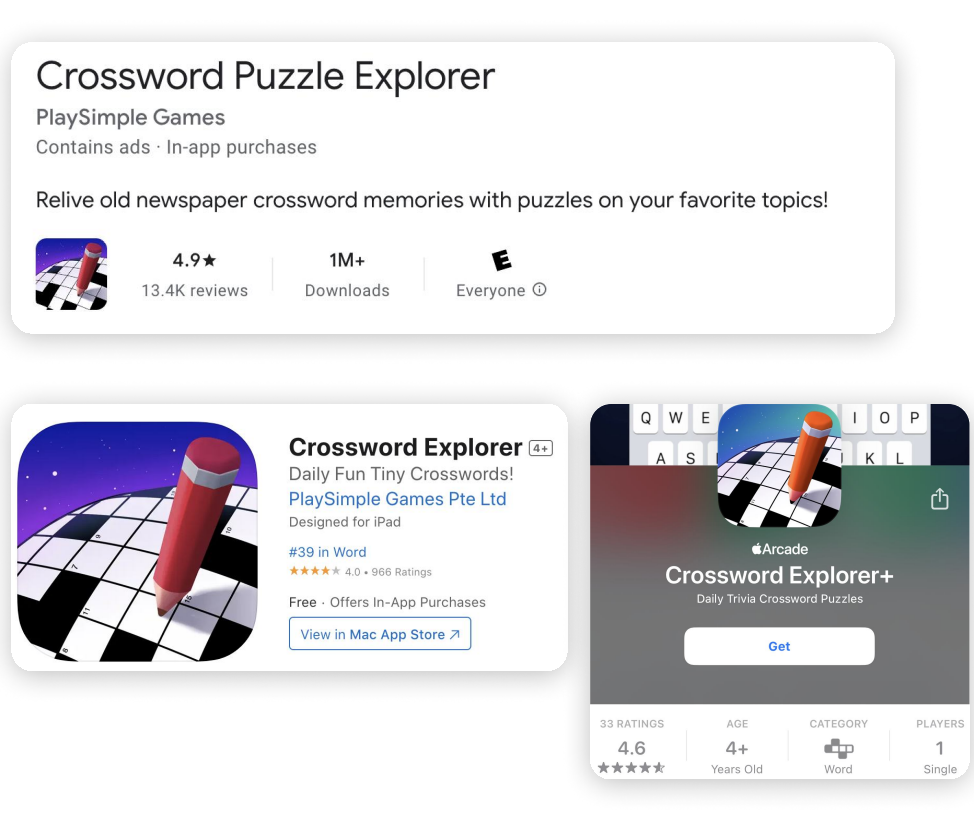
Designing Weekly and Daily Collectible Events Framework to drive engagement

ABOUT THE GAME

Crossword Explorer is a casual, free-to-play, crossword game. Launched in Jan 2020, it has garnered 1 million+ downloads and has a 140k+ DAU (and counting!) in Android, IOS and Apple Arcade.



Crossword Puzzle Explorer
PlaySimple Games
Contains ads · In-app purchases
Relive old newspaper crossword memories with puzzles on your favorite topics!
4.9★ 13.4K reviews · 1M+ Downloads · Everyone

Crossword Explorer 4+
Daily Fun Tiny Crosswords!
PlaySimple Games Pte Ltd
Designed for iPad
#39 in Word
4.0 • 966 Ratings
Free · Offers In-App Purchases
View in Mac App Store ↗

Arcade
Crossword Explorer+
Daily Trivia Crossword Puzzles
Get
33 RATINGS 4.6 · AGE 4+ Years Old · CATEGORY Word · PLAYERS 1 Single

BACKSTORY

You're really into crosswords and, one day, you stumble upon an easy crossword game that seems perfect for your commute home from the office. Excitedly, you download Crossword Explorer and eagerly start solving puzzles. 🤩

At first, it's everything you hoped for. You zip through the levels effortlessly, enjoying the simplicity and the quick satisfaction of completing each puzzle.
As days pass, Despite the initial enjoyment, you begin to realise that the puzzles are all the same.
They remain easy and repetitive, offering no variation or fun, surprising elements to keep you intrigued.
What started as an engaging pastime quickly devolves into a monotonous routine 🥱 ......

You find yourself losing motivation. The lack of new challenges or interesting features makes it hard to stay engaged. Soon, you start skipping your daily sessions, and before long, you stop playing altogether.

If you felt the same, You're not alone in this experience. Other players, drawn in by the same initial appeal, are also dropping off and this what gave us an objective for our feature!

Objective

- Introduce a fun element to the game to enhance player enjoyment.
- Boost early retention by catering to low-skilled players who struggle with initial levels, offering them motivational and achievable goals.

Goals

1. To increase a session time and engagement
2. Increase in engagement and session time will lead to an increase in revenue of the game
3. To improve the early retention

Process

- Research
- Idea Exploration
- Team Alignment
- Grounding design approach
- Wireframing & prototyping
- Final Design & Impact

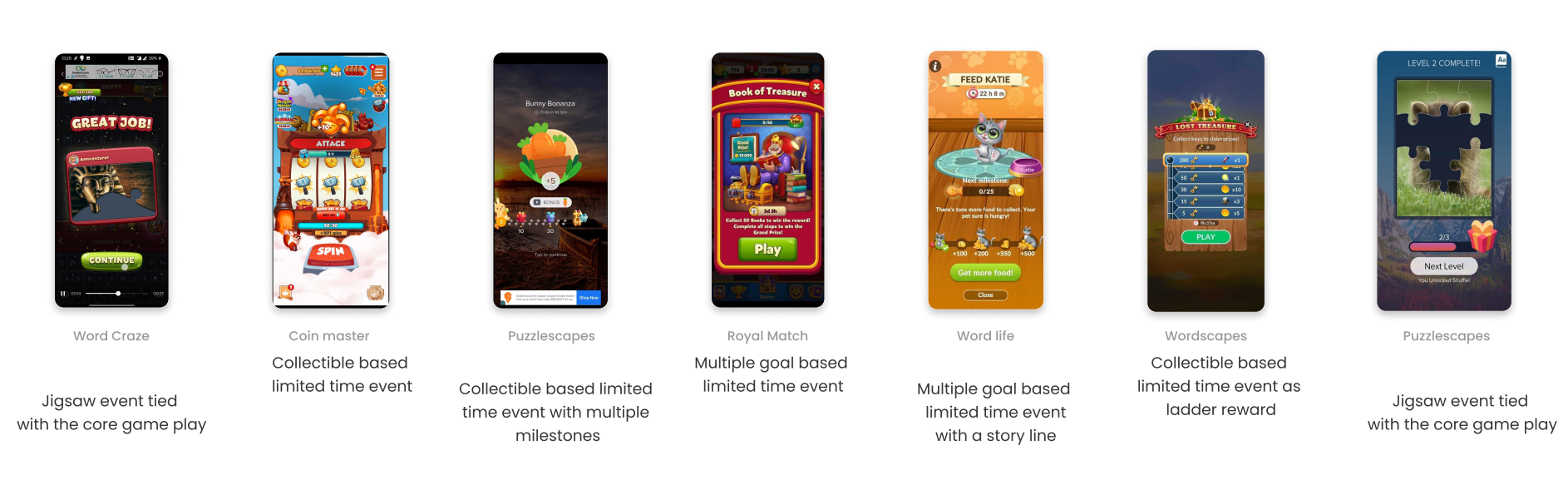
Ideas from the team

We organised brainstorming and game-playing sessions involving our entire team of game designers, product managers, and visual designers to source fresh ideas and innovative solutions.

