IST 649 – Human and Computer Interaction
Instructor – Brian Seeman
Assignment 2 – Due Date 04/06/2018
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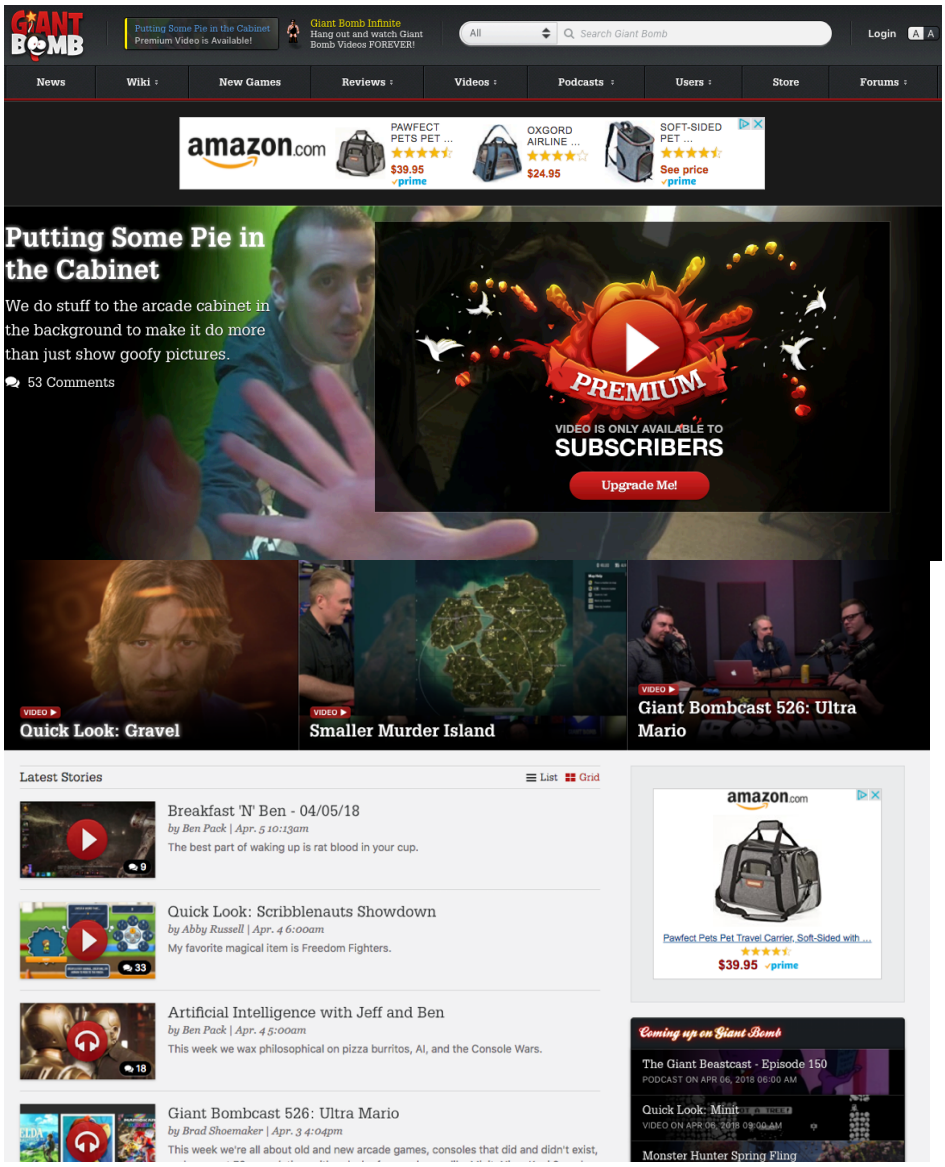
Assignment 2 - Cognitive Walk: Giant Bomb

Giant Bomb is self-proclaimed the "biggest video games data base in the world". The website is one of the brands from CBS Interactive which focus on producing and broadcasting content about video games in different media: podcasts, videos, website articles and other. The website presents itself as a mix between a conventional video games website and a database search engine that allows users to navigate between loads of contents related to a topic.



