DISCORD

The UX Experience
Assignment 1

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Introduction

Discord is an app designed by *Discord Incorporated* predominantly to allow users to engage in forms of communication online. Released on the 13th of May 2015, Discord aimed to be the more efficient and more user-friendly alternative to pre-existing software that provided a similar service.

Discord was mainly marketed towards players of multi-player games who wished to communicate with friends that were also playing. However, the software has seen an explosive increase in its user base across different demographics, after its focus on efficiency and safety meant that it became the preferable tool for group text and video chats.
Subculture enthusiasts and casual users may now make up a significant portion of typical users.

Discord is available as in a free, add-supported version and a paid full featured version for $4.99 USD per month (Or $49.99 USD per year). Discord provides online communities, such as gaming or pop culture communities, a platform to indulge in voice or text-based chats
Discord doesn't simply aim to provide users with a bug-free communication tool; the following should be able to be accomplished on the app:

+ Free low latency communication
+ Integration between desktop/browser/mobile versions
+ Integration with other applications to either suggest friends or give friends access to user's accounts on other platforms i.e. connect your streaming service to Discord
+ Make group calls or direct calls with other users
+ Make group messages or direct messages with other users
+ Share screens with other users
+ Share links and files to others through servers
+ Gives users the ability to see if other users are online/playing games
+ Allows the users to create/join servers to allow interactions between users
+ Customisable servers giving the user the freedom and control to achieve what they want on them.

This report aims to discover how these tasks are impacted by the design of the app and whether or not user experience is as Discord has intended. In order to do this,
groups of typical users and tasks will be discussed, the app's heuristics will be
assessed via analysis against Nielsen's ten principles, a survey on current user
experience will be conducted and the results of which will be discussed.

User groups

Before analysing Discord's capabilities and hindrances, we need to identify the different types of people who use Discord; their characteristics and reasons for using the application. In general, Discord users can be categorised into 3 different groups: the gamers, the pop culture* enthusiasts, and the general online chatters.

Gamers

Demographic
- PC gamers who have friends who play online. They can appreciate the features that were incorporated into the software for gamers
- Non nation exclusive but larger cohort of users in English speaking countries
- Teenagers to young adults, 15 – 30.

Attributes
- Wants to communicate during or outside of gameplay

Domain Knowledge
- Know how to use chat applications
- Knowledge of gaming and chat terms

Skills
- Know how to use a mobile phone (text, emojis etc.)
- Know how to use chat application
- Know how to maximise potential of app and use of features

Pop Culture Enthusiasts

Demographic
- People into certain pop culture trends
- All Genders
- Non nation exclusive
- Young adults 18 – 30

Attributes
- Wants to talk to and share information and opinions about relevant communities

Domain Knowledge
- Knowledge of chat terms
- Knowledge of terms related to their interest

Skills
- Know how to use a mobile phone (text, emojis etc.)
- Know how to use chat application

User groups

General Online Chatters

Demographic
- People who want an alternative to other chat applications
- All Genders
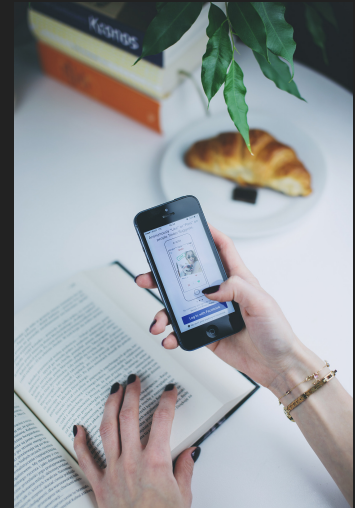- Non nation exclusive

Attributes
- People who want to talk/organise events
- People who prefer of discord over other chat applications
- People who want more personalisation in their communication

Domain Knowledge
- Knowledge of chat terms

Skills
- Know how to use a mobile phone (text, emojis etc.) - could relate to younger users
- Know how to use chat application

The Survey

In order to gather information on the users of Discord and their opinions on the usability of the application; a survey was created and distributed to gather data.

The means to create and distribute the survey
- The survey was created on google forums
- The survey was distributed to various Discord servers and Facebook chats/groups

The survey was distributed to all Australian users, thus there is a bias in the nationality of users.

The Survey and the Users

The Type of user
From the survey conducted, it is clear that the majority (48%) of Discord users have the application for the purpose of video games. While 30% of Discord users appear to use Discord to converse and connect with people who share their passion in a particular topic (Pop culture). For the remaining 22% of users, they appear to use Discord as their main source of online communication.

