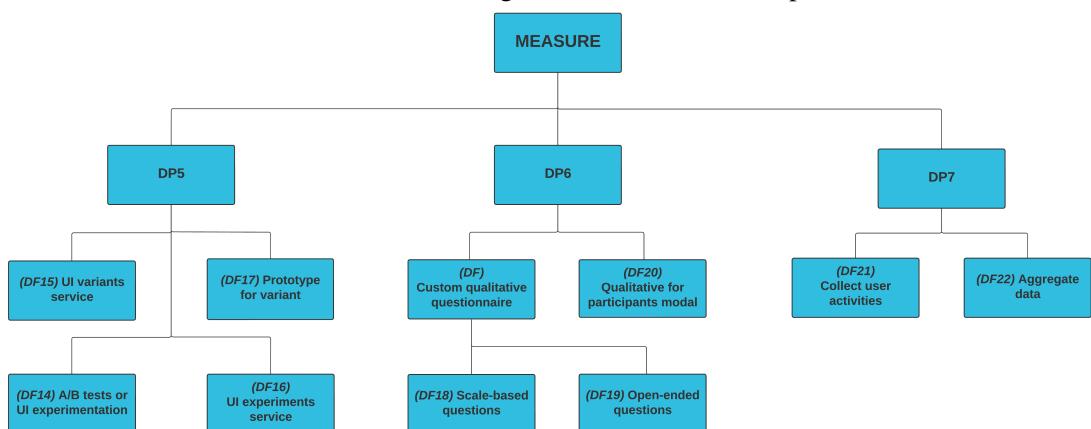
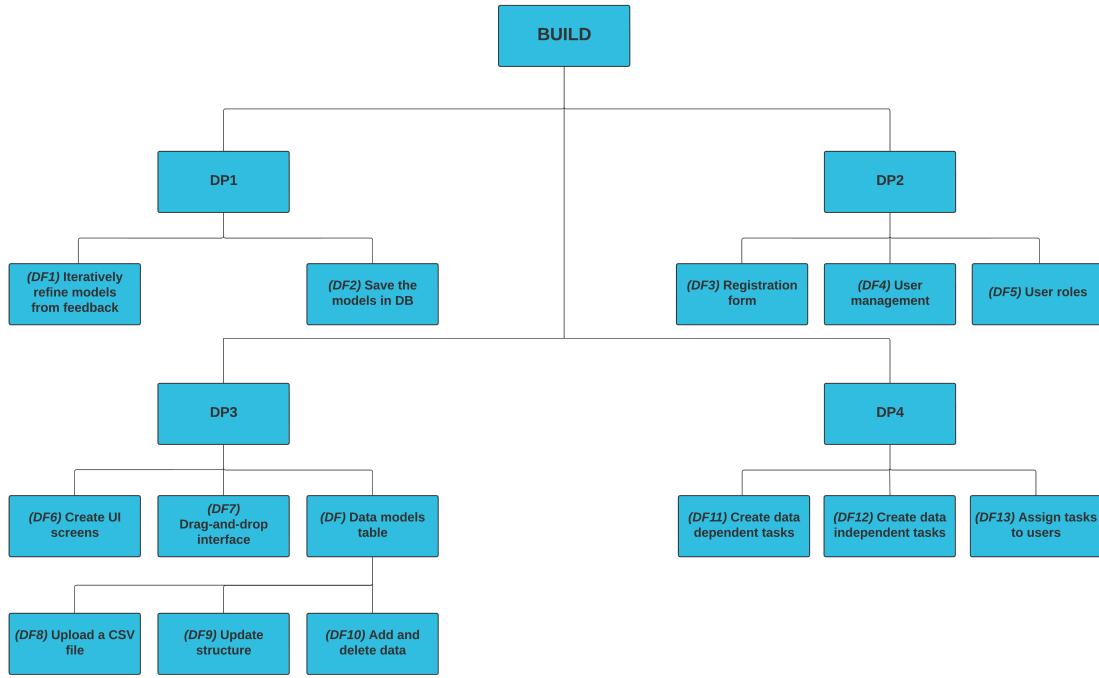


Fig. 5.1 Hierarchical Structure of DFs

**Learn:** In the learning phase of the LEAN development cycle, based on the **DP8: Diversity in Analysis**, the UX designer compares the statistics using the features of our solution tool, which includes showing the results of the experiment (*DF23*), combining qualitative and quantitative analysis of each variant (*DF24*), and a graphical view to see the results (*DF25*). Finally, based on the **DP9: Continuous Design**, the UX designer should be able to analyze the results of the UI experiments (*DF26*) and update the original prototype with the results from the experiment (*DF27*) for continuous improvement.

Overall, the design features section in DSR delivers a comprehensive overview of the solution tool to address the identified problem or research question. Moreover, this section describes the DFs for our Proof-of-Concept (POC) solution tool.

## 5.2 Software Tool

The software tool developed for this research project is a POC UI prototyping tool that offers DFs to create, customize, and test user interfaces. The tool was developed to help UX designers prototype and test different UI versions using split tests or A/B testing methods. The tool provides a simple and user-friendly interface for creating UI prototypes. It offers a variety of DFs, such as customizable UI elements, data modeling, and experiment creation, to help designers create and test UI designs efficiently. In this section, with the help of the tool's screenshots, we will explain the features and functionalities in detail, including how to use the tool to create UI prototypes, set up experiments, and analyze the results. The tool also offers an experiment creation feature that allows designers to create split tests or A/B testing methods to test different versions of their UI prototypes. Designers can create multiple experiments and define experiment tasks, such as finding a movie to watch, to gather quantitative data from participants.

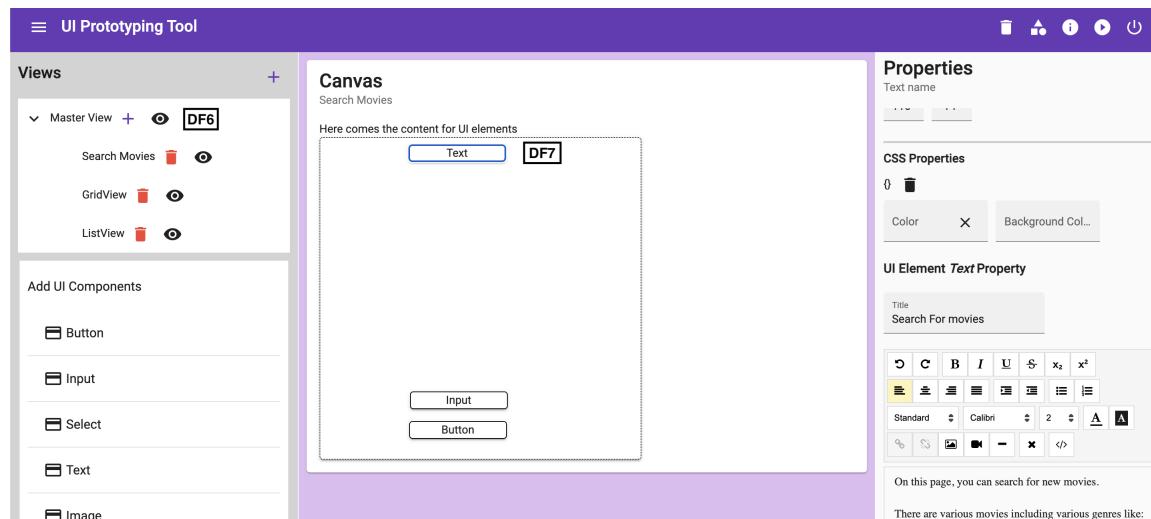


Fig. 5.2 Prototyping Page of the Tool

First, the UX designer needs to create an account as the admin user of the tool. After successful login, the tool provides a headstart option that generates an example movie-streaming UI prototype to help designers jump-start quickly. The generated prototype (see figure 5.2) includes a basic layout and a set of UI elements that can be customized to fit the designer's needs. Next, designers can create data models (see figure 5.3) for their UI prototypes by adding, modifying, or deleting data fields using the data model feature. This feature allows designers to test and manipulate data in their UI prototypes, making creating realistic and functional prototypes easy.

title	budget	year	age	genre	length	
Amistad	62.57023609	1997	21	Drama	152	<b>DF10</b> <span style="color: red;">Delete</span>
Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy	34.56069028	2004	14	Comedy	104	<b>DF10</b> <span style="color: red;">Delete</span>
Cherry Falls	20.41663279	2000	18	Comedy	92	<b>DF10</b> <span style="color: red;">Delete</span>

Fig. 5.3 Data Models Page of the Tool

The tool also offers an experiment creation feature (see figure 5.4) that allows designers to create split tests or A/B testing methods to test different versions of their UI prototypes. Designers can create multiple experiments and define experiment tasks, such as finding a movie to watch, to gather quantitative data from participants. Similarly, to gather participant feedback, designers can create custom questionnaires, such as open-ended or scale-based questions, and participants can answer them after completing experiment tasks.

Nr.	Experiment name	Experiment tasks	Custom Questions	Time range	Priority	Evaluation	Edit	Delete
1	Movie View Test	User Tasks DF12 Qualitative DF19		Mon Mar 27 2023 - Tue Apr 11 2023	1	SUM	<span style="color: blue;">Edit</span>	<span style="color: red;">Delete</span>

Fig. 5.4 UI Experiments Page of the Tool

Next, the UX designer can deploy the tool to see the actual UI elements and the screens that were prototyped. Now, the UX designer recruits some participants and instructs them to participate in a UI experiment. As the user participant logs in to check the tool, they are navigated to the tools page. This page contains the tasks that are assigned to the participant by the UX designer (see figure 5.5).

**What are tasks?**  
A part of our Task-based Usability Tests

Hello, thank you for participating in our usability test.

In this test, you will be performing tasks using our software tool. You will be asked to speak out loud about your thought process and actions while performing the tasks so that we can understand your experience.

We want to see how easy and effective it is for you to complete these tasks. For each task, you will find a specific scenario or goal to achieve using our tool. Try to perform the task as you would in a real-world scenario.

If at any point you encounter difficulties or have questions, feel free to ask me, but remember, we are interested in seeing how the tool performs, not how well you can guess.

Before we start, please familiarize yourself with the tool by taking a few moments to get acquainted with its features and functionalities.

Your Tasks [DF13]						
Nr	Task Name	Task Description	Start Task	Stop Task	Task status	Time taken
1	Find a movie to watch	Find a movie titled 'Kissing Jessica Stein' and click on the key 'year' to complete the task	[Start Task]	[Stop Task]	COMPLETED	153s
2	Find Crossplot	Find a movie called 'Crossplot' and click on its title to finish the task	[Start Task]	[Stop Task]	IN_PROGRESS	1s

Fig. 5.5 Tasks Assigned to the Users

Next, the user participant clicks on the *Start Task* button (see figure 5.5) to make the task status *IN\_PROGRESS* and the tool starts measuring the user movements like time taken to finish the task, the path taken by the user participant, and the number of unsuccessful attempts. After successful completion of the task, the user participants will be asked some qualitative questions (see figure 5.6) which were defined by the UX designers during experiment creation.

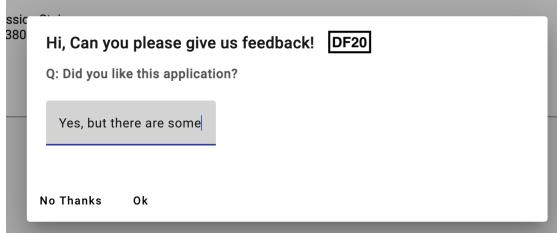


Fig. 5.6 Users Answering the Qualitative Questions

Finally, when all the user participants finish the experiment, the tool provides an analytics page (see figure 5.7) to help UX designers analyze the results of their experiments and decide which version of their UI prototype is more effective and, improve the original prototype.

It is important to note that the tool is a POC rather than industry-ready. The tool's functionalities are limited and may need to be more suitable for complex UI design projects. However, it can be a starting point for further development and refinement of UI prototyping and testing tools.

The screenshot shows the UI Prototyping Tool interface. On the left, there's a sidebar with navigation items: Prototyping (selected), Experiments, Users (with buttons DF5 and DF4), Data Model, and Feedback Questions. The main area has a purple header bar with the title 'Results for the 'Movie View Test'' and a sub-header 'DF23'. Below the header, it says 'A dashboard for analysis'. There's a table with two rows:

Nr.	Variant Name	View Analysis
1	ListView	<input type="button" value="DF26"/>
2	GridView	<input type="button" value="DF27"/>

Below this, there are two sections: 'Qualitative Analysis Results' and 'Quantitative Analysis Results'. The Qualitative section contains several questions and answers, such as 'Overall, I am satisfied with the ease of completing this task' (Answer: 3). The Quantitative section shows metrics like 'Task name: Find a movie', 'Time taken: 82', and 'Path taken (steps): 39'. At the bottom, it says 'Average Time taken: 50.00' and 'DF22'. A footer at the bottom of the main content area says 'Average Value: 2.3333333333333335' and 'DF24'.

Fig. 5.7 Experiment analysis Page of the Tool

## 5.3 Technologies Used

We have created a software tool that allows us to test the DFs and underlying principles of the developed DFs with actual users. To test our solution approach, we developed a rapid prototyping tool for the first cycle of our DSR.

The implementation of our UI Prototyping Tool uses various technologies. Our UI prototyping tool was developed using Angular<sup>1</sup>, Loopback<sup>2</sup>, and MongoDB<sup>3</sup>. Angular is a JavaScript (JS) framework used for building web-based applications. It provides comprehensive tools for creating dynamic and responsive UI components and handling user interactions. With Angular, we are using several other UI components which are available on Node Package Manager (npm)<sup>4</sup>.

Loopback is a Node.js<sup>5</sup> framework used for building RESTful APIs. It provides an intuitive interface for creating API endpoints and managing data persistence. Loopback's support for various data sources, including relational and NoSQL databases, makes it a versatile choice for web applications. We connect our database using the data managers provided by the loopback framework. The framework's ability to generate API documentation and testing tools simplifies our development process.

MongoDB is a NoSQL document-oriented database used for storing unstructured data. We store our prototyping tool's data using a JSON<sup>6</sup> format in an unstructured manner. It provides a scalable and flexible solution for managing volumes of data. MongoDB's support for automatic sharding and replication ensures high availability and fault tolerance. The database's dynamic schema and rich query language make it easy to adapt to changing data requirements.

By leveraging these technologies, our UI prototyping tool delivered a powerful and user-friendly interface while ensuring efficient data retrieval and storage. Based on these technologies, we build a microservice architecture explained in the next section so that our DPs and DFs can be easily implemented.

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<sup>1</sup>Website on Angular: <https://angular.io/>

<sup>2</sup>Website of Loopback 4: <https://loopback.io/>

<sup>3</sup>Website of MongoDB: <https://www.mongodb.com/>

<sup>4</sup>Website of NPM: <https://www.npmjs.com/>

<sup>5</sup>Website of NodeJS: <https://nodejs.org/en/>

<sup>6</sup>Website of JSON: <https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Glossary/JSON>

## 5.4 Frontend Implementation

This section discusses the front-end implementation of our software tool. As discussed in the previous section, we developed the UI using *Angular*, a popular front-end framework. Angular provides a comprehensive architecture (see figure 5.8<sup>7</sup>) that includes components, templates, event binding, property binding, directives, and injectors. Angular's architecture is organized into modules containing specific functions designed to achieve particular goals. These modules can be imported and exported between different Angular applications. In each application, a root module is launched at the start of the application and imports other modules to add additional functionality.

