

ECSS 2025

21st European Informatics Leaders Summit

Ethics Workgroup Workshop

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Co-organized by



Dark Patterns



Ethics WG

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What are Dark Patterns?

- Some websites use tricks to make people agree to share more data than they intended to, or to spend more money than they planned to.
- User Interface experts got together and categorized a number of these tricks that are commonly found on websites, and called them *Dark Patterns*.

Gray, et al. (2018) defined them as “instances where designers use their knowledge of human behavior (e.g., psychology) and the desires of end users to implement deceptive functionality that is not in the user’s best interest”

Why are they called that?

- Dark Patterns get their name from an existing concept in computer science called *Design Patterns*.
- Design patterns are a series of general, reusable solutions to a commonly occurring computer programming problems.
- They generally refer to the style of the computer program itself, whereas Dark Patterns focus on the Interface.
- Mathur *et al.* (2019) did a meta-analysis of 11,286 shopping websites and created a taxonomy to try to explain how dark patterns affects user decision-making by **exploiting cognitive biases**.

- ✓ Dark Patterns deceptively get people to give their data and money away.
- ✓ You or a family member are vulnerable to these misleading interfaces.
No matter how careful you are, some are extremely effective.

Dark Patterns: **Types of Patterns**

Types of Dark Patterns

- Trick questions
- Sneak into Basket
- Roach Motel
- Privacy Zuckering
- Price Comparison Prevention
- Misdirection
- Hidden Costs
- Bait and Switch
- Confirmshaming
- Disguised Ads
- Forced Continuity
- Friend Spam

<https://darkpatterns.org/types-of-dark-pattern.html>

Trick Questions

This is very common when registering with a service. Typically, a series of checkboxes is shown, and the meaning checkboxes is alternated so that ticking the first one means "opt out" and the second means "opt in".

Please enter your details to reserve your item(s)

Title :

First name * :

Last name * :

Email * :

Phone number * :