Weekly Missions	Meta Progression	Seasonal Events	Collectibles
Weekly Quests, that is missions/quests that appear once a week alongside daily goals and the player has to complete them	Implementing a whole new limited time event, that can be a new meta (progression based or collection based)	Implementing seasonal events that only go live during major seasonal celebrations such as Christmas, new year's and so on	Puzzle based event where a player need to hunt for collectibles and complete the scene for reward

Research Insights

To better assess feasibility, I conducted an in-depth analysis of our competitors' games to identify what works and what doesn't. I also reviewed similar implementations in other PlaySimple games to validate our decision.



Word Craze	Coin master	Puzzlescapes	Royal Match	Word life	Wordscapes	Puzzlescapes
Jigsaw event tied with the core game play	Collectible based limited time event	Collectible based limited time event with multiple milestones	Multiple goal based limited time event	Multiple goal based limited time event with a story line	Collectible based limited time event as ladder reward	Jigsaw event tied with the core game play

- It is used in most games and has proven t
- In terms of complexity this was a simple a
- Giving short term goals has proven to driv

Deciding factor

Which construct to go forward with? This discussion alone took weeks. For a project which is as huge as this in terms of scale, There are different POCs from Franchise stakeholder, Product, Game design and Visual team involved in the decision making process. It was a huge challenge to bring everyone on the same page. We narrowed down to two options -

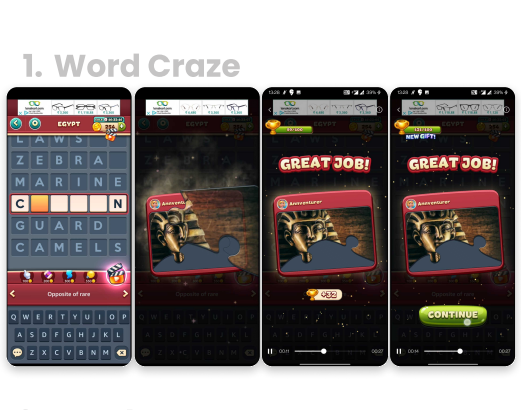
Weekly Missions	Collectibles
Weekly Quests, that is missions/quests that appear once a week alongside daily goals and the player has to complete them	Puzzle based event where a player need to hunt for collectibles and complete the scene for reward

Although each of the ideas were worthy enough to be worked on, we decided to go with **collectibles** as a construct, mainly because the primary target users were pretty excited about this and we believed this will drive active engagement

Identifying key opportunity

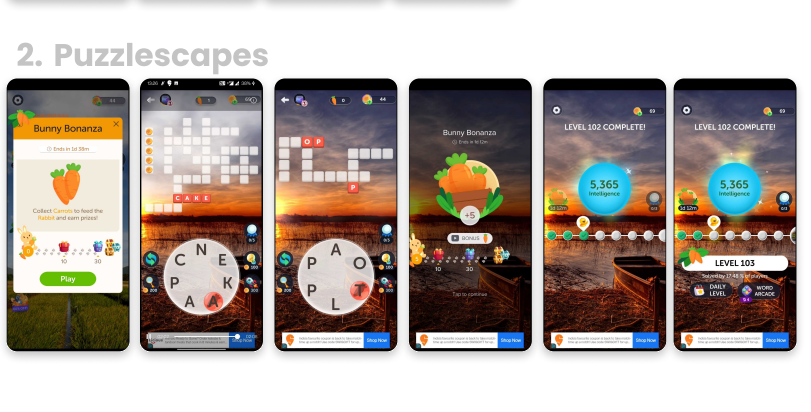
The initial phase of research was aimed at identifying the games which have collectible tied with the core loop of the game or any limited time based event to understand the surfacing of events and flows in the game. The following game were chosen for their frequent live event associated with the main game loop

1. Word Craze



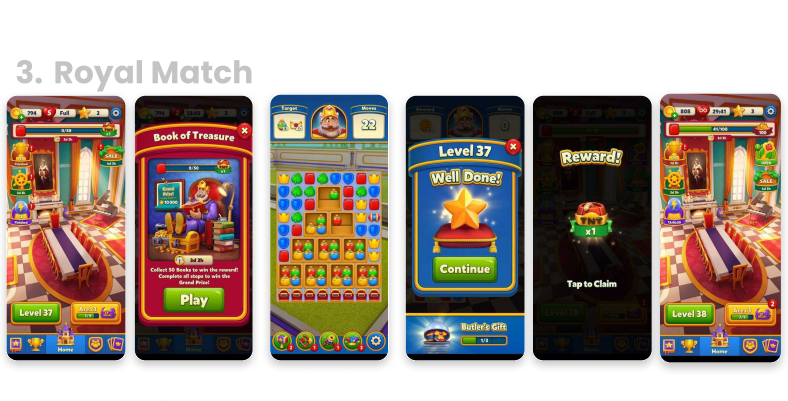
Observation -
1) Word craze jigsaw was tied up with their core game loop
2) Collect jigsaw pieces based on runtimes after completing a puzzle
3) long outro because of jigsaw animation Every time

2. Puzzlescapes



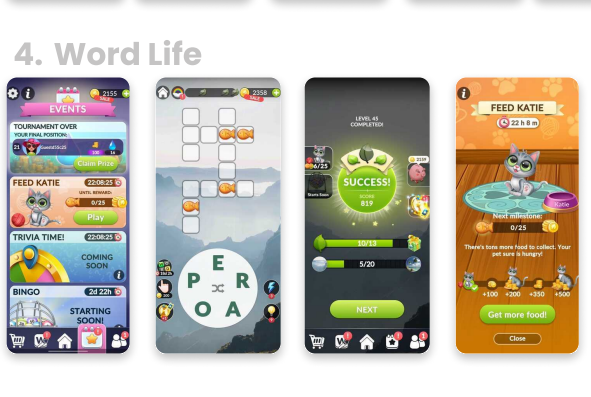
Observation -
1) Puzzlescapes events are time limited events which is surfaced on the home screen and on puzzle screen
2) All the events are based on collecting items by laying the main game laying the main game
3) The detail and progress info are shown by clicking on the icon. Also the after very puzzle, it shows the progress
4) The priority is given to limited time events over the normal game progress

