Critical Analysis & Design

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Introduction

This report aims to look at the principles and practices of UX Design by analysing two specific pieces of digital products or applications. UX design is a critical aspect of creating digital products as it can make or break them depending on how comfortable, engaged and happy the users feel whilst using the product. I will be evaluating both of my selected products based on their UX design and will provide recommendations for improvement based on established UX design principles. This report is essential to help myself acknowledge UX design as a whole and understand the depth of the UX design process and its impact on the most important thing, the end user's satisfaction.

Product Selection

There are two products that have been selected for this report. The first being the game Destiny 2 and the latter being DIM (Destiny Item Manager). Destiny 2 is a game developed by Bungie which was released in September of 2017[1]. It is most commonly described as an open-world multiplayer looter shooter. It is a sequel to the online FPS (First Person Shooter) called Destiny which was made by the same developers in September 2014[2]. The game world features a “mythic science fiction” world with a multiplayer “shared-world” environment and incorporates elements of role-playing games[3]. This can easily be summed up to being an MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game) but whilst it has elements of an MMORPG, it is nowhere near the scale of a real MMO or even remotely close to being an RPG game.

It is currently available on multiple platforms and originally was released as a pay-to-play video game, but later, albeit under massive user protests, became free-to-play under the New Light title. Destiny 2 offers players a variety of game modes, whether they enjoy PvE (Player versus Environment), PvP (Player versus Player) or PvEvP (Player versus Environment versus Player)[4]. As the game has been out since 2017, there have been multiple tweaks and changes to enhance the games overall design and useability. As I have been a part of the franchise throughout the pre-alpha, there is a lot more in terms of room for improvement from a users perspective.

Destiny Item Manager, more commonly referred to as DIM is a free and open-source web and mobile application created by community developers using the same services as Bungie.net and the Destiny Companion App. The beta version of DIM (which is my personal preference and a subject of this report) is continuously updated with the latest features, fixes and bugs whenever

the code is changed[5]. This means that users can access the most recent developments in the application, but they may also encounter the latest issues and bugs as a result of ongoing updates. DIM is a companion app that the majority of players tend to use over the Destiny Companion App released by Bungie.

Initial Review

Destiny 2

Upon initial viewing of the game, the first time someone launches the game, there isn't really much to complain about. The game essentially babies you a little too much on what things are and what to do. It has a Journey tab to promote many challenges to get you acquainted with the game. The UI is very clean and minimalistic overall and the fonts are clear and easy to read even with different backgrounds. Navigating to different parts of the UI as well as destinations within the game is extremely easy to do. I have a fully levelled account and therefore travelling to new destinations is free for me, newer accounts will have to earn XP (Experience Points) in order to unlock new destinations and activities to travel to and get involved in. The UI is good but the UX is a whole different story and will be looked at in detail further in this report.

Destiny Item Manager

This website is extremely well optimised, whether someone visits it on their mobile device or a computer. There are options for essentially everything and as a companion app it does its job quite well. There is a customisation feature where you can set your own theme for the page and accessibility options like high contrast to help with reading things clearer. The community devs have really outdone themselves here as in terms of UI design, this introduces everything to the player in a non-cluttered fashion and all the options a player would find in game and more are available to them at their fingertips.

UX Design Principles

User Centricity

By focusing on the user's needs and preferences, designers can create products that are efficient, progressive and enjoyable thus leading to higher user engagement and overall satisfaction. Having a user centric design helps businesses stand out in an ever evolving, competitive digital world and fosters customer loyalty[6].

Consistency

Consistent design elements and patterns make a product feel more cohesive and usable, reducing the users frustration. Elements being consistent in a design also help to mitigate any confusion as the users learn to remember where things are and how to use a product, increasing the end user efficiency[7].

Accessibility

Designing for accessibility features makes sure that a product is usable by a diverse group of people, including but not limited to those with disabilities, older adults, and users with different devices. This not only allows all users to access the content made but the inclusivity means that the audience is broadened and can lead to search engine optimisation benefits[8].

Useability

A usable product allows users to achieve their goals within the application much more effectively, much more quickly and makes the users feel and satisfied[9]. Good usability also ensures that a user is satisfied, makes less human errors and is happier leading to an overall amazing end user experience[10].