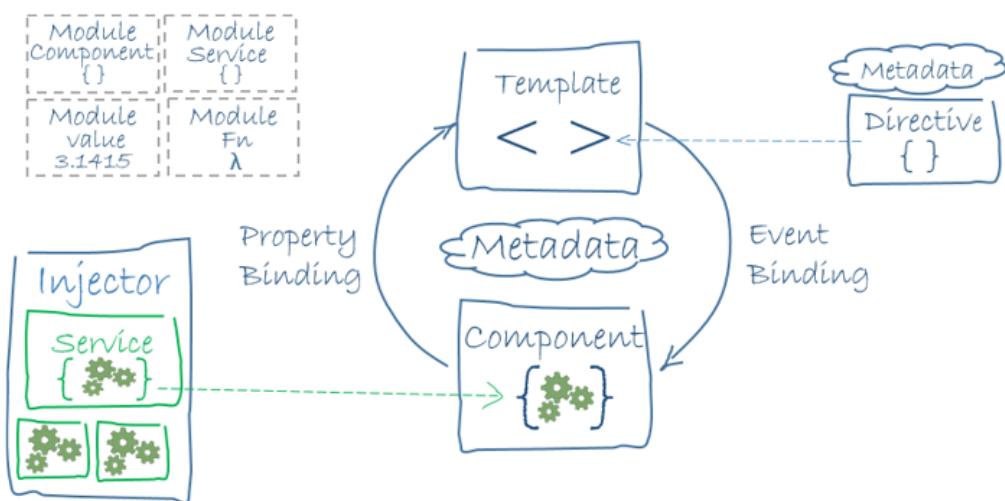


Fig. 5.8 Angular Architecture<sup>7</sup>

In our implementation, the Angular application has a root entry point, a module file (see Listing 5.1), containing all the necessary imports to function properly. Within our NgModule, we have imported various user-developed modules and third-party modules like *MatInputModule*, *NgxMatFileInputModule*, and *DragDropModule* for UI elements. By importing these modules, we can utilize their functions and features within our application to enhance its overall functionality and user experience. We are also using *Angular Material Design*<sup>8</sup> which is providing a library of pre-built UI components that follow Material Design guidelines, such as buttons, forms, and navigation menus. It saves time designing and developing UI elements from scratch and instead focuses on customizing them to fit our needs. *Nginx File Input*<sup>9</sup> is another third-party module we have imported into our application.

<sup>7</sup>Website of the Figure: <https://angular.io/guide/architecture>

<sup>8</sup>Website for Angular material design: <https://v7.material.angular.io/>

<sup>9</sup>Website for Angular Material File Input: <https://www.npmjs.com/package/@angular-material-components/file-input>

This module allows users to upload files directly from their local device, enabling us to save them to our server for future use. Finally, the *Drag and Drop module*<sup>10</sup> allows users to easily rearrange elements on the UI by dragging and dropping them to their desired location. Utilizing this module can provide a more interactive and dynamic user experience for prototyping.

```
1 // import Components
2 import { LoginComponent } from './components/login/login';
3 ...
4
5 // import Modules
6 import { DragDropModule } from '@angular/cdk/drag-drop';
7 import { AppRoutingModule } from '../app-routing.module';
8 import { NgxMatFileInputModule } from '@angular-material-components/
  file-input';
9
10 // import Material design
11 import { MatSidenavModule } from '@angular/material/sidenav';
12 ...
13
14 @NgModule({
15   declarations: [
16     LoginComponent,
17     ...
18   ],
19   imports: [
20     DragDropModule,
21     AppRoutingModule,
22     NgxMatFileInputModule,
23     MatSidenavModule,
24     ...
25   ],
26   exports: [
27     LoginComponent,
28     ...
29   ]
30 })
31
32 export class AllComponentModule {}
```

Listing 5.1 The File Defining All the Modules

---

<sup>10</sup>Website for the Angular material Drag and drop <https://v7.material.angular.io/cdk/drag-drop/api>

Our implementation is based on the MVC architecture, which contains services and directives to talk to the server and some middleware to add a user token to every request to authenticate the user. Similarly, we explain as an example the implemented *left-panel*, *middle-panel*, and *right-panel* components. At the same time, we use the *observer pattern*<sup>11</sup> for the interaction between these components and various services to interact with the server.

```

1 import { NestedTreeControl } from '@angular/cdk/tree';
2 import { Component, OnInit } from '@angular/core';
3 ...
4 @Component({
5     templateUrl: './left-panel.component.html',
6     ...
7 })
8 export class LeftPanelComponent implements OnInit {
9
10    // Define variables ...
11    constructor(private shared: CommunicationService, private
12        viewService: ViewsService, ...) { }
13
14    async ngOnInit() {
15        // get master view from server
16        let master: View = await firstValueFrom(this.viewService.
17            getMasterView())
18    }
19
20    // CRUD of view
21    addView(isMaster: boolean = false, node: View = new View()) {
22        let master: View = this.dataSource.data[0]
23        master.children.push(View.getView(false, name))
24        this.dataSource = new MatTreeNestedDataSource<View>()
25    }
26
27    // Emit events and the other panels/components capture them
28    addElement(elementName: string) {
29        this.shared.setAddUIElement(elementName)
30    }
31 }
```

Listing 5.2 The Typescript File for the Left Panel

---

<sup>11</sup>Website for Observer pattern: <https://refactoring.guru/design-patterns/observer>

**Left panel:** The left-panel component contains a list of UI elements that can be added to the screen. It allows users to navigate and manipulate the elements on the screen easily, improving the UX. In our implementation (see Listing 5.2), firstly, we added a `@Component` decorator to the component's TypeScript file to specify the location of its template file, CSS file and selector. Next, we added a function that fetches the master view, if present in the database, and assigns it to a variable in the component's code. This function is called during the initialization of the component called `ngOnInit`. We also included functionality for CRUD operations for the views or UI screens in the prototyping phase. It includes adding, editing, deleting, and viewing views or UI screens. Finally, we had several functions that emit events to other panels or components that are listening to these events. It allows for communication and coordination between different parts of the application. Similarly, the *template* of the left panel contains a tree structure that displays the views and their children. This structure allows users to easily navigate through different UI screens and select the one they want to work on. The left panel template also contains various UI elements that the user can add to the UI screen in the middle panel. We have grouped them into different categories based on functionality, such as form elements, buttons, text elements, etc. Each category can be expanded or collapsed to make it easier to find the desired element.

**Middle Panel:** In our implementation, firstly, in the constructor, the middle panel component (see Listing 5.3) creates a renderer to listen to mouse and keyboard events. This component subscribes to the required events that are emitted by other components. For example, it listens to adding UI elements from the left panel component. After the event is subscribed it adds the required UI element to the screen using the `addUIElement()` method and the provided information. It then uses the *Drag API* to make the element draggable within the virtual screen and adds various listeners. When the element is moved and placed at a certain position, the draggable interface provides the element's position, which is then added to the data structure of the current element. This component also provides CRUD functionality for the UI elements, i.e. to add, update, and remove elements. For instance, it adds listeners for the keyboard events, such as delete or backspace key press, and removes the element from the screen when the event is triggered. Similarly, we implemented a *template* for the middle panel component that allows the user to build the prototype visually. The template is designed to provide a virtual screen for the user to place UI elements. It contains a box that defines the dimensions of the screen and displays the name of the current view that is being edited. The user can place UI elements within the box by dragging and dropping them onto the screen. These elements are provided by the left panel component and can be customized using the properties panel component on the right. The middle panel component

subscribes to events emitted by the left and right panel components, allowing it to update the screen in real-time.

```

1  @Component({...})
2  export class MiddlePanelComponent implements OnInit {
3      // Define variables
4      @ViewChild('cardContent') el!: ElementRef
5      ...
6      constructor(private rf: RendererFactory2, private drag: DragDrop) {
7          this.renderer = this.rf.createRenderer(null, null);
8      }
9      async ngOnInit() {
10          // Subscribe to events e.g. add UI element
11          await firstValueFrom(this.shared.getAddUIElement())
12          this.addUIElement()
13      }
14      addUIElement() {
15          // Define Component
16          let component: ComponentContainer = new ComponentContainer()
17          component.name = this.toAddElement
18          ...
19          // Make it draggable
20          let dragRef: DragRef = this.drag.createDrag(
21              recaptchaContainer).withBoundaryElement(this.el)
22          // Add Element, push to array, add listener
23          const text = this.renderer.createText(this.toAddElement)
24          this.elementsOnCanvas.push(component)
25          this.addListener(recaptchaContainer, component)
26          this.getPosition(dragRef, component.id)
27          ...
28      }
29      async getPosition(dragRef: DragRef, id: string) {
30          const val = await firstValueFrom(dragRef.ended)
31          toAdd.cssProperty.dropPoint = dragRef.getFreeDragPosition()
32      }
33      async addListener(elm: Element, el: ComponentContainer) {
34          // Delete the element
35          const event = await this.renderer.listen(elm, 'keydown')
36          if (event.key == 'Delete' || event.key == 'Backspace') {
37              elm.remove() ...
38          }
39      }

```

Listing 5.3 The Typescript File for the Middle Panel

**Right Panel:** In our implementation, the right panel component serves as a property editor for the selected UI element in the middle panel. It contains various functions which are explained using the Listing 5.4. It listens to events emitted by the left panel and middle panel components to update the selected element's properties. It also listens to events to edit the canvas or screen and to delete the element from the canvas. The right panel contains various input fields and dropdowns to edit the properties of the selected UI element, such as color, text, font, size, etc. When the user selects an element on the canvas, the right panel updates with the properties of that element. Similarly, when a new UI element is added to the canvas, the right panel displays the default properties for that element. Additionally, the right panel contains a function for adding new interactions to the UI element, such as `onClick` event. This function allows the user to define a JS function that will be executed when the UI element is clicked. The function can be added to the element's properties in the right panel and saved to the database along with the other properties. Moreover, the template of the right panel component displays the properties of a selected UI element. It is dynamically updated based on events emitted by the middle panel component. When the middle panel emits an event to update the selected element, the right panel template displays the properties of that element. Similarly, when the middle panel emits an event to update the canvas or screen, the right panel template updates the properties displayed on the screen. Overall, the right panel template is designed to provide real-time updates to the properties of the UI element based on user actions and events.

```
1 // imports ...
2
3 @Component({...})
4 export class RightPanelComponent implements OnInit {
5     // Define variables
6     ...
7
8     constructor(...) { }
9
10    ngOnInit() {
11        // Functions for subscribing to various events
12        this.updateSelectedElement()
13        this.getProperties()
14        this.updateCanvasView()
15        this.updateDeletionUIElement()
16    }
17    async updateCanvasView() {
18        this.element =
19        await firstValueFrom(this.shared.getCanvasView())
20        this.elementName = this.element.name
21        if (this.element.type == ContainerType.VIEW) {
22            this.element.cssProperty = new CSSProperty().json
23            this.element.cssProperty.height = '200'
24        }
25    }
26    // Other functions ...
27
28    addNewInteraction() {
29        const interaction: OnClickInteraction =
30        new OnClickInteraction();
31        interaction.id = uuidv4();
32        this.element.interactions = [interaction]
33    }
34 }
```

Listing 5.4 The Typescript File for the Right Panel

## 5.5 Backend Implementation

This section discusses the backend implementation of our software tool. As discussed in the previous section, we developed the backend server using *Loopback v4*, a popular open-source Node.js framework. We implemented the backend following the MVC architecture pattern. In our implementation, we have leveraged the core concepts of LoopBack 4 to create a scalable and modular architecture for our application. According to the loopback 4 architecture (see figure 5.9<sup>12</sup>), the backend implementation contains controllers, services, repositories, models, data sources, authentication middleware, and many more. One of the key concepts we utilized was the ability to generate these components using the LoopBack 4 Command-Line Interface (CLI)<sup>13</sup>. This approach allowed us to quickly and easily create the necessary components of our backend and reduce development time. Another important concept we incorporated was the use of decorators to define the various endpoints and routes for our application. This approach enabled us to map our data models to REST APIs, simplifying CRUD operations. Additionally, we used the powerful dependency injection system provided by LoopBack 4. This functionality allowed us to modularize our application and simplify the management of dependencies between different components. Thus, the backend implementation provides a robust and scalable architecture to handle the application's data management and authentication needs. Next, we will provide an overview of some of the

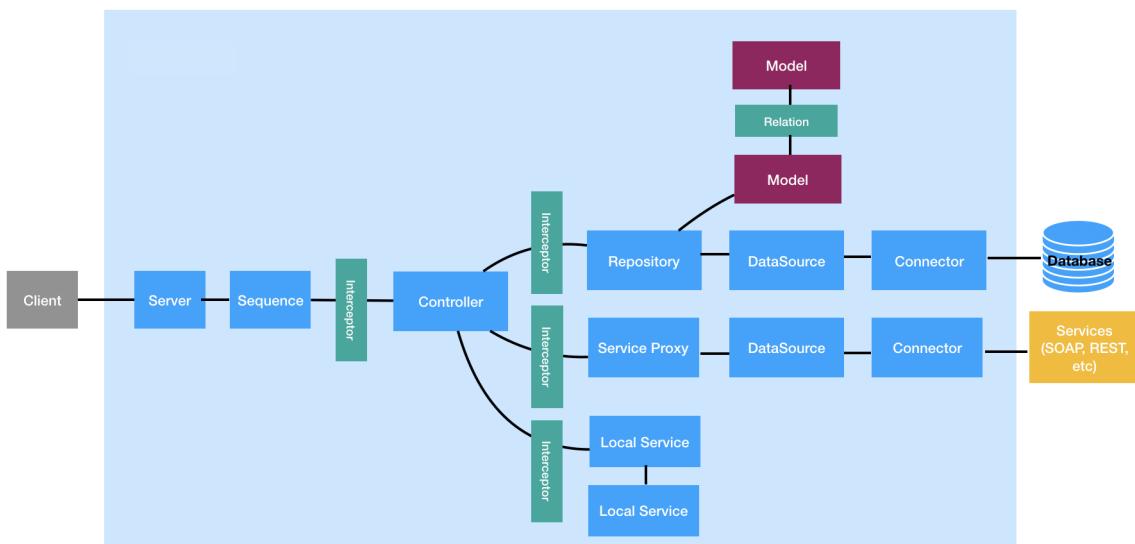


Fig. 5.9 Loopback 4 Architecture<sup>12</sup>

specific components that were generated by the LoopBack CLI and further customized by us.