3. Royal Match



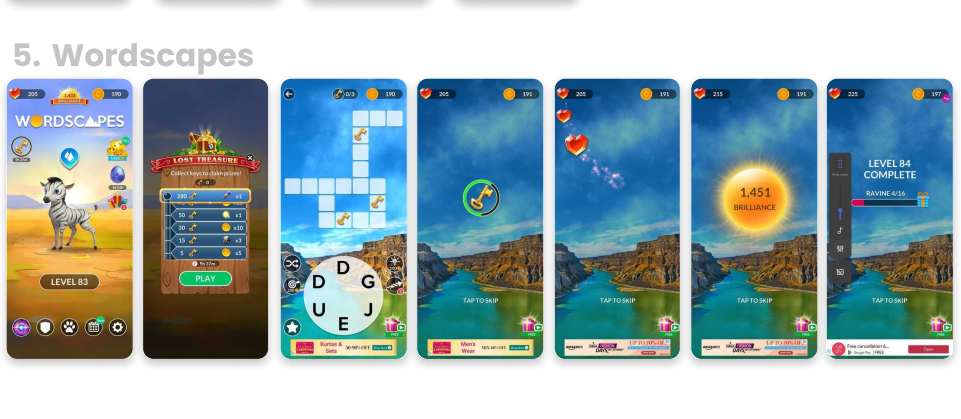
Observation -
1)There is no additional surfacing on the puzzle screen
2)Only the progress bar is shown with the goal on HS. As you complete the goal, it gets more tougher

4. Word Life



Observation -
1)Based on collection mechanic
2)Surfaced on puzzle screen
3)There are intermediate goals and sense of progression as the cat will keep growing as we collect the fish

5. Wordscapes



Observation -
1)Objective is to collect key by playing puzzle and get the rewards.
2)Keys are shown as a ladder, as you keep climbing , the rewards gets bigger

Conclusion

Our benchmarking revealed that many of our competitors feature limited-time collectible events in their games. These events have proven to drive high engagement and keep players consistently hooked. And which is why we decided on designing 🤩 ......

Jigsaw Event

Jigsaw is a time limited event to provide players a fun elements in the game.
It is a feature which will provide players with a motivational and easier goals.

Why?

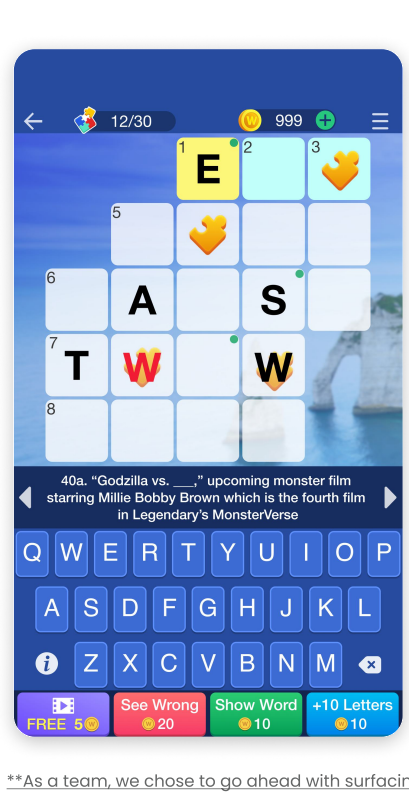
1. **Time-Based Challenge:** Creating a sense of urgency with a time frame will encourage players to stay engaged and focused on finishing the puzzle.
2. **Sense of Accomplishment:** Completing the jigsaw puzzle will provide players with a feeling of achievement and aesthetic satisfaction, encouraging them to participate in future jigsaw events.
3. **Enhance Session Duration:** By motivating players to complete the jigsaw puzzle, we can increase their in-game session time.

How do we design this?

- To reward jigsaw pieces after completing every puzzle
- To permanently surface in the game tying with the core loop
- To surface on the puzzle grid as intermediate reward as a limited time event

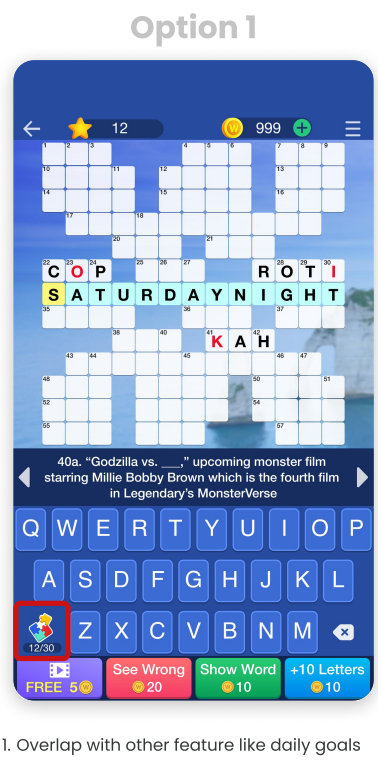
Deciding on touch points

With the objective in mind, I evaluated the feasibility of all three options discussed and identified the optimal touchpoints for accessing the event.



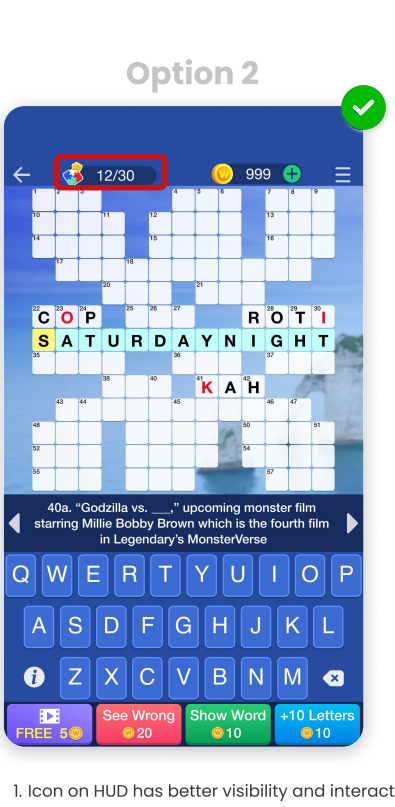
**As a team, we chose to go ahead with surfacing jigsaw pieces on the puzzle grid to provide players with immediate gratification.

Option 1



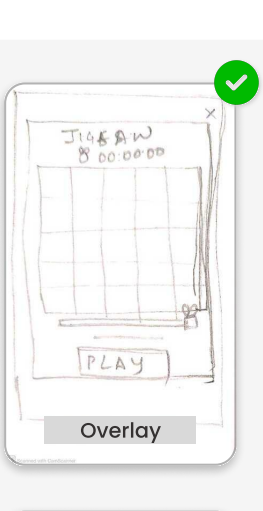
1. Overlap with other feature like daily goals
2. Too many colours, Interferes with the hints button
3. Less prominence, bottom area looks cluttered

Option 2



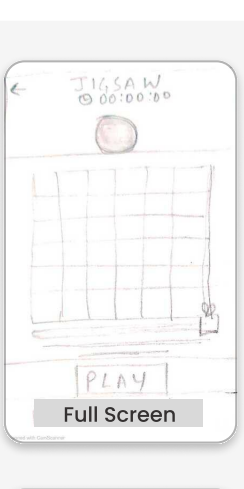
1. Icon on HUD has better visibility and interactable
2. Keyboard area looks less cluttered
3. Avoid accidental clicks

Exploration



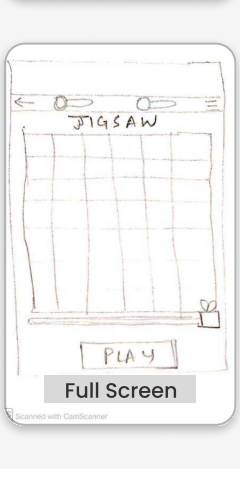
Overlay

1) Overlay is scalable and contain more information
2) It can be access from puzzle screen at any time



