

Case Study: WhatsApp

The FOMO Project.

FOMO (acronym): Fear of missing out

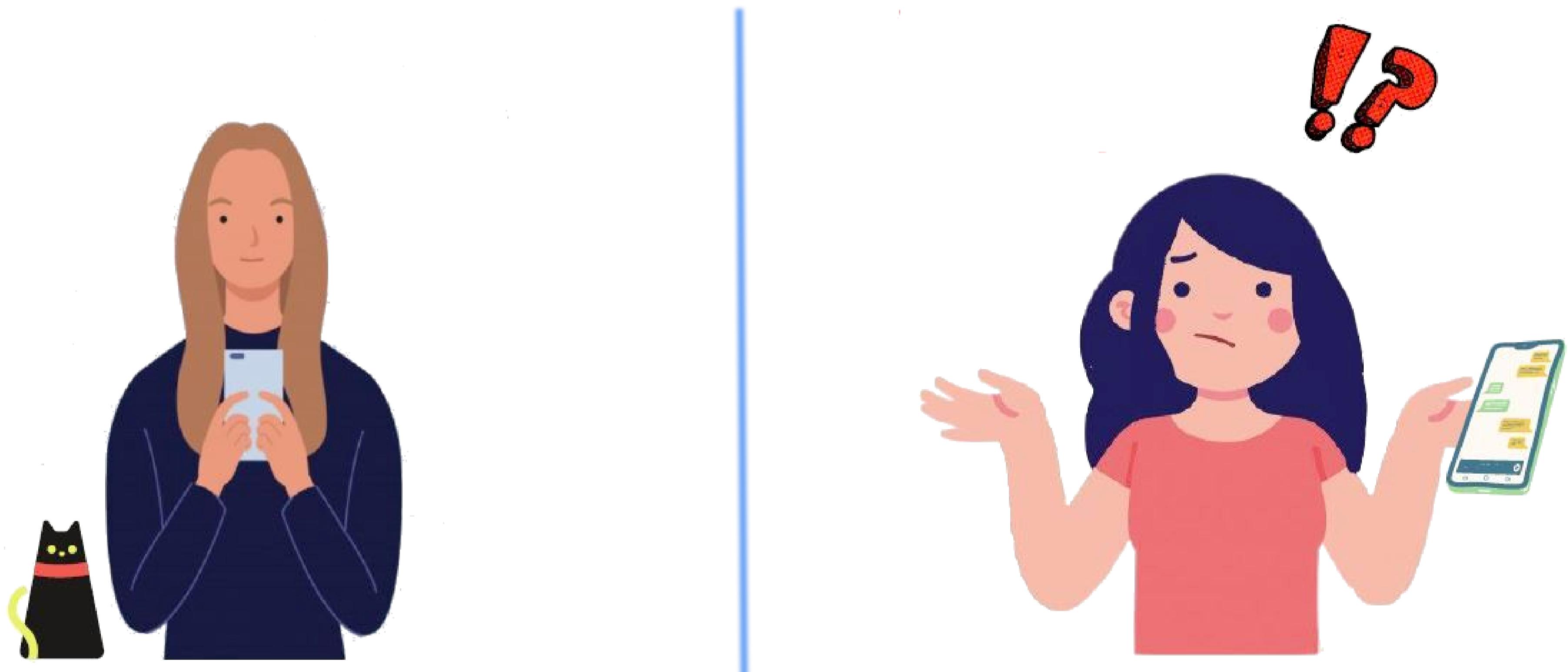
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The Question.

Understanding modern slangs, acronyms, initialism or "millenial dictionary" on WhatsApp messenger.

Intro.

A majority of messenger app users tend to use "messaging slang" such as "omw" short for "on my way", "atm" short for "at the moment", "rn" short for "right now", "nsfw" short for "Not Safe for Work" and so on - you get the point! It seems easy for millenials and frequent users to use these terms and understand the connotations of it from its abbreviation, but for the occasional user or even for the active user a little out of sync with this terminology, it can be a troublesome endeavour to navigate to a different application (chrome or safari) altogether just to find out the meaning of a slang. It can be intimidating to encounter new slang, almost as intimidating as landing in a country that speaks a different language altogether!



*Disclaimer: I am in no way affiliated with WhatsApp. All logos and trademarks belong to WhatsApp. This case study is a hypothetical exploration in possible feature additions and consequent design changes.

Statistics.