<sup>12</sup>Website of the image: <https://loopback.io/pages/en/lb4/imgs/loopback-overview.png>

<sup>13</sup>Website for Loopback4 CLI: <https://loopback.io/doc/en/lb4/Command-line-interface.html>

**Datasource:** In the backend implementation using LoopBack 4, we used a MongoDB database as the data source for our application. We used the CLI to generate a MongoDB data source for our application by running the command `lb4 datasource`. It generated a data source file (see Listing 5.5) with the necessary configuration for connecting to our MongoDB instance. We customized the data source configuration to include the database name and other options, such as the connection string, username, and password in an env variable `DB_CONNECTION`.

```

1 // imports ...
2
3 const config = {
4   name: 'mongo',
5   connector: 'mongodb',
6   url: process.env.DB_CONNECTION,
7   useNewUrlParser: true
8 };
9
10 // Observe application's life cycle to disconnect datasource when
11 // application is stopped
11 @lifeCycleObserver('datasource')
12 export class MongoDataSource extends juggler.DataSource
13   implements LifeCycleObserver {
14   static dataSourceName = 'mongo';
15   static readonly defaultConfig = config;
16
17   constructor(@inject('datasources.config.mongo', {optional: true})
18     dsConfig: object = config) {
19     super(dsConfig);
20   }
21 }
```

Listing 5.5 The Typescript File for the MongoDB Datasource

**Controller:** Using Loopback 4, we created RESTful APIs for our application. The REST controller was generated using the LoopBack CLI tool using the command `lb4 controller <name>`, which provided a boilerplate code structure for creating REST endpoints. To connect the REST controller to our application's business logic, we connected it to the repository and services. It allowed us to define the operations that could be performed on the model and provide implementation details. We also implemented APIs for file uploads (see the Listing 5.6), specifically CSV files and images, necessary for our prototyping tool. We created a function called `fileUpload`, which takes in a `@requestBody` containing the file

to be uploaded. This function used the Nginx File input module to process file upload. Once the file is uploaded, we save it to our server folder.

```

1 // imports ...
2 export class FileUploadController {
3     constructor(...) {}
4
5     @authenticate('jwt')
6     @post('/files/{key}', {
7         responses: {...},
8     })
9     async fileUpload(
10         @requestBody.file()
11         request: Request,
12         @inject(RestBindings.Http.RESPONSE) response: Response,
13         @param.path.string('key') key: string,
14     ): Promise<object> {
15         this.handler(request, response, async (err: unknown) => {
16             this.uploadCsv(files["files"][0]["path"], key)
17         })
18     }
19     private uploadCsv(file: File) {
20         ...
21     }
22 }
```

Listing 5.6 The Typescript File for the Rest Controller for File Upload

**Model:** In our implementation, we used the CLI to generate our models. A data model in Loopback is essentially an entity representing a collection of data or a resource. It can have various properties that define its schema, such as the data type, validation rules, default values, etc. In our implementation, we defined our data model with various properties (as shown in Listing 5.7) like `id` of type `string`, `key` of type `string`, an `array` of data and some other properties. We also defined validation rules and default values for some of these properties. Overall, a model in Loopback 4 provides a structured way of organizing and storing data in our application.

**Other components:** We implemented an *Interceptor* using the `@authenticate('jwt')` decorator to secure the API endpoints and authenticate the user. This decorator validates the JWT token sent in the request header and authenticates the user based on the token's validity. If the token is valid, the user can access the endpoint; otherwise, a 401 unauthorized

error is returned. *OpenAPI* is a specification that allows developers to define, create, and consume RESTful APIs. We used the Loopback OpenAPI specification to generate API documentation for our application. The OpenAPI specification defines the API's endpoints, parameters, request and response bodies, and authentication requirements. The specification generates interactive documentation, client libraries, and code snippets to help developers integrate with the API. We configured the OpenAPI specification by defining the application's metadata, security schemes, and endpoints in the Loopback configuration file. Finally, we used a predefined docker file generated from the Loopback CLI to deploy the application. The file specified the base image, environment variables, exposed ports, and dependencies required to run the application. The docker file contained all the necessary instructions to build and run the application in a containerized environment.

```

1 @model({ settings: { strict: false } })
2 export class DataModel extends Entity {
3     @property({
4         type: 'string',
5         id: true,
6         generated: true
7     })
8     id?: string;
9
10    @property({
11        type: 'string'
12    })
13    key?: string;
14
15    @property({
16        type: 'array',
17        itemType: 'object',
18        required: false,
19        default: []
20    })
21    data: any;
22
23    [prop: string]: any;
24
25    constructor(data?: Partial<DataModel>) {
26        super(data);
27    }
28}
```

Listing 5.7 The Typescript File for the Data Model

## 5.6 Database Schema

In our database implementation, we used MongoDB as our database, which is a non-relational database system. MongoDB is a NoSQL database management system that uses a document-oriented data model. It is designed to scale horizontally across many servers, making adding new nodes to an existing cluster easy to increase capacity and improve performance.

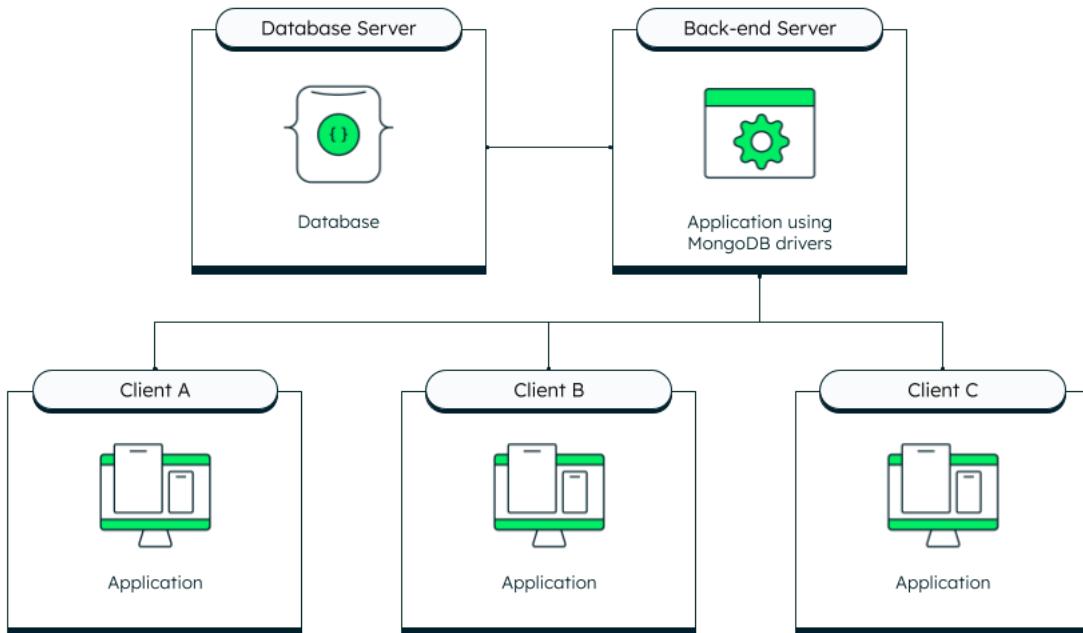


Fig. 5.10 Client-Server architecture of our MongoDB implementation<sup>14</sup>

MongoDB follows a client-server architecture (see figure 5.10<sup>14</sup>), where each node can act as a client, server, and nodes can communicate directly. Our implementation architecture includes using MongoDB Atlas, a cloud-based service for managing MongoDB databases. It allows us to easily manage and scale our database with features such as automatic scaling and backups. The data is stored in a collection of documents, which can be considered similar to rows in a traditional relational database. Each document consists of a set of key-value pairs and can have a flexible schema, allowing for dynamic data structures. It is in contrast to a traditional relational database with a fixed schema. We have implemented a 3-tier architecture for our application, with the frontend, backend, and database layers. Using JS code allows us to perform CRUD operations on the database.

We created two main tables, *View* and *Experiment* (see figure 5.11 containing the ER diagram), to store the data for our prototype and experimentation phases. The first table we

<sup>14</sup>Website for MongoDB architecture: <https://www.mongodb.com/basics/database-architecture>

created is called *View* and is used to store the various UI screens in our application for the prototyping section. The *View* table in our database schema is a crucial component of the prototyping feature. It stores various UI screens with properties like *ID*, *Name*, *property*, *elements*, and *children*. The *ID* and *Name* are both strings and *ID* is used for uniquely identifying each view. The *property* is a JSON object storing different properties like CSS properties, screen dimension properties, etc. Similarly, the *elements* property persists in an array of UI elements that are part of that view. These UI elements have properties like *ID*, *Name*, *cssProperties*, *interactions*, etc.

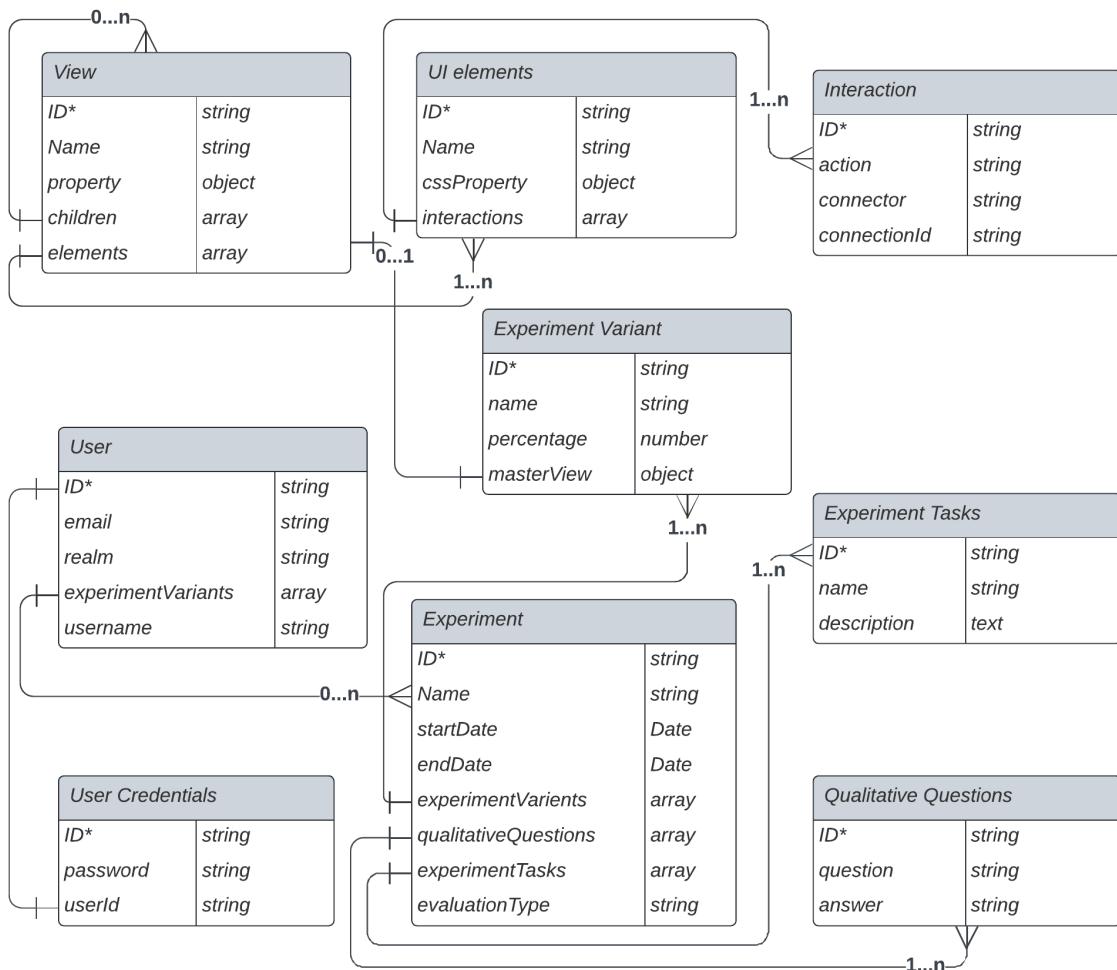


Fig. 5.11 Entity Relation Diagram of the Tool

Furthermore, the *View* table also contains the *children* property, which stores an array of *Views*. It's a cyclic reference, allowing us to create complex views by nesting views within each other. For instance, a parent view might contain two child views, each with unique UI elements and properties. By storing this information in the *View* table, our application

can easily retrieve all the necessary information to render the UI, including the properties of each UI element and how they relate to each other in the view hierarchy. This information is crucial for the prototyping feature as it allows users to create and visualize complex UI designs.

The second table in our MongoDB database schema is the *Experiment* table. This table stores details related to the experiment and contains properties such as *ID*, *Name*, *startDate*, *endDate*, *experimentTasks*, *qualitativeQuestions*, *experimentVariants*, and *evaluationType*. The *ID* and *Name* are both strings and the *ID* is used for uniquely identifying an experiment in the database. The *startDate* and *endDate* properties are used to store the dates between which the experiment was conducted.

The *experimentTasks* property is an array of experiment tasks to be performed as part of the experiment. Each task has a unique *ID*, a name, and a description. Similarly, the *qualitativeQuestions* property is an array of qualitative questions to be answered by the participants after completing the experiment. Each question has a unique *ID*, a question, and an answer. The *experimentVariants* property is an array of experiment variants to be used. Each variant has a unique *ID*, a name, and a percentage. The *percentage* property is used to specify the percentage of participants assigned to the variant. Additionally, each variant is associated with a *masterView*, a *View* entity representing the prototype of the user interface for that variant. Finally, the *evaluationType* property is used to specify the type of evaluation that will be performed for the experiment.

In addition to the *View* and *Experiment* tables, our database schema also includes a *User* table for storing user information with different user roles such as admin, participant, etc. This table contains properties such as *ID*, *email*, *realm*, *username*, and *experimentVariants*. The *ID* property serves as the unique identifier for each user, while *email* and *username* store the user's email and username, respectively. The *realm* property stores the user role assigned to the user, and *experimentVariants* is an array of experiments assigned to the user, precisely the variant of the experiment assigned to the participant. By storing this information in the database, we can keep track of user information and their assigned experiment variants. This information is used in the experiment to ensure that participants are assigned to the correct experiment variant and that their responses are recorded accurately. Finally, the *User* table plays a critical role in our application by ensuring that user information is stored accurately and can be easily accessed and managed.

Overall, our database implementation allows us to store and manage complex hierarchies of UI screens and interactions and store data related to our experimentation phase.



# Chapter 6

## Evaluation

In the previous chapter, we explained the implementation of our tool. Based on that, in this chapter, we will discuss the details of the evaluation process, including a user study we performed. Firstly, we explain the experimental design (see section 6.1), which focuses on the planning and design of the user study. Next, we explain the execution section (see section 6.2) that involves the actual implementation of the study. Next, we explain the analysis section (see section 6.3) discussing the processing of the data collected during the study and the results of the study. Finally, in the interpretation section (see section 6.4), we aim to draw conclusions from the analysis and determine the study's implications. For the setup, we recruited participants from Paderborn University (UPB)<sup>1</sup>.

### 6.1 Experimental Design

The experimental design is a crucial aspect of any user study as it determines the effectiveness and reliability of the study. In conducting and reporting our user study research, we followed the established guidelines of Runeson and Höst [64] (see figure 6.1) to increase the quality of the study outcomes. The experimental design comprises three main components: defining an objective, user scenario and research questions, establishing a study protocol, and addressing ethical concerns.

**Objective:** The user study aims to evaluate the usability and effectiveness of our model-based UI prototyping experimentation approach. Additionally, the study aims to identify any usability issues or limitations of the approach through user testing. Furthermore, the study aims to test the effectiveness of the DPs suggested by our approach in terms of the

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<sup>1</sup>Website of Paderborn University: <https://www.uni-paderborn.de/>

participants' ease of use and understandability. Through the evaluation, we hope to gain insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the approach and provide recommendations for further improvement. Based on these objectives, we define some RQs in the next section.

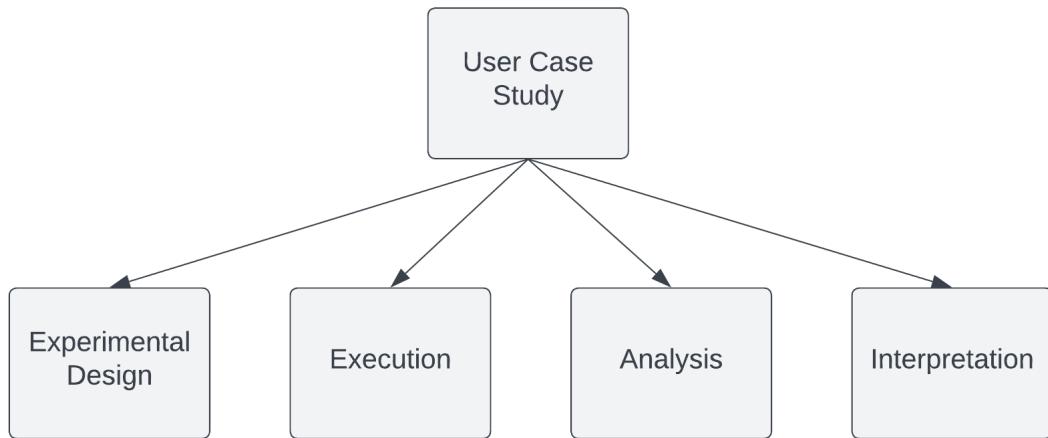


Fig. 6.1 User Case Study for Analysis

**Research Questions:** As an extension of main *RQ2*, we defined a research question for the user study.

**RQ:** What DPs are suitable for product designers to develop UI prototypes in the model-based UI prototyping experimentation approach?