Home page

Targeted audience of the website is young and adults interested in video games content. The website eventually produces content about different topics that may match with audience interest, but it mostly focuses on video games content. They

provide content for free users and for premium users who pay for a subscription. All tests described below will focus on public content.

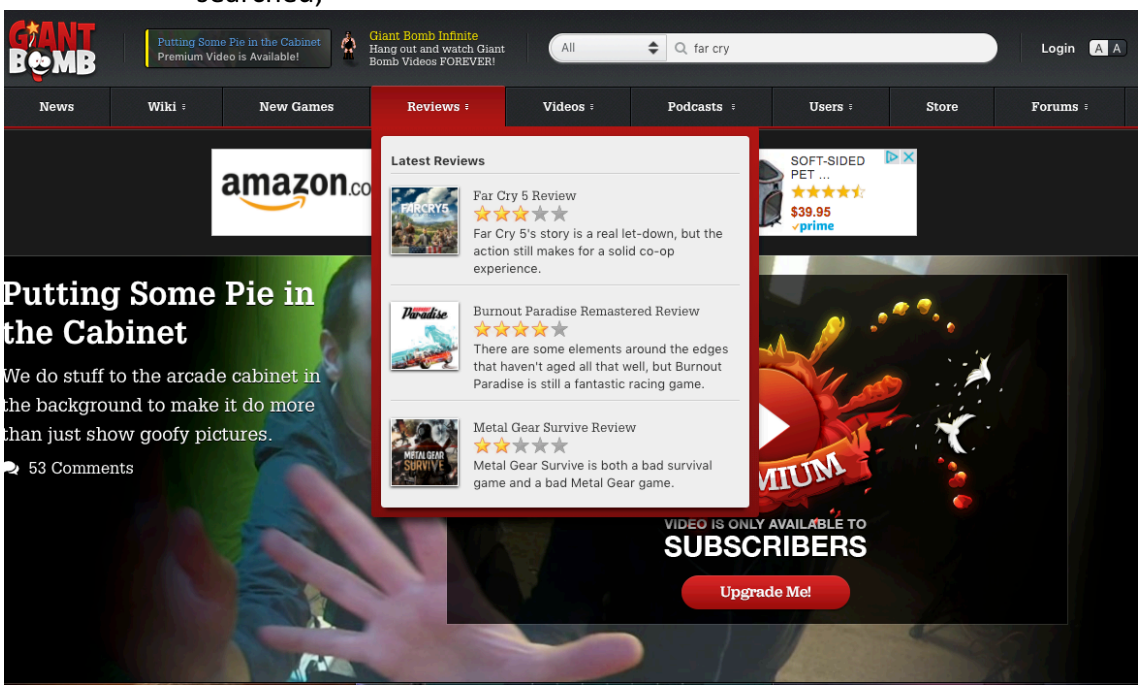
Because of the company`s concept, Giant Bomb`s website embodies design decisions that reflect both of its` main features: content database website and content producer website. Considering that these two different affordances are mixed together in the same website, I decided to create use cases to explore individually each one of them and have a better understanding of how they change user experience.

The first use case will be to find a review for a recently released game to support the user`s decision about buying the game. The second use case will be to search for information about a curious history regarding the development of what turned to be known as Super Mario Bros 2 everywhere else in the world, but in Japan.

The first use case consists in asking the user to find information about a recently released video game as support to make a decision whether to buy it or not. This is probably one of the most used features of the website, so I`m going to use the game Far Cry 5 as an example, considering its` recent release date.