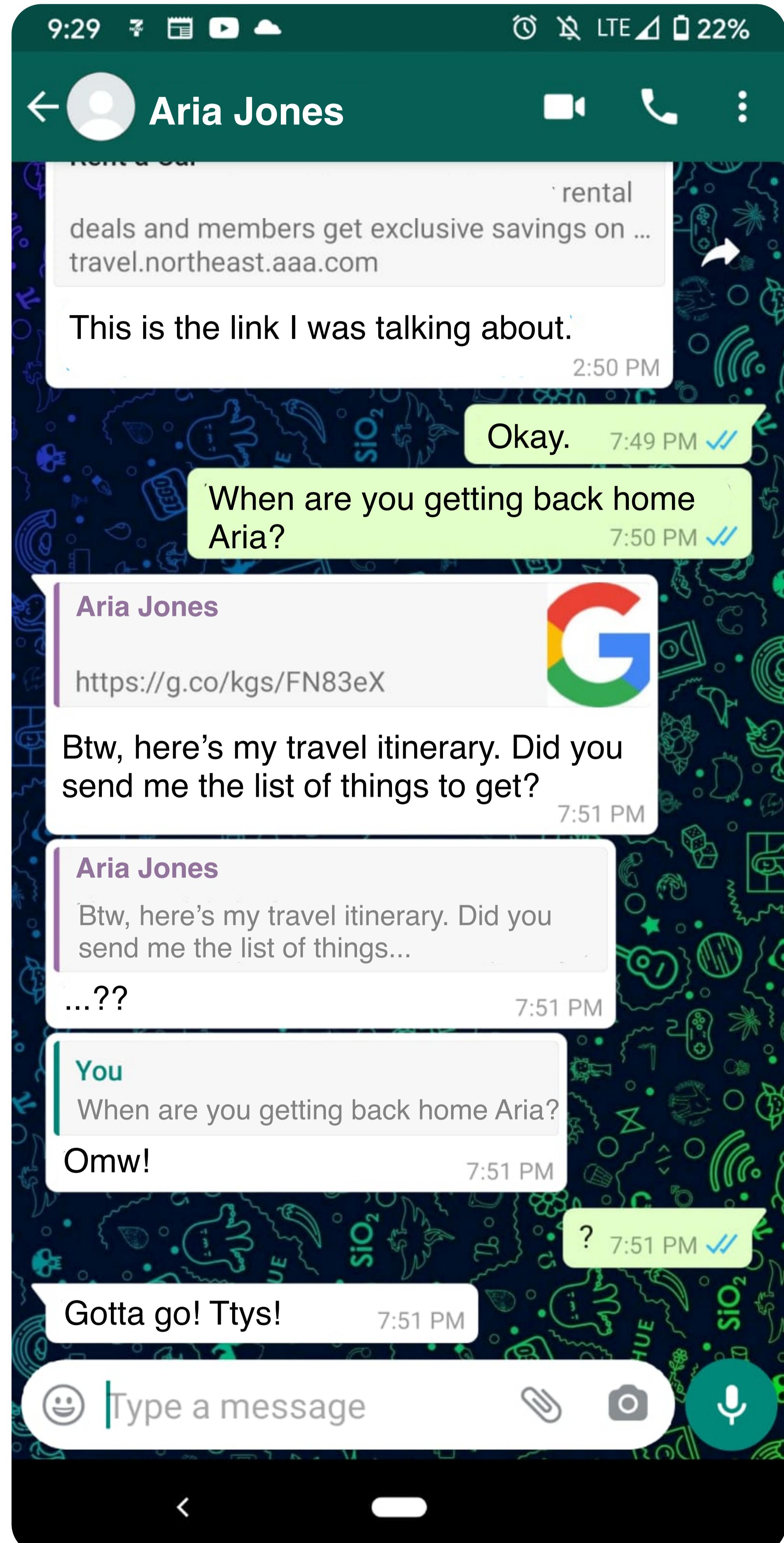
For reference:

WhatsApp is a cross-platform messenger and calling application that runs primarily on modern day cellular devices aka "smart phones". Users can send text messages, voice messages, photos, gifs, stickers, attachments in the form of documents, images, videos, audio, location and even contacts on your device's address book.

Current Market Alternatives (Similar Apps): Facebook Messenger, Telegram, Viber or even the normal SMS.

Present day context:

¹ As of the year 2020, WhatsApp has about 2 billion registered users all over the world. Combined, these users send approximately 63-65 billion messages per day on the app - messages to friends, colleagues and family. These users range anywhere from 15 years of age (or even younger) to 56+ years of age. Almost 17% of the users are in the 46-55 years of age range, and a whopping 13% are in the 56+ years of age range.



[1] All figures stated in this case study are an approximation derived from various sources listed in the References section.

² Key statistics on WhatsApp user base and revenues:

Registered Users (not unique users) : 2 billion

Active Users : 2 billion monthly

Number of messages/day : 63-65 million

User Age Range : 15 - 56+ years

Ethnicity : N/A | Geographical Dominance : Asia / South America

Usage Stats (% users by age):

15 - 29 years : 37%

30 - 45 years: 33%

46 - 55 years : 17%

56+ years : 13%

How can we help the range of users understand and communicate at a similar level?

This concept centers around bringing the lookup functionality directly to the users. Given that WhatsApp's market is not dominantly defined by a particular age group and its growth trajectory in user expansion is quite explosive (*especially internationally. In the United States, the app is popular among certain ethnicities more than others. Statistics show that registered users in the US are increasing every year*), it's important to consider reducing complexity for all user groups - even in functionality related to user lingo.

The user's functional flow for a basic text chat:

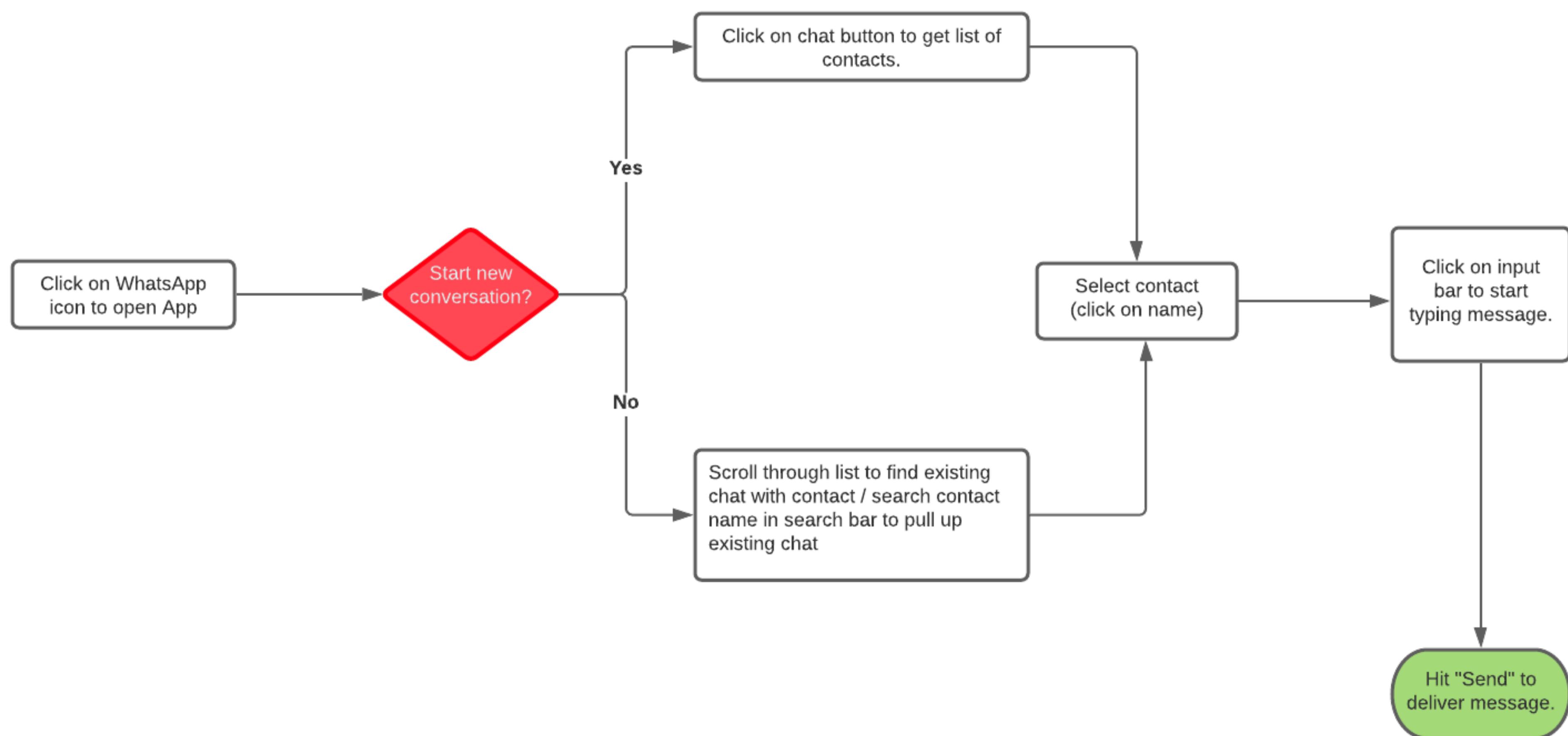


Diagram: Functional flow for text using WhatsApp

CURRENT Process

When a user comes across an acronym while messaging, they follow the process in diagram A to discover the definition of that acronym or abbreviation.

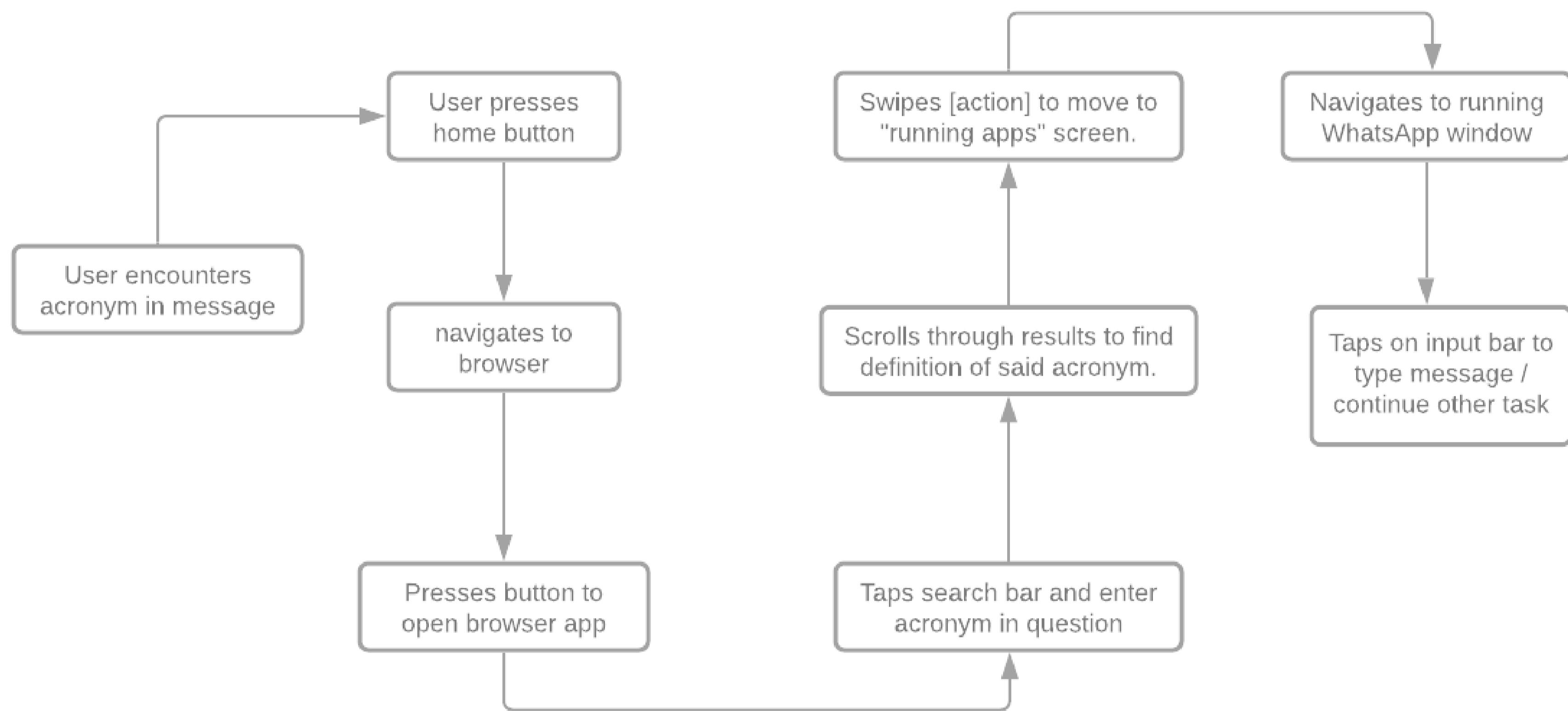


Diagram A

REVISED Process

Instead of going through 9+ steps, the new process allows the user to perform the same function in 4 steps presenting a LESS complex and smoother user experience.