**Study Protocol:** For the user study, we aimed to recruit diverse participants from different courses enrolled at UPB to ensure a wide range of perspectives and experiences on UI prototyping and UI Experimentation. We wanted to include individuals with varying experience in prototyping and user scenario development, from beginners to experts. To recruit participants, we first sent an invitation message and email (see figure 6.2) to our research group and other groups at the university. The invitation message included a Doodle<sup>2</sup> link, an online tool for setting up the appointment. The potential study participants clicked on the link and selected a one-hour slot for the study. After booking the slot, the participants received a detailed invitation email (see appendix C for details), which specified the location of the study, prerequisites, and a user scenario.

Since our tool was hosted online at the UPB server, we used Big Blue Button (BBB)<sup>3</sup>, an open-source web conferencing system, to monitor participants during our user study. We

<sup>2</sup>Website for Doodle: <https://doodle.com/>

<sup>3</sup>Website for BBB: <https://open-bbb.uni-paderborn.de/>

From: Rakshit  
To: various groups  
Subject: Invitation to Participate in a User Study

Hello,

my name is Rakshit Bhat, and I am inviting you to participate in my user study, which is a part of my master's thesis evaluation. The study is based on a UI prototyping tool with an option to create different UI variants and find the best fit for the prototype. Your participation in this study will greatly help me evaluate the effectiveness and contribute to advancing UI prototyping tools.

The study will require about 45-60 minutes, during which you will be asked to perform some tasks using the tool and provide your feedback.

Your participation in this study will be highly appreciated.

If you are interested in participating, please schedule a session using the Doodle link at your convenience. (Please try to select the empty spots)

If these slots do not fit you, you can always contact me, and we can find some slots.

After selecting the slots, an invitation email will be sent to you with further details.  
Thank you for considering.

**Link for Doodle:** «Doodle Link»

Cheers,  
Rakshit

Fig. 6.2 Recruiting the Participants for User Study

chose BBB because it is easy to use, reliable, and provides all the required features for our study. We conducted the study remotely, and BBB allowed us to interact seamlessly with the participants during the study. As the BBB service is also provided by our UPB, we did not have to worry about additional costs or compatibility issues. Therefore, BBB was a valuable tool for monitoring the participants during our study.

For our user study, there were a few prerequisites that the participants needed to fulfill. Firstly, since our tool was hosted on the UPB server, participants were required to have access to the Virtual Private Network (VPN)<sup>4</sup> to access the tool. The VPN ensured that only authorized individuals could access the tool. Secondly, the participants needed a good internet connection as the tool was web-based and required a stable internet connection for smooth functioning. Lastly, although the participants did not need any prior experience

<sup>4</sup>Website for University Paderborn VPN config: <https://imt.uni-paderborn.de/vpn-zugang/>

with UI prototyping or UI experiments, they required very basic knowledge, which we also explained before starting the study. It ensured they could understand the tasks and provide meaningful feedback during the study.

After finishing the user scenario, the participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire to provide us the qualitative and quantitative feedback. This questionnaire was created using Limesurvey<sup>5</sup>, an open-source online survey tool that is a service provided by UPB for surveys. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part included the System Usability Score (SUS), a standardized questionnaire for assessing the usability of a system. The second part included a Likert scale (1-5) for participants to rate the effectiveness of our DPs in improving the usability of the prototyping experimentation approach. In the third part, we included three open-ended questions to gather qualitative feedback from participants on the strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement of the approach.

**User Scenario:** To conduct the user scenario, we gave the participants a hypothetical situation where they had to imagine themselves as John, a UX designer, creating a movie-streaming app. We then guided them through a set of tasks to prototype the UI and create split or A/B tests to select the best variant. Finally, we asked them to gather feedback through a set of questionnaires and monitor the results to see which version of the app's interface was more effective.

**Ethical considerations:** Finally, for ethical considerations, we took steps to ensure the privacy and anonymity of the participants as per the guideline of UPB<sup>6</sup>. During the user study, we used BBB and informed the users that we were not recording the session. We only stored the user's department at the university to ensure diversity in the user case study. Additionally, we made the survey questionnaire anonymous to ensure participants could answer honestly without fear of repercussions. These steps confirmed that the user study was conducted ethically and respected the participants' privacy.

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<sup>5</sup>Website for UPB hosted Limesurvey: <https://umfragen.uni-paderborn.de>

<sup>6</sup>Website for ethical considerations: [https://www.uni-paderborn.de/fileadmin/ethik-kommission/Standard-Fragebogen-Ethikkommission-UPB-vs6\\_2018-10-31\\_de\\_en\\_2021-11-12\\_final.pdf](https://www.uni-paderborn.de/fileadmin/ethik-kommission/Standard-Fragebogen-Ethikkommission-UPB-vs6_2018-10-31_de_en_2021-11-12_final.pdf)

## 6.2 Execution

The execution phase of our user study involved several key steps. We conducted pilot testing to ensure our user scenario was well-designed and effective. Following this, we recruited participants through various channels and scheduled one-hour appointments with each of them. During these appointments, we collected data and observed as the participants executed the user scenario we had created. In this section, we will discuss each of these steps in more detail, including our pilot testing, recruitment, and data collection process. We will also provide an example scenario to illustrate one participant’s experience with our prototyping tool.

**Pilot Testing:** Before the actual execution of the user study, we conducted pilot testing to ensure that the user scenario and the tool were easy to understand and use. Initially, we did the pilot testing ourselves to identify potential issues and gather feedback. Later, we also asked two friends to test the tool and scenario to get additional feedback. Based on the feedback during the pilot testing, we made some updates and improvements to the tool and the user scenario. We addressed the bugs pointed out to us and made some changes to improve the tool’s usability. The changes were made to ensure the participants’ smooth experience during the actual user study.

**Recruitment:** Recruitment is an essential part of conducting a user study as it determines the quality and representativeness of the data collected. After completing the pilot study, we initiated the recruitment process for our user study. We sent an invitation email to various groups and channels that we believed would be interested in participating. The email included a Doodle link where potential participants could select their preferred time slots. The study lasted one hour for each participant, and as the participants selected different slots, the entire user study continued for two weeks. After agreeing to participate and giving their verbal consent, we sent the user scenario to each participant. We received a response from 17 participants who agreed to participate and selected their preferred slots for the study. Unfortunately, two participants later backed out for reasons beyond our control. After reading the user scenario, one participant did not like the study, and another fell sick before their scheduled slot. The recruitment process was conducted carefully to ensure that we had a diverse range of participants. We confirmed that the participants represented different departments in the university to ensure we had a good mix of perspectives. We also ensured that the study was voluntary and participants could opt out at any point. We provided anonymity for all participants by not recording any personal information, and we also ensured that the survey questionnaire was anonymous.

**Data Collection - User Participation and Observation:** For the data collection step, firstly we started the BBB session at the appointed time, and the participant joined us. Before beginning the session, we informed the participant that we would not be recording the session. We then asked the participant to share their screen while executing the user scenario. During the session, we observed the participant performing the scenario and took notes wherever necessary. We made sure to inform the participant before the start of the session that we would be taking notes to avoid any discomfort. The first two participants had doubts about the scenario, so after their participation, we had to update the scenario to improve it. Therefore, the remaining thirteen participants had slightly different scenarios from the first two. After completing the scenario, we asked the participant to stop sharing the screen and answer the questionnaire or the survey on Limesurvey. The survey questionnaire was anonymous to maintain the participants' confidentiality. The survey asked questions about the user's experience and the tool's usability. After the session, we thanked all the participants for their valuable time and participation in our study. After the successful participation of all 15 candidates, we gathered all the notes and survey responses for analysis.

**Example scenario:** The scenario was that John, a UX designer, was creating a new movie-streaming app and wanted to prototype different UI designs and conduct split tests to select the best variant. The study was conducted in several phases. In the first phase, John explored the tool and generated an example movie streaming prototype using the headstart button. He then added new movies to the prototype using the data model feature.

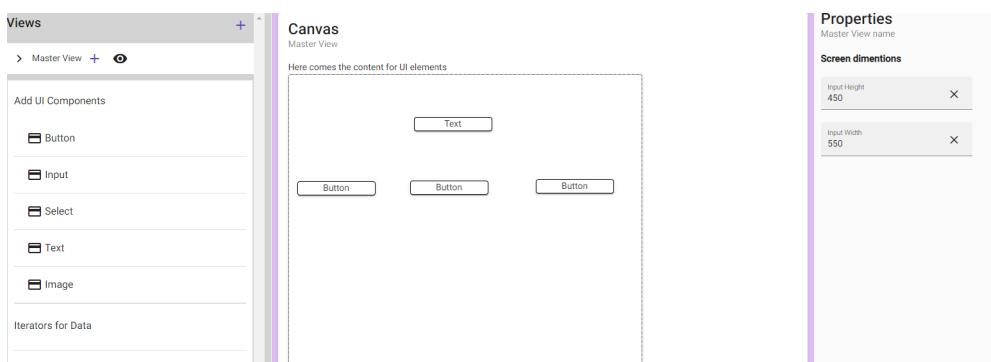


Fig. 6.3 Participant Master View

In the second phase, John created split tests for different app interface versions. He used the tool's A/B testing feature to create two versions of the app's view screen and changed the UI to make some changes in the variant's prototype.

In the third phase, John created tasks for participants to complete and gather feedback on the app's interface. He also created a set of questionnaires, including open-ended and

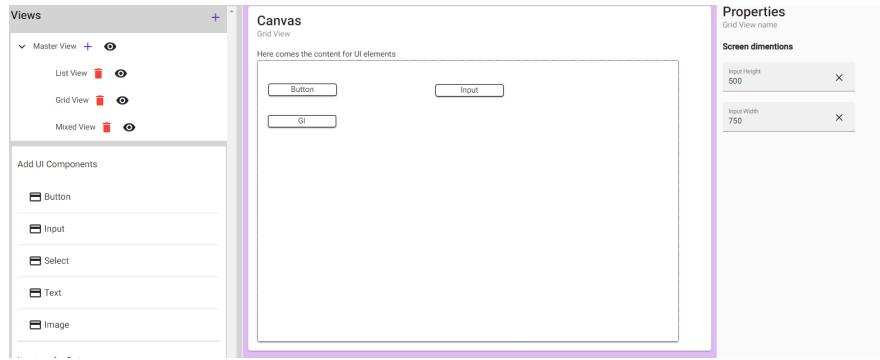


Fig. 6.4 Participant Grid View

scale-based questions, to collect qualitative data from participants. In the fourth phase, John recruited participants or used dummy users generated from the tool to test the experiments and monitor the results. After completing the experiment, John navigated to the experiments page and analyzed the statistics to determine which version of the app's interface was more effective. Based on the feedback from the usability tests and questionnaires, John iterated on the app's design and updated the prototype in the tool. Overall, the execution of the experiment involved prototyping, split testing, task creation, and feedback gathering to design and improve the movie-streaming app's interface. An example prototype, created by one of the user participants, is shown in figures 6.3, 6.4, 6.5.

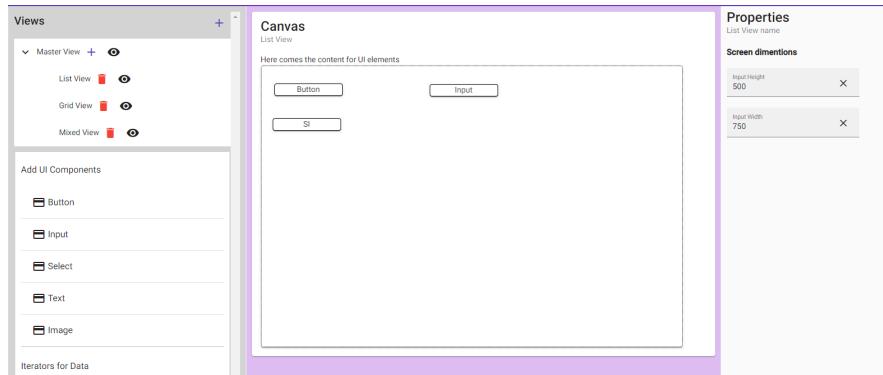


Fig. 6.5 Participant List View

## 6.3 Analysis

After collecting the data through LimeSurvey and the tool, we analyzed the feedback and results to draw insights and conclusions about the effectiveness of our RQs and the software tool we designed. The analysis phase of the user study is an essential part of the research process that helps to interpret the collected data and draw meaningful conclusions. This section includes the four steps in the analysis phase: data preparation, data reduction, quantitative analysis, and qualitative analysis. We also examined the qualitative feedback from the participants to gain a deeper understanding of their preferences and needs.

**Data Preparation:** We focused on data preparation in the first step of the analysis phase. We collected data from different sources, including the notes taken during the BBB session and the survey responses collected using Limesurvey. We first organized and cleaned the data to make it ready for analysis. This step involved going through the notes and categorizing them based on the difficulties faced by participants, bugs observed during scenario execution, and ambiguity in the scenario. We also exported the survey responses from Limesurvey, which were in raw form and needed to be organized to accumulate the data for analysis. We used the export feature of Limesurvey to get the survey responses from each participant. However, the data was per participant, and we needed to accumulate the data to analyze it. For example, the SUS values from section one must be collected for all participants to get an overall view of the system's usability. Therefore, we had to spend some time organizing the data and getting it in a format that would be easier to analyze. We used MicroSoft (MS) Excel<sup>7</sup> to compile and accumulate the data. This process required attention to detail, as we needed to ensure we had all the necessary data in the correct format to draw meaningful conclusions. Once we had organized the data, we moved on to the next step of the analysis phase, which was data reduction.

**Data Reduction:** Data reduction is the next step in our user study's analysis phase. The data we collected needed to be reduced to the most important aspects for analysis. One of the key aspects was the SUS scores. The SUS score provided a numerical value indicating the tool's usability level. We also analyzed the responses to the open-ended questions in the survey to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences. To group the responses from the open-ended questions, we categorized them into different themes. Additionally, we focused on analyzing our DPs as they were the foundation of our tool's design. By prioritizing the most important data for analysis, we gained meaningful insights into our

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<sup>7</sup>Website for MS Excel: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/excel>

tool's usability and identified improvement areas. Once we had reduced the data, we moved on to the next step of the analysis phase, which was data analysis including qualitative and quantitative.