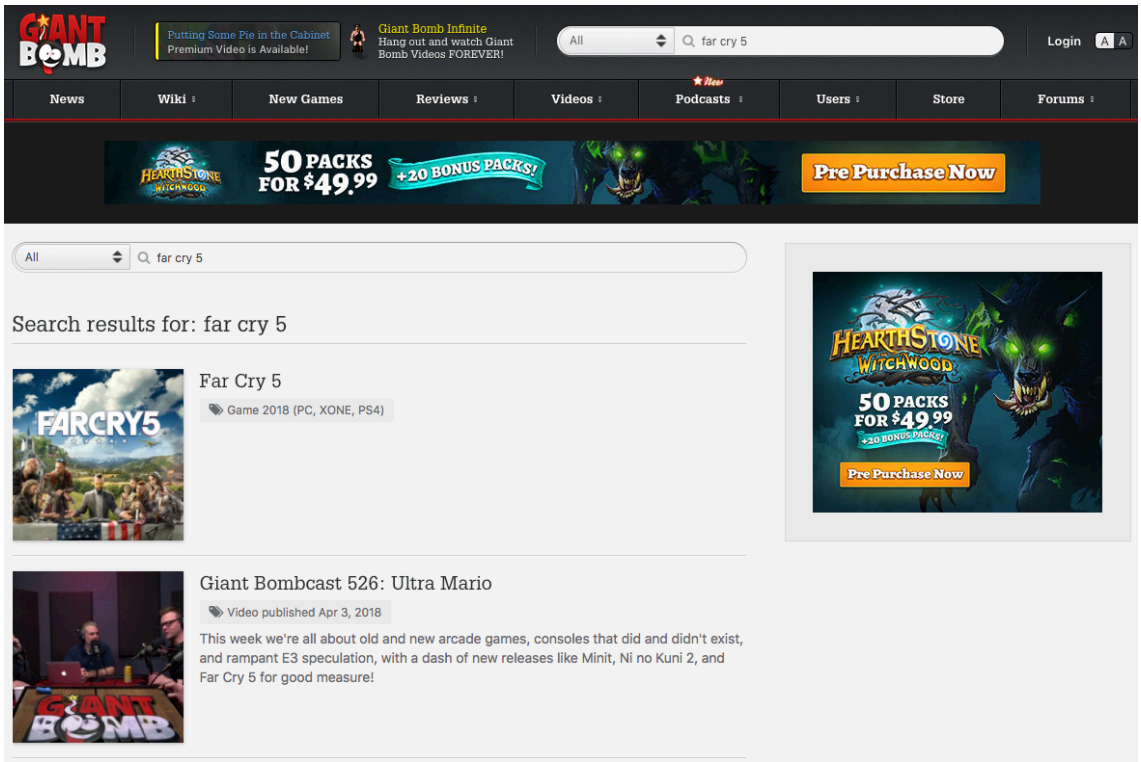
The user may follow different methods to complete this task. The first one would be to search for the game`s name using the search feature on top of the home page. It consists in:

1. Click the search field in the home page ad type the name of the game – "Far Cry 5";
    a. Before pressing enter a drop down menu appears under the search bar with good matches for the search, including the actual game being searched;



