



Prototyping

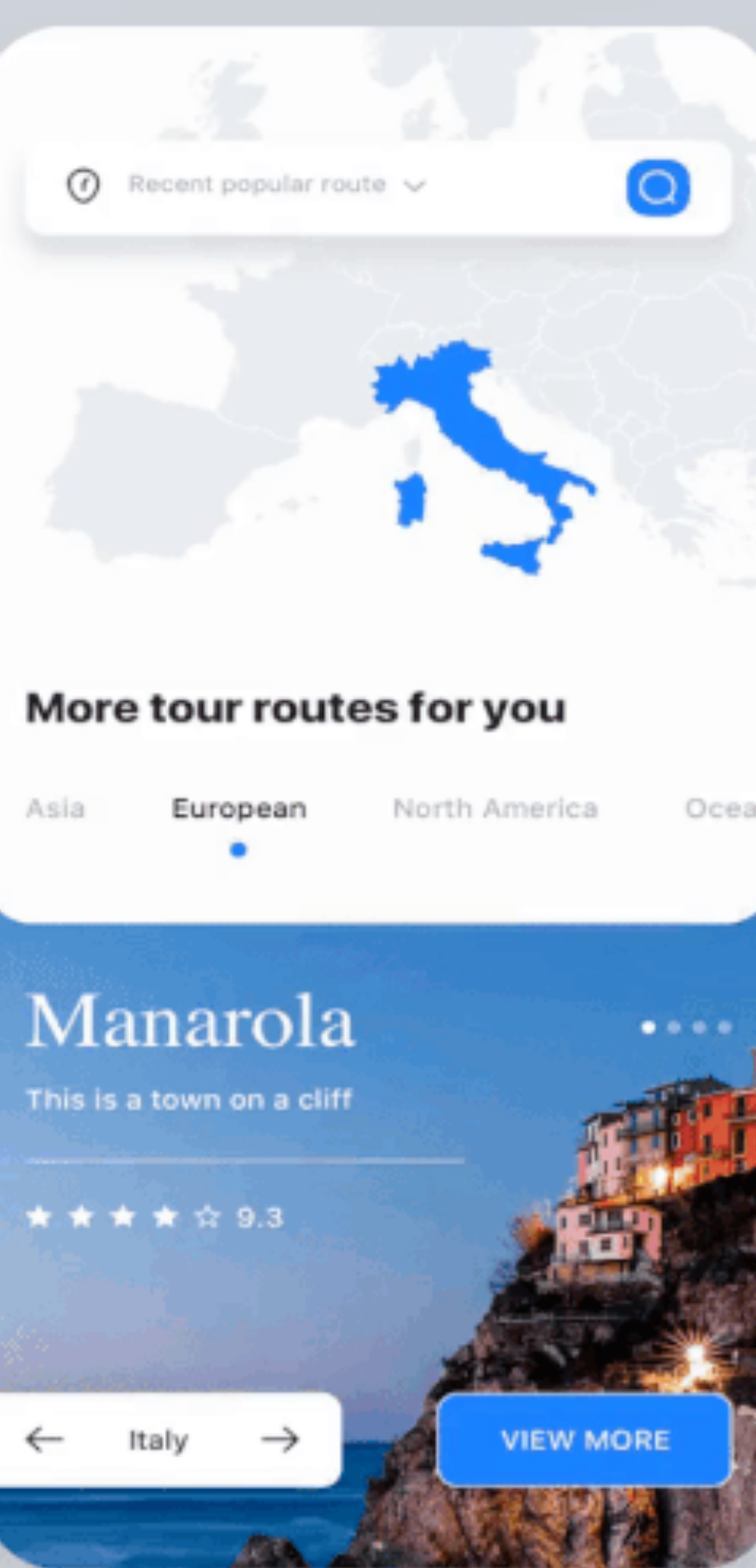
A guide backed by science

Prototype however is a very broad term, describing handful of items.

- What are the differences then?
- Is it always worth going for a hi-fi mockup?
- A rough sketch may bring you more honest answers.

What a prototype *actually* is:

- “A **prototype** is an early sample, model, or release of a product built to test a concept or process” – Blackwell, A. H.; Manar, E.
- The word ‘early’ is critical for understanding the main purpose of prototyping – cutting costs of the development process.
- Testing early and often requires prototypes to appear early + often



Hi-fidelity digital

- Probably the most popular deliverable we output.
- Probably the most satisfying one, since you see all your hard work (crafted in blood, sweat, and tears) in full glory.
- At this point, a prototype should be an accurate representation of 'a real thing', and feel like it's a functional product.

Hi-fi also has downsides!

When to go hi-fi depends on purpose

- If the main goal is to showcase the business what we're aiming for, maybe just one happy path click-through is enough.
- If you're planning on showcasing your UI skills in the first place, static mockups can do the trick.
- Doing some usability testing? Preparing only relevant screens for a test will save you a ton of time.

Beware aesthetic-usability effect

- If your main goal is to focus on functionality, flow, or information architecture, keep your prototype simple.
- The Aesthetic-Usability Effect coined by NN Group makes users more tolerant towards minor usability flaws when an interface is visually appealing.
- The pretty visual design may cover-up flaws, that otherwise would be apparent, so don't push it too far for initial research iterations.

Human brains are easily distracted

- Flashy animations, pictures (with human faces particularly) and colors are great at catching attention (Northdurft, 2000).
- In the research scenario, however, we may not want to direct participants' attention away from things like flow, or information architecture.
- If you don't want user's opinion on photos or animations just yet, don't make them stand out in your design.

The theory of planned behaviour

- Be careful when designing, and later analyzing research results!
- The theory of planned behaviour (Azjen, 1985) says, the more effort you put into a design, the more effort participant puts in testing it.
- It's a subconscious belief they are interacting with a real thing, so they act this way.
- Once they stumble upon a bug or an inactive link, this belief goes away for some time, and a participant may become more forgiving realizing "it's just a prototype".
- We don't quite want that.