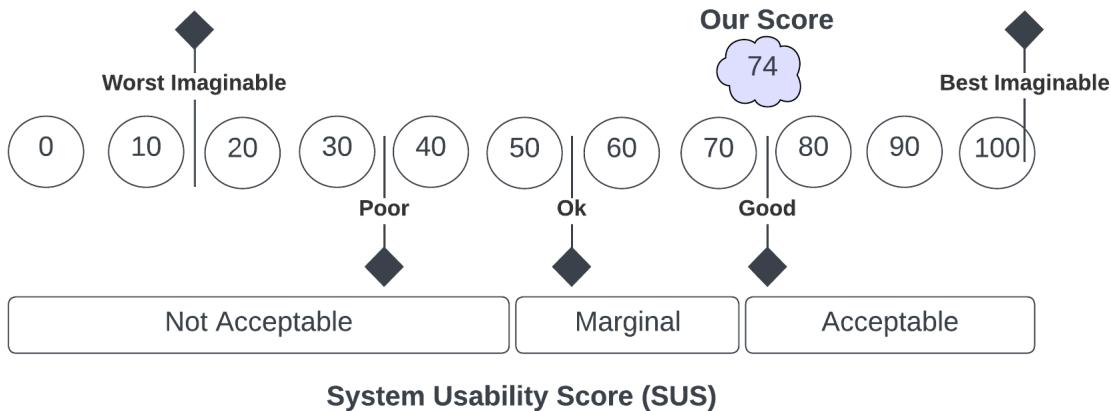


Fig. 6.6 System Usability Score of Our Tool

**Quantitative Analysis:** In the first part of the quantitative section of our analysis, we utilized the SUS to gather feedback on the usability of our tool. The SUS is a widely used and well-established questionnaire for assessing the usability of a system. It consists of 10 statements that participants rate on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scores from each report are then combined and transformed to create a final SUS score ranging from 0 to 100. After administering the SUS questionnaire to our participants, we computed the average score to obtain a quantitative measure of the usability of our tool (for raw data see Appendix C). We also analyzed the individual scores for each statement to identify areas where the tool performed well and where improvements could be made. It allowed us to gain insights into the strengths and weaknesses of our tool from a quantitative perspective. It provided a basis for making data-driven decisions about improving the tool's usability. Our analysis of the SUS survey responses revealed an average score of 74 (see figure 6.6).

The second part of our survey focused on rating the DPs of the solution tool using a 5-point scale. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with statements related to each DP. To analyze the data, we calculated the mean and standard deviation for each DP, as well as plotted a boxplot (see figure 6.7) to visualize the distribution of responses. The boxplot showed that the majority of participants had a positive rating for all DPs, with some variability in the extent of agreement. Overall, the results indicated that the DPs were well-received by participants and can be considered strengths of the app's design.

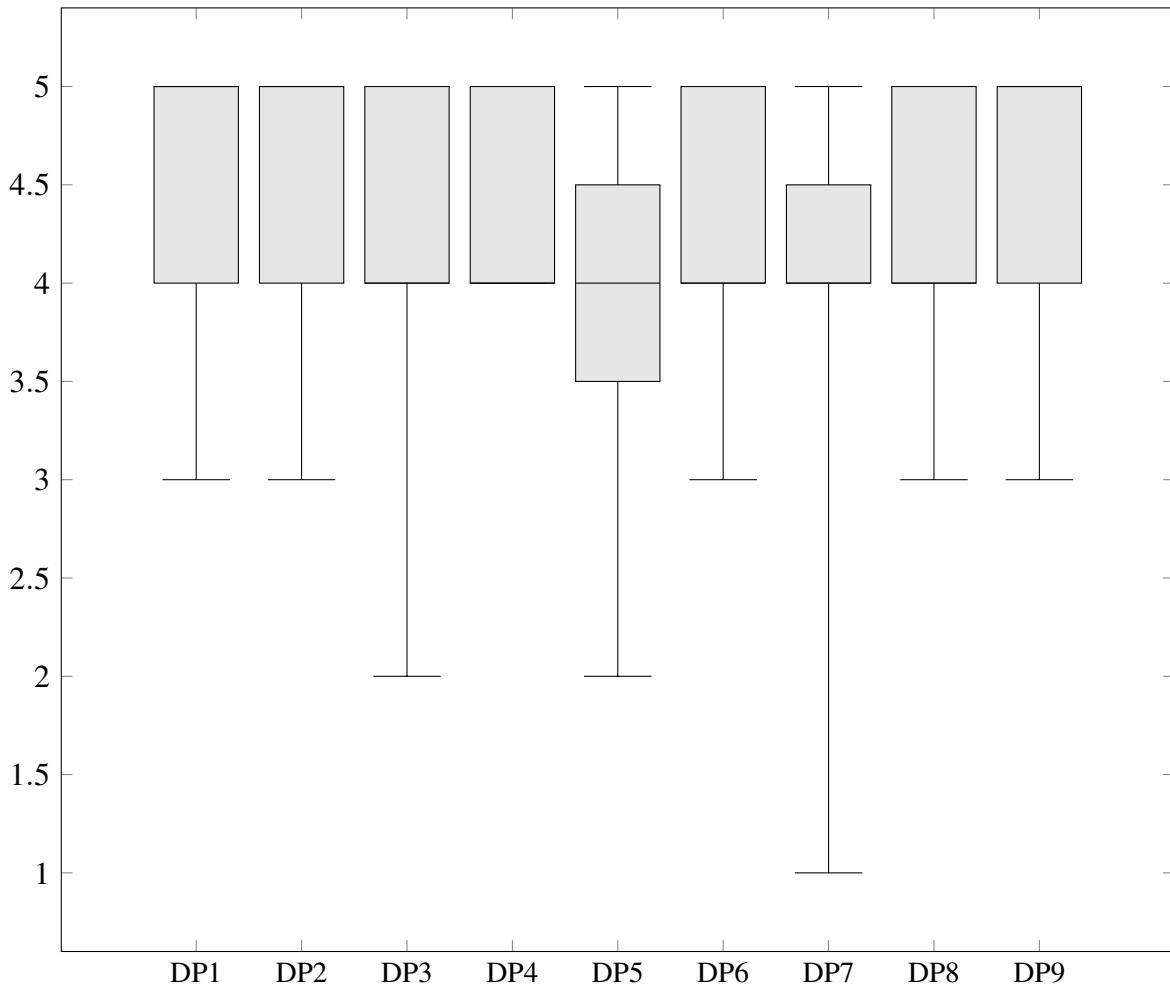


Fig. 6.7 Box Plot Analysis of the DPs

**Qualitative Analysis:** For the qualitative analysis, we had three open-ended questions in the survey. We used a thematic analysis approach to identify common themes among the responses [65]. After analyzing the answers, we identified four main themes: ease of use, functionality, aesthetics, and suggestions for improvement. We further analyzed each theme to identify specific issues or areas of improvement. For example, under the theme of ease of use, we identified problems such as difficulty finding certain features or confusion in the navigation. Similarly, under the theme of suggestions for improvement, we identified specific recommendations made by participants, such as adding new features or changes to existing parts.

The first question asked participants if they could complete their scenario efficiently using the software and, if not, what difficulties they encountered. Many participants noted that they could complete their scenario without any issues, while a few mentioned that they

had trouble navigating the software or understanding how to use certain features. The second question asked participants if there were any areas where the tool could be improved to meet their needs better. Several participants suggested adding more customization options for UI elements. The third question asked participants if they would recommend this UI prototyping tool to others and why or why not. Many participants said they would recommend the tool, citing its ease of use and ability to create and test UI prototypes quickly. Some participants noted that the tool could be improved in certain areas but still felt it was valuable overall.

## 6.4 Interpretation

In this section, we interpret the feedback obtained from the user study and analyze the quantitative and qualitative analysis. The feedback and user comments will be used to identify the areas where the tool can be improved to better meet the needs of its users. We will also discuss the lessons learned from the feedback and analysis and how they can be applied to future tool iterations. The insights gained from this section will be valuable in guiding the development and improvement of the tool to provide an optimal user experience for its users.

**Quantitative data:** The SUS is a widely used measure of the perceived usability of a system. The average SUS score of 74 (see figure 6.6) indicates that the users found the tool reasonably usable. However, the score could be higher, suggesting that there is still room for improvement. The SUS score provides a broad measure of overall usability but does not provide specific details on areas that may require improvement. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the individual user feedback and the box plots of the DPs to identify areas that need improvement.

To further analyze, we looked at the individual DPs box plots (see figure 6.7). Box plots are a way of graphically representing the distribution of data. The box represents the middle 50% of the data, with the median value marked by a line in the box. The whiskers extend to the highest and lowest data points within 1.5 times the upper and lower quartiles' interquartile range (IQR). Any data points beyond the whiskers are marked as outliers. Looking at the box plots for the DPs, we can see that DP1, DP2, DP6, DP8, and DP9 all have similar distributions with median scores of 4 or 5, upper quartiles of 5, and lower quartiles of 4. These DPs were generally well-received by users, with most participants rating them as good or excellent. On the other hand, DP3, DP5, and DP7 have lower median scores of 4, indicating that users rated them as slightly less usable than the other DPs. DP3 and DP5 have wider distributions, with lower quartiles of 2 and 3.5, respectively, indicating that some users found them particularly challenging. DP7 has a particularly low lower quartile of 1, meaning that some users found it very difficult to use. Overall, the box plot analysis suggests that some areas of the tool are particularly challenging for users, and these should be the focus of improvement efforts. Specifically, improvements to DP3, DP5, and DP7 could be prioritized to make them more usable and user-friendly in the next cycle or iterations of the DSR.

**Qualitative data:** Three open-ended questions were asked to the participants from the responses to the question *Were there any areas where the tool could be improved to better meet your needs?*, we received 15 responses. In this section, we relate the changes instructed by the participants with our DFs.

A few respondents didn't have any specific suggestions (A<sub>1</sub> and A<sub>2</sub>) (here A<sub>n</sub> means answer from nth participant). However, some participants recommended adding new features or enhancing the existing ones. For instance, A<sub>3</sub> suggested including the ability to configure whether users can go back in the questionnaire (improving DF20), editing, and reordering created tasks (improving DF13) and questionnaires, and providing more data analysis options (improving DF25). A<sub>4</sub> proposed adding a more intuitive button to extend experiments (improving DF14 & DF16) or tasks (improving DF11 & DF12). A<sub>5</sub> and A<sub>6</sub> recommended adding the ability to see how much space UI components take when creating views (improving DF6) and improving the analysis graph's size and readability (improving DF25). A<sub>7</sub> suggested enhancing the tool's appearance to make it more attractive. A<sub>8</sub> recommended making the user guide more intuitive and easier to follow, possibly with examples (improving DF2). A<sub>9</sub> suggested improving the aesthetics and reducing the complexity of certain features (improving DF23). A<sub>10</sub> recommended adding more variations for UI elements, such as drop-downs, and refining the result analysis to be more visually appealing (improving DF7). A<sub>11</sub> suggested several improvements, such as providing freedom to change the size of elements in a view (improving DF6), displaying the tasks in the testing view (improving DF11), and reducing the number of feedback confirmations during tasks (improving DF13). A<sub>12</sub> suggested improving the data model and views sections' explanations (improving DF8). A<sub>13</sub> recommended improving the image variable. A<sub>14</sub> and A<sub>15</sub> suggested providing clearer instructions to make the tool easier to use.

Based on these responses, the tool has several areas for improvement. Some participants suggested adding new features, while others recommended improving existing features' usability and aesthetics. Some of the most common suggestions included improving the appearance and usability of the tool, refining the result analysis, and providing more thorough explanations of features in the User Guide. The development team can use these suggestions to enhance the tool's functionality and make it more user-friendly for future users.

**Validity and Limitations:** Internal validity refers to the degree to which the results of a study are valid within the context of the study. Similarly, external validity refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be generalized to other populations or contexts. In our user study, internal validity refers to how our results accurately reflect the relationship between the tool we developed and the DPs we aimed to fulfill. To ensure the good internal

validity of our user study, we took several steps. Firstly, we carefully designed the user scenario to simulate realistic tasks that users might perform using the tool in a real-world context. Secondly, we pilot-tested the scenario with ourselves and two other individuals to identify any potential issues or ambiguities which were addressed before recruiting participants. Thirdly, we recruited diverse participants with varying experience levels in the field to ensure our results were generalizable. Fourthly, we took detailed notes during each user session to accurately capture any difficulties participants encountered or issues with the tool. Finally, we used quantitative and qualitative analysis methods to analyze the data, which allowed us to triangulate our findings and ensure that the results were not skewed by any single method.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of our study that could have affected its validity. Firstly, the sample size was relatively small, with only 15 participants completing the study. It could have impacted the representativeness of our results, and larger sample sizes would have increased the generalizability of our findings. Additionally, we only used one user scenario for our study, which could have limited the range of issues that participants encountered and may have yet to capture the complexity of real-world scenarios fully. Therefore, while we took steps to ensure validity in our user study, the study design's limitations must be considered when interpreting the results.

# **Chapter 7**

## **Related Work**

In the previous chapter, we explained the evaluation of our solution approach and the tool we developed. Consequently, in this chapter, we present a comprehensive overview of the related work in two sections. The first section (see section 7.1) will discuss the tools commonly used for UI prototyping and UI split testing. We will provide an in-depth analysis of the strengths and limitations of each tool and highlight its unique features and functionalities. The next section (see section 7.2) focuses on comparing our tool with the existing ones. Similarly, in the sections 7.3 and 7.4 we will discuss some State-of-the-Art (SOAT) technologies and compare them. We compare different DRs we developed in chapter 3 with the other available tools.

### **7.1 Tools**

This section will explore some of the existing software or Related Approach (RA) available in the market. We have identified some existing tools that are commonly used for UI prototyping and A/B testing. UX designers widely use these tools to create and test UI prototypes with users. Some of these tools are industry-standard and have been around for many years, while others are relatively new. We will briefly describe each tool's key features and capabilities to provide a comprehensive understanding of the tools we will be comparing. The comparison will help us identify the gaps and limitations of existing tools and evaluate our tool's uniqueness and innovation. Through this section, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the existing tools and technologies and highlight our tool's contributions to the field of UI prototyping and UI split testing.

**RA1 Figma:** Figma<sup>1</sup> is a popular UI design tool designers and design teams use for prototyping, UI design, and collaborative work. It has gained popularity due to its versatile features, user-friendly interface, and real-time collaboration capabilities, making it a go-to tool for many designers. Figma has a broad range of features that allow designers to create complex UI designs easily. It includes an extensive library of UI elements, customizable templates, and vector networks to make designing more manageable. Additionally, it offers prototyping features that allow designers to simulate complex user interactions and animations, which can help designers validate their decisions quickly. Figma is an excellent tool for teams working on the same design project, as it offers real-time collaboration. Designers can work together on the same design file, share feedback, and update the design in real-time, making it an efficient and collaborative tool for design teams.

**RA2 InVision:** InVision<sup>2</sup> is a UI prototyping and collaboration platform that allows designers to create interactive and animated prototypes for web and mobile applications. It offers a range of features, including vector-based design tools, advanced animations and interactions, and an extensive library of pre-built UI components. Its design tools are based on vector graphics, allowing for easy scaling and resizing of elements. The platform also offers various commenting and annotation tools, making it easy for team members to communicate and collaborate on design decisions. InVision also offers advanced animation and interaction capabilities, allowing designers to create complex, engaging interactions that simulate real-world user experiences. This feature includes support for animations, transitions, and gestures and the ability to create interactive elements such as buttons, menus, and forms.

**RA3 Axure:** Axure<sup>3</sup> is another popular prototyping tool used in the industry. It is a wireframing and prototyping tool that allows designers to create complex interactions and dynamic content. With Axure, designers can create interactive prototypes with conditional logic, animations, and data-driven interactions. It also offers collaboration features, which enable teams to work together on the same project in real-time. Its ability to handle complex logic and conditional interactions sets it apart from many other prototyping tools. However, the learning curve can be steep, and there may be better choices for designers looking for a quick and easy way to create simple prototypes. Finally, Axure offers integrations with other design and collaboration tools, which can benefit teams using multiple tools in their workflow.