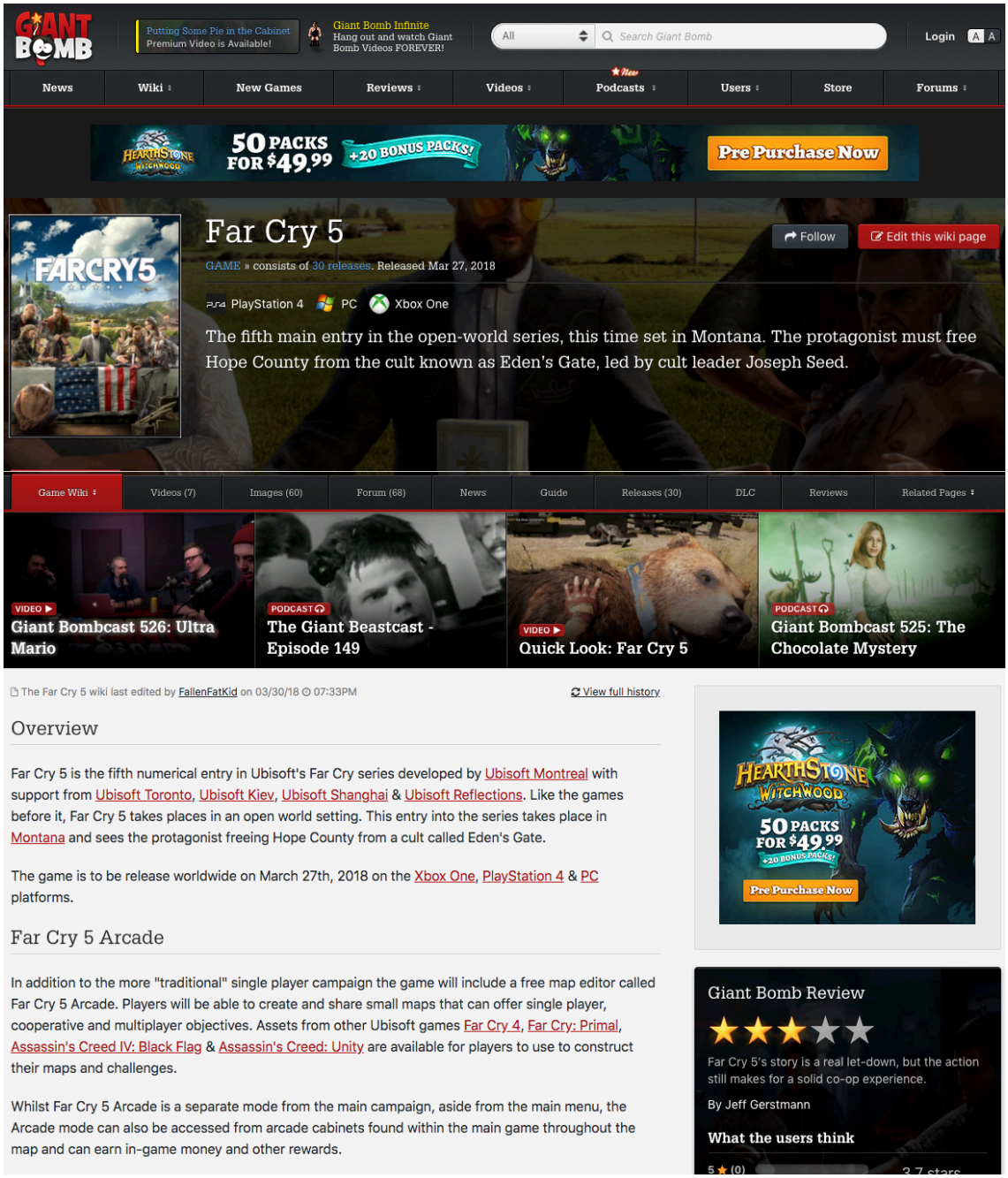
Featured reviews on the main page

b. After pressing “enter” the user is taken to a search result screen that lists all good matches for the search. For the game searched on the example, the first result returned is a good match;



Search result

2. Both options above take the user to the game`s wiki page, showing:
   a. Advertisement banner;
   b. Basic information – cover image, name of the game, platforms, release date and a quick description;
   c. A menu bar with the following options: Game Wiki, Videos(7), Images (57), Forum(68), News, Guide, Releases (30), DLC, Reviews and Related Pages.
   d. A wide bar with recent content related to the game produced and published by Giant Bomb. On the day of the test, 3 podcasts and one Quick Look video were being showed.
   e. Game Wiki content, which include an overview and the description for the Arcade mode for the example.



