

# Beyond Dark Patterns

Promoting Ethical Design for Consumer-Centric Experiences

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Presented by: Chongrui Zhao, Namitha Karupakula & Maegan Wright





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Senior Designer



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UX Designer

VLC Media Player (Windows) - x

softpedia.com/get/Multimedia/Video/Video-Players/VideoLAN-Client.shtml

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**VLC Media Player 3.0.18**

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**A fully customizable, powerful and practical media player that lets you enjoy nearly all available media file formats or your favorite radio station**

**VLC Media Player** ★★★★★ 5.0/5 Review by [Mircea Dragomir](#)

In order to be able to fully enjoy a movie or song, appropriate applications need to be used. Media files are found under a large variety of formats, not supported by all available players. Among the existing industry giants which have built a name and reputation over the years, there is **VLC media player**, a simple looking tool with a lot of power under the hood.

Advertisement

**fiverr.**

Here comes the sun.

(Source: Deceptive Patterns, 2023)

1. Towards the start of the user's journey on stubhub.com, they are shown a price.

112

Row Y

You'll pay

**\$310** each

Quantity

1 ticket

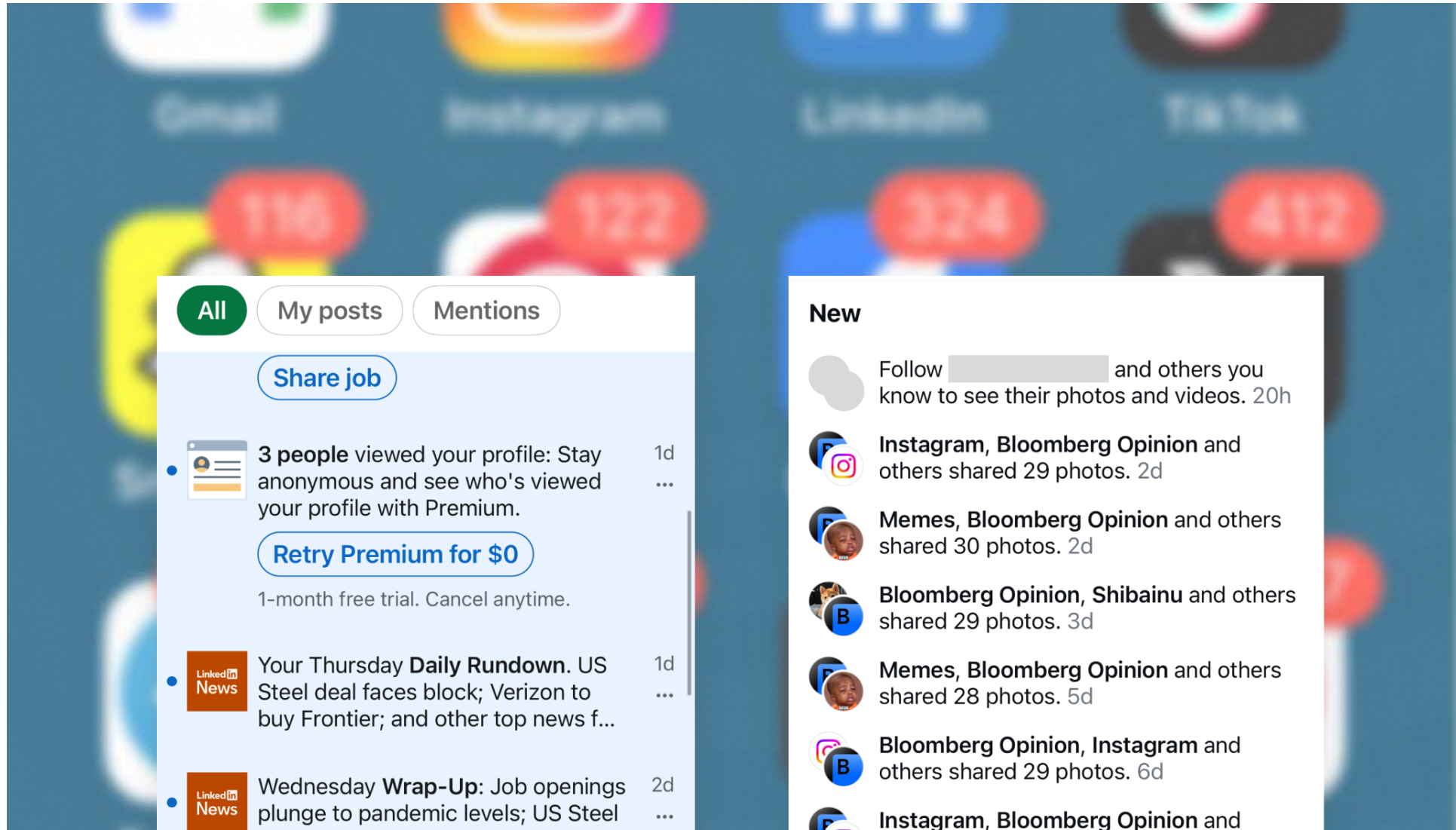


2. The user proceeds through multiple steps in which they must enter their name, phone number, email and postal address. Only then are they shown the total price. In this case it is a 29% increase.

|                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Ticket Price       | 1 × US\$ 310.05    |
| Service Fee        | 1 × US\$ 86.13     |
| Fulfillment Fee    | 1 × US\$ 4.95      |
| <b>TOTAL PRICE</b> | <b>US\$ 401.13</b> |

(Source: Deceptive Patterns, 2023)

(Source: LinkedIn & Instagram, 2024)



All My posts Mentions

Share job

3 people viewed your profile: Stay anonymous and see who's viewed your profile with Premium. 1d

Retry Premium for \$0

1-month free trial. Cancel anytime.

Your Thursday Daily Rundown. US Steel deal faces block; Verizon to buy Frontier; and other top news f... 1d

Wednesday Wrap-Up: Job openings plunge to pandemic levels; US Steel could be out of a deal; and more n... 2d

Quantitative User Experience 2d

New

Follow [redacted] and others you know to see their photos and videos. 20h

Instagram, Bloomberg Opinion and others shared 29 photos. 2d

Memes, Bloomberg Opinion and others shared 30 photos. 2d

Bloomberg Opinion, Shibainu and others shared 29 photos. 3d

Memes, Bloomberg Opinion and others shared 28 photos. 5d

Bloomberg Opinion, Instagram and others shared 29 photos. 6d

Instagram, Bloomberg Opinion and others shared 29 photos. 1w

Bloomberg Opinion, Instagram and others shared 30 photos. 1w

**What are dark patterns?**

**Why do dark patterns matter?**

**How do we avoid dark patterns?**

# What is a Dark Pattern?



## Dark Patterns

Manipulating users into unintended actions like unwanted purchases or sharing personal data



## Light Patterns

Focusing on transparency and user autonomy, supporting clear, honest interactions for informed decisions

# Why Do Dark Patterns Matter?

**Privacy  
& Security**

**Financial  
Loss**

# Users

**Mental  
Health Risks**

**97%**

websites and apps exhibited  
at least one dark pattern  
harming privacy

(Source: GPEN, 2024)

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Loss**

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**40%**

online shoppers  
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(Source: CX today, 2024)

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(Source: GPEN, 2024)

**40%**

online shoppers  
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loss from dark patterns

(Source: CX today, 2024)

**66%**

higher depression  
rates among heavy  
social media users

(Source: Child Mind Institute, 2024)

Loss  
of Trust

Loss of Revenue  
**Business**

Legal  
Risks

**59%**

stopped buying from  
an online retailer due  
to dark patterns

(Source: CX today, 2024)

**Loss of Revenue**

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**43%**

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(Source: PwC, 2024)

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(Source: CX today, 2024)

**43%**

walked away after several  
bad experiences

(Source: PwC, 2024)

**\$520M**

settlement for  
misleading user  
purchases by Epic Games

(Source: CX today, 2024)



# Types of Dark Patterns

# Pressure

Fake  
scarcity

Fake  
urgency

Confirm  
shaming

Nagging

Fake social  
proof

(Source: Deceptive Patterns, 2024)

## Pressure

Fake  
scarcity

Fake  
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Confirm  
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Nagging

Fake social  
proof

## Force

Forced  
action

Forced  
continuity

Forced  
enrollment

(Source: Deceptive Patterns, 2024)

## Pressure

Fake scarcity

Fake urgency

Confirm shaming

Nagging

Fake social proof

## Force

Forced action

Forced continuity

Forced enrollment

## Sneaking

Hidden subscription

Hidden costs

Sneak into basket

(Source: Deceptive Patterns, 2024)

## Pressure

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Fake social proof

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## Obstacles

Visual interference

Hard to cancel

Comparison prevention

Obstruction

Preselection

(Source: Deceptive Patterns, 2024)

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## Deception

Trick wording

Disguised ads

(Source: Deceptive Patterns, 2024)

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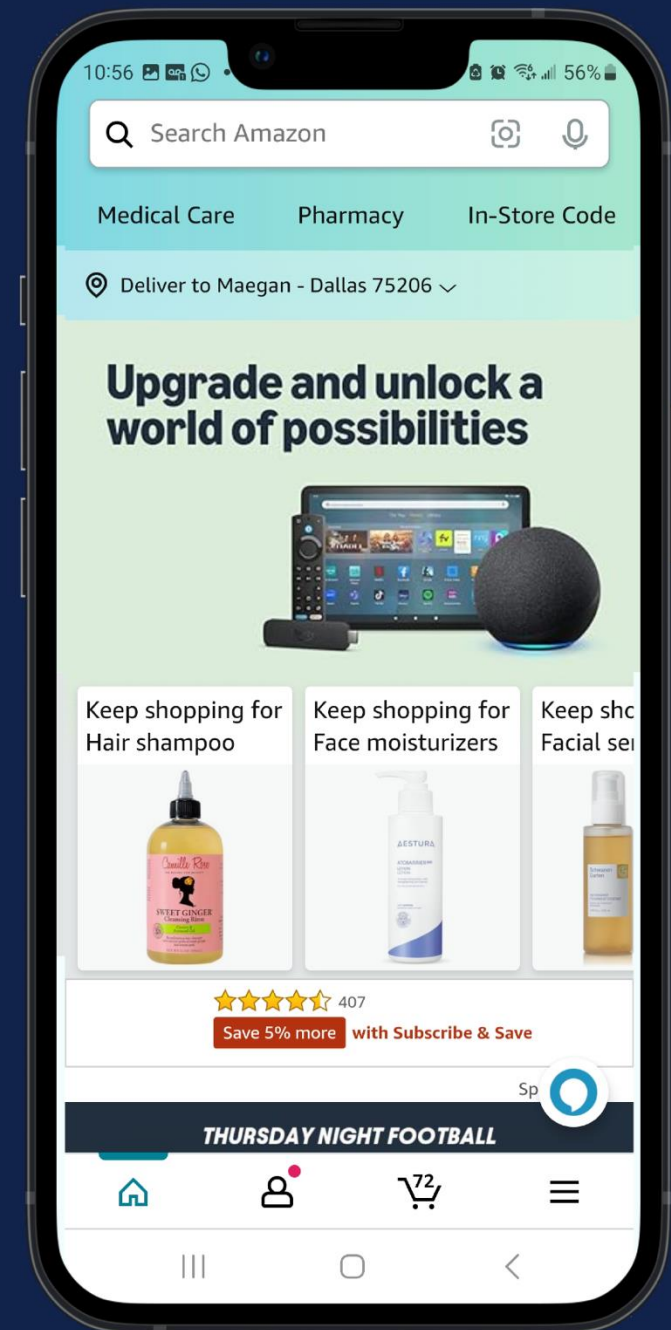
Disguised ads