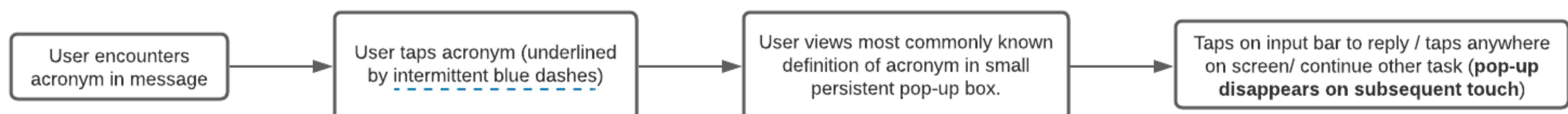


Diagram B

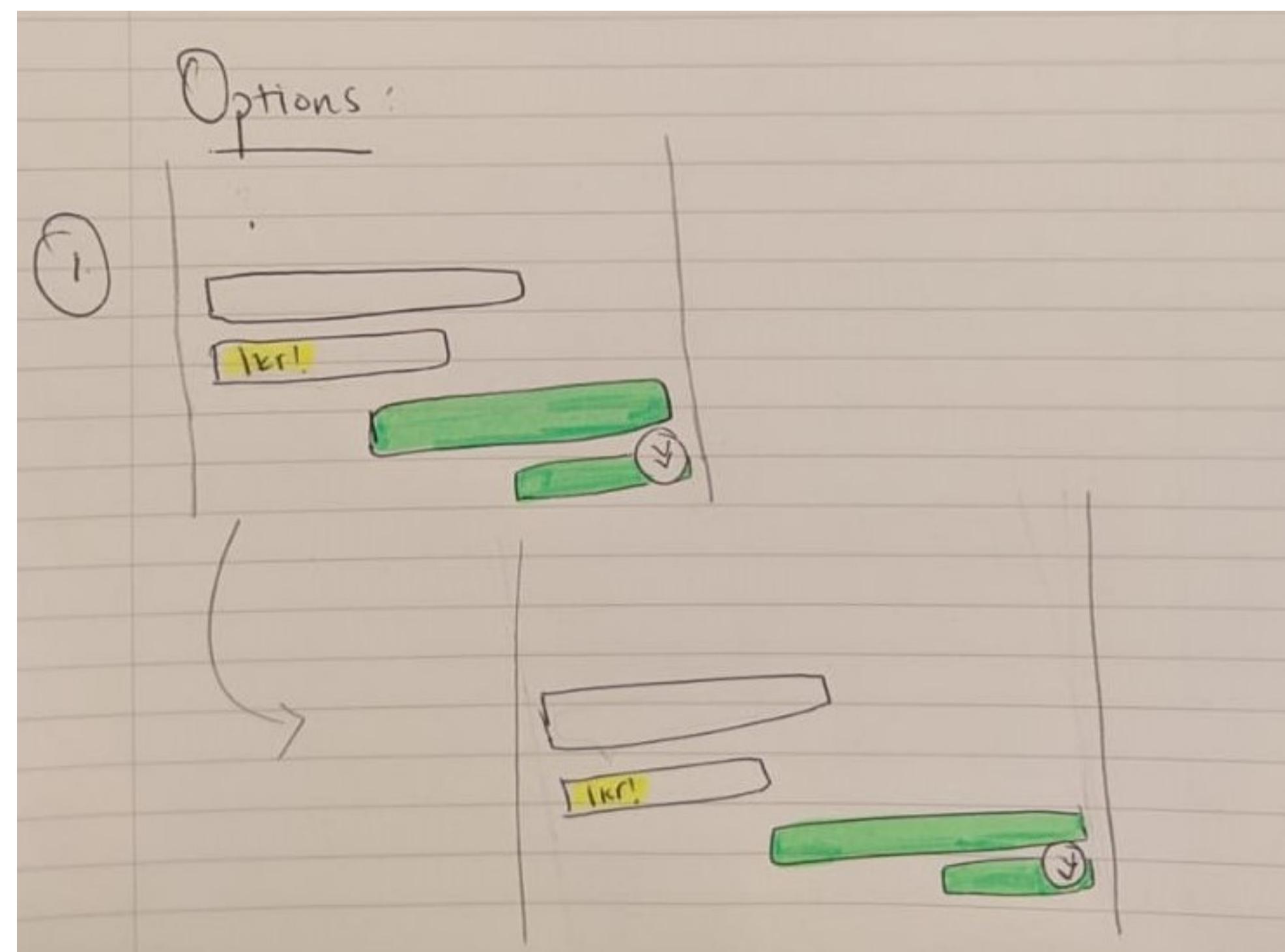
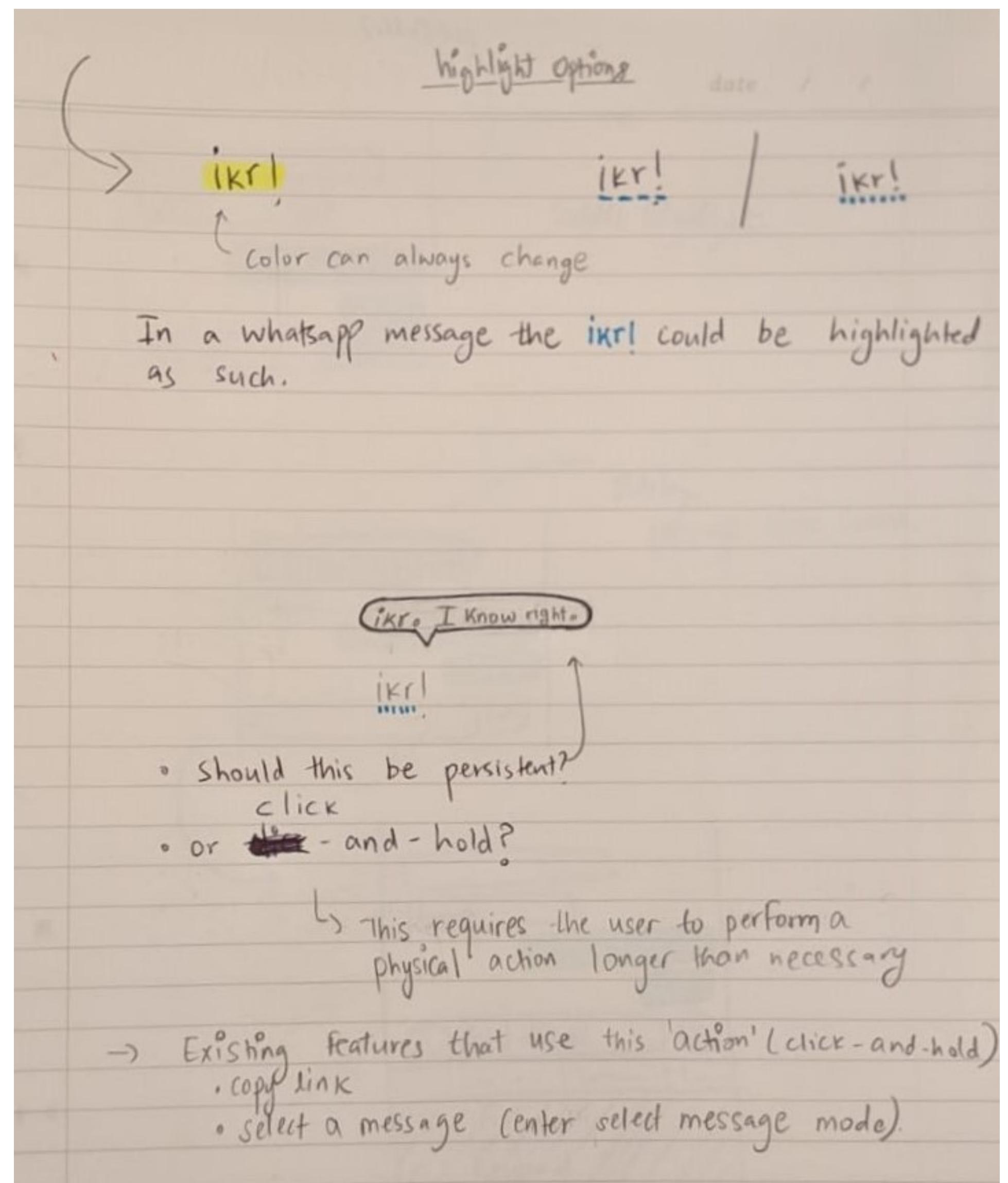
DESIGN PROCESS