Chatting
22%

Games
48%

Pop Culture
30%

Other
4%

Female
11%
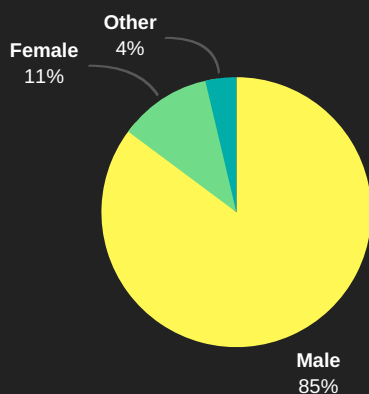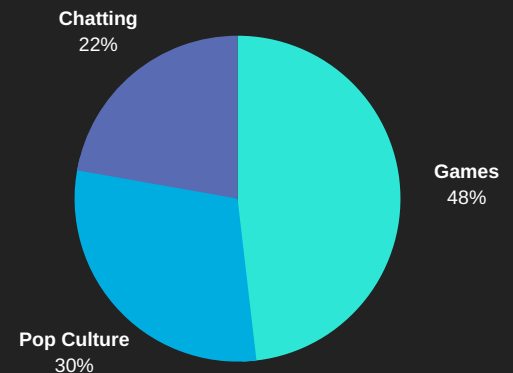
Male
85%

The gender of users
The survey results do prove that Discord is not a gender specific application. However, the results do support the notion that Discord is a male dominated application; with 85% of users being male in comparison to the 11% of females. (4% of users identify with different genders)

Do users know how to use a mobile phone?
The survey supports the notion that all Discord users (of all groups) know how to use a mobile phone.

(The graph below displays users self-assessment of their skills with a mobile phone, 1 being the least confident and 5 being the highest
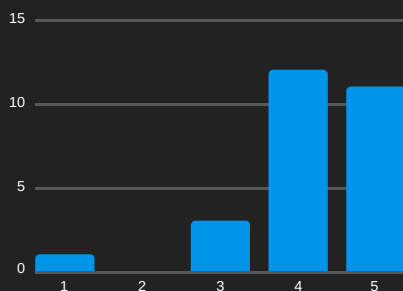
## Have users used chat applications before?
The survey shows that all Discord users (of all groups) have used other chat applications before. Indicated by the survey results showing 96% of users saying they have.
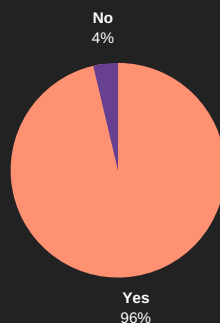
Do users know gaming terminology? (For the "gamer" users)
The survey supports the idea that most gaming discord users know gaming terminology

(The graph below displays users self-assessment of their knowledge of gaming terms, 1 being the least confident and 5 being the highest)

No
4%

Yes
96%
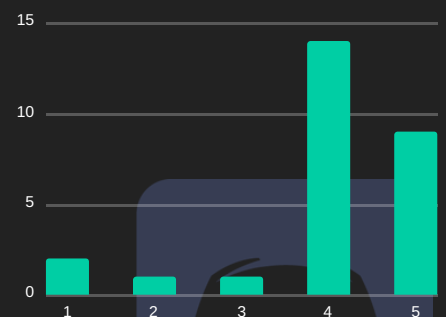
What Discord does - The user experience

Discord's Purpose

Discord's primary goal is to provide a platform for users to engage in different forms communication online (primarily for multiplayer gaming). This includes voice chats, text chats and video chats; in direct and group messages.
According to the survey results, most users believe that Discord is a great service for communicating with others online.

Tasks Discord accomplishes

- Free Low Latency Communication for the users
- Integration between desktop/browser/mobile versions
- Integration with other applications to either suggest friends, give friends access to your accounts on other platforms, connect your streaming service to discord or
- Users making group calls or direct calls with other users
- Users to make group messages or direct messages with other users
- Allows users to share their screens with other users
- Allowing users to share links and files to others through servers
- Gives users the ability to see if other users are online/playing games
- Allows the users to create/join servers to allow interactions between users
- Customisable servers giving the user the freedom and control to achieve what they want on them.