☐ Please do not send me details of products and offers from Currys.co.uk

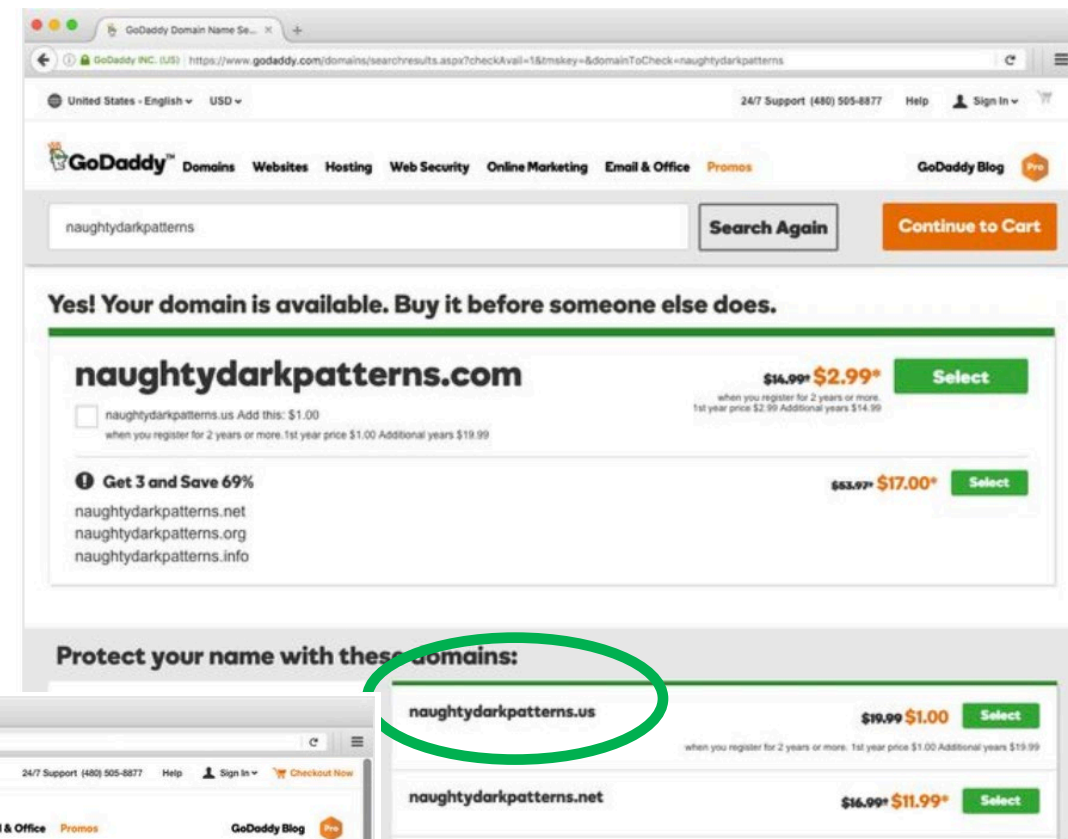
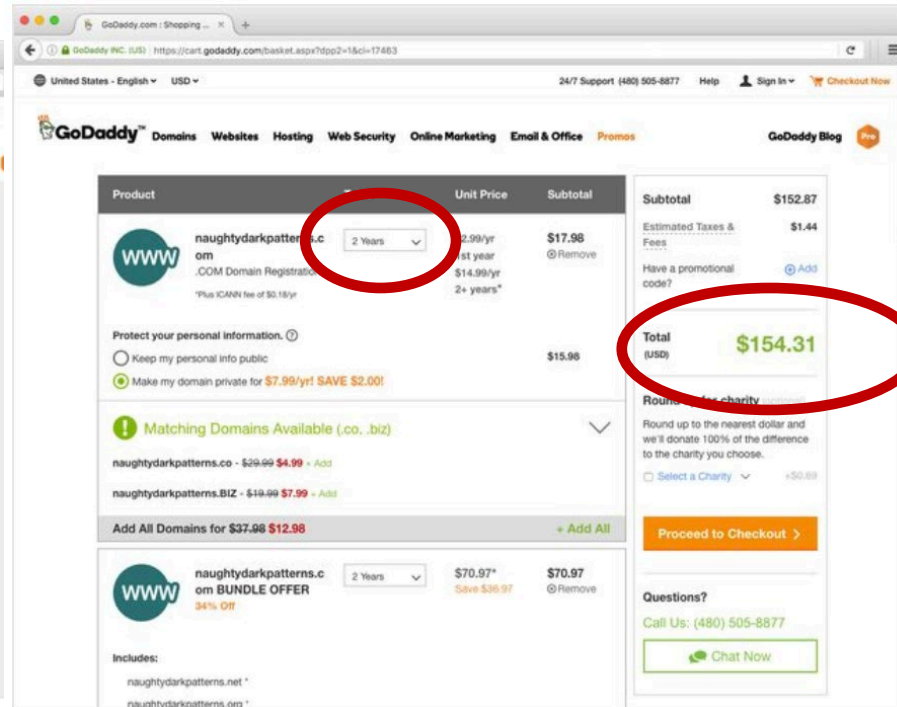
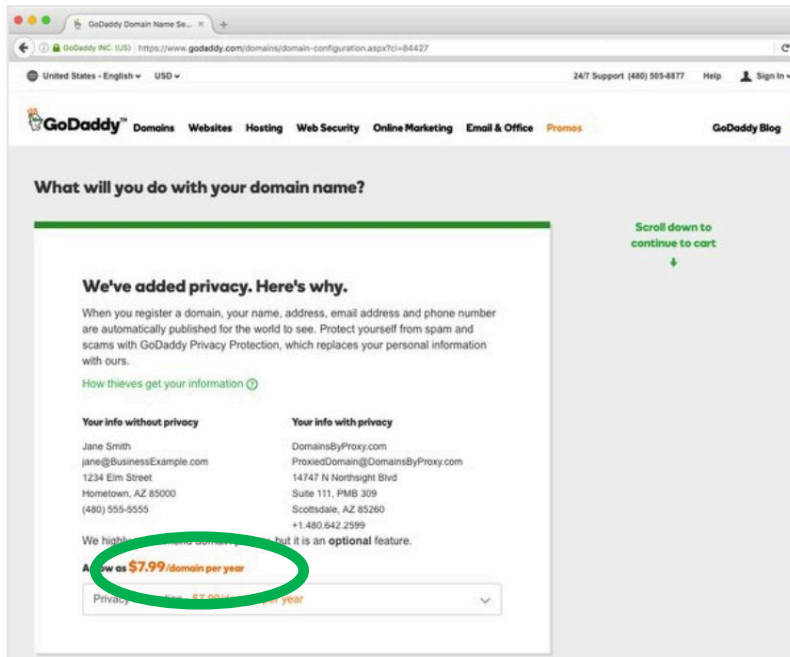
☐ Please send me details of products and offers from third party organisations recommended by Currys.co.uk

Reserve items



Sneak into Basket

You attempt to purchase something, but somewhere in the purchasing journey the site sneaks an additional item into your basket, often through the use of an opt-out radio button or checkbox on a prior page.



