

Mziki

The Project

Project Name
Mziki Music App

Service
UI/UX Design

Year done
2016

Mziki, the business, was an Indian start up. Their mission was to develop a music app which was going to rival Spotify, Google Play, Musi and Pandora. Being the brainchild of a DJ, there was a lot of insights we were able to get from the brains behind the brand.

My Role

Design, team lead, research, test

Project Statement

Mziki's vision was to make this software the go to app for music lovers on the go. Their business model was simple, get the users on-board now monetise later. Having secured a crowdfunding amount of over USD 3 million, through Kickstarter, the business was able to commence the project and run the business without needing to get subscriptions from users for a period of 24 months.

When a subscriber downloaded and registered the app, the user was automatically given access to the full version of the music app for 2 months of streaming and music download at no cost. Based off research, two months was adequate to get user hooked, after which time the subscriptions then kick in. For those users who did not want to upgrade to the full subscription service, after the 2 months free had lapsed, they could continue to use the service free but would be interrupted by 30 second adverts after every five songs played, that way the user would still pay for the service indirectly. Based off the business projections, the business was expected to break even in profits within the first twelve months of operation.

Project Research

Prior to design briefing, Mziki had done extensive research. All the research findings gathered were handed over to us. This eliminated the need to kick start the project with user testing and research as these processes had already been done prior to engaging our services.

Project Requirements

Following the project briefing and receipt of the research findings, my team and I commenced design work. The key requirement was simple, 'Create the best music app experience for the audience'.

The Process

This project was worked on by teams across the globe. Mziki was based in India, my design team and I were based in South Africa while the development team was based in Brazil. For this project everyone was working across different time zones to get the project deliverables. As a result, the different teams would collaborate at different times of the day based on their geographic location.

As a design team the steps we followed to deliver the project were as follows:

- i) Storyboarding. To kick-start the project my team and I conducted a storyboarding exercise. This exercise was to aid us establish the final design look and feel we were aiming for.
- ii) Affinity mapping. I then lead an affinity mapping exercise. This exercise helped us to understand where the different app elements were going to sit within the software.
- iii) User journeys. I created and fine tuned a user journey for the software. This helped us better understand how the system was going to function and how the different parts of the system were going to work together.
- iv) Low fidelity wireframing. Based off the brief and the insights we had at our disposal, my team and I took pen to paper and began to work on the low fidelity wireframe sketches for the project. The intention was to enable us to get conversations started with stakeholders and the development team and surface any potential obstacles which could come up during the design process. After the low fidelity wireframes had been finalised and shared with the various stakeholders a few amends were made inline with the feedback gathered.

The Process (continued)

- v) High fidelity wireframes. Upon finalisation of the low fidelity wireframes, my team and I began design of the high fidelity wireframes. Upon completion of the high fidelity wireframes I then got to build the prototype. I presented and shared the prototype with all the relevant stakeholders. Mziki was happy with the wireframes.
- vi) User testing. I requested that my team and I test our prototype to expose any usability issues which may be present. We were unfortunately denied the affordance to test. Mziki, however recruited an independent testing company to test our designs. Before Mziki commissioned an independent tester we were privileged to highlight the specific areas of the software we wanted feedback on. Upon testing, we were furnished with some insightful feedback. We addressed the few issues which were surfaced and requested a retest of the prototype. Upon getting feedback on the retest we finalised the designs and pushed them over to development upon receiving signoff.
- vii) Development and final software testing. Designs were handed over to development. We, the design team, worked closely with development to make sure that the designs were developed properly in accordance with the designs. After development we worked closely with the testing team to make sure that everything was looking and working the way it should.