The graph below displays users' opinions on how well Discord accomplishes it's primary purpose of: providing a platform for users to engage online. (1 being not good at all, and 5 being very good)

How good is Discord at creating a way for you to communicate with others?
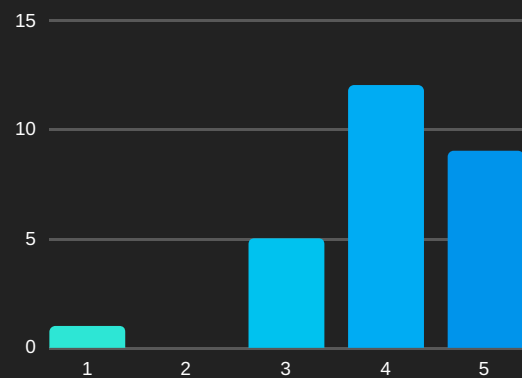
The paid version of Discord

The survey results found that 22% of Discord users have paid for Discord Nitro. However, only 33% of users agree/strongly agree that what Discord Nitro offers is worth the price.

Strongly Agree 17%
Strongly Disagree 17%
Agree 17%
Disagree 17%
Neutral 33%

In fact, 50% of Discord Nitro users stated that their reasoning for purchasing Discord Nitro was to support the developers. Thus, it appears Discord Nitro does not enhance the user experience, rather it's for the developers of Discord.


Features 33%
For Developers 50%
Status 17%
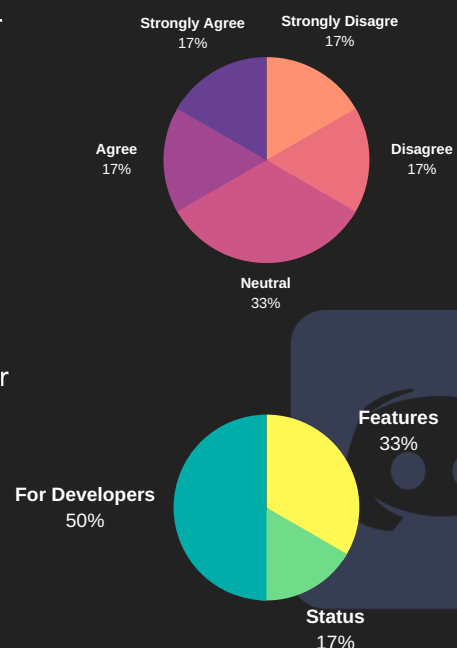
Heuristics Analysis: Nielsen's principles

1. Visibility of system status (⅖ stars)

How Discord helps to accomplish "visibility of system status"
- In-Game Overlay to allow clear communication whilst using other applications allowing you to see who's talking and manage the call
- Discord's Rich Presence allows users to see the details of what they're doing (what they're listening to in spotify, the number of people they're playing a game with, how long they've been playing a game)
- Stream integration with Twitch and Youtube to allow streamers to communicate with their audience easier
- Allows people to add other people as friends giving users the ability to see if other users are online/playing games and mutual servers both users are in

Discord does have visual representation of progression for certain functions, such as the "sharing photos" feature. However, the progression bar moves in random, progressive jumps. This is not an accurate indication of how much time is left for the upload.
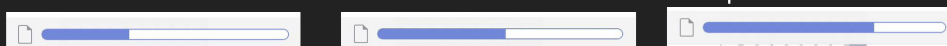
Discord's photo sharing mechanic seems to be the only function that requires a progression bar of sorts, most other functions are instantaneous. Therefore, Discord does have a visual indicator that these functions have been processed.

2. Match between system and the real world (4/5 stars)

How Discord helps to accomplish "match between system and the real world"
- Use of gaming/meme culture lingo to appeal to the target audience
How Discord hinders "match between system and the real world"
- Lots of online colloquialisms used in discord terminology that can make it difficult for people unfamiliar with such terms

Most intractable icons on the Discord app have similar images to other mainstream chat/app services. Such as having the search icon be a magnifying glass, or the users/friends icon being two portrait silhouettes.

Rather than using terminology exclusive to certain users, Discord chooses to explicitly state the function of its features to prevent confusion. For example, noise suppression gives a clear indication of the use of the function. All functions have their labels in plain English (while on the English setting) and sometimes in sentences so that the user knows what each feature does.