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<sup>1</sup>Website for Figma: <https://help.figma.com/hc/en-us/articles/360040314193-Guide-to-prototyping-in-Figma>

<sup>2</sup>Website for InVision: <https://www.invisionapp.com/defined/prototype>

<sup>3</sup>Website for Axure: <https://www.axure.com/prototype>

**RA4 Adobe XD:** Adobe XD<sup>4</sup> is a popular tool for designing and prototyping digital products, including websites, mobile apps, and other interactive experiences. It is widely used by UX designers, product managers, and other professionals in the design industry. Adobe XD's capability to produce interactive prototypes is one of its primary characteristics. With XD, designers can create clickable, interactive mockups of their designs, allowing them to test user flows and interactions before writing any code. These prototypes can also be shared with stakeholders and users for feedback. In addition to prototyping, it is possible to integrate external plugins to conduct A/B testing in Adobe XD. One such plugin is UserTesting, which allows designers to recruit participants and set up tasks for A/B testing directly within Adobe XD.

**RA5 Proto.io:** Proto.io<sup>5</sup> is a powerful UI prototyping tool widely used in the industry. It offers a variety of features to create interactive prototypes, including the ability to add animations, transitions, and gestures. Proto.io provides an intuitive drag-and-drop interface and supports multiple platforms, including iOS, Android, and the web. One of the standout features of Proto.io is its ability to simulate the final product. This feature allows designers to create prototypes that look and feel like the final product, providing a more realistic user experience. Proto.io also provides advanced collaboration features, making sharing and collaborating on designs with stakeholders and team members easy. Another key feature of Proto.io is its ability to create A/B tests. The tool offers a dedicated A/B testing feature, which allows designers to create multiple versions of a design and test them against each other. The tool also provides detailed analytics and user feedback, helping designers make informed design decisions.

**RA6 Google Optimize:** Google Optimize<sup>6</sup> is an A/B testing and personalization tool developed by Google. It is a cloud-based tool that can help businesses optimize their website or app by creating and running experiments. Google Optimize has a user-friendly interface allowing users to create experiments without coding knowledge. One of the key features of Google Optimize is the ability to create A/B tests with different variations of a website or app. Users can set up experiments to test various elements of their website or app, such as headlines, images, or calls to action. Google Optimize also allows users to create multivariate tests that test multiple elements simultaneously. Another important feature of Google Optimize is the ability to create personalization experiments. Users can create targeted

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<sup>4</sup>Website for Adobe XD: <https://www.adobe.com/products/xd/learn/get-started-xd-prototype.html>

<sup>5</sup>Website for Adobe XD: <https://proto.io/developers/>

<sup>6</sup>Website for Google Optimize: <https://developers.google.com/optimize/devguides/experiments?technology=ga4>

experiences for specific audiences based on location, behavior, or demographics. This allows businesses to create more relevant and engaging experiences for their users. Google Optimize also integrates with other Google products, such as Google Analytics, allowing users to analyze experiment results and gain insights into user behavior. Additionally, Google Optimize supports third-party integrations.

**RA7 VWO:** VWO<sup>7</sup> (Visual Website Optimizer) is another popular tool for A/B testing and conversion rate optimization. It is a cloud-based platform that enables users to run experiments on their websites or mobile apps to improve the user experience and increase conversions. VWO offers a variety of features for A/B testing, including split URL testing, heatmaps, session recordings, surveys, and personalization. Users can create and run experiments with a simple WYSIWYG<sup>8</sup> editor or use custom code for more advanced experiments. VWO also provides a powerful targeting engine that allows users to target specific segments of their audience, such as first-time visitors, returning visitors, or users who have abandoned a shopping cart. This targeting engine helps to ensure that experiments are relevant to the user and are more likely to lead to a positive outcome.

**RA8 Convertize:** Convertize<sup>9</sup> is a website optimization tool that provides a wide range of features for A/B testing, personalization, and targeting. It enables marketers to create and test multiple websites or landing page versions to determine which design, layout, or content performs best for their target audience. Convertize offers a visual editor allowing users to create different variations of their website without coding skills. Users can drag and drop elements, such as images, text, and buttons, to create different versions of their websites, which can then be tested against each other. One of the unique features of Convertize is its AI-powered Autopilot mode, which allows users to automate the optimization process. With Autopilot, Convertize automatically adapts the website to each visitor by personalizing the content, design, and layout to maximize conversions. Another notable feature of Convertize is its SmartEditor, which uses a library of pre-built templates and machine learning algorithms to recommend changes to website elements, such as headlines, images, and CTAs, that will likely improve conversions.

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<sup>7</sup>Website for VWO: <https://help.vwo.com/hc/en-us/articles/360021171954-How-to>Create-an-A-B-Test-in-VWO>

<sup>8</sup>Website for WYSIWYG: <https://www.howtogeek.com/752396/what-is-a-wysiwyg-editor/>

<sup>9</sup>Website for Convertize: <https://docs.convertize.io/docs/how-to-do-ab-testing/>

**RA9 Freshmarketer:** Freshmarketer<sup>10</sup> is a comprehensive conversion optimization suite that offers a range of tools to help businesses optimize their website and improve their online performance. It allows users to create and execute A/B tests, track visitor behavior, and gather customer feedback from a single platform. Freshmarketer's A/B testing tool enables users to create multiple webpage variants and test them against each other to determine which is most effective at achieving a specific goal, such as increasing conversions or decreasing bounce rates. The platform also offers advanced targeting options to help users deliver personalized experiences to particular audience segments. In addition to A/B testing, Freshmarketer offers a range of other optimization tools, including heatmaps, session replays, and form analytics, to help users gain deeper insights into visitor behavior and identify areas for improvement. Freshmarketer's customer feedback tools, such as surveys and polls, allow users to collect valuable customer insights and use that feedback to inform future optimization efforts.

**RA10 Zoho PageSense:** Zoho PageSense<sup>11</sup> is a web optimization tool designed to help businesses optimize their website's user experience, increase visitor engagement, and boost conversions. Zoho PageSense offers many features to help companies to optimize their website, including A/B testing, heatmaps, funnel analysis, and more. With Zoho PageSense's A/B testing feature, businesses can create multiple variations of their website pages and test them against each other to determine which performs best. Zoho PageSense offers a visual editor that allows users to create and edit website page variations without requiring coding knowledge. In addition to A/B testing, Zoho PageSense offers heatmaps, allowing businesses to visualize how users interact with their website pages. This feature enables companies to identify areas of their website that are not performing well and make data-driven decisions to improve the user experience.

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<sup>10</sup>Website for Freshmarketer: <https://support.freshmarketer.com/en/support/solutions/folders/50000000186/page/3>

<sup>11</sup>Website for Zoho Pagesense: <https://help.zoho.com/portal/en/kb/pagesense/run-a-b-and-split-url-tests/create-and-launch-a-test/articles/a-b-test>

## 7.2 Comparison of Tools

In this section, we compare different tools based on their ability to fulfill the DRs we have defined for our project. In the table (see 7.1), we categorize the fulfillment of DRs into three categories: no fulfillment, partial fulfillment, and complete fulfillment. It is important to note that these categories are based on our perspective and are not mentioned anywhere else. When we say a tool has no fulfillment, we mean it does not satisfy the DR. On the other hand, partial fulfillment means that the tool only partially meets the DR. In contrast, complete fulfillment indicates that the tool fully satisfies the DR. This categorization helps us compare and evaluate the tools based on our needs and requirements.

In comparing the different tools based on the DRs (see table 7.1), we can see that only some tools fulfilled all the DRs. RA5 and RA6 fulfilled the most DRs, with RA5 fulfilling five out of ten DRs and RA6 fulfilling six out of ten DRs. For *Heterogeneous Users (DR1)*, only RA5, RA6, RA9, and RA10 fulfilled this requirement completely. Most of the other tools only partially fulfilled this requirement. Most tools fulfilled this requirement for *Iterative Design (DR2)*, but some only partially fulfilled it. For *Easy Development (DR3)*, RA1, RA2, RA3, RA4, and RA5 fulfilled this requirement. The rest of the tools did not fulfill it. For *Integrate Data Models (DR4)*, only RA3 fulfilled this requirement completely. Most of the other tools only partially fulfilled this requirement. For *Classified UI Variants (DR5)* and *Conduct Split Tests (DR6)*, RA5, RA6, RA7, RA8, RA9, and RA10 fulfilled this requirement, but the rest of the tools still need to.

Comparison between different Tools										
Tool	DR1	DR2	DR3	DR4	DR5	DR6	DR7	DR8	DR9	DR10
RA1	○	●	●	○	○	○	○	●	○	○
RA2	○	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	○	●
RA3	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	○	●
RA4	○	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●
RA5	●	○	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
RA6	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
RA7	○	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
RA8	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
RA9	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
RA10	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●

Legend: No Fulfillment (○) Partial Fulfilment (○) Complete Fulfilment (●)

Table 7.1 Table Comparing Different RAs Against DRs

For *Conduct User Tasks (DR7)*, only RA9 and RA10 fulfilled this requirement completely. The rest of the tools only partially fulfilled this requirement or did not fulfill it. Similarly, for

*Collect User Feedback (DR8)*, most tools partially fulfilled this requirement, except for RA5, RA6, RA7, RA9, and RA10 which fulfilled this requirement completely. For *Aggregated Feedback (DR9)*, most tools only partially or still need to fulfill this requirement. Only RA5 fulfilled this requirement completely. For *Improvement (DR10)*, most of the tools only partially fulfilled this requirement or still need to fulfill it. Only RA5, RA6, RA7, and RA10 fulfilled this requirement completely. Overall, each tool had its strengths and weaknesses in fulfilling the different DRs, and no tool could completely fulfill all our DRs.

### 7.3 State-of-the-Art Technologies

This section explores some SOAT or cutting-edge technologies for UI prototyping and A/B testing of UI. UX designers widely use these technologies to create and test UI prototypes with users. This section aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the existing SOAT and highlight our technology's contributions to UI prototyping and UI split testing using the DRs. We will provide a comprehensive overview of each technology's key features and capabilities to understand the these technologies we will compare comprehensively. The comparison will help us identify the gaps and limitations of existing technologies and evaluate our technology's uniqueness and innovation.

**RA11 Rapid software prototyping approach:** L. Luqi et al. [3] propose a rapid software prototyping methodology that utilizes a visual design tool and object-oriented technology. The authors argue that traditional software development methodologies need to provide adequate support for rapidly creating prototypes that can be used to communicate design ideas with stakeholders. To address this issue, they propose a framework that combines a visual design tool for creating user interfaces with object-oriented technology to build functional prototypes quickly. The authors demonstrate the effectiveness of their methodology through a case study, which shows that the proposed framework can significantly reduce the time and effort required to develop functional prototypes.

**RA12 Continuous Prototyping approach:** Lukas Alperowitz et al. [66] propose a continuous prototyping approach to bridge the gap between design and development in continuous software engineering. The authors argue that traditional software development methodologies must provide adequate support for continuous prototyping, a critical aspect of iterative design and development processes. To address this issue, they propose a framework that enables designers and developers to continuously prototype and refine their design ideas as part of the software development process. The authors demonstrate the effectiveness of their approach through a case study, which shows that continuous prototyping can significantly improve the quality and speed of software development and increase stakeholder satisfaction.

**RA13 Data-Driven Approaches to User Interface Design:** Pimenov et al. [67] present a case study on data-driven approaches to user interface design. The authors argue that traditional user interface design methods rely on expert opinions and intuition, which may not always reflect the actual needs and preferences of users. To address this issue, they propose a data-driven approach that utilizes user feedback and analytics to inform design decisions. The authors demonstrate the effectiveness of their approach through a case study,

that shows that data-driven design can lead to significant improvements in user satisfaction and task completion rates. The paper provides insights into the potential of data-driven approaches to user interface design and highlights the importance of incorporating user feedback and analytics in the design process.

**RA14 A Tool for Online Experiment-Driven Adaptation:** Ilias Gerostathopoulos et al. [68] propose a tool for online experiment-driven adaptation. The authors argue that traditional software development approaches must provide adequate support for online experimentation and transformation, which are critical for improving the UX and achieving business goals. To address this issue, they propose a framework that enables developers and designers to create and deploy online experiments that can be used to test and optimize different aspects of the software system. The authors demonstrate the effectiveness of their approach through a case study, which shows that the proposed tool can significantly improve the effectiveness of online experimentation and adaptation. The paper provides insights into the potential of experiment-driven transformation to improve software systems and highlights the importance of incorporating data-driven approaches in software development.

**RA15 A promising tool for customer value evaluation:** Peitsa Hynninen et al. [69] propose using A/B testing as a promising tool for evaluating customer value. The authors argue that traditional methods of customer value evaluation, such as surveys and focus groups, may not provide accurate or reliable results due to biases and limitations. To address this issue, they propose the use of A/B testing, which is a randomized experiment that compares the effectiveness of two or more alternatives in achieving a specific goal. The authors demonstrate the effectiveness of A/B testing through a case study, which shows that A/B testing can provide valuable insights into customer preferences and behavior. The paper provides insights into the potential of A/B testing as a tool for customer value evaluation. It highlights the importance of incorporating data-driven approaches in marketing and customer experience strategies.

## 7.4 Comparison of SOAT

In our chapter on design chapter 3, we identified 10 DRs for the development of effective user interfaces. To evaluate the SOAT based on these DRs, we analyzed five studies, namely RA11, RA12, RA13, RA14, and RA15 (see table 7.2).

Comparison between different RA										
Tool	DR1	DR2	DR3	DR4	DR5	DR6	DR7	DR8	DR9	DR10
RA11	○	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
RA12	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	●
RA13	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	●	●	○
RA14	●	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	○	○
RA15	●	○	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	○

Legend: No Fulfillment (○) Partial Fulfilment (○) Complete Fulfilment (●)

Table 7.2 Table Comparing Different SOATs Against DRs

RA11 fulfilled DR2, DR3, and DR10, partially fulfilled DR4, and failed to fulfill DR1, DR5, DR6, DR7, DR8, and DR9. RA12 fulfilled DR2, DR3, DR4, and DR10, partially fulfilled DR5 and DR8, and failed to fulfill DR1, DR6, DR7, DR9. RA13 partially fulfilled DR1, DR2, DR3, DR7, DR8, and DR10, fulfilled DR4 and DR8, and failed to fulfill DR5 and DR6. RA14 fulfilled DR1, DR6, and DR8, partially fulfilled DR2, DR5, DR7, and DR9, and failed to fulfill DR3 and DR4. Finally, RA15 fulfilled DR1, DR5, DR6, and DR10, partially fulfilled DR2, DR7, DR8, and DR9, and failed to fulfill DR3 and DR4.

Overall, we observed that none of the RAs fully fulfilled our identified DRs. However, RA15 achieved the most DRs, with four fulfilled and four partially fulfilled, while RA11 and RA12 each achieved three fulfilled DRs. Our analysis demonstrates the need for continued research in developing effective user interfaces that fulfill all identified DRs.

# Chapter 8

## Conclusion

In the previous chapter, we did a comparative study of different tools and technologies. Consequently, this chapter summarizes the key findings, contributions, limitations and potential areas for further research. The first section summarizes and provides an overview of the research and its contributions (see section 8.1). In contrast, the next section discusses the challenges and shortcomings encountered during the study (see section 8.2). Finally, the last section explains the possible improvements and extensions that can be made to the software tool, as well as the research questions that can be explored in future studies (see section 8.3).

### 8.1 Summary

In our master thesis, we identified the problems related to UI prototyping and UI experimentation and formulated a *Research Question* to address these issues. To solve this problem, we followed the DSR approach and conducted the first cycle of DSR in our thesis. As part of this approach, we conducted a *User case study* to evaluate the effectiveness of our DPs and identify any necessary corrections. The outcome of the DSR was more *refined DPs* which can be used to develop a tool for UI prototyping and experimentation using a data-driven approach for user feedback.