The initial approach was to highlight the acronym or abbreviation using a bright color. This serves two purposes, it would draw the user's attention to the acronym, and it would indicate a call to action (underlying functionality).

On tapping the highlighted word, a small temporary pop-up would reveal the definition of said acronym.

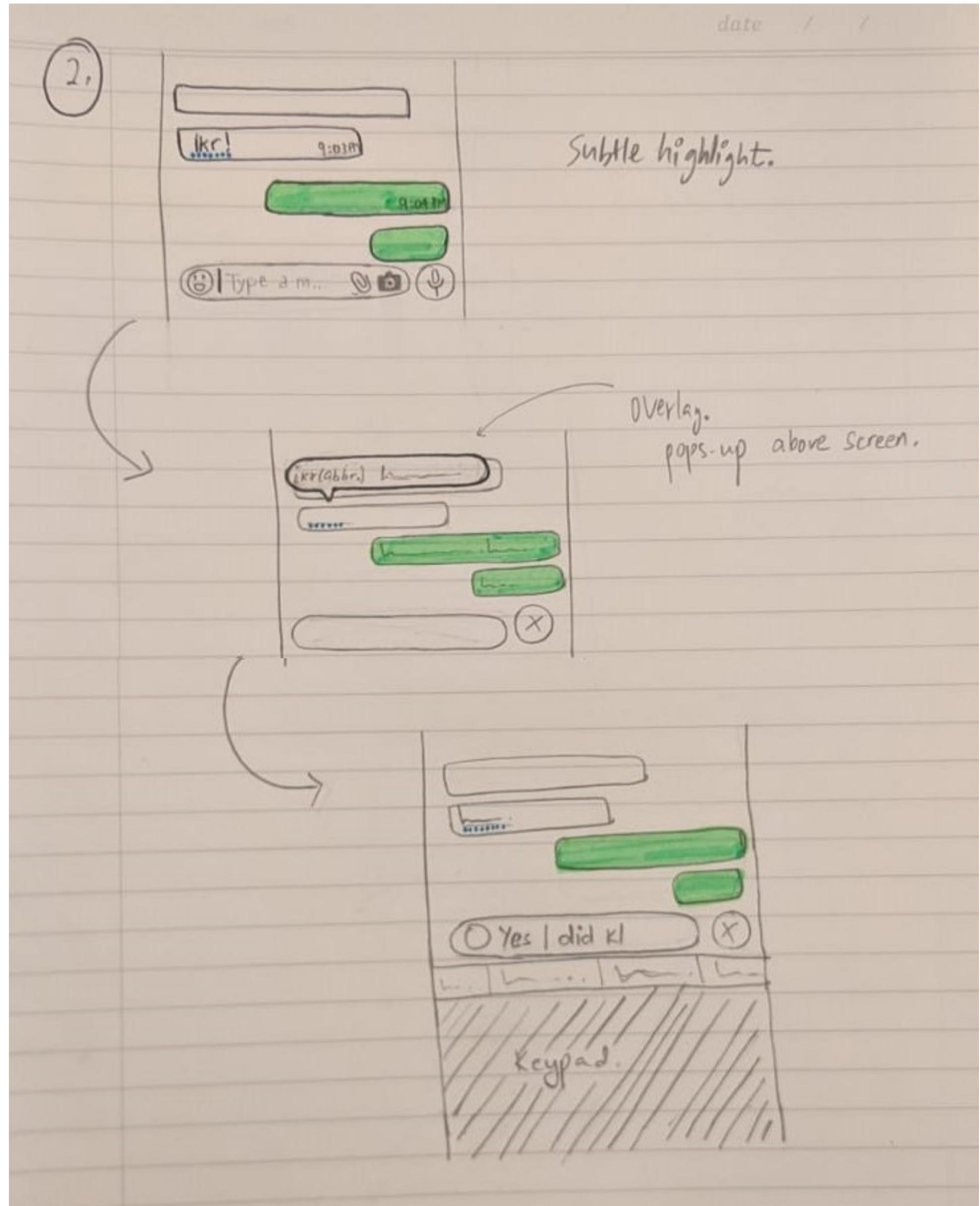
Through user feedback, the following issues were found:

1. Highlighting was jarring to the user's vision.
2. If the user required more time to view the definition, they would have to press and hold the highlighted text to continue viewing the pop-up box .



Clearly, the user testing indicated that it was frustrating for the users to use this design.

An alternative more favorable approach to this was to bring the acronym to the user's attention in a subtler manner by *underlining* it.



This approach utilises a persistent pop-up box that disappears on any subsequent tap on the screen.

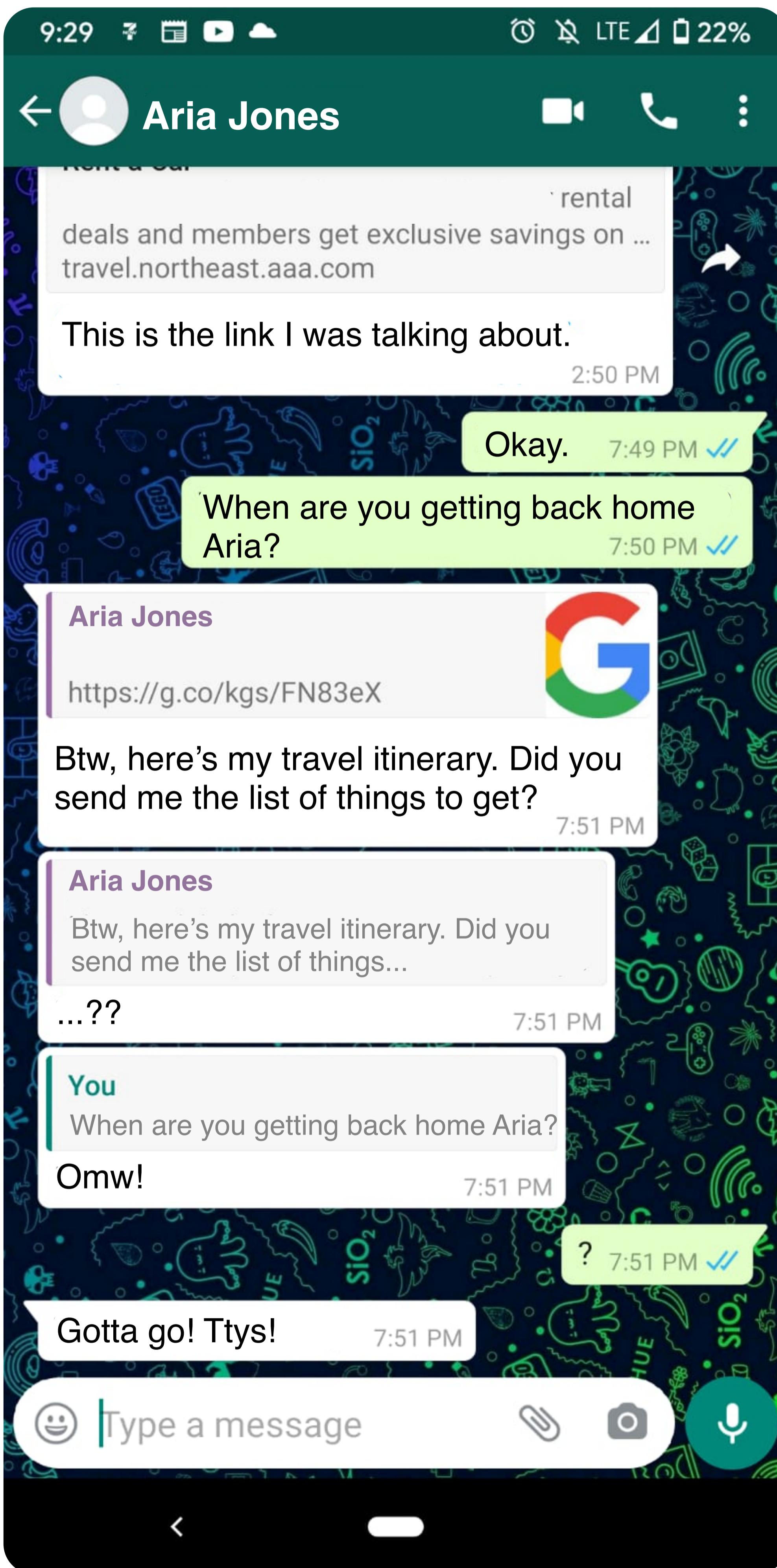
The acronym is underlined by a colored intermittently dashed line that subtly brings it to the attention of the user.

On tapping the underlined text, the definition is displayed on the pop up box.