However. Discord has a unique identification code for each user which must be used to add people as friends. This code can become confusing for users coming from other chat application with much simpler "Adding friends" features.
This is reflected in the survey question regarding the ease of "finding and adding friends", (which is positively skewed) and a user's comment explicitly stating

:"The use of #xxxx tags is inconvenient"
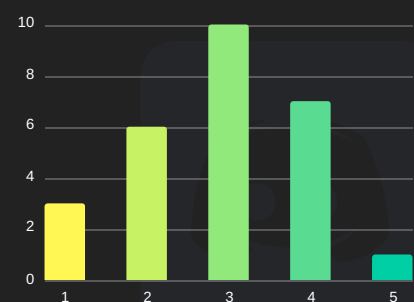
The graph above displays the user opinion on the ease of "finding and adding friends". 1 being not easy at all, and 5 being really easy

Heuristics Analysis: Nielsen's principles

3. User control and freedom (3.5/5 stars)

How Discord helps to accomplish "user control and freedom"
- Audit Logs to track server changes making it easier to manage what happens in a server and who does things
- Server permissions and roles to allow users to manages the server

How Discord hinders "user control and freedom"
- Long process to report content on discord so consequences for harassment and misdemeanor takes a while

On most of Discord's "pages" or "windows", there is an explicit "exit" or "cancel" radio button which allow users to leave the page they just entered and return page before. However, this only works for extensions such as the search window. If a user moves from one chat group to another and then back, they would have to manually click between the two rather than having an "undo button".

Close	Add Friend

On the other "pages" or "windows" of Discord, when things such as the Server radio button, a side tab of the servers will appear. To return to the server the user was on, rather than going to a new one; the user needs to simply click on the part of the screen not taken up by the newly opened tab. This might not be apparent to fresh users but can be identified easily with little exploration. Nevertheless, it is not stated how to do this.

This is reflected in the survey, where the (few) complaints about the Discord's direct messaging service commented that: "Its a whole separation of the screen that's kinda a pain"
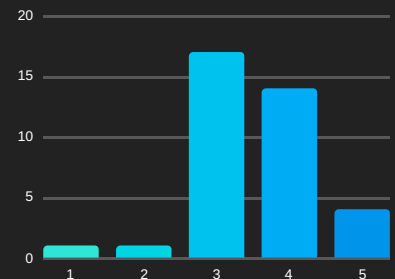
The graph above displays the user opinion on the ease of "direct messaging". 1 being not easy at all, and 5 being really easy. the comment mentioned relates to the lower end of the graph

4. Consistency and standards (2.5/5)

How Discord helps to accomplish "consistency and standards"
- Keeps the same design, in terms of colours, font, and general aesthetic

The colour scheme of discord stays consistent throughout the application. Through its own design choice, any "window" opened to the left or right of the screen is black, and all "windows/pages" in the middle are white (text colour for both sections stays consistent).

However, for the error recovery radio buttons, the name or type of error recovery function differs. For example, some radio buttons are labeled "exit" while others are labeled "cancel". It is true that those terms are not synonymous, however the function of both are the same when clicked. In addition, to go back from a page change such as server to server, the way to "undo" is to click off the tab, rather than a "cancel" or "exit" radio button.

🔍		Cancel
SEARCH OPTIONS		

Close	Add Friend
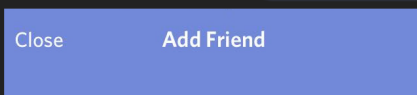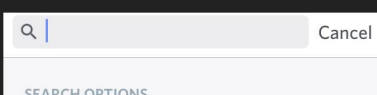
Heuristics Analysis: Nielsen's principles

5. Error Prevention (4/5 stars)

How Discord helps to accomplish "error prevention"
- Link filters that warn users when clicking on a link to suspicious websites
- Auto-moderation that requires users to have their account verified for a certain amount and filters server content for explicit content and two-factor authentication that prevents potentially dangerous actions for users without two-factor authentication

#3146

Discord is quite effective at preventing potential errors made by users, with real time verification being implemented for most search functions, a handy tool for searches through servers with a lot of messages and members. Usernames also have unique number identifiers that to help differentiate between people operating under the same name; this negates the necessity for username verification and therefore, username rejection, at setup.

The only potential pitfall for users would be the 'Add friends' function, which requires users to obtain precise usernames and numbers of individuals before being able to add them. The search provides no suggestions for potential friends, even if they may already be on the same server and only verifies after input, so users who make mistakes during input or who don't have the greatest memory may find the process a little finicky.