Full Screen

1) Jigsaw full screen can be accessed from HS icon
2) This layout is scalable and contain more information
3)This will open up new screen which will increase cognitive load
4) This layout is visually consistent as LB



Full Screen

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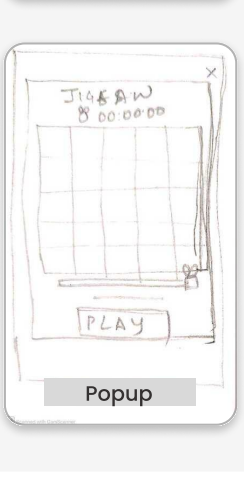
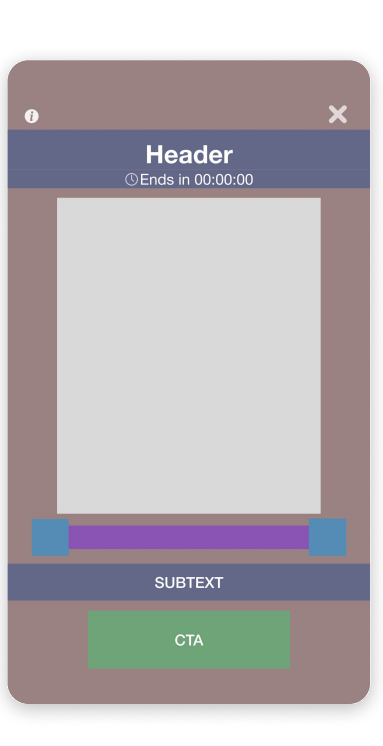


Popup

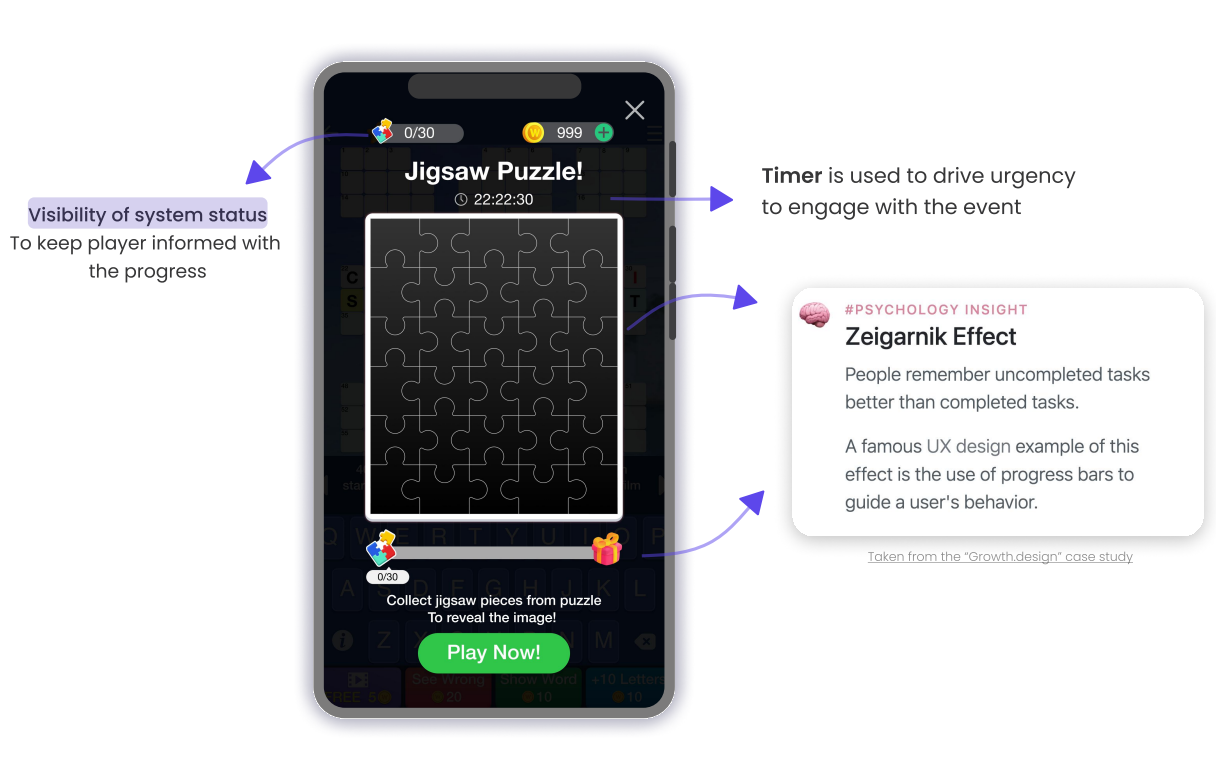
1) Popup looks visually consistent but is not scalable
2) cannot contain more information
3) It can be access from puzzle screen at any time

Final design

After exploring various methods and layouts, we decided to proceed with the overlay approach. Since the collectible is linked to the puzzle, this makes it easy for players to access the event directly from the puzzle screen.



Designed a reusable layout to reduce the UI/art effort



Visibility of system status
To keep player informed with the progress

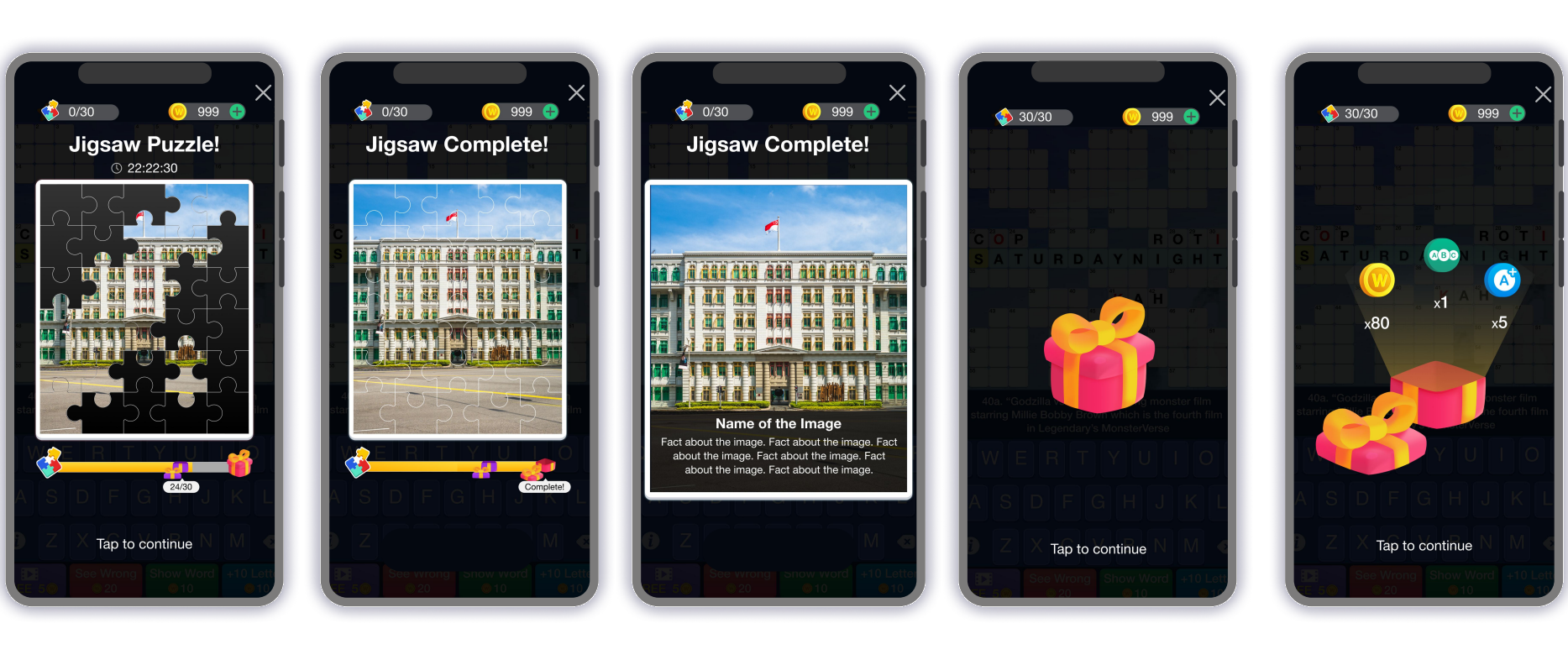
Timer is used to drive urgency to engage with the event