(Source: Deceptive Patterns, 2024)

# Dark Patterns In Action

# Unsubscribable subscriptions with Amazon Prime

Case study – Hidden subscription & Hard to cancel



For Release

# FTC Takes Action Against Amazon for Enrolling Consumers in Amazon Prime Without Consent and Sabotaging Their Attempts to Cancel

Complaint outlines details of company's knowing failure to address non-consensual subscriptions and cancellation trickery

June 21, 2023 |   

(Source: FTC, 2023)



# How did Amazon do this?

Let's take a closer look...



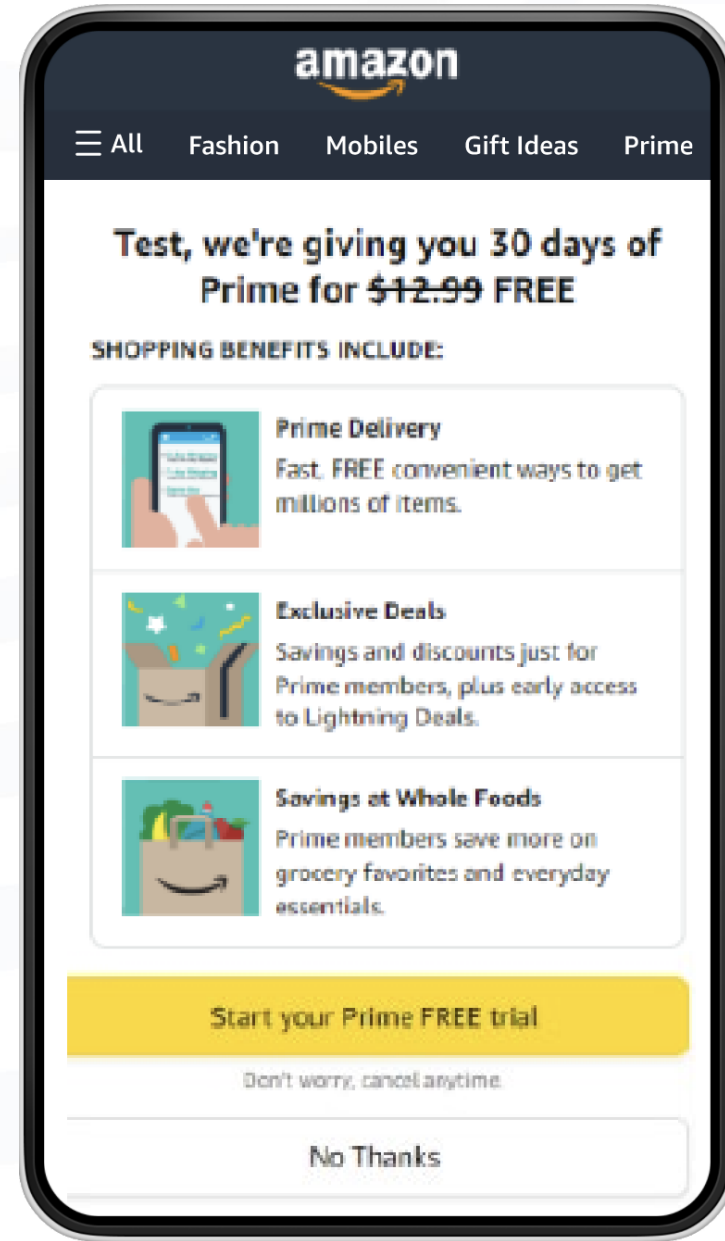
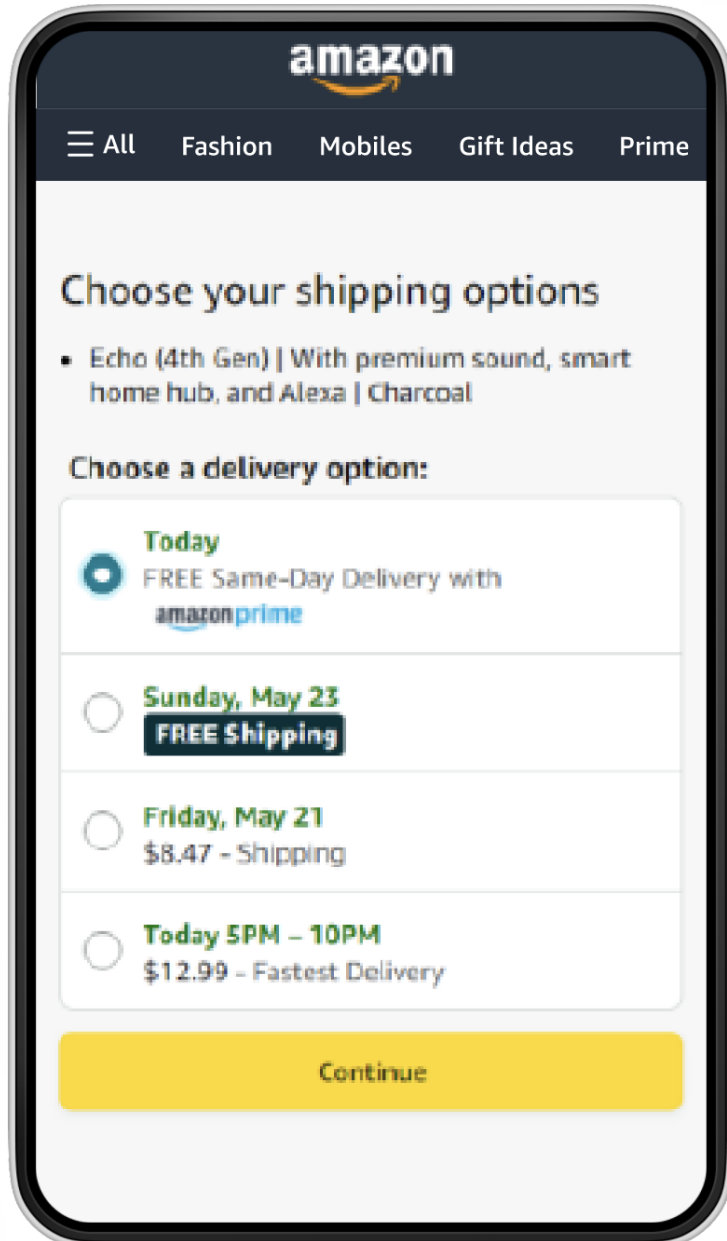
## Hidden subscription

The user is unknowingly enrolled in a recurring subscription or payment plan without clear disclosure or their explicit consent.

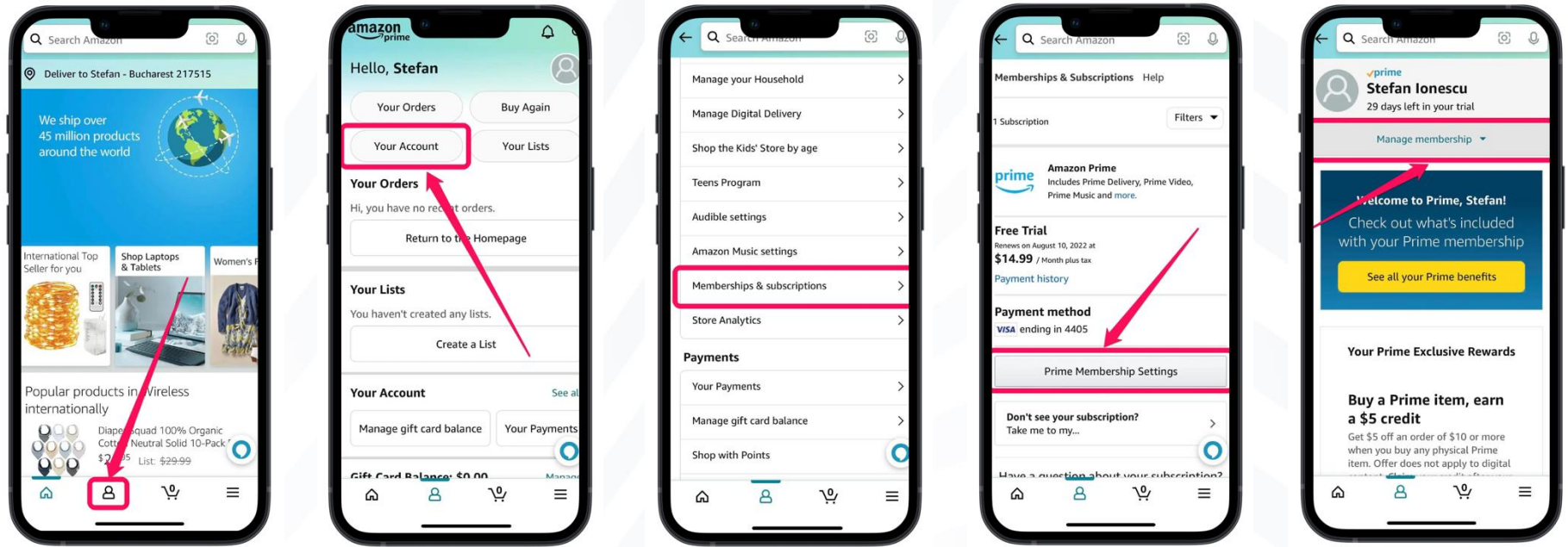


## Hard to cancel

The user finds it easy to sign up or subscribe, but when they want to cancel they find it difficult.