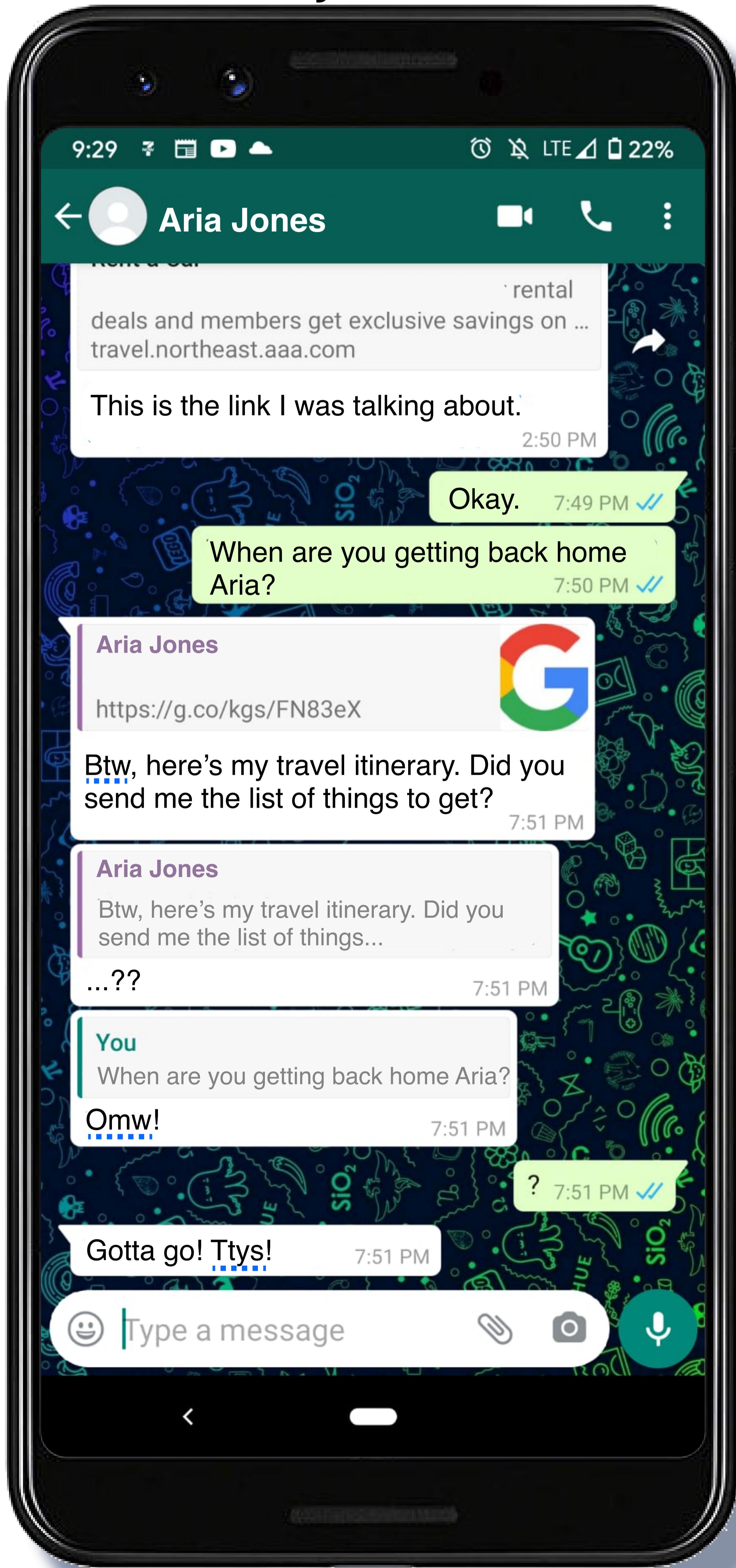
The user can then click anywhere on the screen to go on to their next action while the box simultaneously disappears.

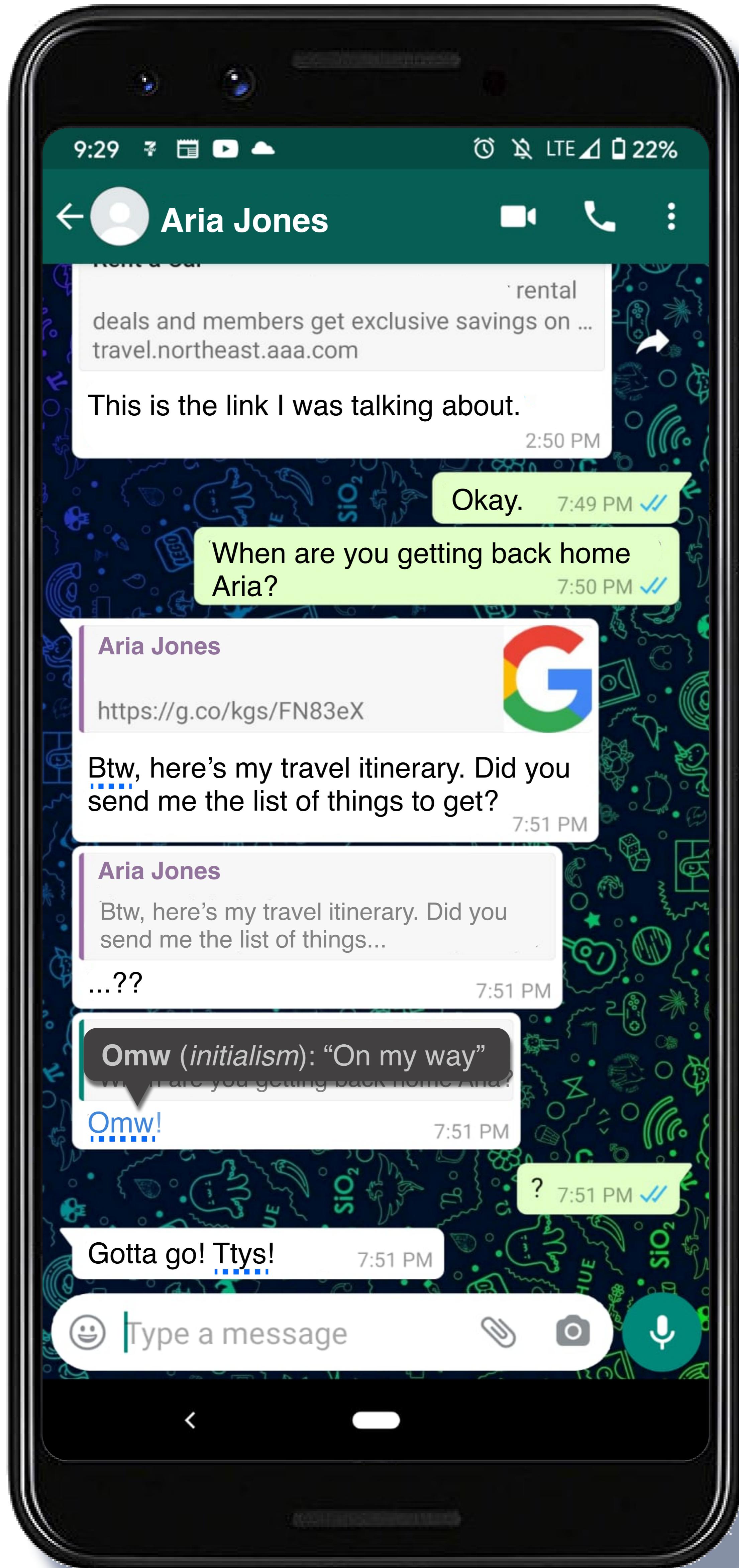
This approach held well with the users that were tested for the previous approach as well as the new users (no previous experience).