#PSYCHOLOGY INSIGHT
Zeigarnik Effect
People remember uncompleted tasks better than completed tasks.
A famous UX design example of this effect is the use of progress bars to guide a user's behavior.

Taken from the "Growth.design" case study

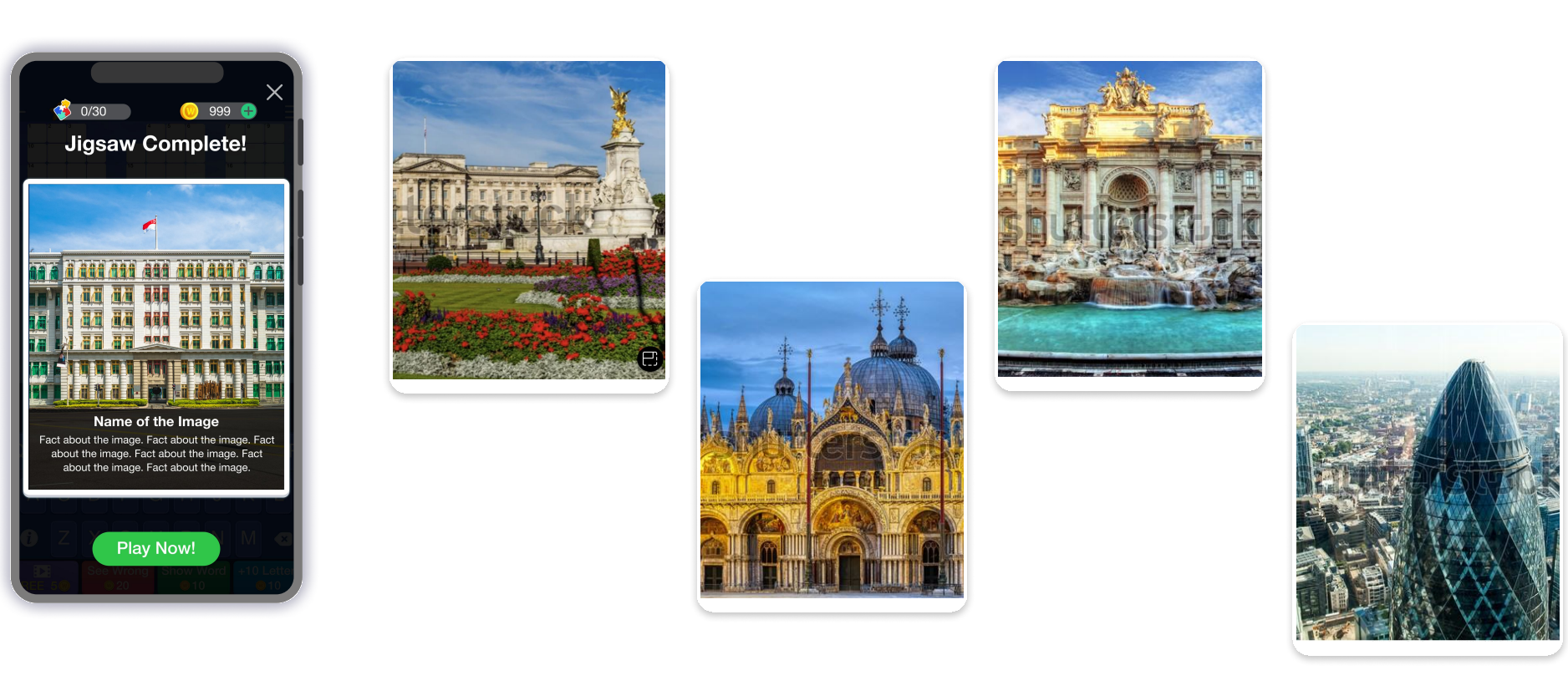
Flows

When a player collects a jigsaw piece from the puzzle, an overlay appears to reveal the image. In this instance, it shows the completed jigsaw scene, allowing players to see the full picture and claim their reward.



Scalability (future prospects)

I aimed to create a framework that could be reused for different use cases without altering the layout. This approach allowed us to maintain the cadence with minimal time and effort.



KEY METRICS FOR JIGSAW

Impact

Engagement
▲ 4.6%
For D60-D120 users it has increased by 10.8% as similar upside is on non-event days as well.

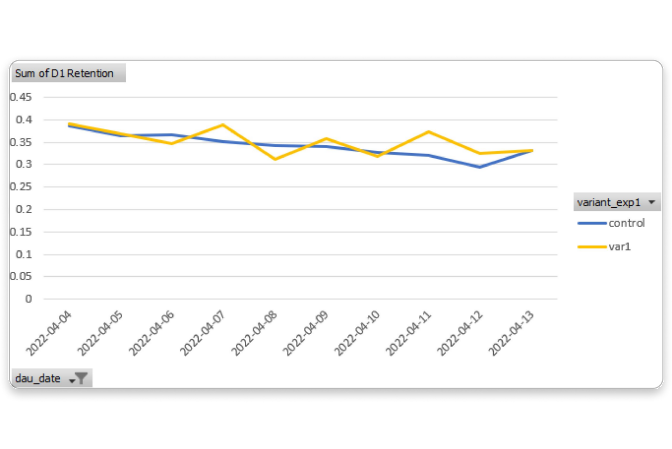
Session time
▲ 15%
upside in session time during the event

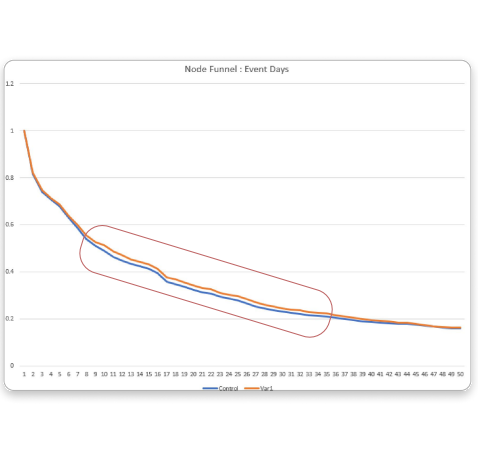
LT days
▲ 9%
Decay rate improved by 2.5% , Install retention have been mostly better on event days

Net revenue
▲ 5.5%
Driven by upside in ads revenue

The chart showed increased player engagement during the jigsaw event. Initially, we tested a one-day jigsaw event each week, but due to the high engagement, we increased it to three times a week.