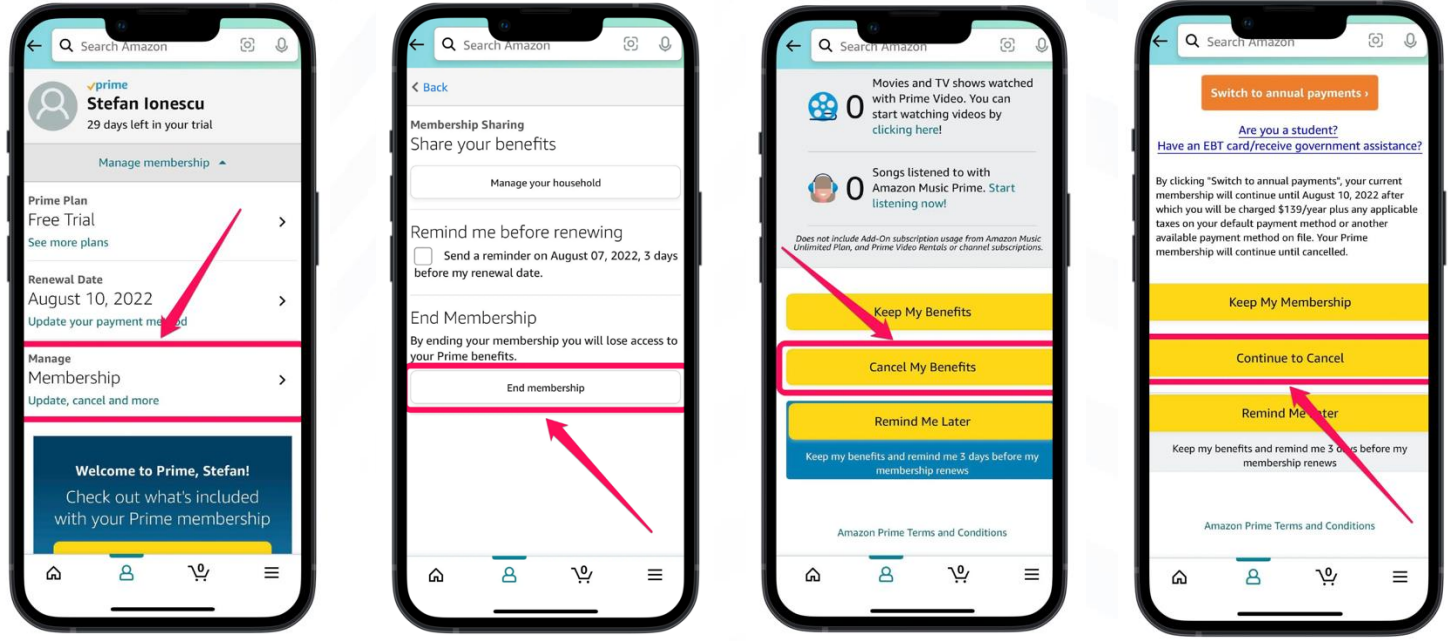
(Source: FTC, 2023)



A "complex and confusing process"

- FTC

(Source: Business Insider, 2024)



41%

“Of [people] said [online shopping] was where they experienced the most dark patterns”

(Source: Dovetail, 2023)



# Auto-cancellation with Netflix

—  
Case study – Proactive cancellation

## Netflix Will Start Automatically Canceling Inactive Accounts

By Todd Spangler ▾



Isopix/Shutterstock

Netflix has started to terminate accounts that people haven't used the service for a year or more.

(Source: Variety, 2020)

Netflix has started to auto-terminate inactive accounts that people haven't used for more than 10 months, to help subscribers save money.



## Netflix Will Start Automatically Canceling Inactive Accounts

By Todd Spangler ▾



Isopix/Shutterstock

Netflix has started to terminate accounts that people haven't used the service for a year or more.

(Source: Variety, 2020)



**“We hope this new approach **saves people some hard-earned cash**”**




Eddie Wu, Director of Product Innovation at Netflix



For Release

# Federal Trade Commission Announces Final “Click-to-Cancel” Rule Making It Easier for Consumers to End Recurring Subscriptions and Memberships

Agency acts after receiving more than 16,000 comments from the public

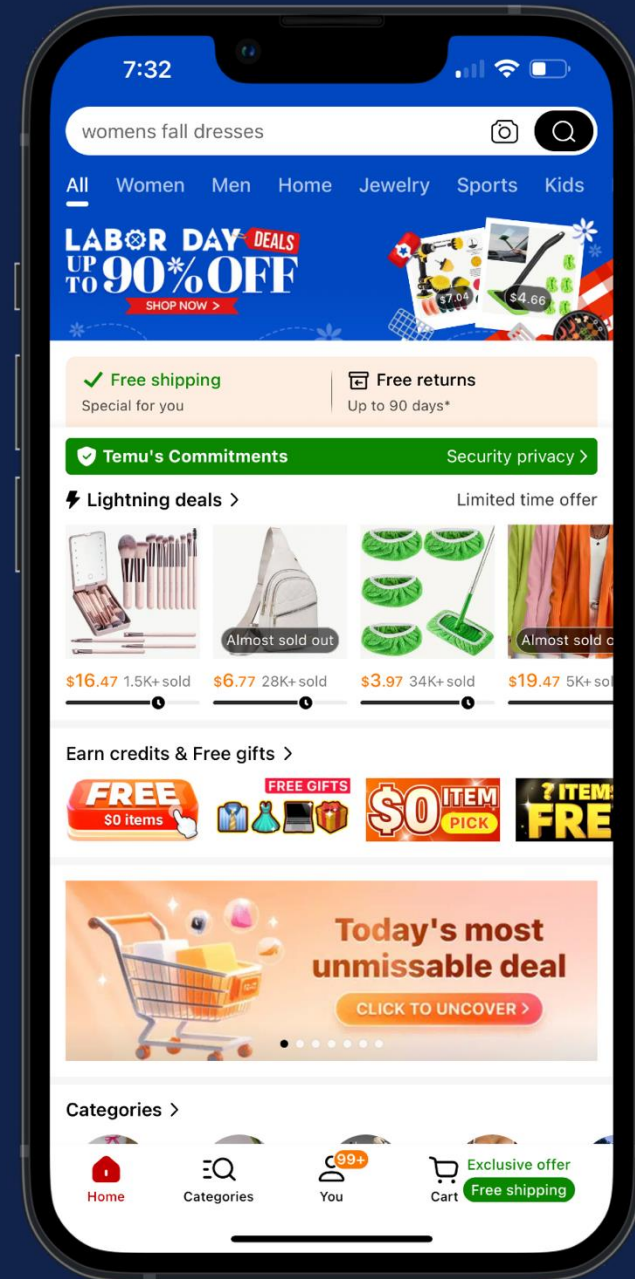
October 16, 2024 |   

(Source: FTC, 2024)



# Anxiety induced shopping with Temu

Case study – Fake scarcity & Fake urgency



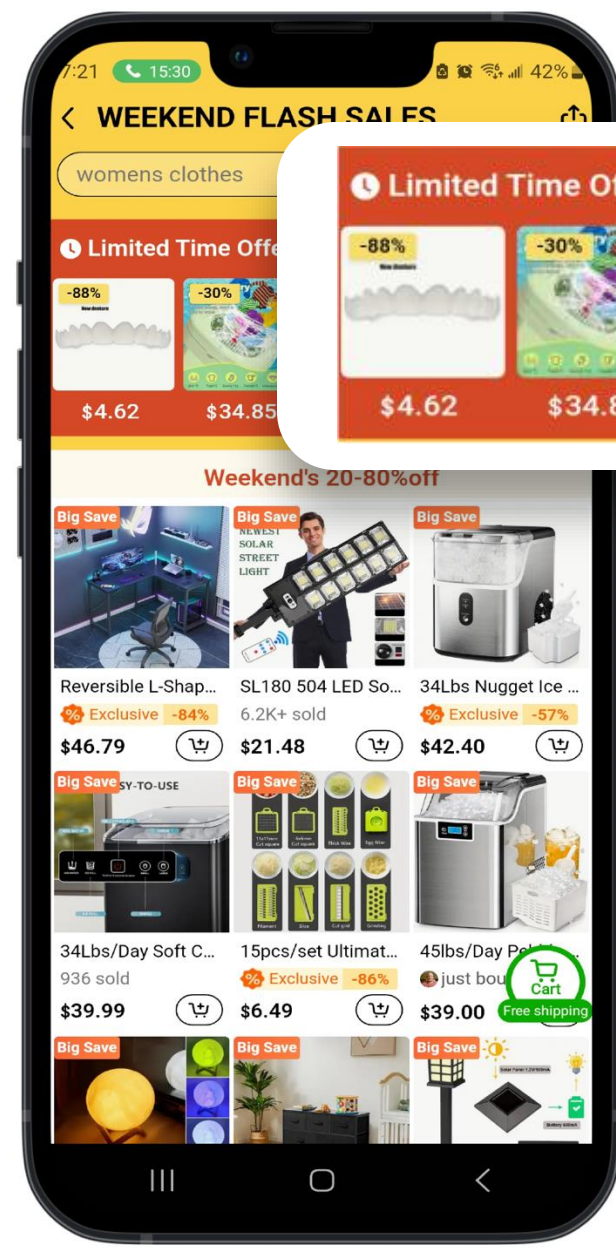
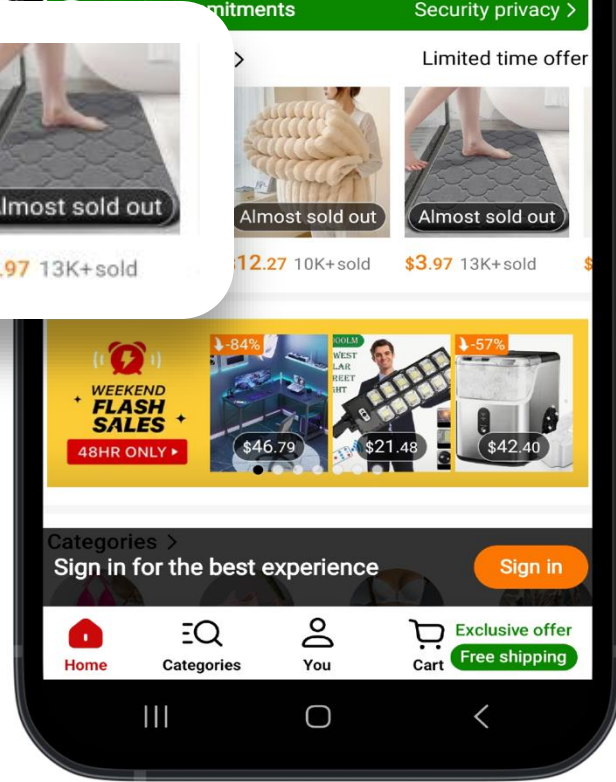
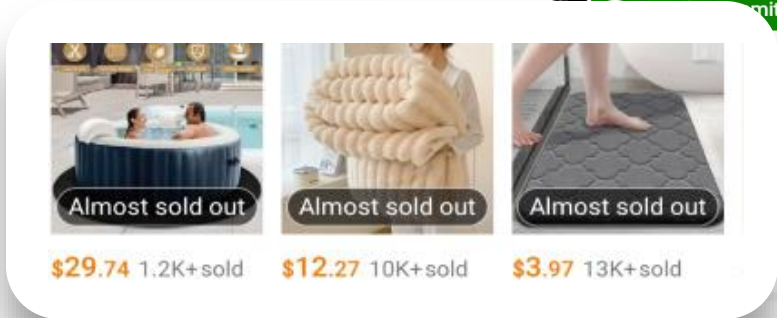
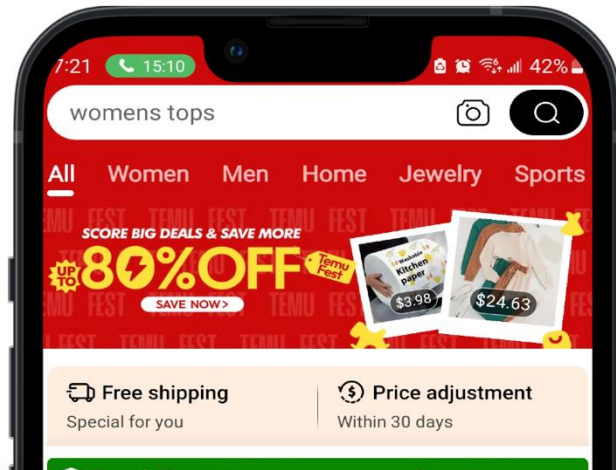
## Fake scarcity