**Software Tool:** The tool is designed to provide an easy and efficient way for developers to prototype and experiment with UI designs, allowing them to receive feedback quickly and make adjustments as necessary. Similarly, the tool is designed to incorporate all the DPs as DFs and uses modern technologies to build the solution. We implemented the tool using MVC architecture and used docker and micro-service architecture for deployment.

## 8.2 Limitations

As with any research study, some limitations must be considered while interpreting the results. While we have made every effort to design and implement rigorous research, several potential shortcomings must be acknowledged. It is important to understand these limitations to avoid any misconceptions about the scope and applicability of our research. In this section, we will discuss the limitations of our master thesis, which may have affected the generalizability and validity of our findings.

**Limited prototype creation:** One limitation of our software tool is that it only allows users to add one prototype at a time. This limitation is due to the deployment and docker multiple instance creations during runtime, which makes it challenging to scale up the number of prototypes. It can be frustrating for users who must work on multiple prototypes simultaneously, as they would have to close one prototype before working on another. Additionally, the inability to add multiple prototypes simultaneously can slow the user's workflow and limit their productivity.

**Generalizability of Findings:** Conducting only one user study in our master thesis may limit the generalizability of our results and conclusions. Since the user study was conducted with a specific set of users and a specific problem, the findings may not apply to different contexts or user groups. Additionally, the study may have yet to capture the full range of issues and challenges users may face when using the tool. As a result, it may not be easy to draw robust and generalizable conclusions from the study. However, our thesis aimed not to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the tool but to demonstrate the feasibility of our DSR approach and the potential of our tool for UI prototyping and experimentation. Therefore, while the limitation of a single case study is acknowledged, it does not invalidate our research findings.

**Usability:** Although we conducted a user case study to evaluate the usability of our software tool, it is important to note that the survey only provided us with a limited scope of feedback. Some aspects of the tool's usability were not addressed in the study, so additional usability issues could not be identified. In some scenarios, the study's results may only partially reflect the tool's usability. Some users may find the tool difficult to use or may prefer other tools for UI prototyping and experimentation. Thus, the results could have been influenced by factors such as the participants' prior experience with similar tools, their level of expertise, or their personal preferences.

## 8.3 Future Work

The software tool developed in this thesis has significantly contributed to UI prototyping and UI experimentation. However, there are some areas where further improvements and developments can be made. In this section, we will discuss potential future works that can enhance the functionality and performance of the software tool. These future works include the ability to layout different screen sizes and scale them, implementing voice-to-text conversion to automatically create prototypes and experiments with the user's voice instructions, extracting intelligence from data collected from user feedback, and allowing multiple users to collaborate at the same time. We also discuss the potential technologies that can be utilized to implement these future works.

**Layouting for different screens:** In future work, an essential feature to be added to the tool could be the ability to design for different screen sizes and scale them effectively. With the advent of smartphones and tablets, users access software applications on various devices, which differ in screen size and resolution. Therefore, the ability to design for different screen sizes is crucial to ensure that the software tool is accessible and usable on other devices. To achieve this, the software tool could provide pre-defined templates for popular devices or enable users to define custom screen sizes. The tool could also have a preview mode that allows the user to see how the design looks on different screen sizes, with the ability to adjust elements as needed. Additionally, the tool could automatically scale elements based on the screen size to ensure the design is proportionate and aesthetically pleasing. Incorporating these features would enhance the usability of the software tool and improve its functionality.

**Voice-to-text Conversion and Coding:** Incorporating voice-to-text conversion capability into the software tool could significantly improve its usability and efficiency. With this feature, users can easily create prototypes and experiments by dictating their instructions to the tool. This feature could reduce the time and effort required to develop and modify UI designs, especially for users who may have difficulty with traditional keyboard and mouse inputs. One technology that could be used for implementing this feature is natural language processing (NLP) algorithms. NLP is a field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that focuses on analyzing and understanding human language. With NLP, the software tool could recognize and interpret user voice commands, converting them into actionable tasks. Additionally, machine learning techniques could be applied to improve the accuracy of the voice-to-text conversion over time as the tool learns to recognize different user accents and speech patterns. Overall, incorporating voice-to-text conversion could significantly improve the software tool,

making it more accessible and user-friendly. Further research and development in the area of NLP could be a fruitful area of future work for the continued improvement of the tool.

**Extract Intelligence from User feedbacks:** Another future work for the software tool can involve implementing a data analysis component to extract intelligence from the data collected from user feedback. This component can process user feedback data in real-time and provide insights into user behavior, preferences, and needs. The tool can dynamically adjust the prototypes and experiments with the insights provided to better match the user's expectations and preferences. Machine learning technologies such as sentiment analysis can be employed to implement this. Sentiment analysis can gauge the overall sentiment of the user feedback and continuously improve the prototype. Additionally, clustering and classification algorithms can group similar feedback and identify patterns that can help improve the tool's design and functionality. The software tool can improve its user-centered approach and enhance the overall user experience by incorporating this feature. The extracted intelligence can be used to identify areas for improvement and help guide the design decisions in future iterations of the tool.

**Real-time collaboration:** One potential future work for the software tool is enabling real-time collaboration among multiple users. This feature would allow different users to work on the same project simultaneously, making it easier for teams to collaborate on complex design projects. This functionality could be achieved by integrating a collaborative platform that allows multiple users to work on a single document simultaneously. Additionally, a chat or messaging feature would enable team members to communicate in real-time as they work on the project. Another technology that could be used to enable collaboration is real-time collaborative editing software. These tools allow multiple users to work on the same document simultaneously. One such technology is the Operational Transformation (OT) algorithm, which enables multiple users to make simultaneous edits to a document and ensures that those edits are synchronized across all users in real-time. Integrating this technology into the software tool would enable users to collaborate on a project in real time, providing an efficient and streamlined workflow for design teams.

**Multiple prototypes** To overcome the limitation *Limited prototype creation*, one possible future work and solution could be to explore container orchestration technologies such as Kubernetes<sup>1</sup>. Kubernetes allows for the management of containerized applications, making it easier to deploy and manage multiple prototype instances. This solution would enable our

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<sup>1</sup>Website for Kubernetes: <https://kubernetes.io/>

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software tool to support the addition of numerous prototypes, thereby improving the user experience and increasing productivity. By implementing Kubernetes, we could also ensure that our software tool can scale up as more users start using it, making it a more robust and reliable tool for UI prototyping and experimentation.



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# Acronyms

**AI** Artificial Intelligence

**API** Application Programming Interface

**BBB** Big Blue Button

**CE** Continuous Experimentation

**CLI** Command-Line Interface

**CRUD** Create Read Update Delete

**CSV** Comma Separated Value

**DB** Database

**DBMS** Database Management System

**DF** Design Feature

**DML** Data Modeling Language

**DP** Design Principle

**DR** Design Requirement

**DS** Data Structure

**DSL** Domain Specific Language

**DSR** Design Science Research

**ER** Entity-Relationship

**GUI** Graphical User Interface

**HTML** Hypertext Markup Language

**IT** Information Technology

**JS** JavaScript

**LCDP** Low-Code Development Platform

**MBSE** Model-Based Software Engineering

**MDD** Model Driven Development

**MDSE** Model Driven Software Engineering

**MOF** Model Object Facility

**MQTT** Message Queue Telemetry Transport

**MS** MicroSoft

**MVC** Model-View-Controller

**MVP** Minimum Viable Product

**NCDP** No-Code Development Platform

**npm** Node Package Manager

**OMG** Object Management Group

**POC** Proof-of-Concept

**RA** Related Approach

**REST** Representational State Transfer

**RQ** Research Question

**SE** Software Engineering

**SICP** Software Innovation Campus Paderborn

**SOAT** State-of-the-Art

**SUS** System Usability Score

**UAT** User Acceptance testing

**UCD** User-Centered Design

**UI** User Interface

**UML** Unified Modeling Language

**UPB** Paderborn University

**UX** User Experience

**VPN** Virtual Private Network

# Appendix A

## How to Install Our Application

Our UI Prototyping tool (as shown in figure A.1) utilizes AngularCLI<sup>1</sup>, MongoDB<sup>2</sup>, and NodeJS<sup>3</sup> in conjunction with a microcontroller architecture that employs docker containers. To use the tool, you will need to download and install these technologies beforehand. NodeJS serves as a runtime environment for executing JavaScript code and comes with the Node Package Manager (NPM), which can be used to include external JavaScript code packages in the software. Moreover, you need to install Loopback<sup>4</sup> which is a framework for NodeJS. AngularCLI, on the other hand, is a command-line interface (CLI) used to develop and maintain Angular applications. Additionally, MongoDB drivers can be installed or can also be the cloud version of MongoDB. Lastly, for cloning the repository, you can install the Git<sup>5</sup>.

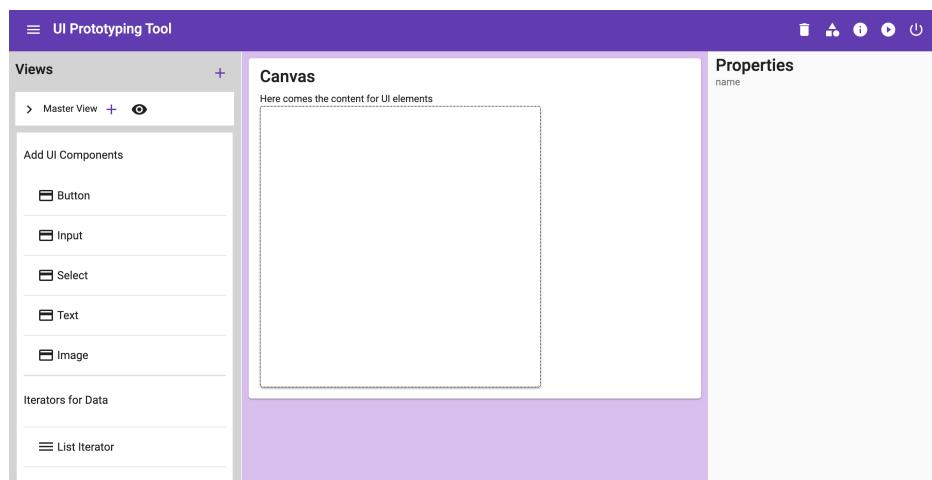


Fig. A.1 Index page of our UI Prototyping tool

<sup>1</sup>Website of AngularCLI: <https://angular.io/cli>

<sup>2</sup>Website of MongoDB: <https://www.mongodb.com/>

<sup>3</sup>Website of NodeJS: <https://nodejs.org/en/>

<sup>4</sup>Website of Loopback: <https://loopback.io/doc/en/lb4/Getting-started.html>

Based on these prerequisites, there are additional instructions for installing the tool.

```
version: "3.9"
services:

  ui-prototyping:
    container_name: ui-prototyping-app-docker
    build: ./ui-prototyping-tool/
    restart: unless-stopped
    ports:
      - 8083:8083
    networks:
      - myNetwork

  ui-prototyping-no-code-app:
    container_name: ui-prototyping-no-code-app-docker
    build: ./no-code-built-app/
    restart: unless-stopped
    ports:
      - 8084:8084
    networks:
      - myNetwork

  ui-prototyping-server:
    container_name: ui-prototyping-server-docker
    build: ./ui-prototyping-server/
    ports:
      - 3001:3001
    networks:
      - myNetwork

  nginx:
    container_name: nginx-final-docker
    restart: unless-stopped
    build: .
    ports:
      - 80:80
      - 443:443
    networks:
      - myNetwork
    volumes:
      - ./certbot/conf:/etc/letsencrypt
      - ./certbot/www:/var/www/certbot
    depends_on:
      - server
```

(a) A configuration file for docker-compose file

```
1   upstream ui-prototyping {
2     server ui-prototyping-app-docker:8083;
3   }
4
5   upstream no-code-app {
6     server ui-prototyping-no-code-app-docker:8084;
7   }
8
9   upstream ui-prototyping-api {
10    server ui-prototyping-server-docker:3001;
11  }
12
13 server {
14
15   listen 80 default_server;
16   listen [::]:80 default_server;
17
18   server_name _;
19
20   location / {
21     proxy_pass http://ui-prototyping/;
22     proxy_redirect off;
23   }
24
25   location /no-code-app/ {
26     proxy_pass http://no-code-app/;
27     proxy_redirect off;
28   }
29
30   location /ui-prototyping/api/ {
31     proxy_pass http://ui-prototyping-api/;
32     proxy_redirect off;
33   }
34
35   error_page 404 /404.html;
36
37
38   error_page 500 502 503 504 /50x.html;
39   location = /50x.html {
40     root /usr/share/nginx/html;
41   }
42 }
```

(b) Nginx Configuration for our tool

Fig. A.2 Configuration Settings

### Tool configuration steps:

- 1. Install Docker:** To begin with, you need to install Docker on your computer. You can download it from the official website<sup>6</sup> based on your operating system.

<sup>5</sup>Website of Git installation: <https://git-scm.com/downloads>

<sup>6</sup>Website of Docker Installation: <https://www.docker.com/>

2. **Clone Repository:** Get the latest version of the tool from GitLab repository<sup>7</sup>. We use GitLab which is hosted by the University of Paderborn.
  - (a) Clone the GitLab repository directly from GitLab<sup>8</sup>.
  - (b) You can fork the repository<sup>9</sup>
3. **Start docker daemon:** Start the docker engine or the service for running the docker containers<sup>10</sup>.
4. **Run Application:** Run the script file (`./restart-docker.sh`) which is available to run the docker containers. This also runs the `docker-compose.yml` file internally. You can update the file if you want to change the ports or add TLS signatures (see figure A.2a).
5. **Check on Browser:** Use the UI Prototyping tool to develop the UI prototypes, create experiments and improve the prototype by opening `http://localhost/` in your web browser.

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<sup>7</sup>Link for repo: <https://git.cs.uni-paderborn.de/rakshitb/thesis>

<sup>8</sup>Website for cloning repository instructions: <https://docs.gitlab.com/ee/gitlab-basics/start-using-git.html>

<sup>9</sup>Website for forking a repository: [https://docs.gitlab.com/ee/user/project/repository/forking\\_workflow.html](https://docs.gitlab.com/ee/user/project/repository/forking_workflow.html)

<sup>10</sup>How to start docker deamon: <https://docs.docker.com/config/daemon/start/>



# **Appendix B**

## **Literature Review Summary**

In this thesis, a non-systematic literature review was conducted to explore the current state of UI prototyping tools and develop the DRs for our DSR. Several research papers were reviewed, along with an examination of some renowned UI prototyping tools. The review focused on the features and capabilities of these tools and any potential limitations or drawbacks. Through this process, valuable insights were gained into the strengths and weaknesses of existing UI prototyping tools, which can inform the development of more effective tools in the future. This section below contains a table containing the papers (see section B) we reviewed and the tools (see section B) we tested.

### **Software tools**

In this section, we briefly discuss some of the tools and how they helped us formulate the DRs. Our non-systematic literature review identified ten tools that could help us with our solution approach (see table B.1). Among these, we found five UI prototyping tools that could be useful in designing and refining the user interface of our solution. These tools included Axure, Figma, Proto.io, InVision, and Adobe XD. Additionally, we identified five split testing tools that could be helpful in testing and improving the effectiveness of our solution. These split testing tools included Optimizely, VWO, Google Optimize, Freshmarketer, and Zoho PageSense. By incorporating these tools into our solution approach, we hope to create a user-friendly and effective solution that meets the needs of our users.