This success gave us the confidence to design a week-long event.

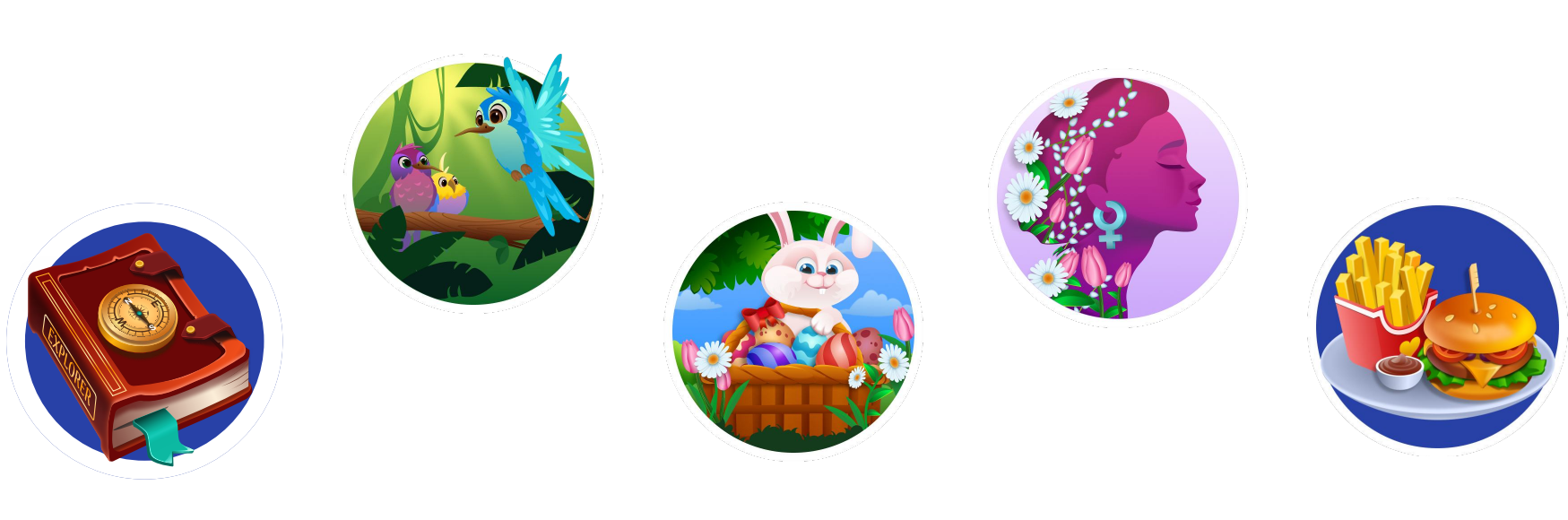




As Jigsaw was a big success 🥳........
We designed Weekly Fest!!

Weekly fest

Weekly Fest is a week-long event integrated into the game's core loop, designed to give players a compelling reason to return. It offers easier goals and the allure of uncertain rewards, keeping the gameplay engaging and motivating.

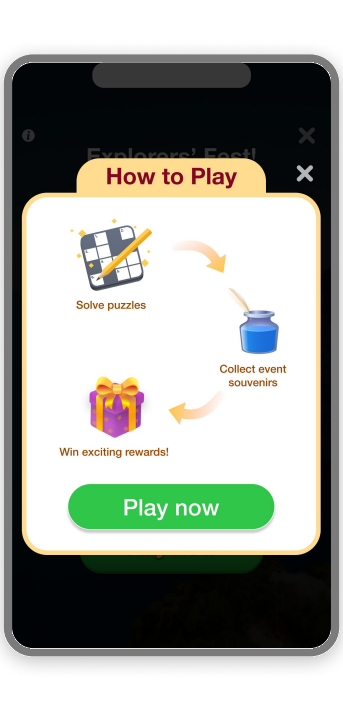


Why?

- **Lack of Seasonality in our game:** During seasonal occasions, such as christmas, new years and so on we experience a dip in our DAU, retention. .
- **Lack of an event which lasts for a while:** There is no event that will stretch for more than 4 days that will make the player potentially play both jigsaw and leaderboard events.
- **Lack of multiple hook in our game :** These types of quests can significantly boost overall engagement by encouraging players to adopt a loss minimization mindset, motivating them to keep playing our games.

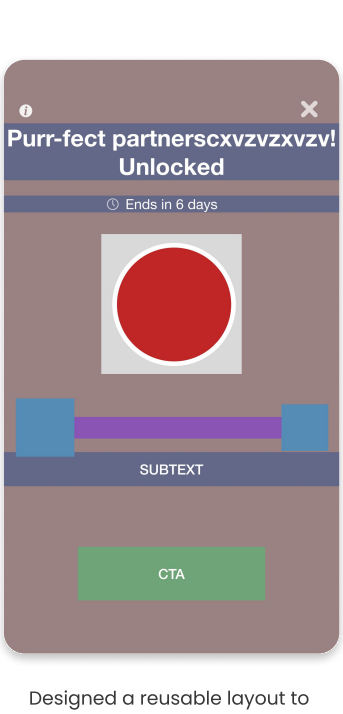
How?

By integrating it into the game's core loop, we ensure players find it exciting to clear puzzles and collect items to complete quests for rewards.



Final design

I established a consistent layout for all future events, ensuring a cohesive visual experience throughout the game.



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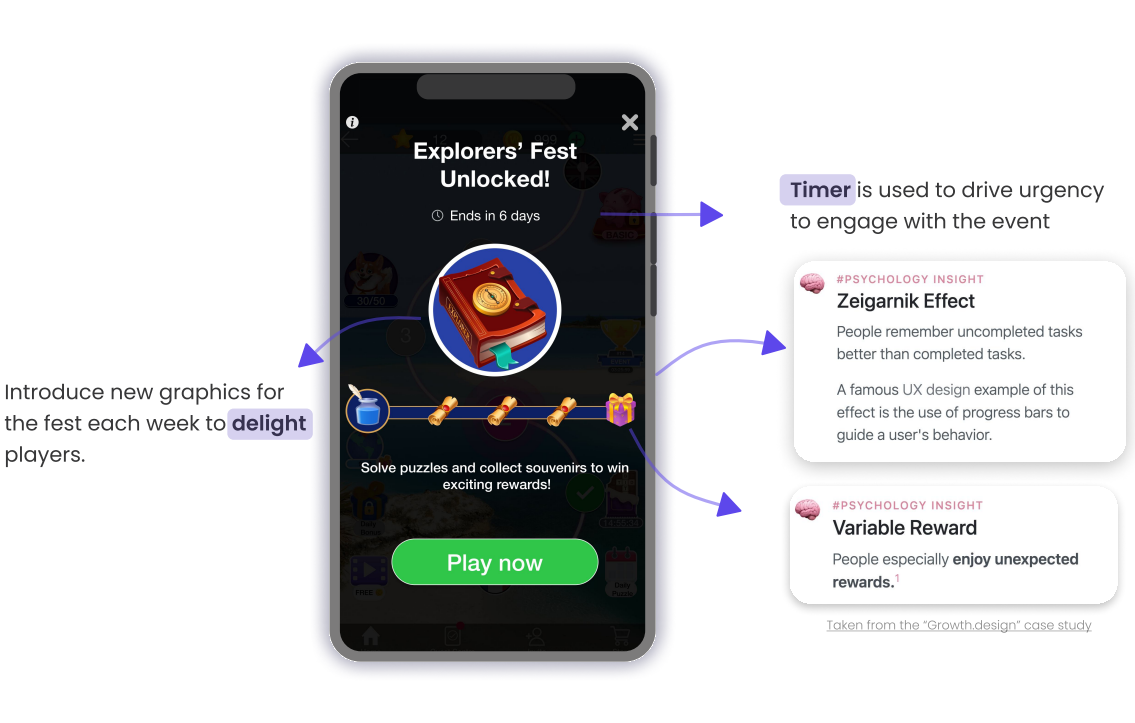