Far Cry 5 page

3. To complete the task, the user may decide for different content, according to personal preferences:
    a. Watching the featured video (Quick Look: Far Cry 5 – 51 minutes) to see initial moments of the game being commented by two journalists from Giant Bomb. As the title announces, this content shares only initial thoughts, and it allows the user to watch the actual game being played. After clicking the link to the video a YouTube player pops up on the screen and the user may click play to start;

   b. The second option would be to click on the menu "Reviews" and navigate to a page where different user reviews are showed as a list, and on the right side a highlighted review from Giant Bomb is also showed. Each review (users` or Giant Bomb`s) show a title, a rate in a 5 star scale, reviewer`s name and number of comments and likes. After the user clicks the title of a review they can read all the content – usually a written article with pictures and the reasons for the rate;
   c. The third option would be to listen to one of the audio contents – podcasts. This option would not be brought to detail as it is more time consuming, and the task is expected to be finished in a shorter time frame.

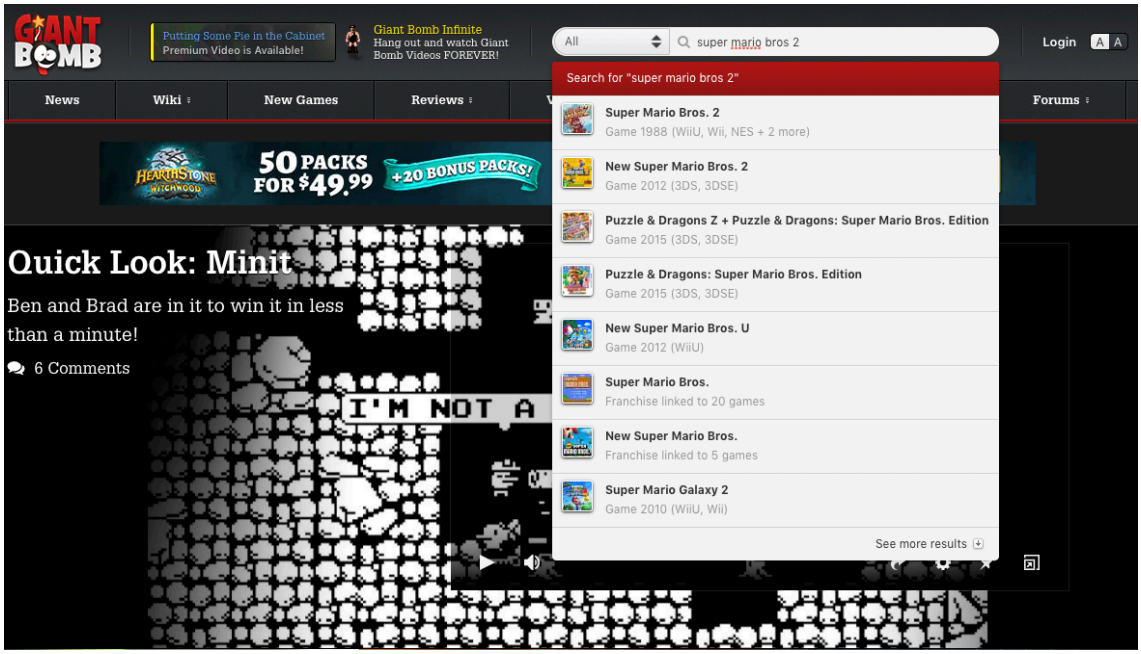
4. After navigating through one or more of the options described above the user is expected to have enough information about the game to decide about buying it or not.

An alternative method the user can follow to complete the task consists in positioning the mouse cursor over the menu Reviews on the main page and then clicking on the link to the game`s review. This option is available at this point because the game is one of the biggest releases of the last weeks. After clicking the link, the user is sent to Giant Bomb`s review page. After consuming the content, a user is expected to have enough information about the game to decide about buying it or not.