Users are pressured into completing an action because they are presented with a fake indication of limited supply or popularity.

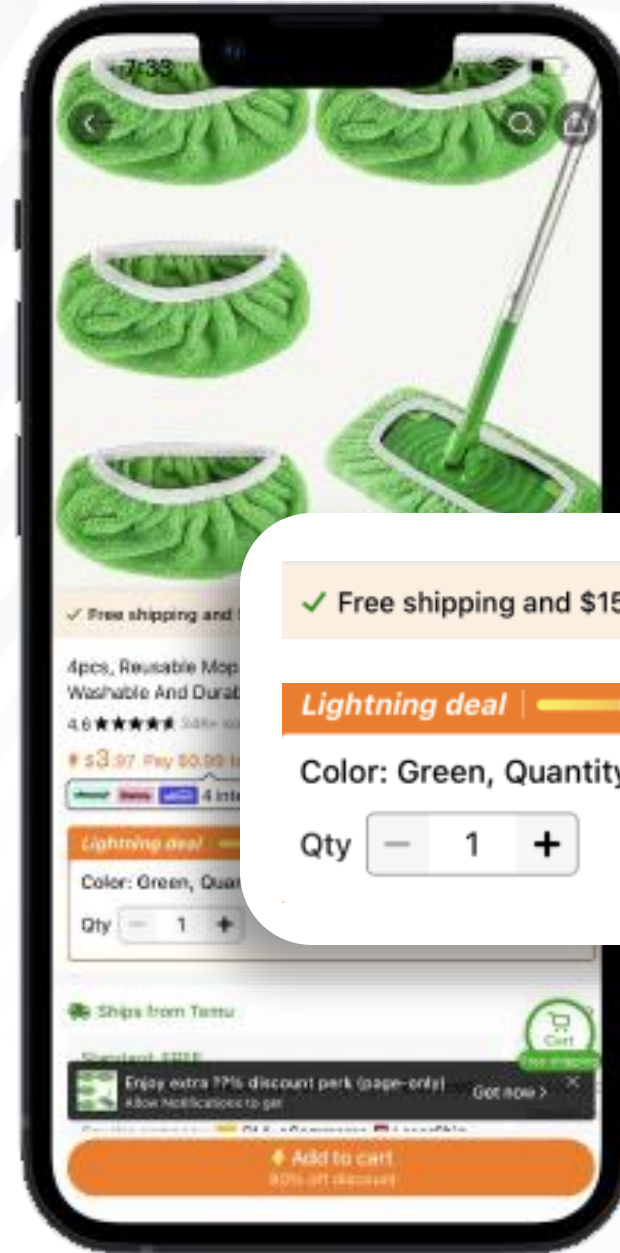


## Fake urgency

Users are pressured into completing an action because they are presented with a fake time limitation.



Temu uses countdown clocks and timers to pressure users into shopping fast when they don't have to.



# 65%

"Of [people] indicated that they had been rushed through an online transaction by notifications urging them to hurry up due to limited supply"

(Source: Dovetail, 2023)



# Slowing down spending habits with DECIEM

Case study – The Ordinary & Slowvember

## Why this affordable beauty brand wants you to buy even less this month

Slow and steady wins the race

Holly Berckelman

3 min read November 2, 2023 - 5:35PM

Our articles are dedicated to helping you find the right product at the right price. We may receive revenue from affiliate and advertising partnerships for sharing this content and when you make a purchase. [Learn more](#)

### More From Beauty



Ghd that 'halves straightening time' now on sale



Our favourite K-beauty buys that 'live up to the hype'



The Ordinary says we could all do with a reminder to slow down. Image: The Ordinary

**While the urge to shop gets stronger at this time of year, The Ordinary is encouraging all of us to be more considered with our purchases.**

(Source: Body+Soul, 2023)



**“Black Friday flash deals can encourage pressured decision-making and rushed purchases, leading to additional waste.”**

DECIEM



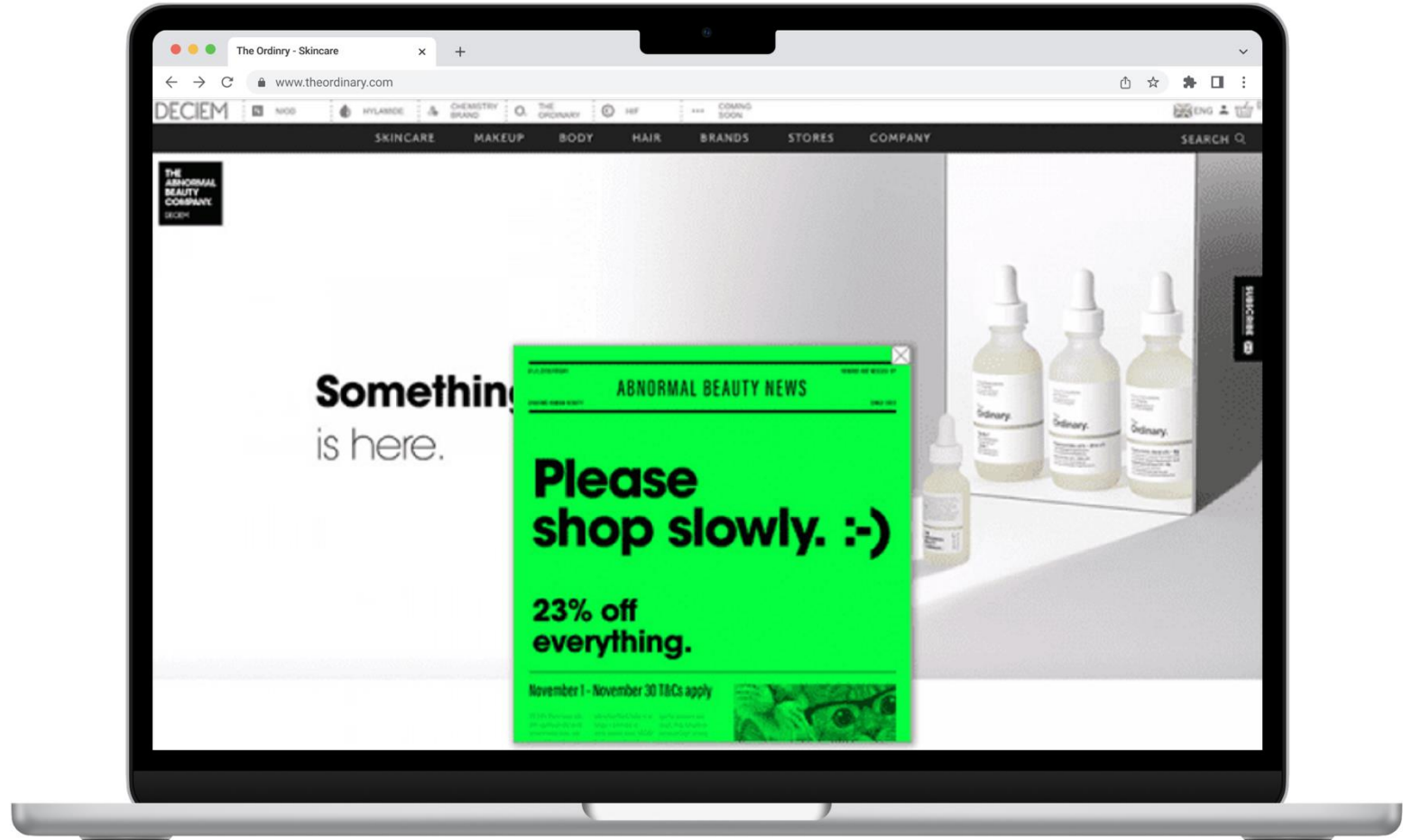
# 1.5 miles

of stacked packaging waste would result if every DECIEM customer bought just one product that wasn't right for them.

(Source: Body and Soul, 2023)



The skincare brand DECIEM encourages customers to think twice before they buy during the holiday season to reduce waste.