This is reflected in the survey results for "ease of finding and adding friends, where the lower survey responses comment that the "xxxx tags are inconvenient."
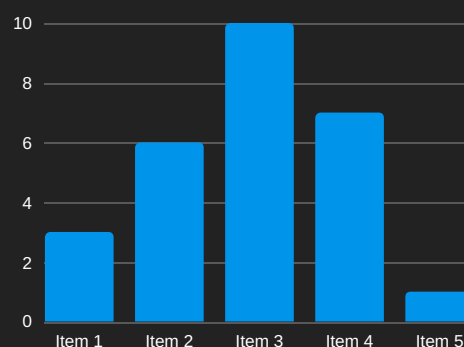
6. Recognition rather than recall (3.5/5 stars)

How Discord helps to accomplish "Recognition rather than recall"
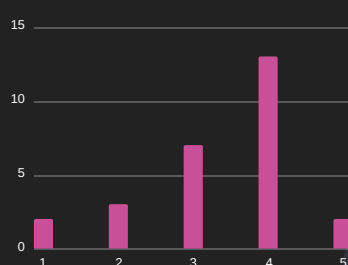- Smart Push Notifications to notify users about things that they choose to be notified
How Discord hinders "Recognition rather than recall"
- Has a lot of information for a new user to take in at once
- Lots of effort/knowledge required to maintaining a safe server

The interface for Discord is relatively simple and effective. Functions of icons are largely identifiable even without prior knowledge of the app i.e. the settings icon is a cog; availability of user is conveyed through a small circle on the edge of the user's profile icon that changes colour depending on the status.

Ease of using direct voice chat

Ease of using group voice chat

This is reflected in the survey questions regarding voice chats, where on a scale of 1-5 most users rate the ease of using voice chats as high (4-5).
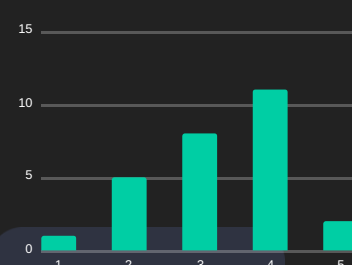
Something that may confuse new users, but which becomes self-evident and somewhat intuitive over time, is the lack of a homepage. There is no central hub that acts as a base for users where relevant information is conveyed. Instead, it is the menu that allows users to switch from function to function and server to server. This differs from other messaging and chat apps that list conversations on one main page with offshoot pages for other operations. This difference can subtly change how a user operates within the app as it requires the user to remember which function is contained where. This introduces a slight learning curve to the app and can therefore confuse new users.

7. Flexibility and efficiency of use (5/5 stars)

How Discord helps to accomplish "flexibility and ease of use"
- Embedded links and allowing to upload any type of files in text channels and direct messages allow users to share those things much more efficiently
- Individual Volume Control to adjust the volume so that in a call you can turn up or lower the volume on different people
**How Discord hinders "flexibility and efficiency of use"**
- no voice options in voice call, they can only be accessed via the side bar
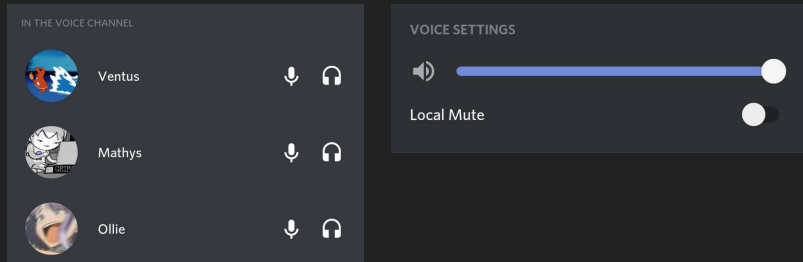
Discord's interface includes a lot of features that make it easy to navigate once users are acclimatised; shortcuts to message friends directly by swiping on them, shortcuts for entering and leaving voice channels rather than through the channel page, shortcuts for changing availability statuses, are all ways in which the app optimises the user experience. These reduce the time and number of steps required to operate in the app compared to novice methods. In this way, Discord makes it even faster and easier for users to connect with others.
However, the survey shows that these short cuts are not known to the common user, thus many people do not find navigating the app to be efficient (On a scale of 1 - 5; 1 being not easy at all)
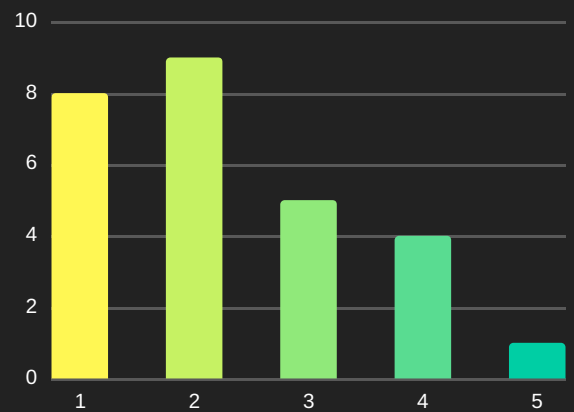
8. Aesthetic & Minimalist Design (3.5/5 stars)