Roach Motel

The screenshot shows the checkout page on <https://www.livenation.com/checkout/order>. The page layout includes a header with the site name, a navigation bar, and a main content area. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Price Details:** A table showing the subtotal, tickets/items, standard mail (allow 10 to 14 days for delivery), and total charges. The subtotal and total charges are redacted with black boxes.
- Select Payment Method:** A section with options for Gift Card, Voucher Code, and Age Restrictions. It also includes Shipping & Billing Restrictions.
- Privacy Information:** A section with a checkbox to decline the bonus subscription to Rolling Stone Magazine. This checkbox is circled in red.
- Protect Your Ticket Purchase - Allianz Global Assistance:** A section with text about Event Ticket Insurance from Allianz Global Assistance for an additional \$7.00 per ticket.

The checkbox for declining the bonus subscription is the 'trick question' mentioned in the text, as it is not clearly highlighted and is placed in a section that is not immediately obvious to the user.

- When purchasing tickets, *livenation.com* tries to sneak a subscription to a magazine (into your basket via a **trick question** on the checkout page).
- Note that the design is "opt out" - the purchase is made for you automatically unless you notice the checkbox and realise you need to tick it to opt out.

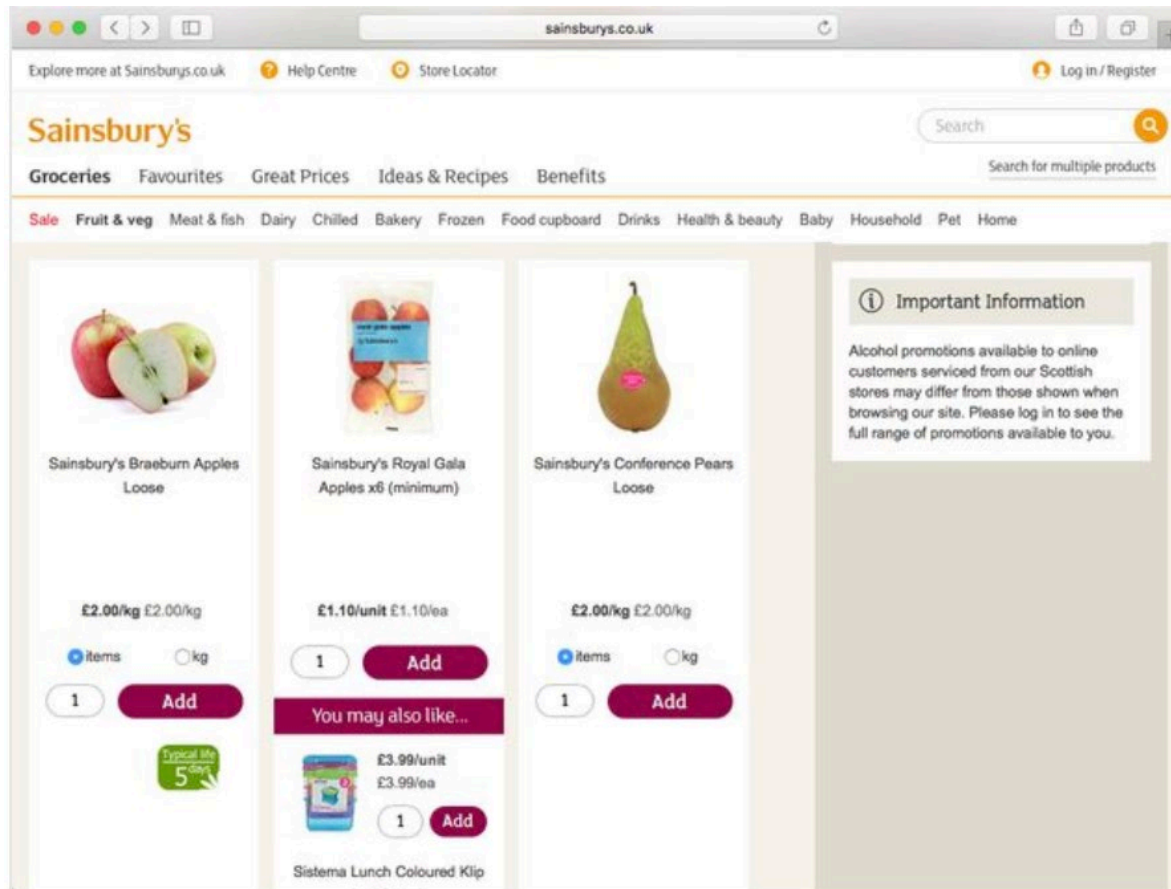


Privacy Zuckering

- You are tricked into publicly sharing more information about yourself than you really intended to. Named by **Tim Jones** as a homage to Facebook CEO Mark **Zuckerberg**.
- In its early days, Facebook had a reputation for making it difficult for users to control their privacy settings and generally making it very easy to "overshare" by mistake. In response to feedback from consumers and privacy groups, Facebook has created a clearer, easier to use privacy settings area.