(Source: DECIEM, 2020)



# 200 %

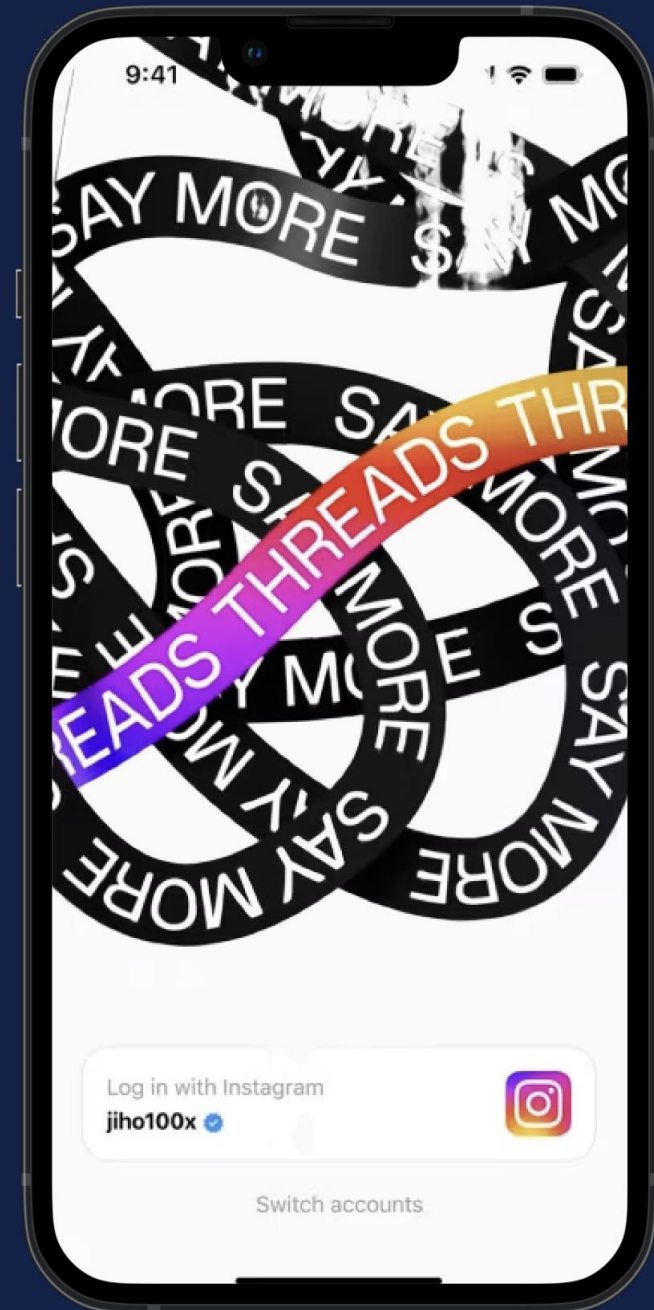
Month-on-month sales increased during DECIEM's "Slowvember" sale in November 2019, with its premium brand NIOD seeing a 400% rise in sales.

(Source: Glossy, 2020)



# Secret data collection from Instagram Threads

Case study – Visual Interference & Trick wording



## Visual Interference

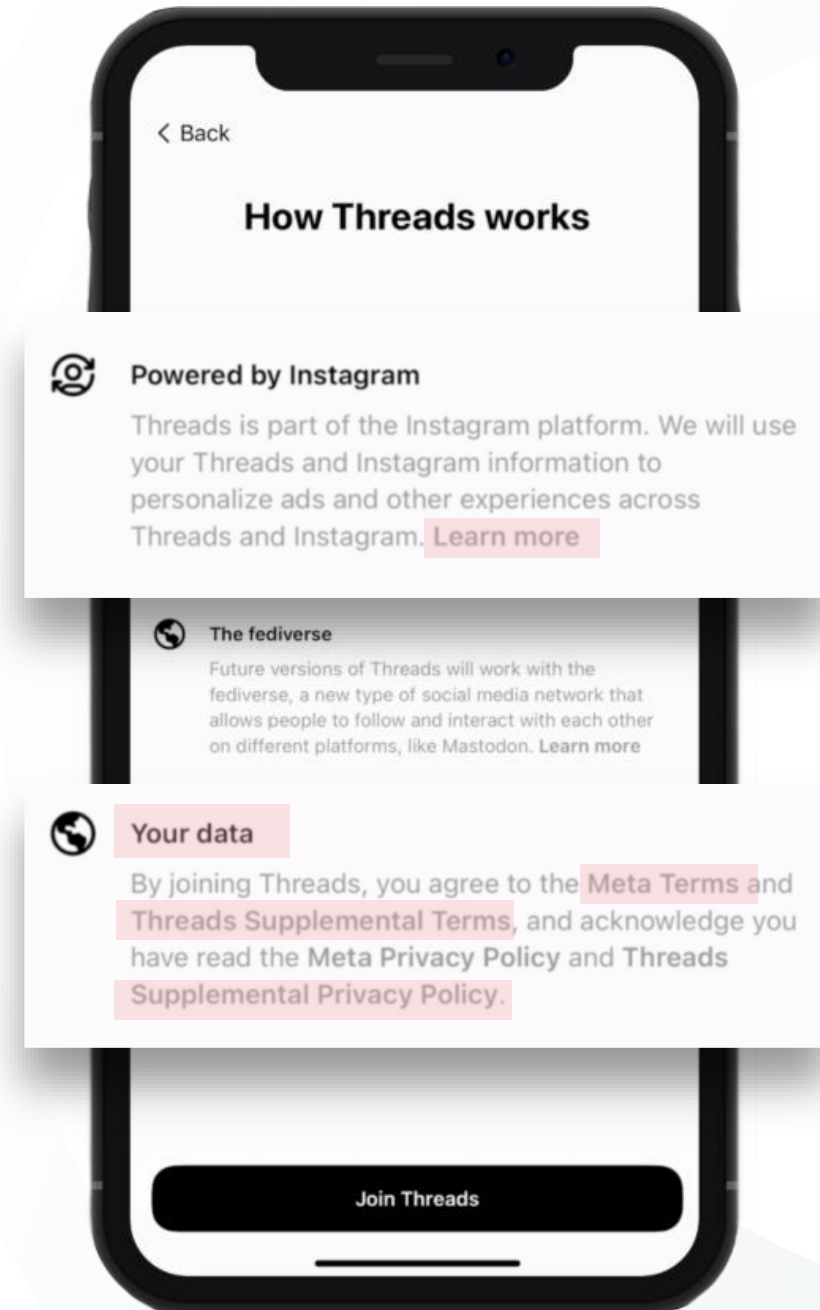
The user **expects to see information presented in a clear and predictable way** on the page, but it is hidden, obscured or disguised.



## Trick wording

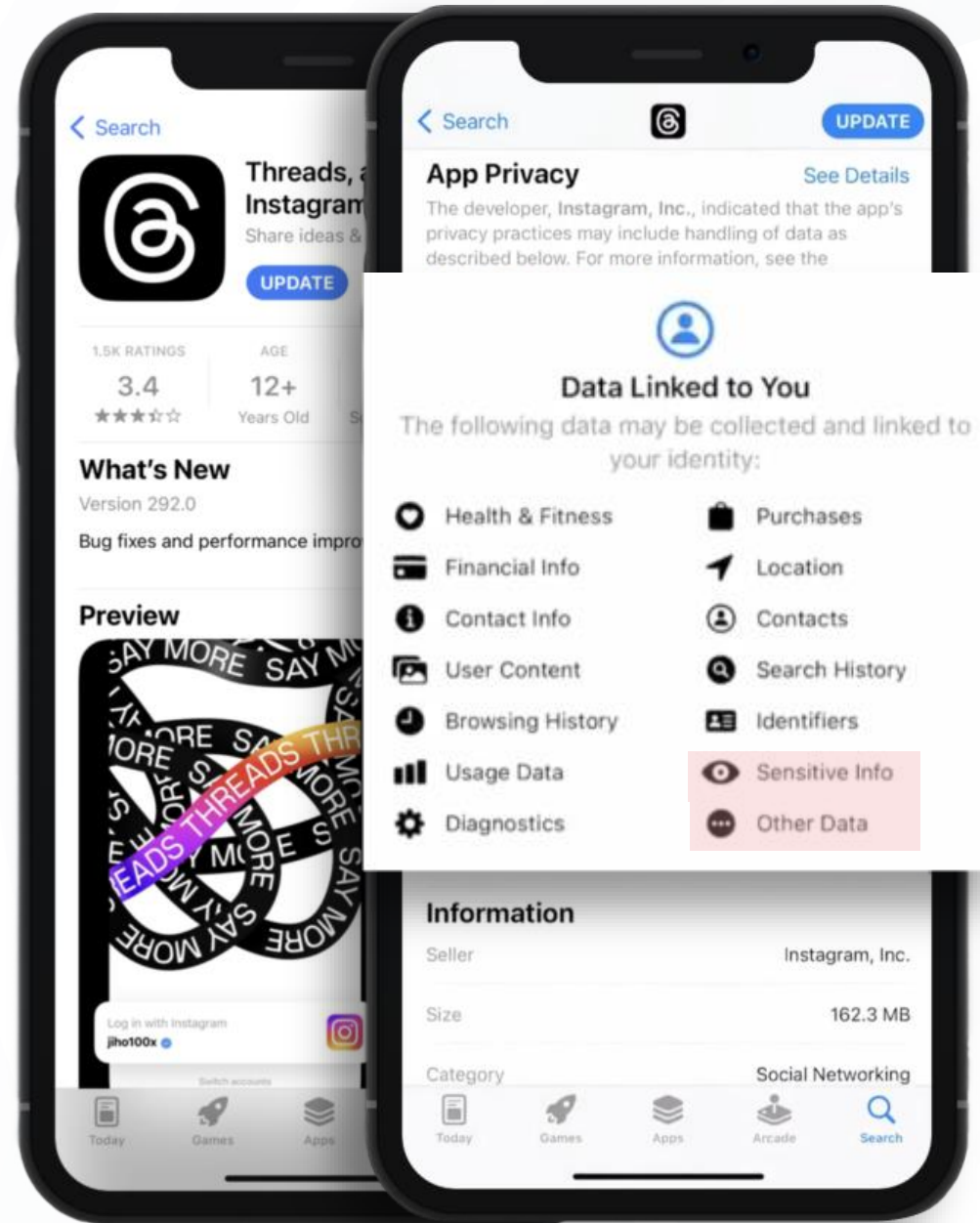
The user is **misled into taking an action**, due to the presentation of confusing or misleading language.