Explorers' Fest
Unlocked!
Ends in 6 days
Solve puzzles and collect souvenirs to win exciting rewards!
Play now

Introduce new graphics for the fest each week to delight players.

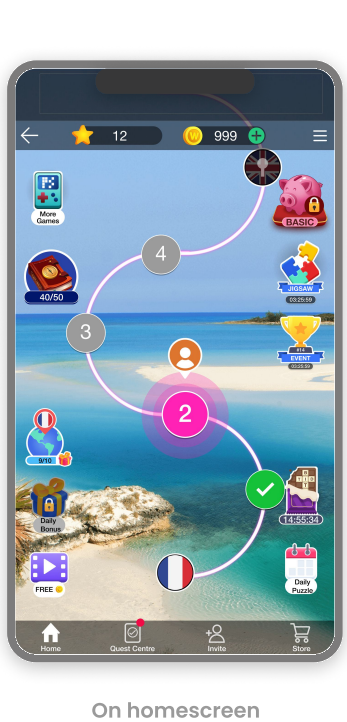
Timer is used to drive urgency to engage with the event

#PSYCHOLOGY INSIGHT
Zeigarnik Effect
People remember uncompleted tasks better than completed tasks.
A famous UX design example of this effect is the use of progress bars to guide a user's behavior.

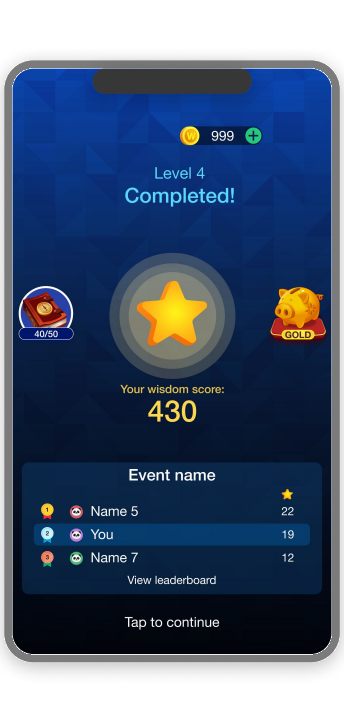
#PSYCHOLOGY INSIGHT
Variable Reward
People especially **enjoy unexpected rewards.**

Taken from the "Growth.design" case study

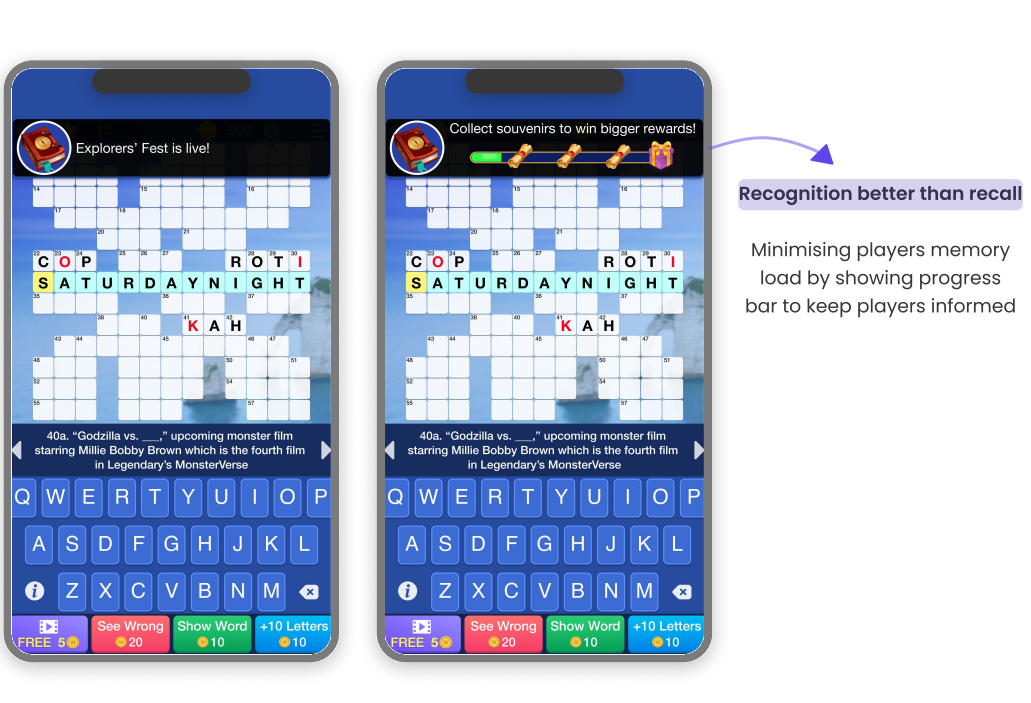
Different touch points and nudge



On homescreen



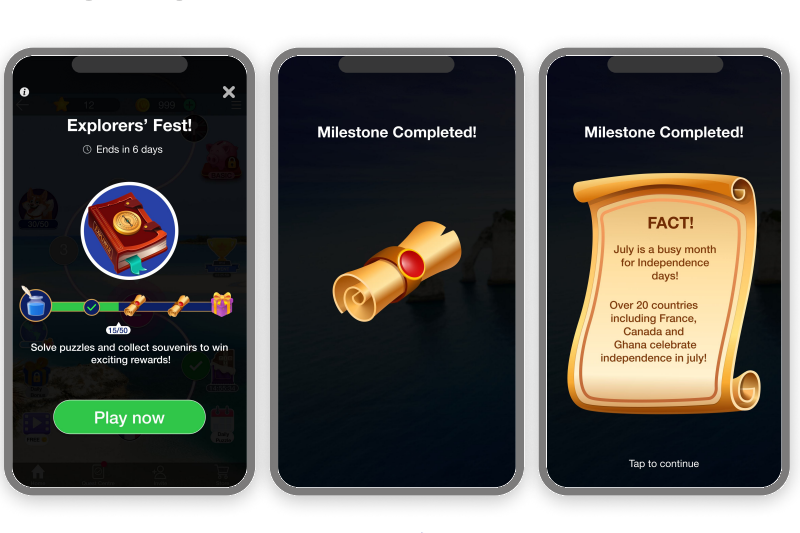
On puzzle completion screen



In game toaster to nudge players and keep them informed on the progress

Recognition better than recall
Minimising players memory load by showing progress bar to keep players informed