Price Comparison Prevention

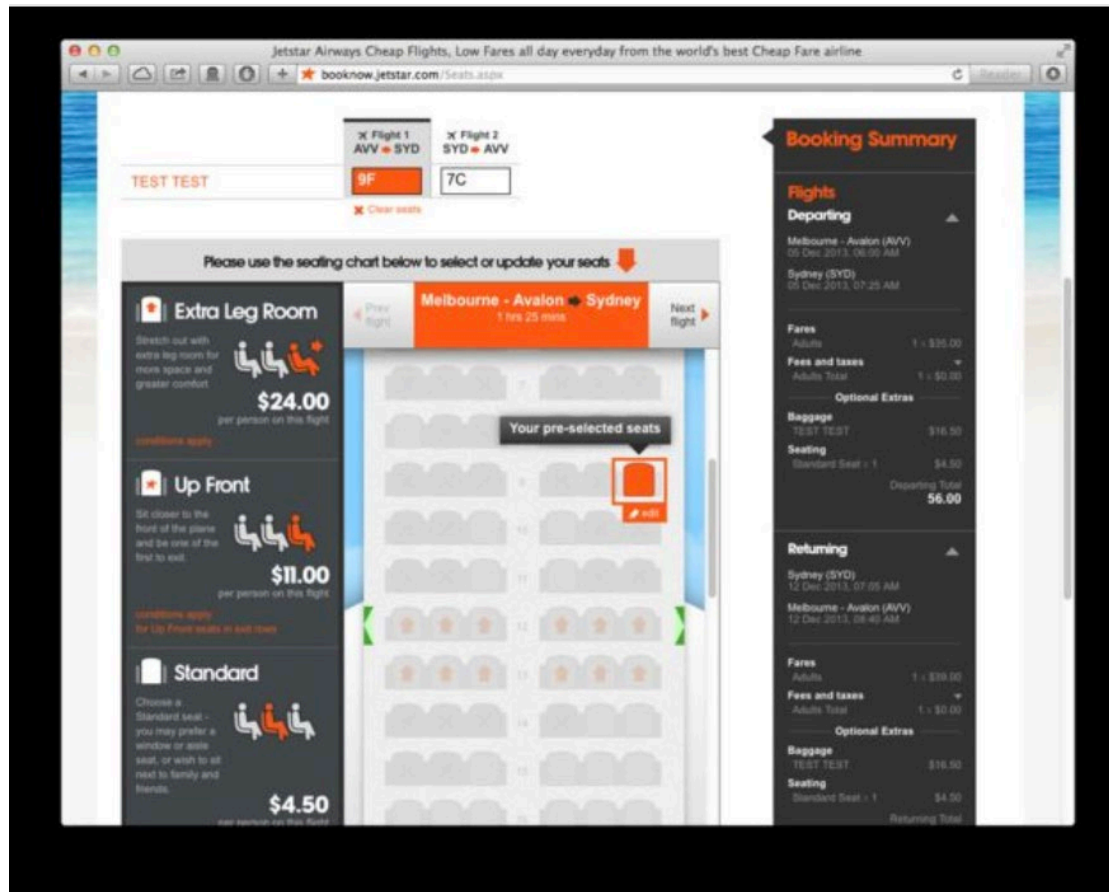
The retailer makes it hard for you to compare the price of an item with another item, so you cannot make an informed decision.



- Retailers typically achieve this by creating different bundles where it is not easy work out the unit price of the items within the bundles.
- In the Sainsbury's website, it is not possible to compare the price of the first item to the second item.

Misdirection

The design purposefully focuses your attention on one thing in order to distract you attention from another.



- On **jetstar.com**, when this page loads, they have already preselected a random seat for you.
- They use word-play trickery, as a "preselected" random seat here costs \$5, but if you opt out via the tiny "skip seat selection" link at the bottom of the page, you're assigned a random seat without the \$5 charge.

Hidden Costs

You get to the last step of the checkout process, only to discover some unexpected charges have appeared, e.g. delivery charges, tax, etc.

ProFlowers
Flowers • Plants • Gifts
Need Help? 800.330.2584

Our Brands Account Cart

Search Keyword / Item #


Birthday • Sympathy • Occasion • Flowers • Plants • Gourmet • Specials • International • Same Day • Blog

Can't complete your order now? [Sign in](#) to save your cart for later.

Shopping Cart

CONTINUE SHOPPING

PROCEED TO CHECKOUT

Product	Price	Qty	Total
 Birthday Frills Delivery date: Fri, Dec 30 Change	\$34.99	1	\$34.99

Remove Item

Special Codes [?](#)

Enter Code [APPLY](#)

Subtotal: **\$34.99**

Subtotal does not include tax and shipping, handling and service charges, which will be calculated during checkout. You can review the final total before submitting your order.