### **Literature and State of the Art (SOAT) technologies**

Our non-systematic literature review led us to state-of-the-art research in several key areas relevant to our solution approach (see table B.2). We identified research on UI prototyping,

<b>Software Tools</b>			
#	Name	Type	View
1	Figma	UI Prototyping Tool	<a href="#">Link</a>
2	InVision	UI Prototyping Tool	<a href="#">Link</a>
3	Axure	UI Prototyping Tool	<a href="#">Link</a>
4	Adobe XD	UI Prototyping Tool	<a href="#">Link</a>
5	Proto.io	UI Prototyping Tool	<a href="#">Link</a>
6	Google Optimize	Split Testing Tool	<a href="#">Link</a>
7	VWO	Split Testing Tool	<a href="#">Link</a>
8	Convertize	Split Testing Tool	<a href="#">Link</a>
9	Freshmarketer	Split Testing Tool	<a href="#">Link</a>
10	Zoho PageSense	Split Testing Tool	<a href="#">Link</a>

Table B.1 Table for different UI prototyping and A/B testing tools

which can help us design and refine our solution's user interface to meet our users' needs. We also found research on low-code/no-code development, which can help us to build our solution quickly and efficiently. Additionally, we explored model-based software engineering, which can provide us with a structured approach to software development. We also discovered research on continuous experimentation, which can help us to test and improve our solution over time. Task-based usability testing was another key area of research we explored, which can help us to ensure that our solution is easy to use and meets the needs of our users. Finally, we looked into the LEAN development cycle, which can help us build our solution iteratively and incrementally while minimizing waste and maximizing user value. By incorporating the insights from these research areas into our solution approach, we hope to create a robust and effective solution that meets the needs of our users.

<b>Literature and SOAT Research</b>			
#	Name	Type	View
1	Rapid software prototyping	UI Prototyping	Link
2	Automating the software development process	UI Prototyping	Link
3	User interface prototyping	UI Prototyping	Link
4	Exploratory user interface design using scenarios and prototypes	UI Prototyping	Link
5	Low-code application platform	LCDP	Link
6	Low Code vs No Code	LCDP / NCDP	Link
7	No-code platform	NCDP	Link
8	Adaptive model-driven user interface development systems	MBSE	Link
9	OMG, Meta-Object facility	MBSE	Link
10	Turn User Goals into Task Scenarios for Usability Testing	Task Based Usability Testing	Link
11	But You Tested with Only 5 Users!	Task Based Usability Testing	Link
12	Continuous experimentation and A/B testing: a mapping study	Split Testing	Link
13	Evolving UX: experimental product design with a CXO	Split Testing	Link
14	Why the lean start-up changes everything?	LEAN	Link
15	Lean software development: A tutorial	LEAN	Link
16	Continuous planning: an important aspect of agile and lean development	LEAN	Link

Table B.2 Table For Different SOAT Research



# Appendix C

## User Study

The user study was a 2-week research conducted with 15 students of UPB. The study aimed to evaluate the usability of a software application through the use of a survey. The participants were emailed a user scenario and instructions for joining an online survey. The survey lasted 1 hour per participant and was designed to collect feedback on the usability of the software application. Throughout the 2-week study, the participants were asked to use our software tool and complete a set of tasks while using it. They were then asked to provide feedback on their experience using the software application through the online survey. The survey results were used to assess the software application's overall usability and identify any areas that required improvement. The study provided valuable insights into how the software application could be improved to enhance user experience and increase usability. Overall, the User case study was a successful project that provided valuable feedback on the usability of the software application. Out of 15 participants, we present one of the user's prototypes and user scenarios.

**Email template:** Here you see the email template (see below) which was sent to every participant before starting the survey.

**Survey questionnaire:** Next, see figure C.1 to see the first part of the survey questionnaire, figure C.2 to see the second part of the survey questionnaire, figure C.3 to see the final part of the survey. The first part consisted of the SUS questionnaire, whereas, the second part consisted of a scale of 1-5 for rating our DPs. Finally, the last part displays the qualitative questionnaire (see figure C.3).

From: Rakshit  
To: Participant  
Date: Wed 05/06/2019 15:00  
Subject: Invitation to participate in a survey

Dear Participant,

You have been invited to participate in a survey.

Please join this BBB room: <https://open-bbb.uni-paderborn.de/b/rak-xtb-6xa-fzz>

Note: Make sure you are connected to the UPB network or have UPB VPN on.

The survey is titled:

**"UI Prototyping tool (Master Thesis)"**

**User Scenario:** Imagine you are John, a UX designer creating a new movie-streaming app for a company. As the UX designer, John is responsible for designing the app's user interface. Unfortunately, John is still determining which UI fits the best for the customers. So, he is looking for solutions where he can prototype the UI and also create split or A/B tests to select the best variant. In the split tests, John wants to create various UI variants and then test the variants with different users and, finally, decide on the best variant from the user feedback.

So, John finds an interesting proof of concept tool and logs in as an admin user with the credentials: username - *admin@co.in* & password - *helloworld*. John finds the tool explanation on the top bar right and checks it. John explores the tool, finds a headstart button that displays (Generate Example UI prototype) on the top bar right and clicks on it to generate an example movie streaming prototype. This headstart option provides a basic layout and a set of UI elements that he can customize. Then, John navigates to the option Data Model in the sidebar on the top left. He finds an already created "movies" model in the data models section. John adds new movies by clicking on the "movies" data model ...

To participate, please click on the link below.

Sincerely,  
Rakshit Bhat  
(rakshitb@campus.uni-paderborn.de)

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Click here to do the survey:  
<https://umfragen.uni-paderborn.de/index.php/237123?lang=en>

**SUS Questionnaire:** This is a screenshot (see figure C.1) where we had 10 questions for calculating the SUS. These were the following questions asked to the participants of our survey:

1. I think that I would like to use this system frequently.
2. I found the tool unnecessarily complex.
3. I thought the tool was easy to use.
4. I think that I would need the support of a technical person to be able to use this tool.
5. I found the various functions in this tool were well integrated.
6. I thought there was too much inconsistency in this tool.
7. I imagine that most people would learn to use this tool very quickly.
8. I found the tool very cumbersome (or difficult) to use.
9. I felt very confident using the tool.
10. I needed to learn a lot of things before I could get going with this tool.

System Usability Scale questions

It's essential to assess the user's overall satisfaction and experience with the system. One way to measure this is through the System Usability Scale (SUS) for the tool. Therefore, in this section, we ask the users 10 questions and then calculate the SUS for our thesis.

\*I think that I would like to use this system frequently.

Check all that apply  
Please select at most one answer

Strongly disagree  
 Disagree  
 Neutral  
 Agree  
 Strongly agree

\*I found the tool unnecessarily complex.

Check all that apply  
Please select at most one answer

Strongly disagree  
 Disagree

Fig. C.1 Survey SUS Questionnaire Sample

Similarly, each question was having multiple choice answers containing the options:

- Strongly disagree
- disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

**DP ratings:** This is a screenshot (see figure C.1) where we had a 1-5 scale for rating our DPs.

The screenshot shows a survey interface. At the top, there is a circular diagram with five nodes: LEARN (blue), MODEL (orange), BUILD (blue), MEASURE (orange), and CYCLE (blue). Arrows indicate a clockwise flow between them. Below this diagram, there is a section titled "This section contains questions related to our design principles (DPs). A DP in a design science research is a fundamental guideline or rule that is used to inform the creation and evaluation of innovative solutions to real-world problems. Rate these following DPs with 1 being the lowest and 5 being highest." This section contains three questions, each with a radio button scale from 1 to 5:

- ★Rate the following DP1: Modeling**  
The solution approach should be developed using a model-based approach.  
E.g.: After getting the winner variant from the experiment, update the model or the prototype.  
○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5
- ★Rate the following DP2: User Variety**  
The tool should be able to add different types of users.  
E.g. Admin users for creating prototypes and user participants for conducting experiments  
○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5
- ★Rate the following DP3: Flexible UI elements**

Fig. C.2 Survey DPs Questionnaire Sample

These were the following questions asked to the participants of our survey:

1. Rate the following DP1: Modeling. The solution approach should be developed using a model-based approach. E.g.: After getting the winner variant from the experiment, update the model or the prototype.
2. Rate the following DP2: User Variety The tool should be able to add different types of users. E.g. Admin users for creating prototypes and user participants for conducting experiments.
3. Rate the following DP3: Flexible UI elements The tool should have various re-usable UI elements and data models which can be customized by the prototype creator (admin user).E.g.: The admin user should be able to add UI elements using a drag-and-drop interface and add various data-models.

4. Rate the following DP4: User Task Refinement The tool should be able to create various tasks for the participants.E.g.: The tool should create data-dependent and independent tasks and assign them to participants for a particular experiment.
5. Rate the following DP5: Split Tests The tool should be able to create various user variants for the prototype.E.g.: The tool should create various types of UI versions and conduct A/B tests.
6. Rate the following DP6: Qualitative analysis The tool should be able to create a qualitative analysis for an experiment on participants.E.g.: The tool should have the possibility for creating a qualitative questionnaire and collecting feedback.
7. Rate the following DP7: Quantitative analysis The tool should be able to conduct a quantitative analysis from the feedback collected.E.g.: The tool should collect the user data while executing the tasks for an experiment.
8. Rate the following DP8: Accumulated analysis The tool should be able to aggregate/accumulate the feedbacks and announce the winner variant.E.g.: The tool aggregates the qualitative and the quantitative analysis and determine the winner variant.
9. Rate the following DP9: Continuous Integration The tool should be able to design the entire process in a continuous manner and integrate the results continuously. E.g.: The tool conducts experiments on UI variants and collect feedback and improve the prototyope.

**Open-ended questions:** This is a screenshot (see figure C.1) where we had three open-ended questions for rating our tool and our solution approach.

This section is used to get an feedback about the solution approach

\*Were you able to complete your scenario efficiently using the software? If not, what difficulties did you encounter?

\*Were there any areas where the tool could be improved to better meet your needs?

\*Overall, would you recommend this UI prototyping tool to others? Why or why not?

Fig. C.3 Survey Open-ended questionnaire sample

These were the following open-ended questions asked to the participants of our survey:

1. Were you able to complete your scenario efficiently using the software? If not, what difficulties did you encounter?
2. Were there any areas where the tool could be improved to better meet your needs?
3. Overall, would you recommend this UI prototyping tool to others? Why or why not?

**Example participant prototype:** These are the three screenshots of one of the participant's prototypes that were created. See figure C.4, figure C.5, and figure C.6.

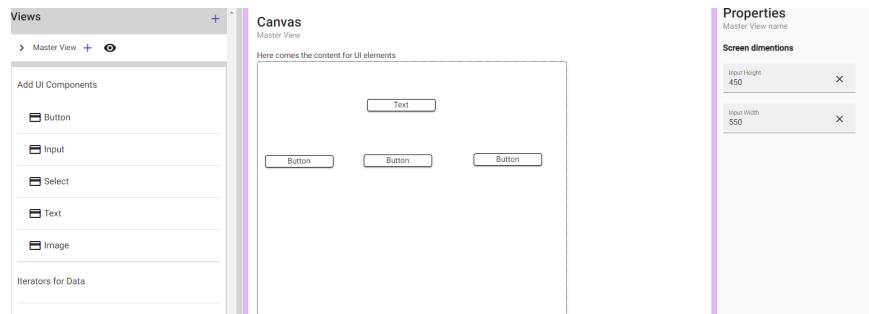


Fig. C.4 Participant Master View

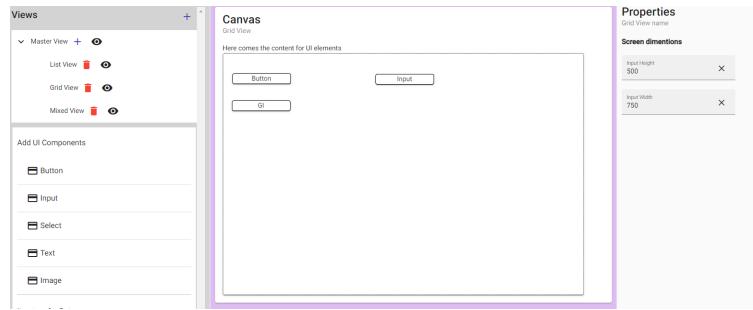


Fig. C.5 Participant Grid View

**SUS responses:** These are the SUS responses of all our participants exported from the Survey in a CSV format (see figure C.7).

**DPs responses:** These are the DPs responses of all our participants exported from the Survey in a CSV format (see figure C.8).

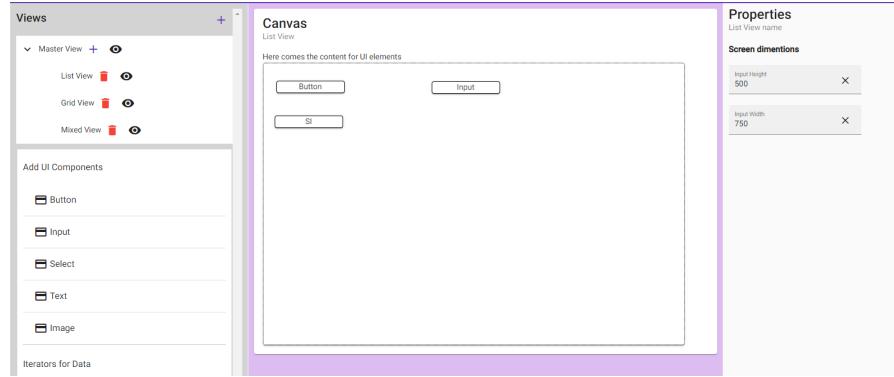


Fig. C.6 Participant List View

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	X	Y	X0	Y0	SUS
P1	5	2	5	1	5	1	4	1	5	1	24	6	19	19	95
P2	4	1	5	2	5	1	5	1	4	1	23	6	18	19	92.5
P3	4	1	4	1	4	1	5	2	4	2	21	7	16	18	85
P4	4	1	5	1	5	1	4	1	4	1	22	5	17	20	92.5
P5	4	1	4	2	3	2	4	2	4	3	19	10	14	15	72.5
P6	4	1	4	1	3	2	4	1	4	1	19	6	14	19	82.5
P7	4	4	3	4	4	2	4	2	4	3	19	15	14	10	60
P8	4	4	4	1	4	3	4	2	3	1	19	11	14	14	70
P9	4	3	4	2	4	2	4	4	4	4	20	15	15	10	62.5
P10	3	1	4	2	4	1	4	2	4	1	19	7	14	18	80
P11	3	4	3	2	4	3	2	4	2	4	14	17	9	8	42.5
P12	4	2	4	4	4	1	4	2	2	2	18	11	13	14	67.5
P13	4	2	3	4	4	2	5	1	4	1	20	10	15	15	75
P14	3	1	4	2	4	3	3	1	4	1	18	8	13	17	75
P15	4	3	3	4	4	2	4	2	3	4	18	15	13	10	57.5
															Average <b>74</b>

Fig. C.7 Participant Responses SUS

	DP1	DP2	DP3	DP4	DP5	DP6	DP7	DP8	DP9
P1	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5
P2	5	5	4	4	5	3	5	5	4
P3	5	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	3
P4	3	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4
P5	5	3	2	4	4	5	3	4	4
P6	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	5
P7	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	5
P8	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	5
P9	4	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	5
P10	3	4	5	5	4	3	4	4	4
P11	5	5	4	5	3	5	4	5	5
P12	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	4	5
P13	5	5	4	4	5	4	2	4	5
P14	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	4
P15	3	3	3	4	2	4	4	3	4

Fig. C.8 Participant Responses DPs