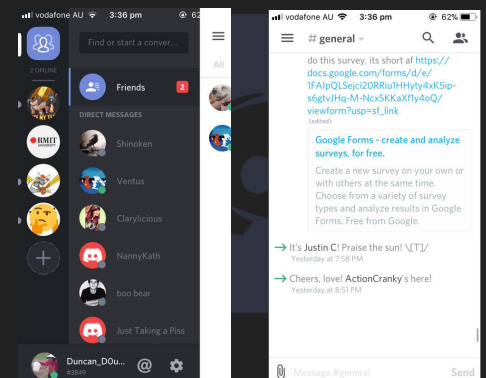**How Discord helps to accomplish "aesthetic and minimalist design"**
- Easy to navigate interface (clean interface and obvious buttons)
- Dark theme option for contrast, creating a more pleasant viewing experience
How Discord hinders "aesthetic and minimalist design"
- Servers are listed in one long line on the sidebar which leaves it to the user to keep track of their servers by memory as the only indication is the server icon which can be the same or similar on multiple servers
- No catering for colourblinded people (colourblind mode that makes the interface easier to read and images and videos easier to see)

Discord has a clear "friends" menu which helps the users to easily classify their friends; such as who is online or who needs to be blocked. The "friends" and "add server" radio buttons are very apparent. Also, all friend requests are shown on the pending menu.
But for the server dialogue, there is no specific name showed on the dialogue hence it is difficult for users to find which serve is the one they want to enter, especially for the user who has a large amount of servers.

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9. Help Users Recognize , Diagnose & Recover from Errors (5/5 stars)

How Discord helps to accomplish "help users recognise, diagnose and recover from errors"
– Error messages in plain language that tell what is wrong and is easy to understand for any user
How Discord hinder "help users recognise, diagnose and recover from errors"
– Servers are listed in one long line on the sidebar which leaves it to the user to keep track of their servers by memory as the only indication is the server icon which can be the same or similar on multiple servers
– No catering for colourblinded people (colourblind mode that makes the interface easier to read and images and videos easier to see)
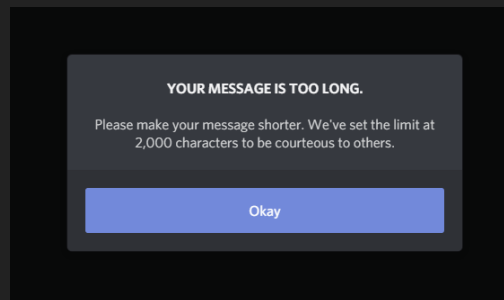
Most errors that occur on Discord provide clear information in simple language so users can easily understand what the issue is such as: 'Microphone setting is wrong'.

To help the users recover from most common errors, Discord can handle these by itself. For example, Discord can reset users' microphone settings when error message 'Microphone setting is wrong' occurs and help users recover from this error.

10. Help & Documents (1/5 stars)

How Discord hinder "help and documentation"
– Very limited access to help on discord, no help button on discord mobile or even links to help forums or faqs which forces new users to either ask other users or to even stop using the app altogether

Any kind of helps or documents can be found on the Discord, thus users are not able to seek help about Discord without knowing how to navigate to Discord's "help" sections. This results in many users not understanding all of Discord's functions.