Flowers
888.776.9964

GIFT OPTIONS GIFT MESSAGE SIGN IN DELIVERY PAYMENT INFO REVIEW

SECURE CHECKOUT

You're Almost Done! Click "Confirm Order Now"

For Delivery To: Matt Damon
Delivery Date: 12/30/2016

[CONFIRM ORDER NOW](#)

[CONFIRM ORDER & CONTINUE SHOPPING](#)

By placing your order, you agree to our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms Of Use](#)

Delivery Information:

Recipient: [Edit](#)
 Matt Damon
 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
 Washington, DC 20500
 759-823-9855

Card Message: [Edit](#)
 No card message included
 Gift will be sent anonymously


Delivery Information: [Edit](#)
 Fri, Dec 30th

Delivery Type: [Edit](#)
 Standard Delivery

Billing Information:

Billing Address: [Edit](#)
 Matt Damon
 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
 Washington, DC, 20500
 759-823-9855
 test@example.com

Special Codes: [?](#)
 [+] Click here to enter your code(s)

Payment Information:
 ending in 5100

Birthday Frills

Gift options selected: [Edit](#)
 None

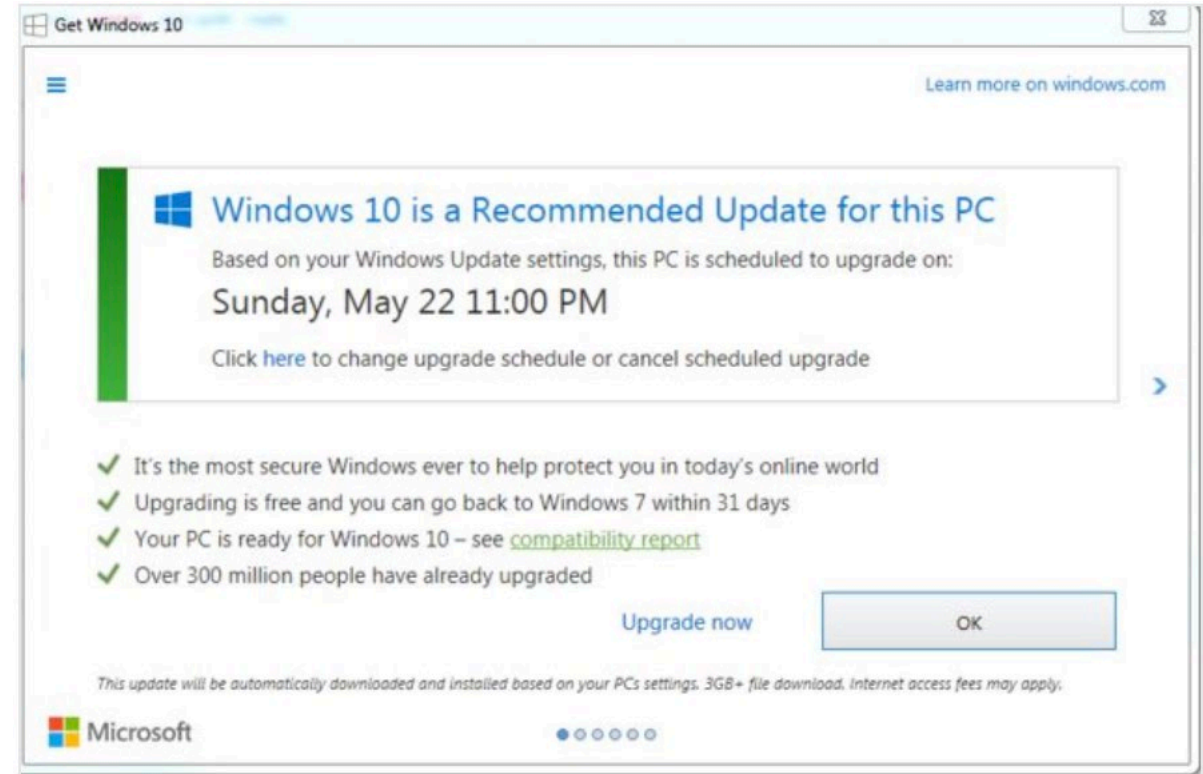
Order Total

Birthday Frills	\$34.99
Standard Delivery	\$14.99
Delivery Rebate	
Care & Handling	\$2.99
Taxes	\$0.00
Order Total	\$52.97

[CONFIRM ORDER NOW](#)