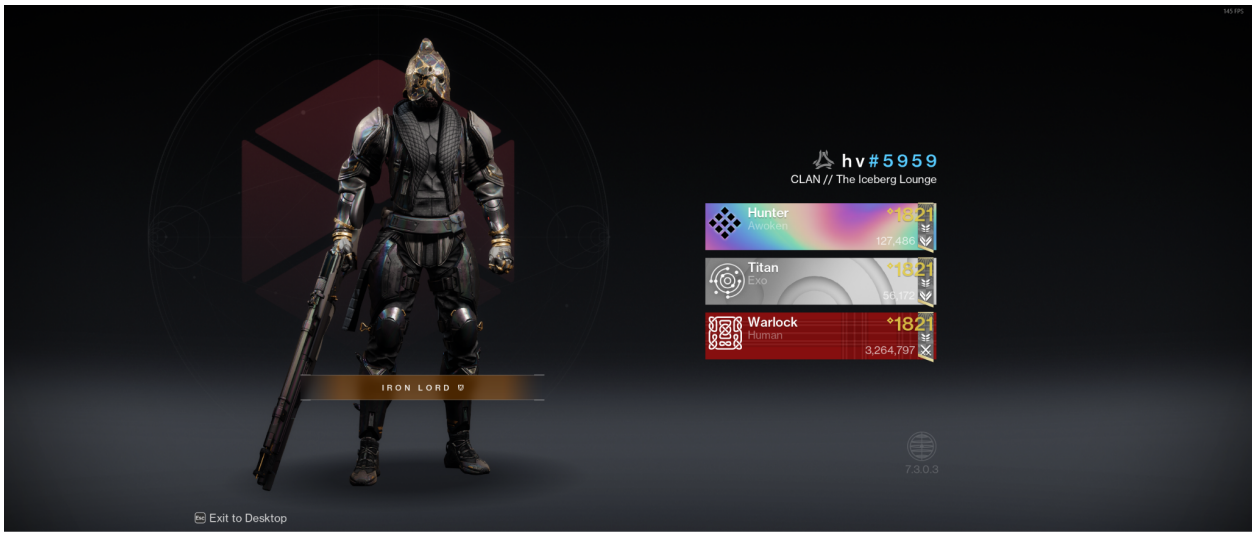
User Control

Providing users with control lets the users feel more comfortable knowing that they can cancel or undo their actions[11]. This contributes positively to the end user experience and the freedom allows users to be a little more confident and creative when it comes to engagement in a program, new or old. The freedom also leads directly to satisfying the user.

UX Analysis & Recommendations for Improvement

Destiny 2

When loading up the game, the initial process of getting from the title screen to the character selection screen is a breeze considering the user's hardware. Whilst the game is optimised to run better performance wise on all devices, it is always more advisable to install the game on an SSD (Solid State Drive) instead of a HDD (Hard Disk Drive) - This is essentially the end users choice but has a great impact on the load times within the game. Everything will happen much faster on an SSD than it will on a HDD. The character selection screen has a minimalistic, easy on the eyes layout. Everything is nicely displayed and centred even on an ultrawide monitor. You can see the three slots for your character, the username, the clan and a preview of the character as it currently looks right now on the left of all the information.



[12]

After you select a character, you are greeted by the navigation menu, where you can select what to do, whether it is “opening the directory” or “viewing your journey” which as a longtime player is essentially just clutter in the UI (User Interface). There is no reason for this button to exist as it can easily be navigated to via hardware buttons. It also provides absolutely

nothing useful in terms of information or things that you need to do. You have the ability to track triumphs but those are visible within the game, no one wants to bring up an entire screen covering up their gameplay when they can have a better less intrusive way to track items. This breaks the immersion and is essentially something that was added but never asked for. The ability to access your vault from Orbit was added recently and is honestly one of the nicest quality of life upgrades as you had to visit one of four destinations from the directory that had a vault you could access. There is currently no option to see what your other characters have equipped or to transfer those items to your selected character. Adding this feature would greatly enhance the usability of this game and give users more control over their items and characters.



[13]

When you open the inventory within Destiny 2, you then have multiple other tabs to navigate to in order to do specific things. The tabs are as follows: Clan (to check in on your current clan level), Collections (to see what you own and what you are missing), Journey (pictured below, it's to look at triumphs and track things should you feel the need to do so), Character (also pictured underneath, your current loadout, the character with the gear equipped as well as 9 slots in each section to allow you to switch out gear on the fly), Inventory (what

consumables, engrams, modifications and currency you are currently holding), and finally, Settings (lets you change controls, audio, video, sound, gameplay and accessibility settings).