For the second use case the user is expected to explore data base features of Giant Bomb`s website to search for information about curious group of events related to the development and publication of what would be named as Super Mario Bros 2 in every country of the world but Japan. Because of the peculiar story behind the game, and because it was first released in the US in 1988, the user will need to explore different features of the data base. No specific outcome is expected from this task. The only purpose of it is to test how the user navigate between different features of the website to look for spread information.

As it happened for the first use case, the starting point is the main page of Giant Bomb`s website. No many options are presented at this page to help a user on the given task but to perform a search for the name of the game:

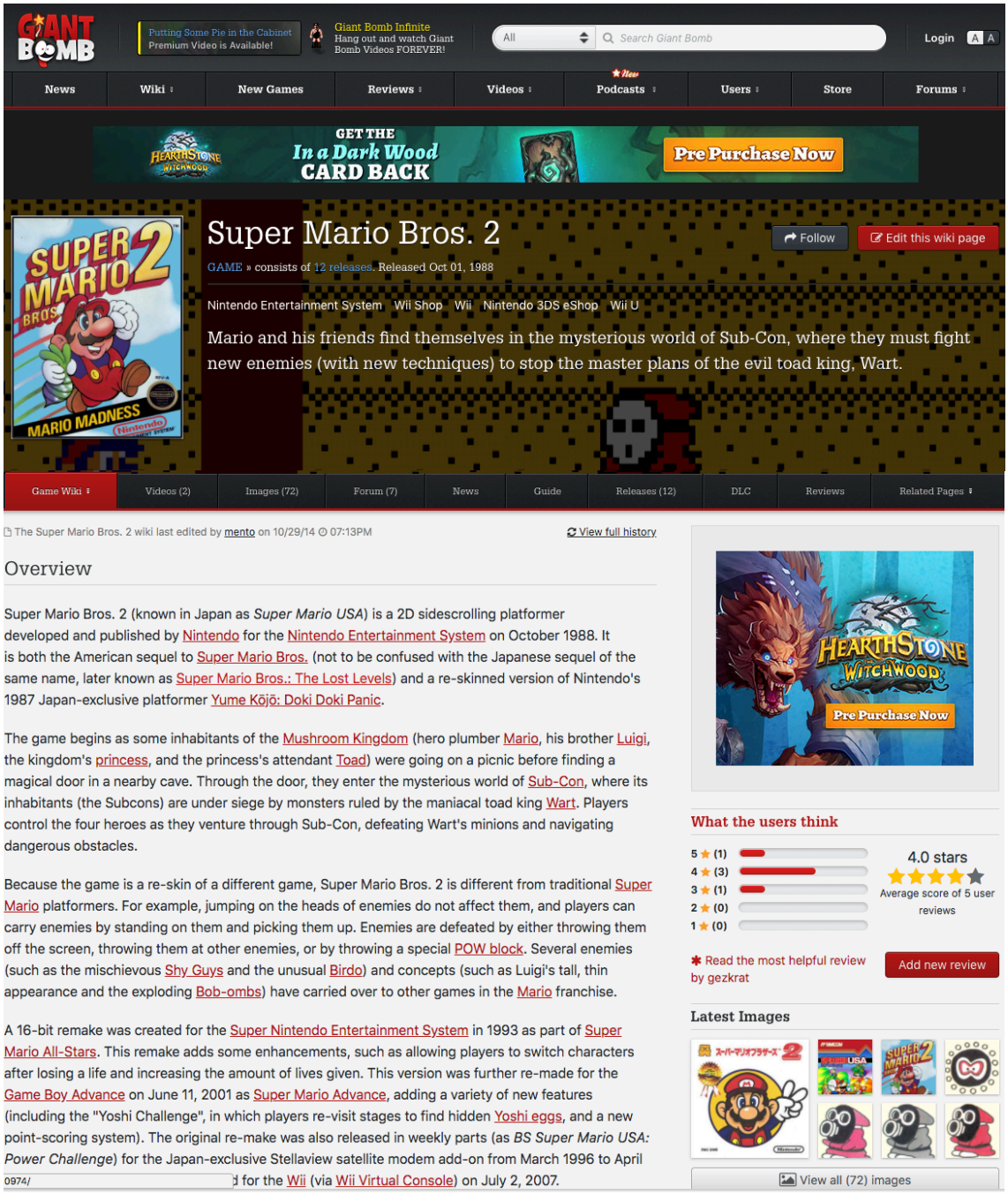
1. Click the search field in the home page ad typing the name of the game – "Super Mario Bros 2";
   a. Before pressing enter a drop down menu appears under the search bar with good matches for the search, including the actual game being searched;