Ethics 4EU Bait & Switch

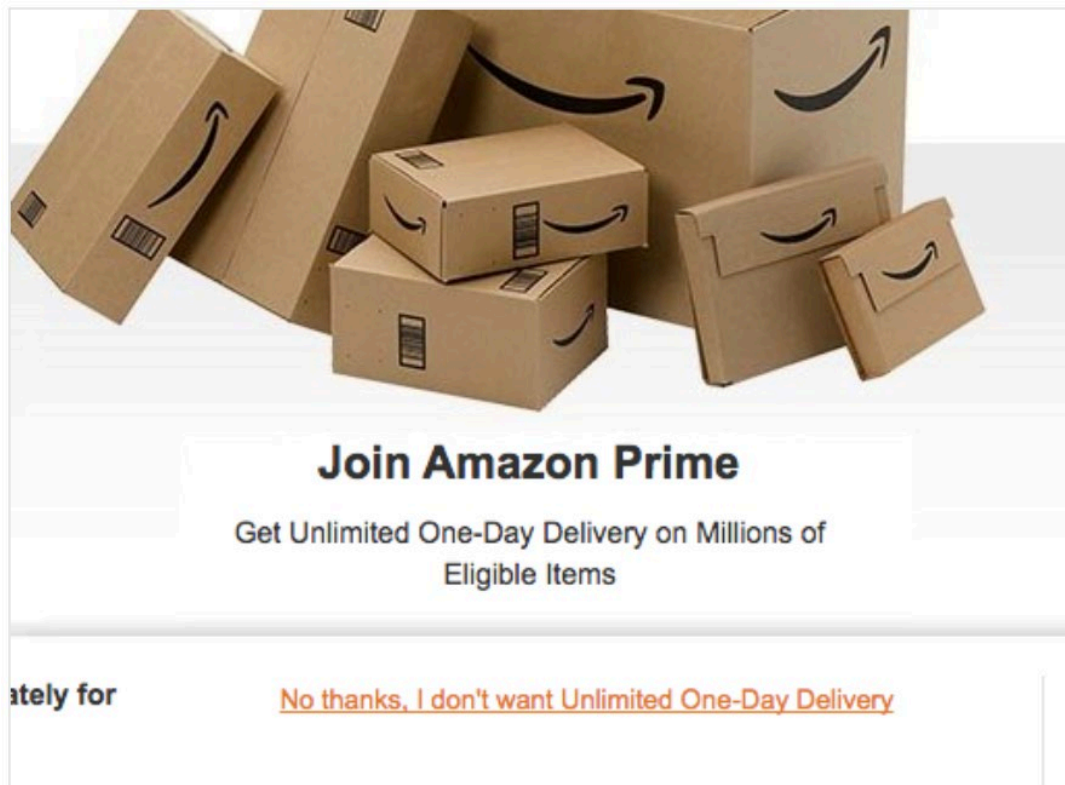
- The user sets out to do one thing, but a different, undesirable thing happens instead.
- The most famous example of digital bait and switch was Microsoft's misguided approach to getting people to upgrade their computers to Windows 10.



They switched the meaning of the “X” button at the top right to mean the opposite of what it normally means. In all other versions of Windows going back to the 1980s, this button means “close”. In this specific instance, they changed it to mean “Yes, I do want to upgrade my computer to Windows 10”.

Confirmshaming

Confirmshaming is the act of guilt-tripping the user into opting in to something. The option to decline is worded in such a way as to shame the user into compliance.



- ➡ Amazon uses confirmshaming to guilt users and discourage them from opting out.

Disguised Ads

Adverts that are disguised as other kinds of content or navigation, in order to get you to click on them.

- Softpedia often run advertisements that look like a download button, tricking users into clicking on the ads rather than getting the thing they wanted.
- The real download link is at the top left of the page. The disguised ads are highlighted in red.



MÁS NOTICIAS

La guerra de los minerales

China asfixia a Occidente al endurecer las exportaciones de las tierras raras

Pekín congela la mitad de las solicitudes europeas y Trump se apoya en Australia

PIERGIORGIO M. SANDRI

- Por qué las tierras raras son piezas clave de la economía moderna
- Washington baraja represalias, desde el software hasta las minas de cuarzo



Vídeo del día
Dos highliners cruzan la cuerda floja de Waterval Boven y baten el récord continental

Una noche en la Tierra
IA, la madre de todas las burbujas

RAMON AYMERICH

BOSCH
Sèche-linge avec Iron Assist

Réduisez votre corvée de repassage

En savoir plus

Des technologies pour la vie



Publicidad



Error sanitario

Miles de personas protestan en Sevilla por

¿Es más progresista ser peaton?