[14]



[15]

The overall UI in the character tab is quite clean. It shows you exactly what you need, whether it be the current character buffs or what champion mods you may have. It also shows your stats and the build you are running. By pressing the left arrow you can view your loadouts, the only actual gripe with this is the fact that you are limited to 10 slots for your loadouts. In a

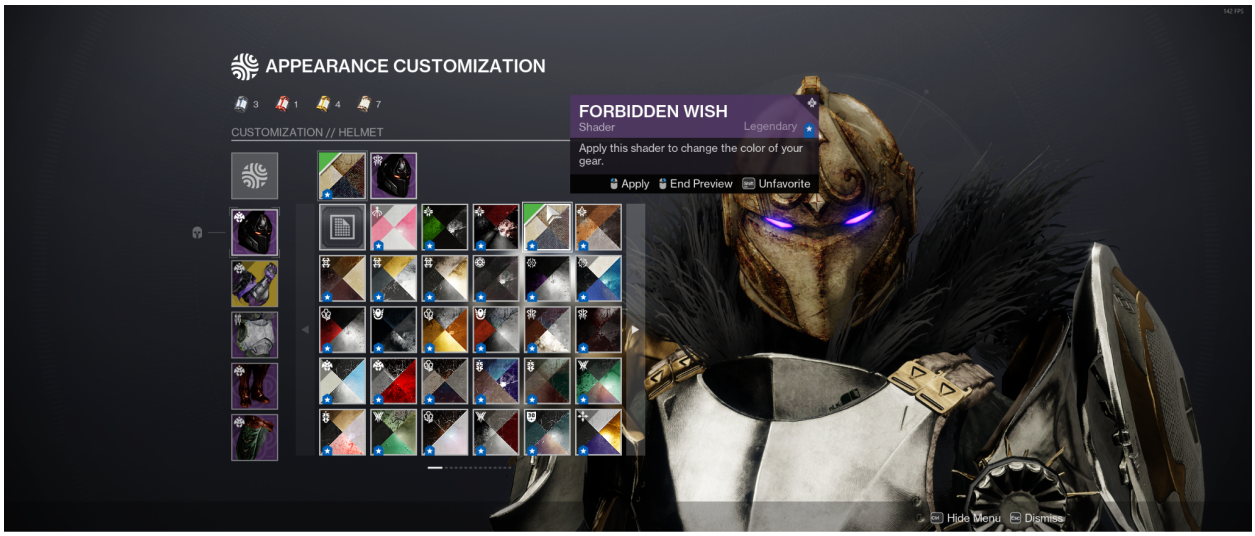
game like Destiny 2 where it promotes build crafting so much, 10 slots isn't a lot. Saving a loadout in game means saving the weapons too, if some weapon types change when switching loadouts you might end up without having any ammo in some weapons. The loadouts do let you change the preset names, colours and icons though so that is a plus. Maybe having 10 loadouts per page might be a good idea letting users have at least 30 loadouts in a game like this would help achieve user satisfaction. The ideal thing would also be to edit a loadout by removing certain aspects, like weapons or saving a loadout without weapons.



[16]

If a user was to press the "S" key or "Down" on the D-pad then they'd see the screen where you can change your equipped emblem, sparrow and ship. This screen also lets you access the transmog menu which is very important. This menu lets you truly customise the appearance of your character by equipping shaders and ornaments on various armour pieces. Whilst there is a way to favourite the shaders, there is no way to search through anything in Destiny 2 at all. A simple text search feature would greatly enhance a players experience in this game, allowing them to find their gear, shaders and ornaments with ease. This hinders the user experience quite a bit. If this wasn't bad enough, when a user is trying to do a full body preview in the transmog

screen, it instead exits the transmog screen entirely, returning the user to the character screen and thus making the user lose their progress on whatever they were trying to preview and forcing them to go through the entire process of selecting shaders and ornaments again. It would be as simple as making the escape key go back to the previous screen instead of dismissing the transmog screen as a whole. This change will help ease users' frustrations and appeal to everyone who spends time on their fashion.



[17]



[18]

A main issue with the game which hasn't been addressed or even changed since the launch is the fact that the Red Green colourblind option is not a good colour scheme. The radar often gets blended into the background, the reticle on guns that ADS (Aim Down Sights) blends in with the surroundings. The ammo bricks get muddled up. For full clarity, the reticle colour can be changed in game; however, that only changed the hip fire reticle and not the ADS reticle, which if you're using to aim a gun, will disappear among the environment. For all players who are colourblind, this is so very detrimental and makes playing the game harder than it needs to be. As I myself am not colourblind, I feel like I am not in a place to say what would be better but I have got feedback from my peers who are colourblind and they would like a better colour scheme with more variants that don't make everything seem brown and slightly less brown. This change would be absolutely incredible as it allows people with a disability to enjoy the game for what it is without letting their disability get in the way. It promotes accessibility and makes the content available to a more diverse audience.