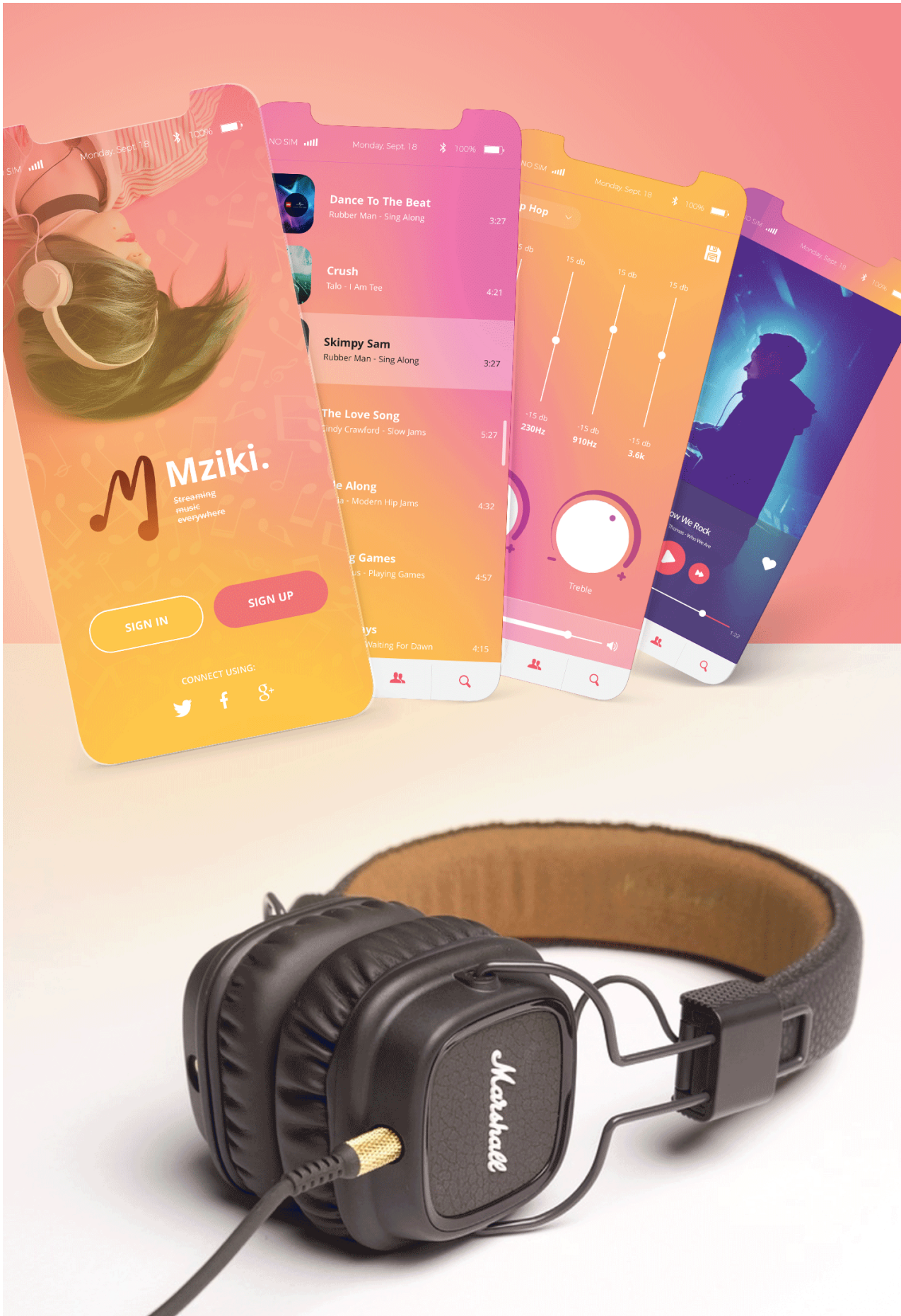
The Solution

We designed an app solution which surpassed the client expectation. Some of the software key features of note were:

- i) Artificial intelligence. Based off the genres and artists listened to, the software was designed to automatically develop its filtering system to provide the user more of the types of music that the user had engaged with.
- ii) Ability to download tracks to the device. While using the free trial offer, users were able to download music to their devices. After trial has ended the users would lose their downloaded music if they didn't upgrade to a paid subscription. If, however, the user upgraded the app to a paid subscription, they would retain the ability to download more music without restrictions and would retain the music they had downloaded during the free trial period.
- iii) For the users who opted not to subscribe to the full version, they were able to continue streaming music without restrictions. They were however not able to download or listen to uninterrupted music. For every 5 music tracks played the user was subjected to a 30 second advert.
- iv) Music party. For paid subscribers, multiple devices within proximity of less than 10 meters from each other could all play a particular track or playlist, all in sync with each other. In practice what that meant is that subscribed users could host a music party with their phones while one of the users was the DJ controlling the play list.

The Designs

Having experienced a different way of working, my team and I were able to come up with an aesthetic, highly functional, user centred piece of software which fulfilled the client requirements.



Conclusion

This project came with its challenges, but despite its challenges we were able to deliver a solid highly functional and engaging music software.

Post deployment of the software on Google Play and App Store, we began to monitor and measure ratings and comments left by users on the app stores. Over the first three months, post deployment, we learned that the app had over 250 000 downloads. Of the 250 000+ downloads, 240 000 were active with users making regular use of the music app. By month three, post app deployment, Mziki had over 170 000 active subscribers. Through monitoring usage and comments we were able to establish that there was a rapid user uptake and a growing subscriber base. App ratings were sitting at 4,5 stars based over 190 000 users. This was a good sign that the users were happy with the software and that there was a rapid user uptake and engagement with the app.

As a design team, we had successfully delivered a successful digital product.