Blues urbano

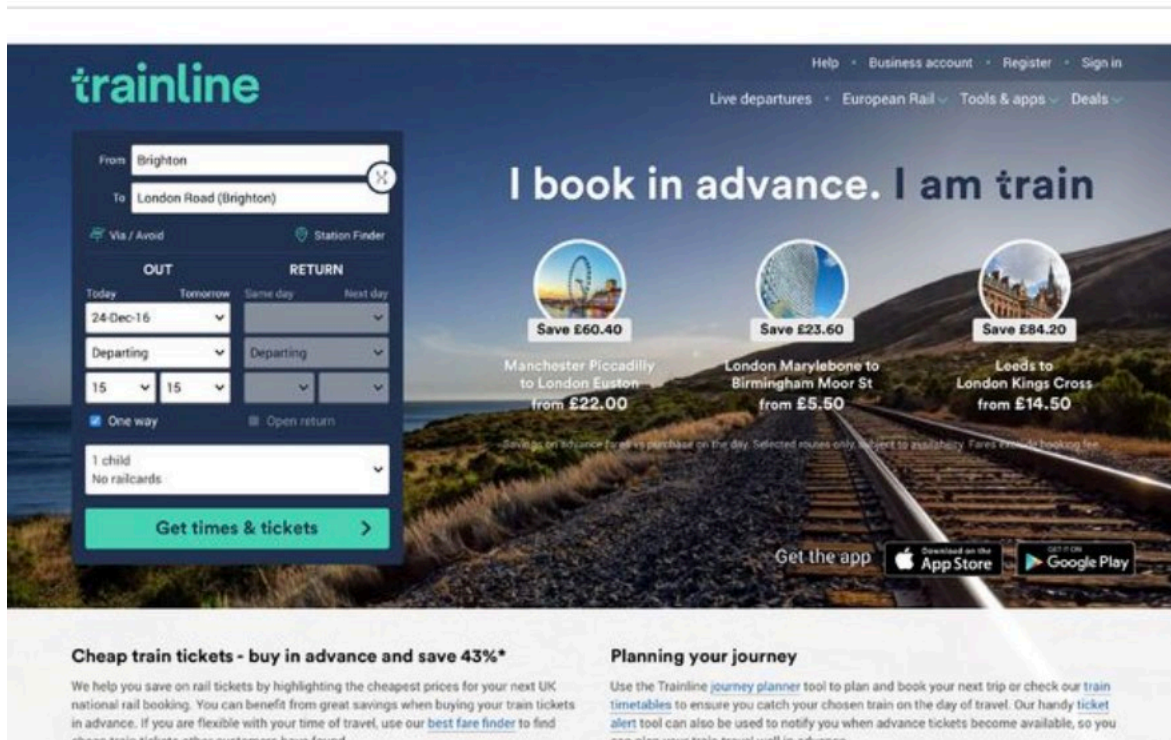
¿Es más progresista ser

Salud

Amiloidosis cardiaca: infradiagnosticada e infratratada, pero con

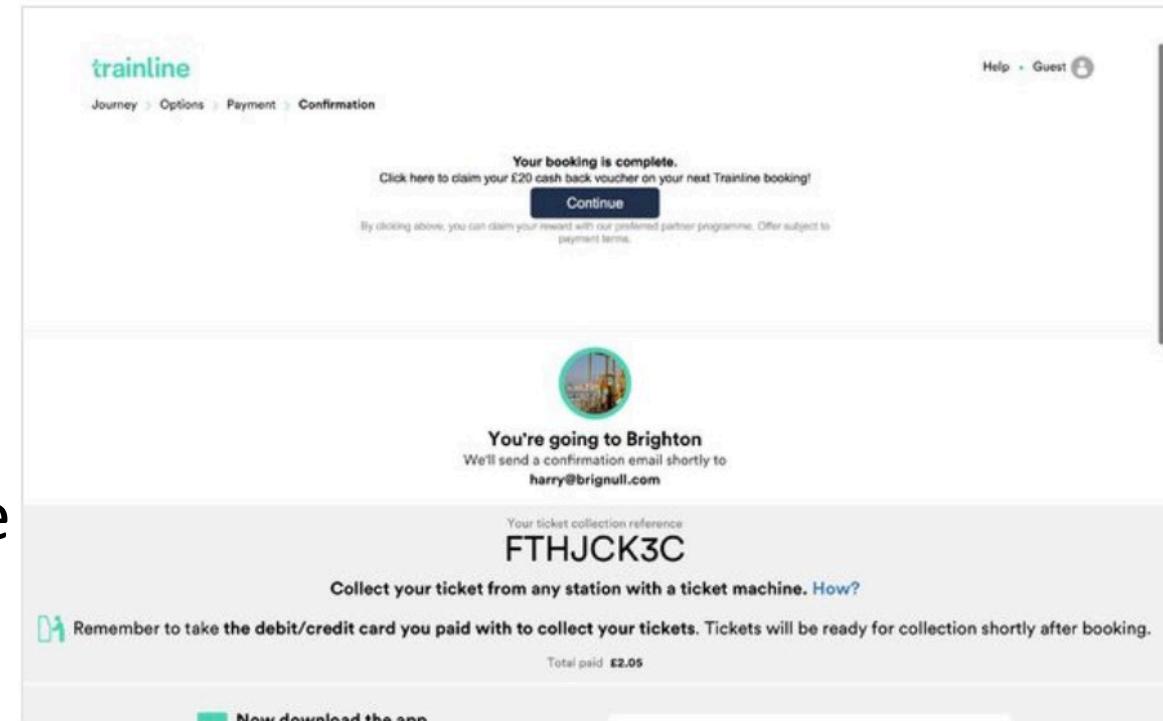
Forced Continuity

- When your free trial with a service comes to an end and your credit card silently starts getting charged without any warning. You are then not given an easy way to cancel the automatic renewal.
- thetrainline.com allows you to buy a ticket in the normal way.

The screenshot shows the homepage of thetrainline.com. On the left is a search form with fields for 'From' (Brighton) and 'To' (London Road (Brighton)). It includes tabs for 'OUT' and 'RETURN' with date and time selectors. Below these are options for 'One way' or 'Open return' and