Super Mario Bros 2 search on main page.

b. After pressing “enter” the user is taken to a search result screen that lists all good matches for the search. For the game searched on the example, the first result returned is a perfect match;

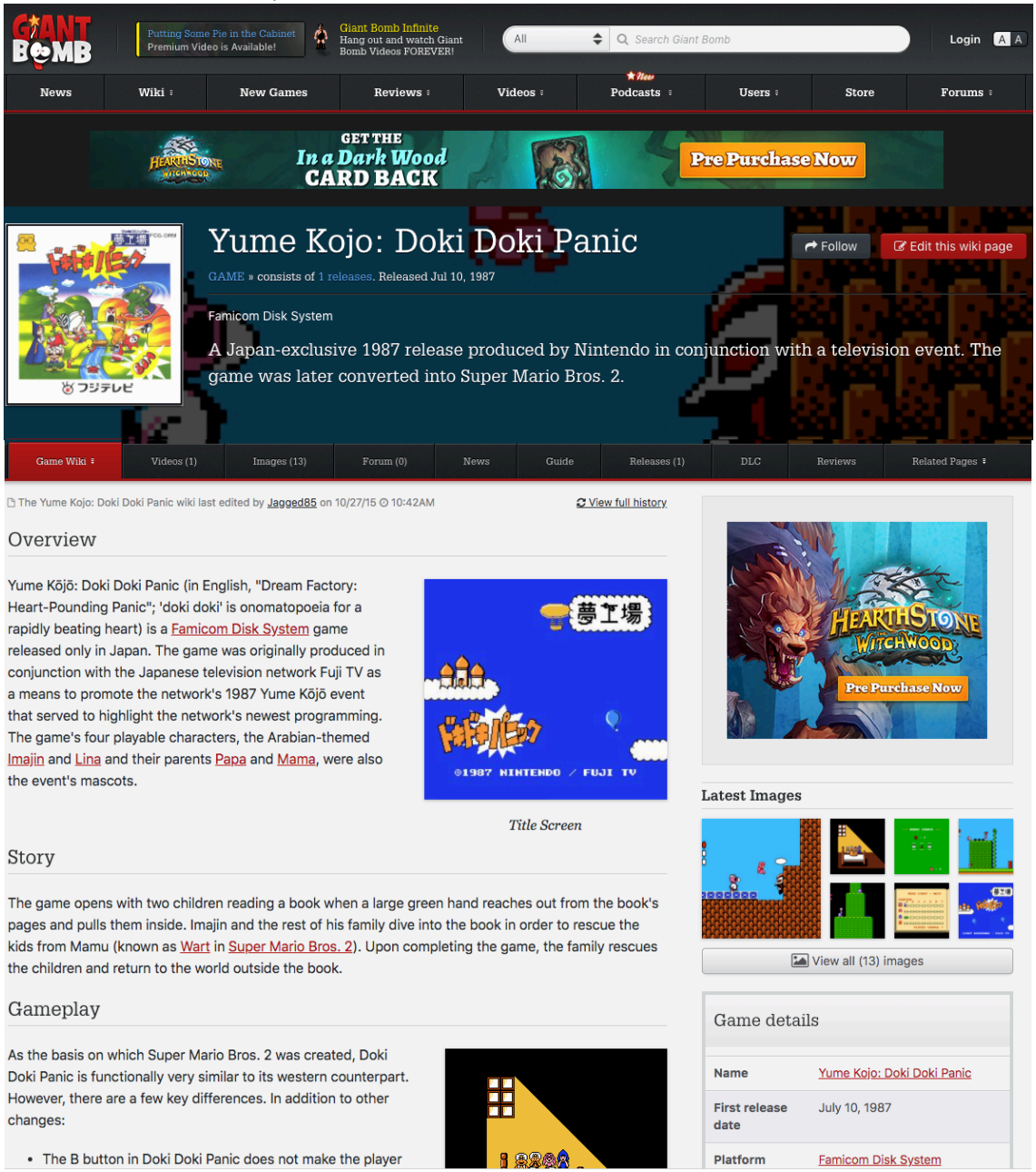
2. Both options above take the user to the game`s wiki page, showing:
   a. Advertisement banner;
   b. Basic information – cover image, name of the game, platforms, release date and a quick description;
   c. A menu bar with the following options: Game Wiki, Videos(2), Images (72), Forum(7), News, Guide, Releases (12), DLC, Reviews and Related Pages.
   d. Game Wiki content, which include the following sections: Overview, Gameplay, Sub-Space and Warping;