Instagram Threads  
manipulate users  
to handing over their  
data by making the  
information hard to  
see and using vague  
terminology.



(Source: Growth Design, 2024)

Threads does not make it fully clear to users what information is being collected and how it will be used.



(Source: Growth Design, 2024)

Threads does not make it fully clear to users what information is being collected and how it will be used.



## Health and fitness

### Health

Health and medical data, including but not limited to information from the Clinical Health Records API, HealthKit API, and Movement Disorder API, or from health-related human subject research or any other health or medical data that you provide.

### Sensitive info



Such as racial or ethnic data, sexual orientation, pregnancy or childbirth information, disability, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, political opinion, genetic information, or biometric data.

### Credit info

Such as credit score.

### Other financial info

Such as salary, income, assets, debts, or any other financial information.

### User content

#### Emails or text messages

Including subject line, sender, recipients, and contents of the email or message.

### Other usage data

Any other data about your activity in the app.

(Source: Threads Privacy Policy, 2024)

# \$1.3B

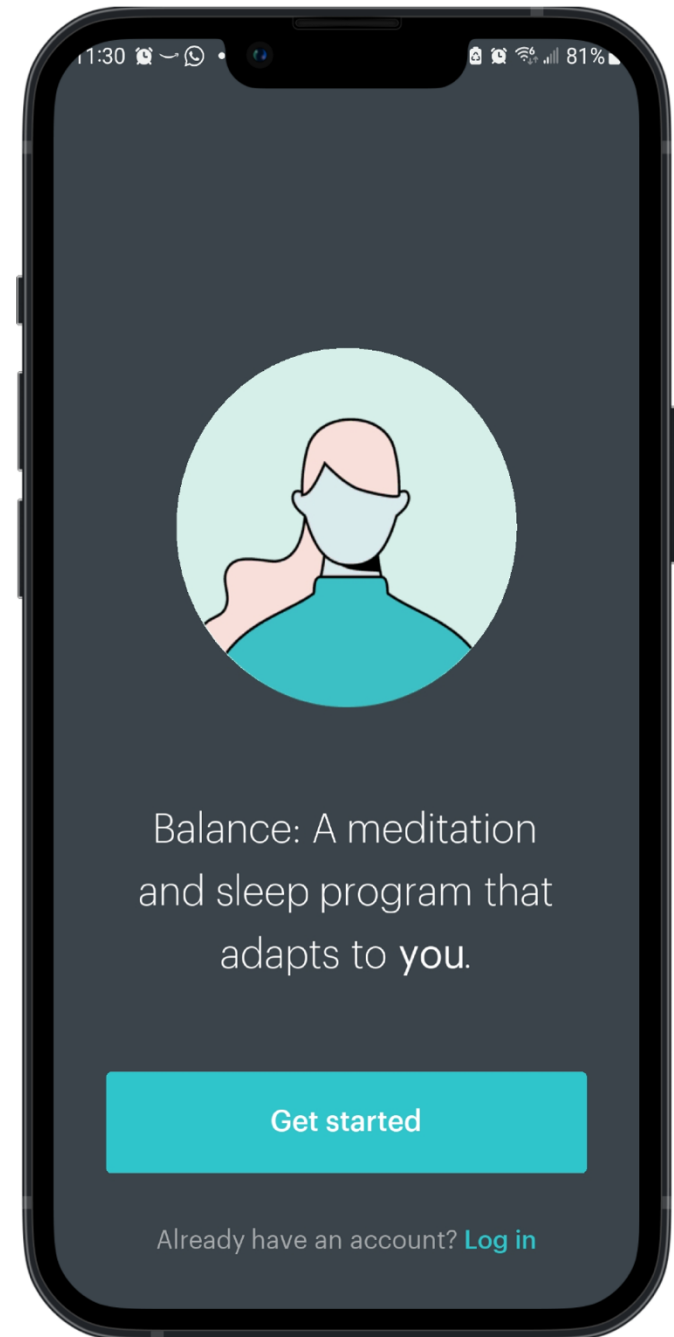
In 2023 Meta was hit with a record breaking 1.3 billion dollar fine for violating the European Union's data privacy regulations

(Source: Reuters, 2023)

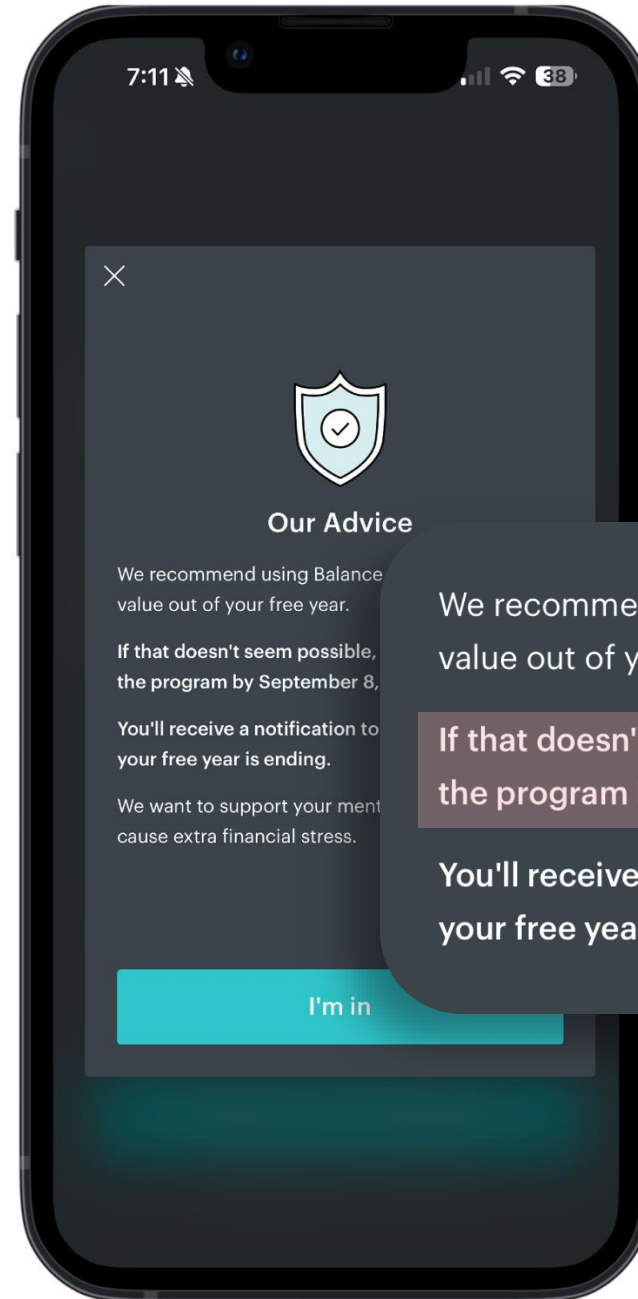


# Mindful & transparent content

Case study – Balance app & Mindfulness



The meditation app Balance lets users know upfront that their app is not for people who cannot commit to it for a full year.



We recommend using Balance consistently to get value out of your free year.

If that doesn't seem possible, you should cancel the program by September 8, 2025.

You'll receive a notification to remind you that your free year is ending.

”

“We want to support [our users] mental wellness, **not causes extra financial stress.**”

Balance meditation



# Guess the Dark Pattern

# Boston Globe

The Boston Globe > Subscriber Customer Service Chat - Click the "B" chat bubble button on bottom right hand corner of the screen. > Customer Service

Articles in this section

## I would like to cancel my subscription.

7 months ago · Updated

**We accept cancellations for digital and home delivery subscriptions by phone only.**

U.S. Residents (Except California): To request a cancellation of your digital subscription, please call us at 1-888-MYGLOBE (694-5623).

Our phone hours are: Monday - Friday: 7:00 am - 8:00 pm  
Saturday - Sunday: 8:00 am - 3:00 pm

California, Virginia, Oregon and Vermont Residents & International Users: To request a cancellation of your digital subscription, please call us at 1-888-MYGLOBE or by email or chat.

You can cancel your subscription at any time. When you cancel, we will stop charging your account the next billing cycle. Billing cycles are determined by the subscription package you purchased. If it is four weeks, your unlimited access will continue for the remainder of the current four-week period. If your billing cycle is longer than 4 weeks, your unlimited access will continue to the end of the billing cycle.

View the full BostonGlobe.com cancellation and refund policy at:  
<http://www.bostonglobe.com/tools/help/terms-purchase>

Nagging

Hard to cancel

Hidden costs

(Source: FTC, 2023)



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Nagging

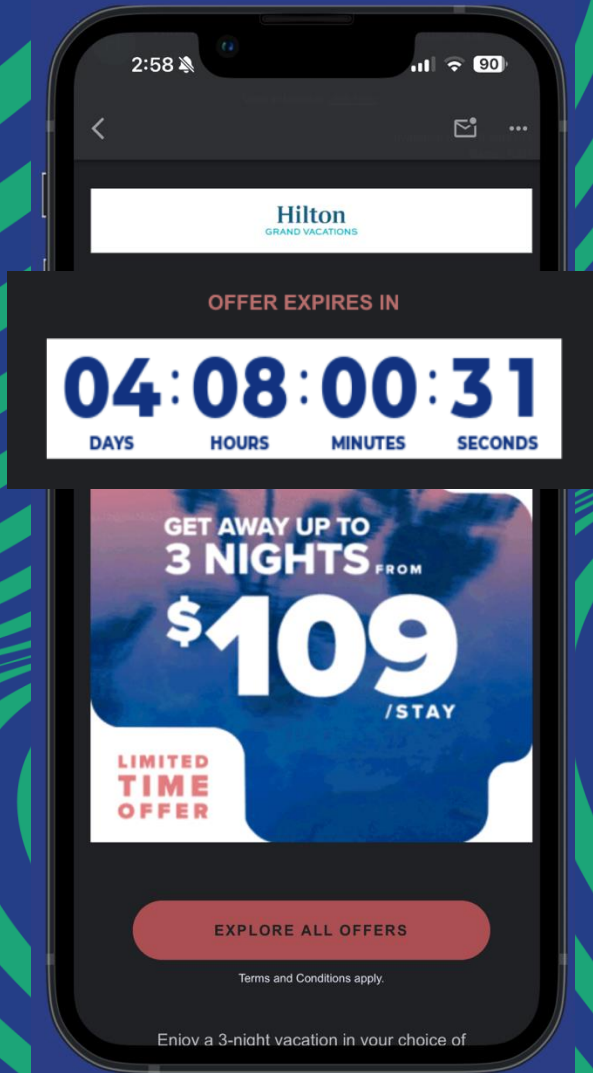
Hard to cancel

Hidden costs

(Source: FTC, 2023)