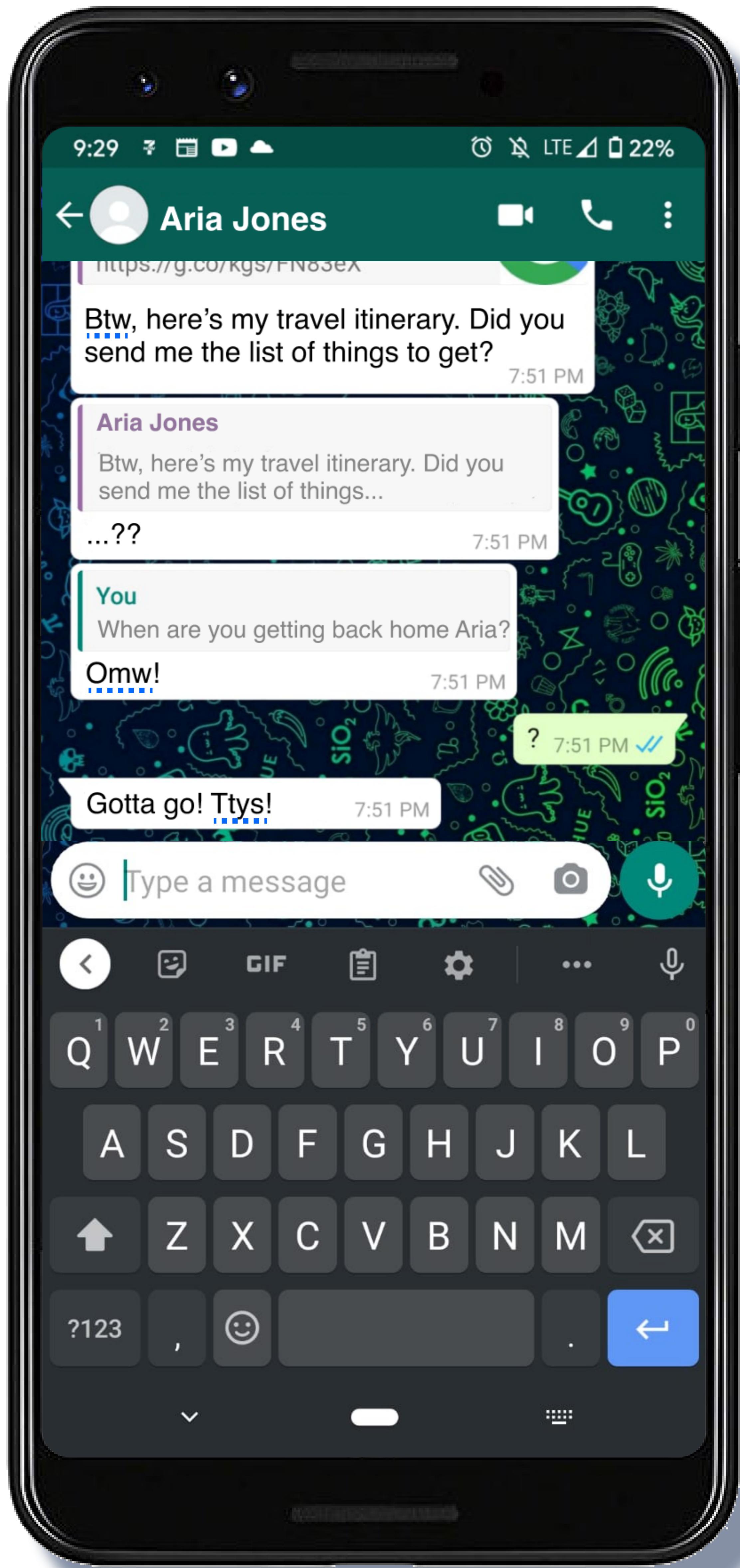
The Current Message Screen



The REVISED Message Screen







Closing Thoughts

Design is living and breathing, it's never really over. This design is also in its infancy and going through its third iteration and will continue doing so (until Facebook decides to adopt it - in which case, there will be potentially even greater scrutiny and forced evolution which should lead to an interesting stage - more on that when it happens).

RESOURCES:

Ah yes, no work is complete without references!

****Kudos to the individuals that took the time to analyze such voluminous datasets.**

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/260819/number-of-monthly-active-whatsapp-users/>

<https://www.statista.com/topics/2018/whatsapp/>

<https://www.businessofapps.com/data/whatsapp-statistics/#1>

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/814649/whatsapp-users-in-the-united-states-by-age/>

<https://expandedramblings.com/index.php/whatsapp-statistics/>

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