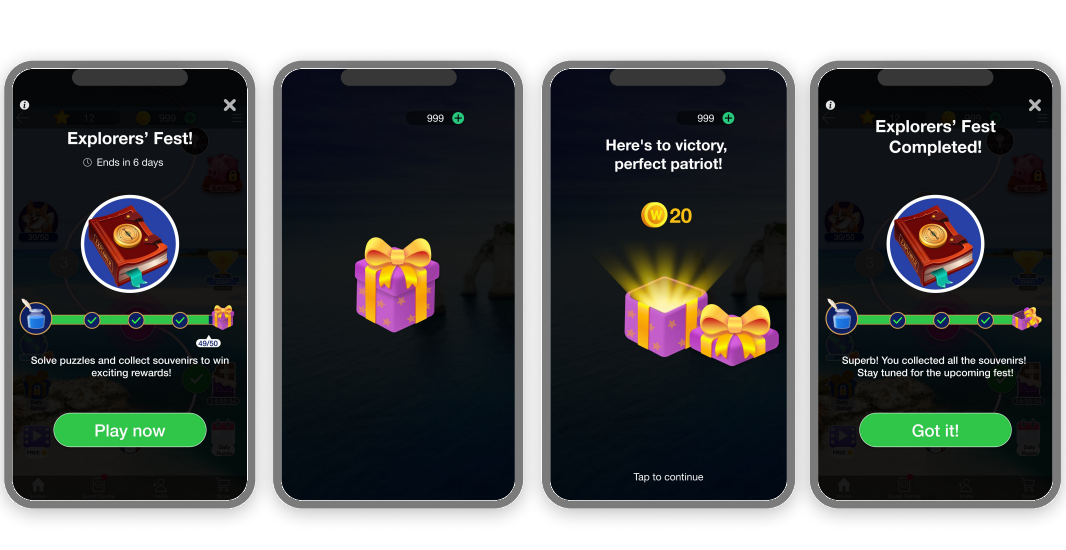
Flows


Explorers' Fest!
Ends in 6 days
Solve puzzles and collect souvenirs to win exciting rewards!
Play now
Milestone Completed!
Milestone Completed!
FACT!
July is a busy month for Independence days!
Over 20 countries including France, Canada and Ghana celebrate independence in july!
Tap to continue

Milestone achieved flow

#PSYCHOLOGY INSIGHT
Delighters
Each week features a new themed fest with unique **collectible items**. We also introduced milestone rewards with memorable **facts**, enhancing the playful experience for players.

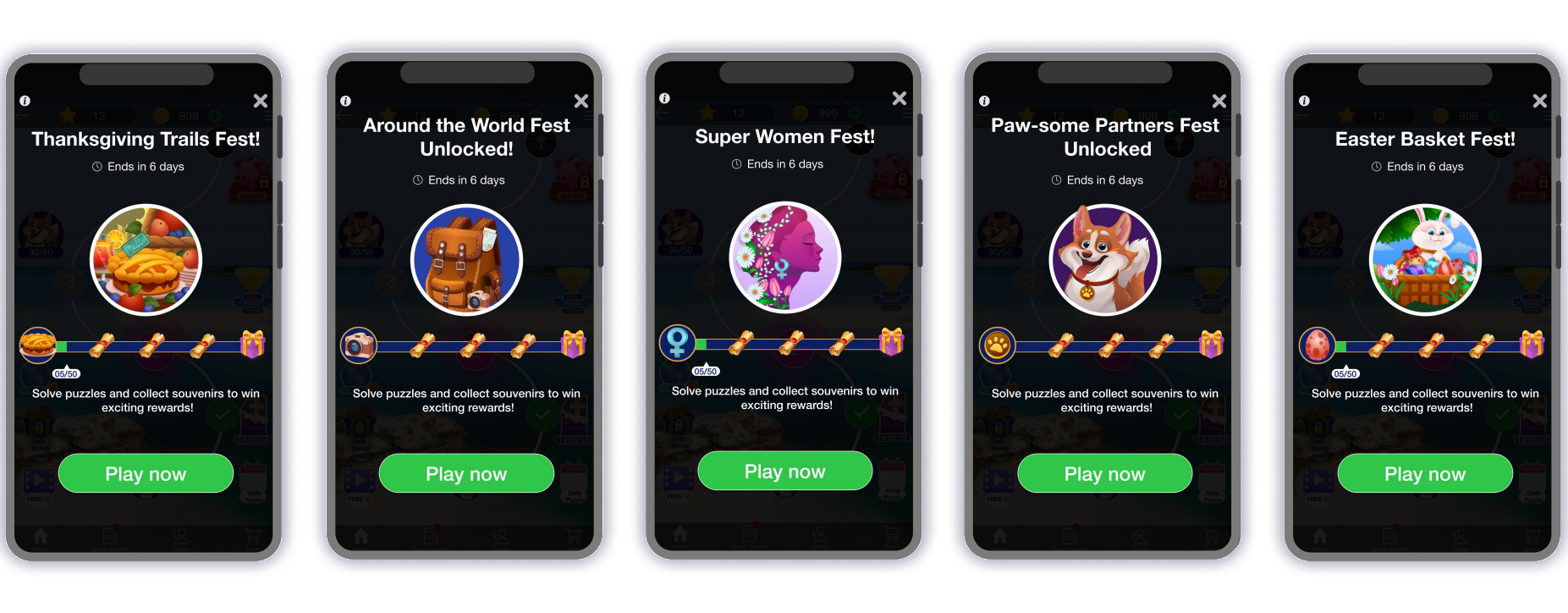
Taken from the "Growth.design" case study


Explorers' Fest!
Ends in 6 days
Play now
Here's to victory, perfect patriot!
20
Tap to continue
Explorers' Fest Completed!
Superb! You collected all the souvenirs! Stay tuned for the upcoming fest!
Got it!

Fest completion flow

Scalability

Similar to jigsaw event above, I aimed to create a framework that could be reused for different use cases without altering the layout. This approach allowed us to maintain the cadence with minimal time and effort.


Thanksgiving Trails Fest!
Around the World Fest Unlocked!
Super Women Fest!
Paw-some Partners Fest Unlocked
Easter Basket Fest!
Ends in 6 days
Solve puzzles and collect souvenirs to win exciting rewards!
Play now

**Special mention to the UI artist (Aaina Gill) in my team for these amazing artwork 👈. It was fun to collaborate with her!

KEY METRICS FOR WEEKLY FEST

Impact

Engagement
▲ 4.6%
Overall clears have increased by 4.6%. For D60-D120 users it has increased by 10.8% as similar upside is on non-event days as well.

Session time
▲1.9%
upside in session time during the event

LTV
▲ 3%
LTV upsides through increased ad impressions. retention and engagement

D1-D30 RR
▲ 30 bps
Regularity 5 users (the users that logged in for 5 days in last 5 days) increased by 43 bps

Want to know how it looks 🤩.....

Click here to watch Jigsaw Event

Click here to watch Weekly Fest

Thank you for reading!