Hilton



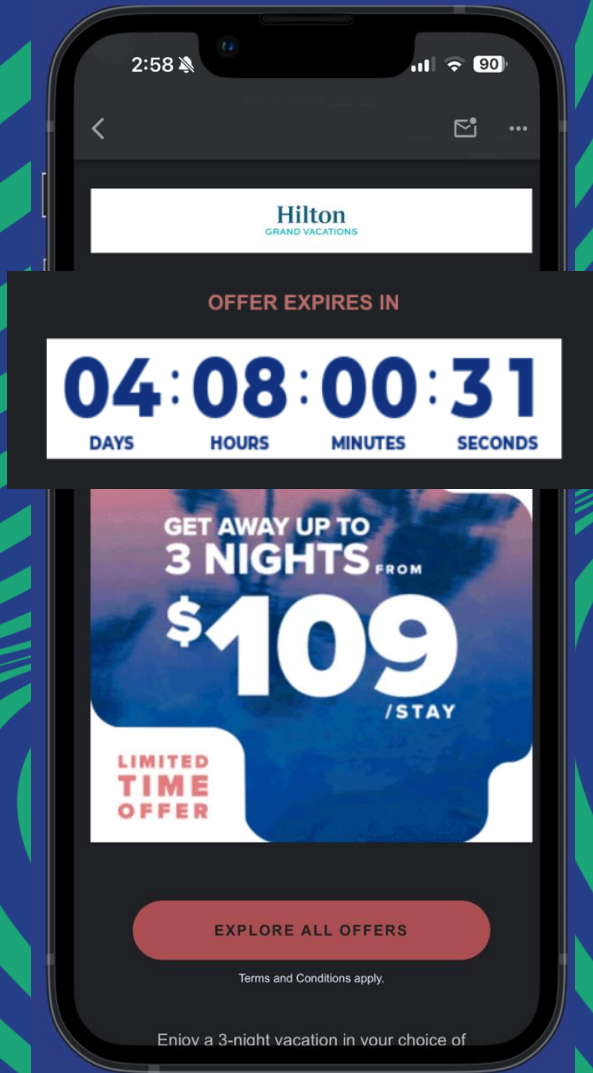
Fake urgency

Obstruction

Trick wording

(Source: Hilton, 2024)

Hilton



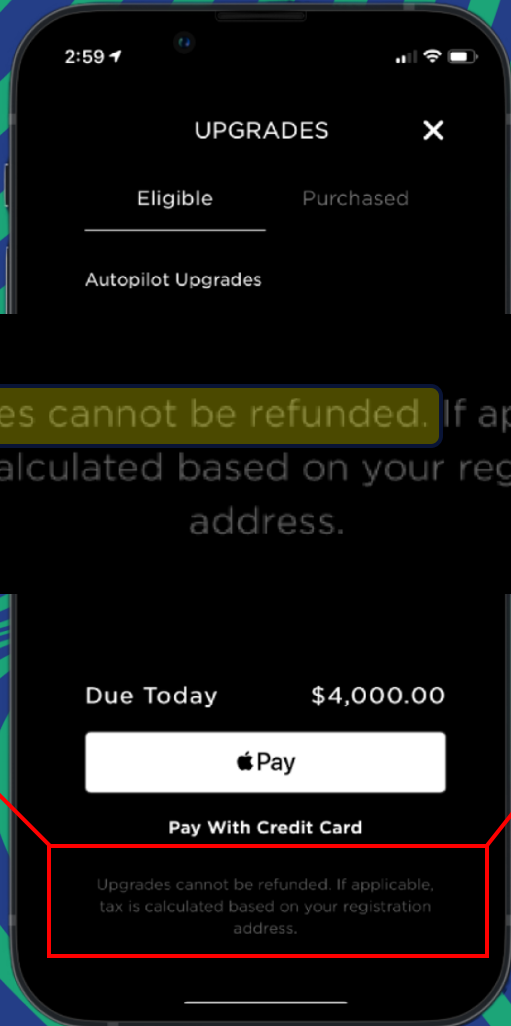
Fake urgency

Obstruction

Trick wording

(Source: Hilton, 2024)

Tesla



Upgrades cannot be refunded. If applicable, tax is calculated based on your registration address.

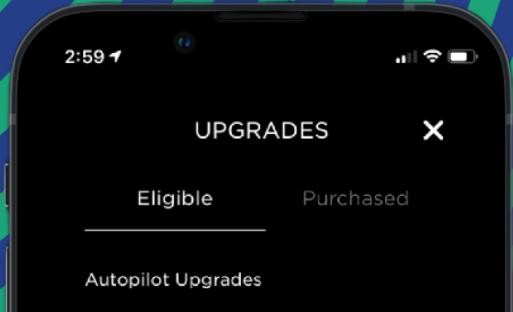
Trick wording

Visual interference

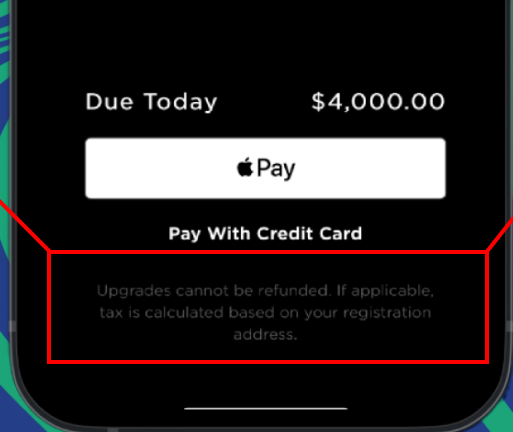
Forced action

(Source: Deceptive patterns, 2023)

Tesla



Upgrades cannot be refunded. If applicable, tax is calculated based on your registration address.



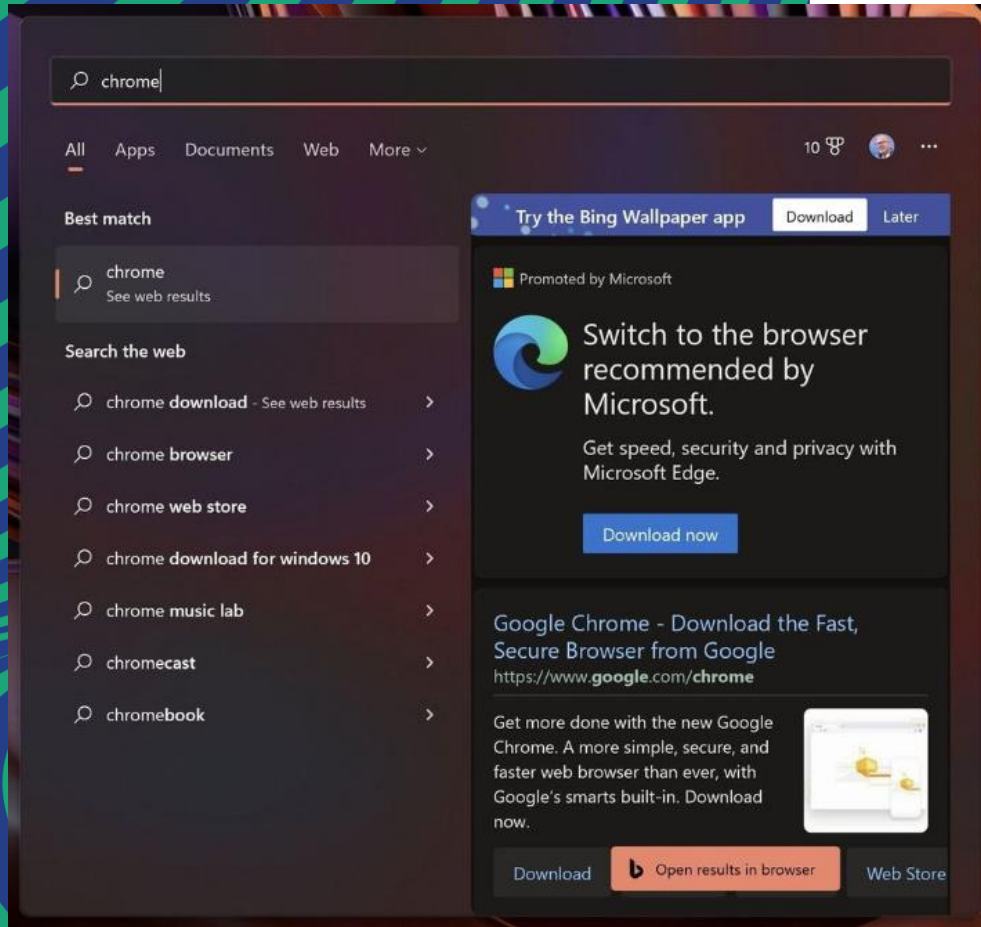
Trick wording

Visual interference

Forced action

(Source: Deceptive patterns, 2023)