For example, Novice users may not be able to find where the voice and video chat radio buttons are or even aware of how to send pictures. Power users may not realise some functions such as "connecting their accounts to their playing devices.
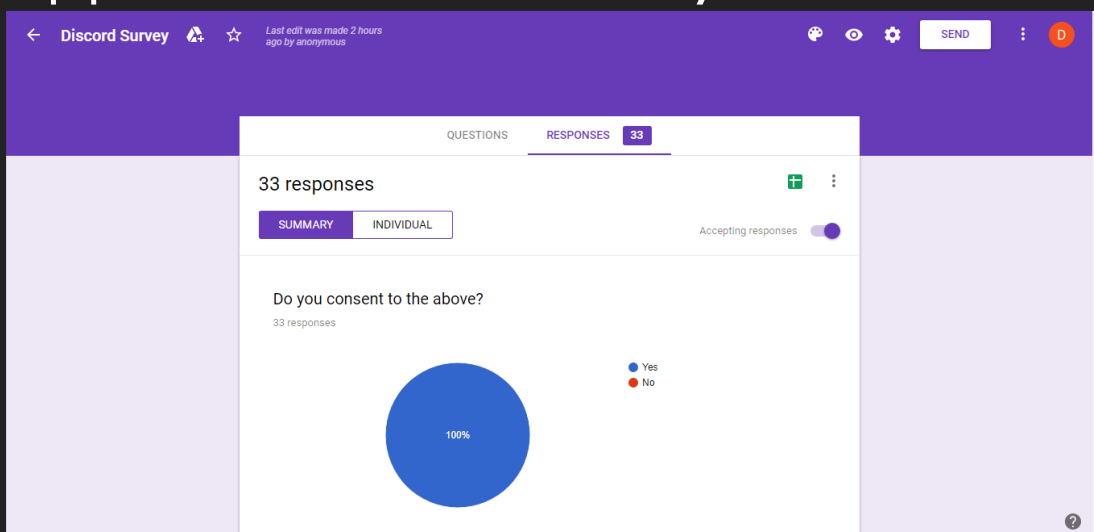
This is reflected in the survey where more users found learning all of Discord's features hard (5) rather than easy (1).
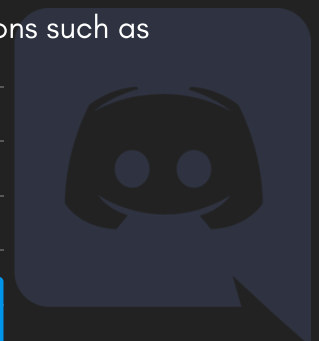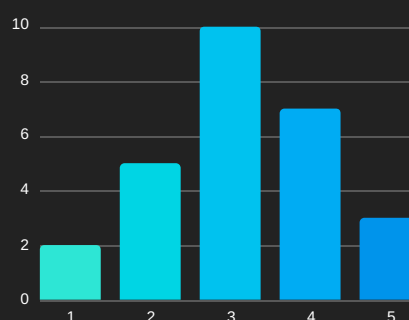
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Appendix

Appendices # 1 – Survey

Link to the survey (With edit rights)
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Bu-
JvO16YH2eedZ4JmyxU2O5mmRpqDjoxLPzW996ebA/edit?usp=sharing

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Appendices # 2 – The questions

Do you consent to the above?
What age group do you belong to?
Do you use the app Discord?
For what reason did you download the Discord app?
Why Discord over other services?
What is your gender?
How well do you know how to use a mobile phone (E.g. How to text, emojis, chat terms)?
How well do you know and use common gaming terms?
Have you used other chat applications before?
How well do you know how to use chat applications?
Do you own a Discord Nitro membership?
Discord Nitro improved your experience using discord (Agree/Disagree)
Why?
Discord Nitro was worth the price of the subscription(Agree/Disagree)
Why?
What was the biggest reason for buying Nitro?
How do you find the promotions for Discord Nitro?
How necessary do you think it is that people have Discord Nitro?
Why?
Do you own or moderate any Discord Server?
How large is your server?
Do you feel Discord gives you the tools to moderate the content on your server?
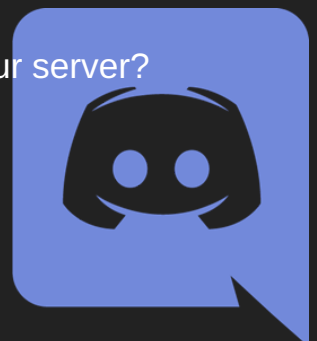Why?
How well does Discord implement the following features?
Direct Messaging
Why?
Group Messaging
Why?

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Appendices # 2 – The questions

Direct Voice/Video Calls and Screen Sharing
Why?
Group Voice/Video Calls and Screen Sharing
Why?
Server Text Channels
Why?
Server Voice Channels
Why?
Sending links/files in messages
Why?
How difficult is it to do the following tasks?
Creating an account
Why?
Finding and adding friends
Why?
Direct Messaging
Why?
Managing sound levels on voice calls
Why?
Setting up your microphone on Discord
Why?
Navigating the app
Why?
Joining a server on discord and creating invites
Why?
How natural does using Discord to communicate with others feel?
Why?