Super Mario Bros 2 Wiki page

3. To complete this task, the user may use different functionalities of the menu described on topic 2.c:
    a. Game Wiki: at this page the user will see information produced by the community and links for content related to it. For example, at the end of the first paragraph of the Overview topic, the game *Yume Kōjō: Doki Doki Panic* is mentioned, and the reader can click over its` name to navigate to the game`s page. This is an interesting feature, as it allows

the user to connect different topics which are important to complete the task;



Yume Kōjō: Doki Doki Panic Wiki page

b. Videos: at this section the user will find a 47 minutes video called "*Encyclopedia Bombastica: Super Mario Bros. 2*" where a journalist from Giant Bomb plays the game while he shares information about its` features and some information about the development and publishing process.
c. Releases: brings information about release dates in different countries, different platforms and even informing different names for the same name;

   d. Images: shows a collection of images of game footage;
   e. Forum: brigs 7 threads of discussions about the game. This one one of the most useful features, as it provides information with links for external sources that adds a lot of information about the topic;
   f. Reviews: different user reviews are showed as a list. No Giant Bomb`s review for this game. Each review show a title, a rate in a 5 star scale, reviewer`s name and number of comments and likes. After the user clicks the title of a review they can read all the content – usually a written article with pictures and the reasons for the rate;

4. After navigating through a few different pages as described above the user is expected to have enough information about the game.

The objective of performing these tasks is to observe how two different features of the website - data base and content producer - interact with each other and interfere on the user experience. It is possible to notice in the first case that the user would probably be looking for Giant Bomb`s content (reviews, videos, podcasts, etc.) as a form to ground its` decision whether to buy the game or not. The different ways to get to Giant Bomb`s content often require the user to navigate through search, wiki and other pages, and this process could demand time and in some cases mislead an unaware user to a third party content or even community content. In other hand, while navigating through the website, a user will get in touch with different sources of content, which can be positive, as more information may mean more understanding of the topic, but may also be negative, considering it takes more time to find the desired content and to understand who it belongs to.

For the second use case it seems more interesting to navigate between different pages, as the objective is to collect spread information from many sources about one specific topic. During my test I could navigate for internal and external webpages, mostly reading forum posts that lead me to external pages where documents, data and pictures could be found.

My recommendation for Giant Bomb`s website aligns with many features that they already provide, and it consists in creating mechanisms for users that look for quick content, in special the ones that decide to rely on Giant Bomb`s self-produced content, including videos, podcasts, reviews and articles. The current site mostly does that by directing the user to this kind of content through featured links on the home page, on the Reviews menu and by highlighting feature content on the game`s page.