[19]

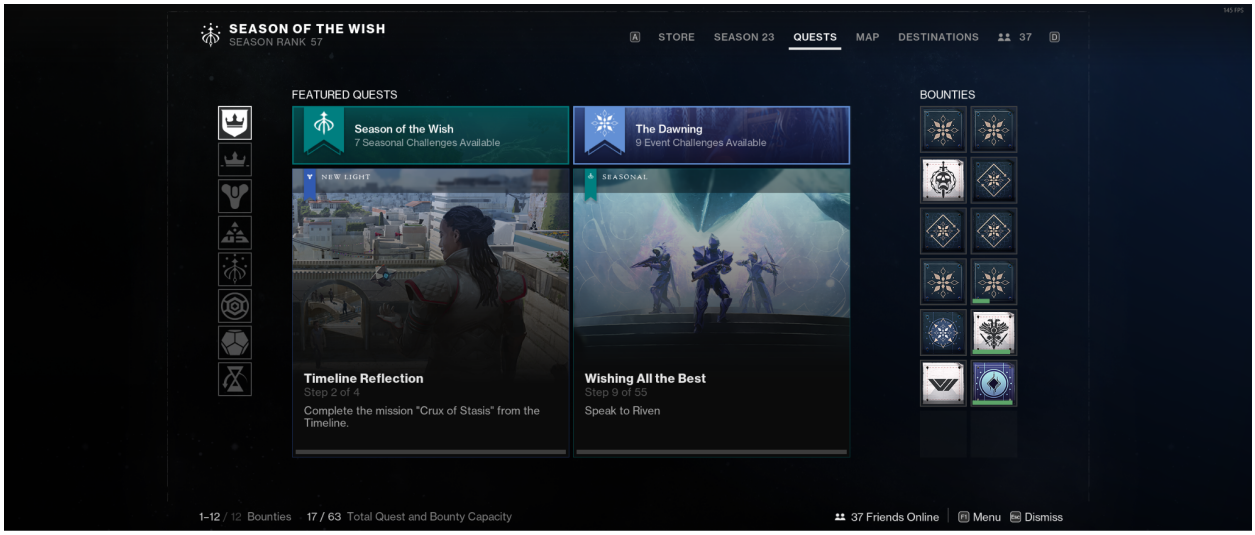


[20]

The quests tab is cluttered. What players actually need, that being the current seasonal challenges and events are in fact the smallest part of the featured quests. What is most apparent is a new light quest for of course new players, this quest was given to every user and cannot be abandoned, thus meaning that if a user hasn't done it, it will continue to appear in the featured quests tab forever until it is completed. It gives an item that many seasoned players already have and do not use because it is not a good weapon. It is silly to keep promoting things like this as it just clutters the UI and the aspect of not being able to abandon it kills the experience for veteran players.

An easier way to combat this would be to show users that this quest exists but can be picked up via a quest kiosk. The ability to abandon all quests should be an option that should be readily available to ALL users, this promotes the idea of user control, if a quest gets abandoned accidentally then they should still be able to pick it back up again via the quest kiosk. There shouldn't be a fear of missing out for new players and veterans of the game can get their sweet screen space back for more important quests. Everything from the current season should be

featured and not older content as it is irrelevant, there are tabs for older content and those should be used appropriately and accordingly.