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Appendix

Appendices # 2 – The questions

How good is Discord at creating a way for you to communicate with others?
Why?
Do you think you know how to use Discord and all of its features?
Why?
How hard is it to learn how to use Discord and all of its features?
Can you give an example?

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Appendix

Appendices # 3 – The consent form

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

User-Centred Survey in the User Centred Design course in RMIT

Chief Investigators:

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Other Investigators:

Head Tutor of User Centred Design course:
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Tutor of User Centred Design tutorial/lab:
McMillan-Tolley

Group members:
Duncan Do: s3718718@student.rmit.edu.au
David Lelis: s3724414@student.rmit.edu.au
Tianchen Zhuang: s3695116@student.rmit.edu.au

You are invited to participate in research being conducted by students of User Centred Design course in the School of Computer Science and IT at RMIT University. Please read this information carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate.
Participation is purely voluntary. Participation in this study does not impact you directly or your assessment in any courses being conducted at RMIT University. If you have any questions about the project, please ask any one of the investigators listed above, by emailing them.
Who is involved in this research? Why is it being conducted?
This research is conducted as part of User Centred Design course. The first assignment of the course is User-centred survey. In this assignment, students needs to perform an analysis and a short survey on a deployed IT based system with users.
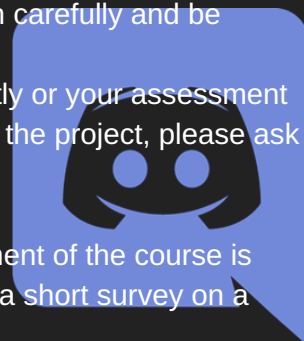
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Appendices # 3 – The consent form

Why have you been approached?
You have been approached because you are a current user of Discord.
If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?
If you agree, you will be required to answer a short survey. Consent will be implied by the return or completion of an anonymous survey.

What are the possible risks and disadvantages?
There are no direct risks of physical or emotional harm.

What are the benefits associated with participation?
There will be no direct benefits associated.

What will happen to the information I provide?
Your response will be stored, anonymously, with other responses.
The results from the analysis of the data will be not be published.
It will make a part of the first assignment of this group enrolled for submission to User-Centred Design course. The submission will be stored safely in RMIT secure server that hosts the Blackboard system.

What are my rights as a participant?
As a participant in this research you have the rights to:
• withdraw from participation at any time.
• have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed provided it can be reliably identified.
• have any questions answered at any time.
Whom should I contact if I have any questions?
Please contact any of the investigators listed at the beginning of this participant information.

Security of the website
Users should be aware that the World Wide Web is an insecure public network that gives rise to the potential risk that a user's transactions are being viewed, intercepted or modified by third parties or that data which the user downloads may contain computer viruses or other defects.
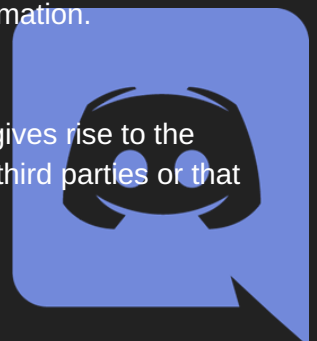
DISCORD

Appendix

Appendices # 3 – The consent form

Security of the data
This project will use an external site to create, collect and analyse data collected in a survey format. The site we are using is Google forms If you agree to participate in this survey, the responses you provide to the survey will be stored on a host server that is used by RMIT. No personal information will be collected in the survey so none will be stored as data.

Yours sincerely

Duncan Do, David Lelis, and Tianchen Zhuang

Course Coordinator:

Dr. Flora Salim, Computer Science & IT, School of Science, RMIT University;
email flora.salim@rmit.edu.au

Course Tutors:

Head Tutor of User Centred Design course:
William Lim; email william.lim@rmit.edu.au

Tutor of User Centred Design tutorial/lab:
Bowen Wu, Renee McMillan-Tolley, Veatrissa Lim, Abhijeet Nair, Johanne Trippas, Andrian Radic, William Lim (name your tutor here and remove the rest)

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Ethics Officer, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, Research & Innovation, RMIT, GPO Box 2476, Melbourne, 3001.
The telephone number is (03) 9925 2251.
Details of the complaints procedure are available on the
Complaints with respect to participation in research at RMIT page

Appendix