Microsoft



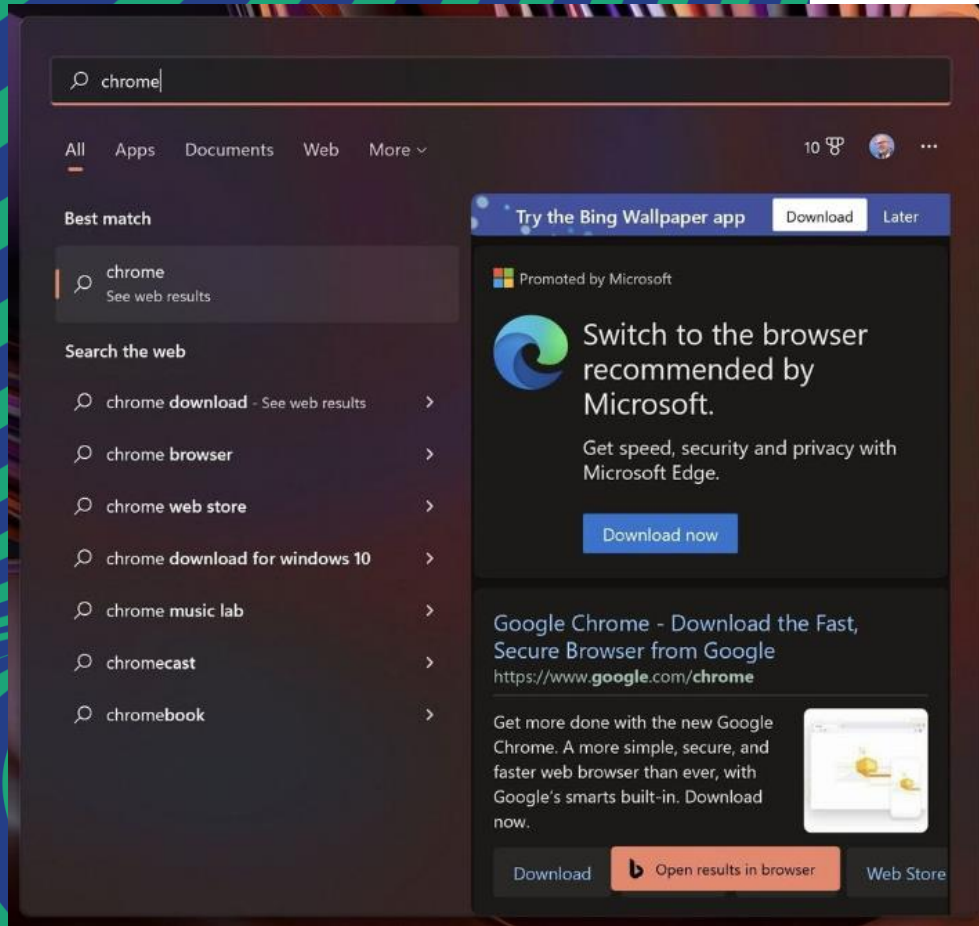
Nagging

Forced action

Disguised ads

(Source: Hall of shame, 2022)

# Microsoft



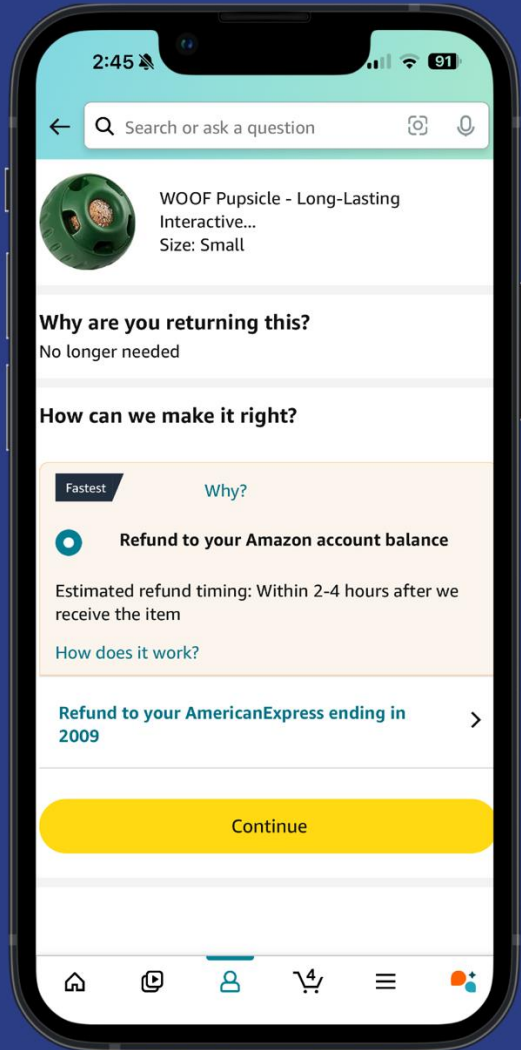
Nagging

Forced action

Disguised ads

(Source: Hall of shame, 2022)

Amazon



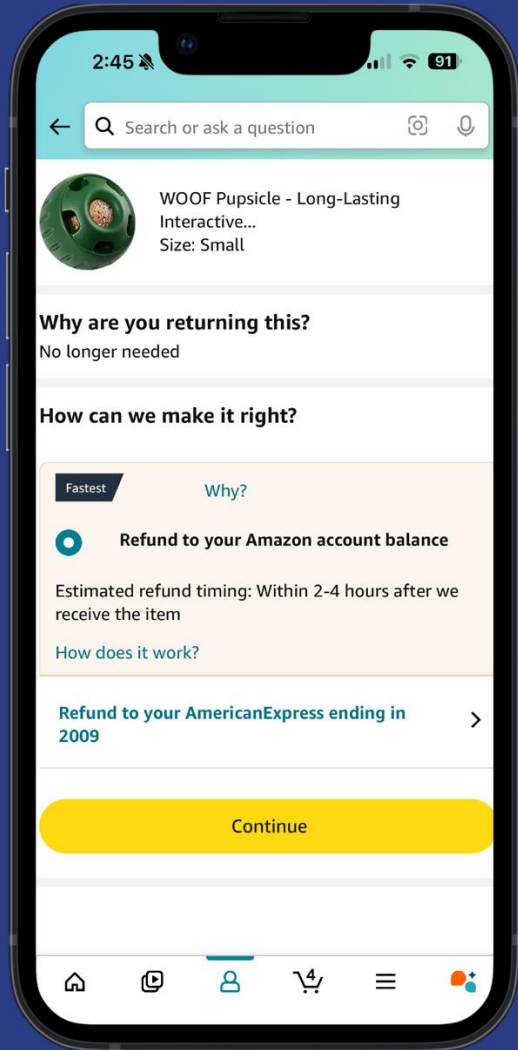
Confirm  
shaming

Preselection

Obstruction

(Source: Amazon, 2024)

Amazon



Confirm  
shaming

Preselection

Obstruction

(Source: Amazon, 2024)

IndiGo



## Get Travel Assistance at @159

Protect your trip with travel assistance and Get Medical ,Travel , Lifestyle , Roadside Assistance , Complimentary Travel Insurance including hospitalization also for Covid-19.

NO, I will take risk

**Yes, secure my trip**

By Clicking on "Yes, Secure my trip", I agree to purchase Travel Assistance and agree to all [T&Cs](#). & I confirm that I am an Indian citizen upto the age of 70 years.

Powered by



Confirm  
shaming

Preselection

Trick wording

(Source: X, 2023)

IndiGo



## Get Travel Assistance at @159

Protect your trip with travel assistance and Get Medical ,Travel , Lifestyle , Roadside Assistance , Complimentary Travel Insurance including hospitalization also for Covid-19.

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Confirm  
shaming

Preselection

Trick wording

(Source: X, 2023)



**How do we avoid dark patterns?**



**Practice ethical design.**

# Ethical Design



**Ethical design refers to design that resists manipulative patterns, respects data privacy, encourages co-design, and is accessible and human-centered.**

(Source: Stephen Gossett, Built In)

## Human centered designs

- Focus on the user needs and wants
- Prioritize usability and functionality
- Empathize with the user



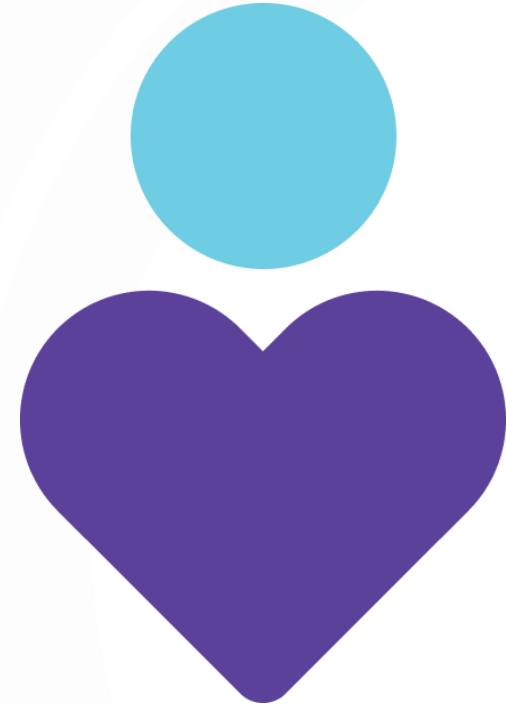
## Human centered designs

- Focus on the user needs and wants
- Prioritize usability and functionality
- Empathize with the user



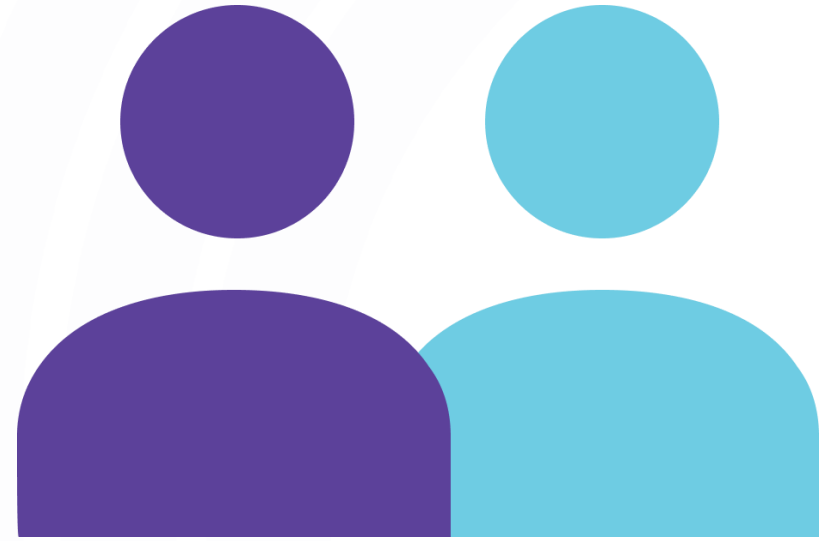
## Human centered designs

- Focus on the user needs and wants
- Prioritize usability and functionality
- Empathize with the user



## Transparent designs

- Communicate to the user
- Build trust and relationships
- Be honest with the user



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## Inclusive designs

- Design for the extreme users
- Accessible designs
- Actively seek feedback



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## Inclusive designs

- Design for the extreme users
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# Takeaways

# What dark patterns are

Interface designs that manipulate or deceive users into actions they might not have intended.



# Why dark patterns matter

## Users impacts

- Financial loss
- Privacy & security
- Mental health risks

## Businesses impacts

- Loss of trust
- Loss of revenue
- Legal risks



# How to avoid dark patterns

## Design ethically

Be human centered | Be transparent | Be inclusive



**Thank You!**

# Reference

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