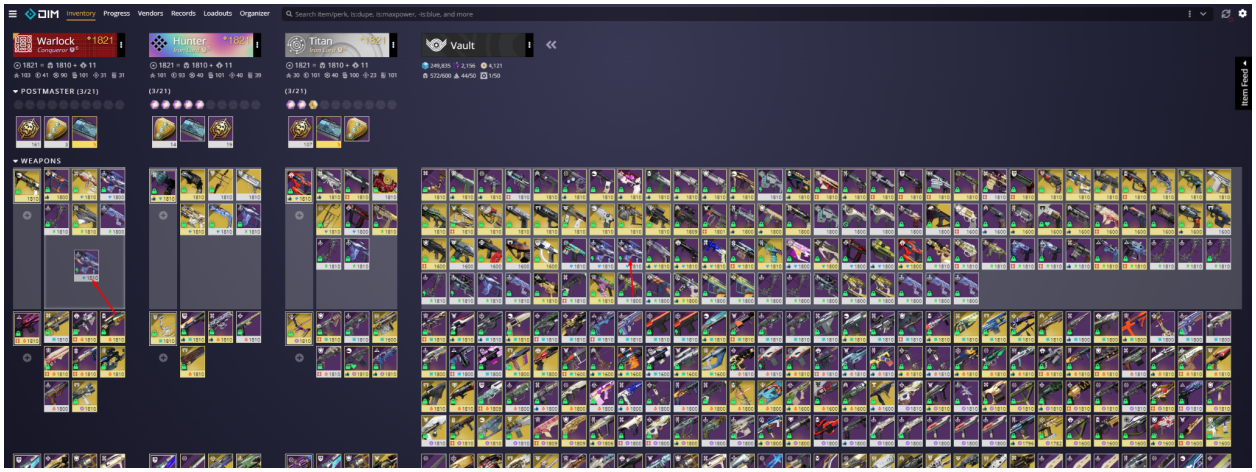


[21]

Destiny Item Manager

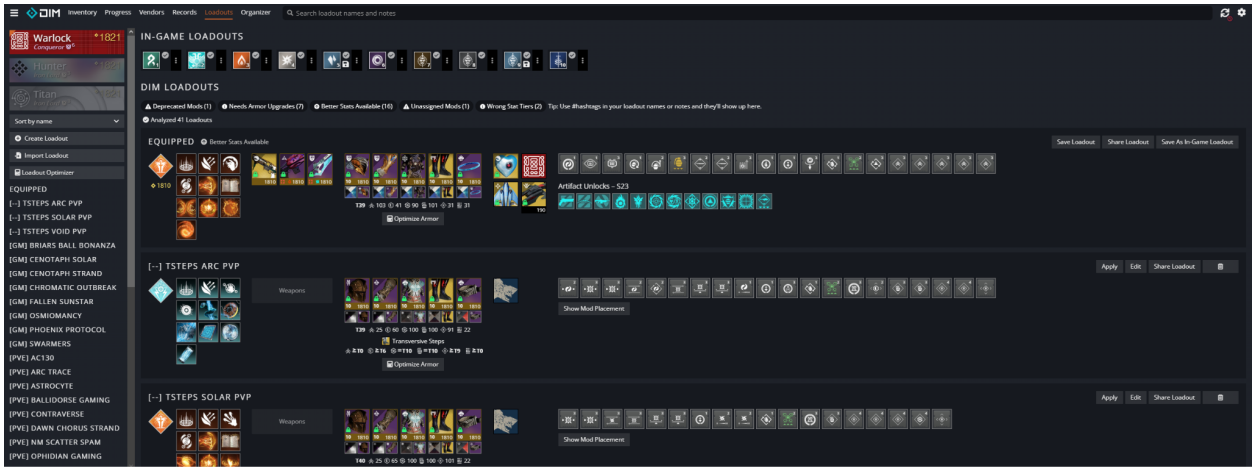
DIM is overall just a very good app. This part is unfortunately going to be a lot shorter than its counterpart above as DIM tends to do everything Destiny 2 can but better and on top of that it can do more things such as searching for gear, shaders and ornaments within the transmog section. It shows where everything is, whether it is on your characters or in your vault. Items can be moved easily just by dragging and dropping into the inventory of a specific character or the vault. The screenshot may look cluttered but that is my fault, as out of 600 spaces, 572 are currently in use. The less items a user has, the less cluttered it looks.

The user can also easily look at how many materials they are holding by hovering over the material icon under the big vault tab on mobile devices or scrolling to the bottom on the web app.



[22]

You can also make loadouts using DIM, there is currently no limit to how many loadouts you can make. DIM also shows you your in-game loadouts and you can edit and improve them if you wish to do so. This is much better than manually clicking and looking for mods in game when you can search for what you want in DIM and make it work through that. Overall the UI and UX design is phenomenal for DIM, the typography is great, the ability to customise it with themes is great, and the options to have the higher contrast text up is more inclusive than Destiny 2 as it stands.



[23]

Conclusion

By following the aforementioned principles, UX designers can create products and services that are functional, usable and also enjoyable for all users. This leads to increased user satisfaction, promotes brand loyalty and retains users for the long term, which, in turn contributes towards the success of a product or service. Unfortunately, Destiny 2 still has a long way to go with overall improvements for user satisfaction.

DIM on the other hand has been flawless, in every aspect of UI and UX design. The team has taken everything into careful consideration and made it so that the user has all the control and can essentially make no mistakes, there is always a chance to undo and even revert to default settings within the app.

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