a passenger count dropdown set to '1 child'. A green button says 'Get times & tickets'. The main banner features the headline 'I book in advance. I am train' over a background image of train tracks. Three promotional cards are displayed: 'Manchester Piccadilly to London Euston from £22.00' (Save £60.40), 'London Marylebone to Birmingham Moor St from £5.50' (Save £23.60), and 'Leeds to London Kings Cross from £14.50' (Save £84.20). At the bottom, there are links to 'Get the app' for the App Store and Google Play, and two text sections: 'Cheap train tickets - buy in advance and save 43%*' and 'Planning your journey'.

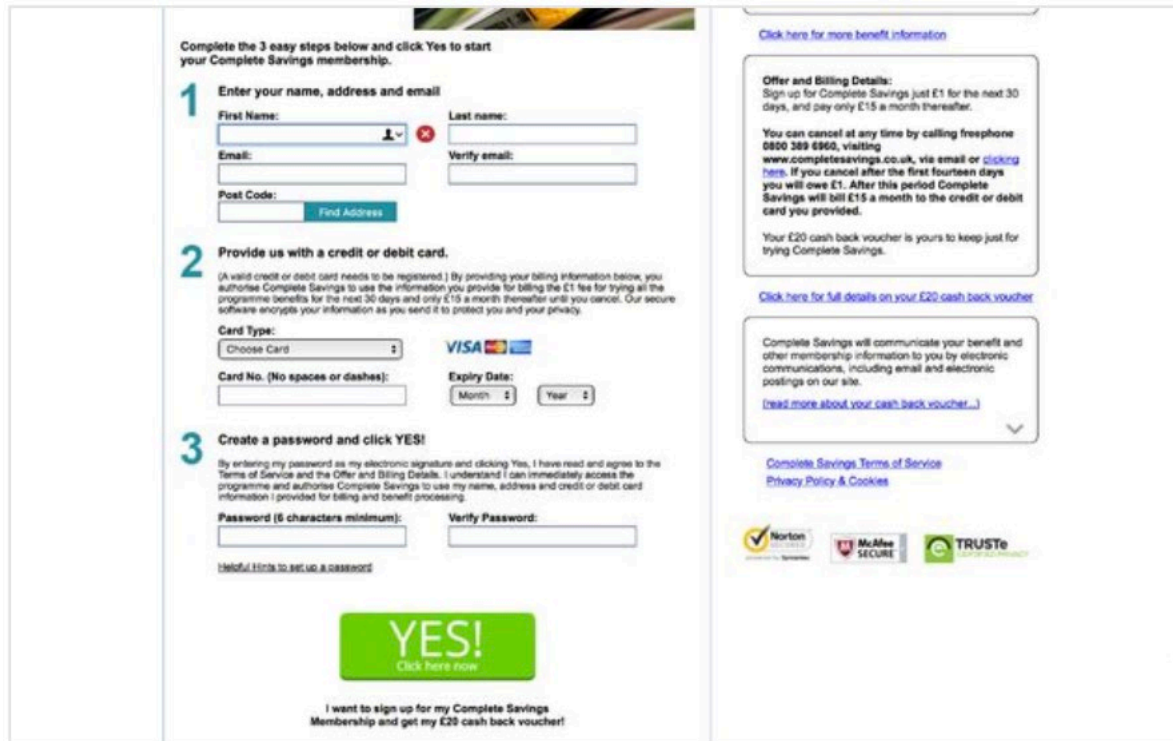
Forced Continuity

- When you complete the process, you are taken to a confirmation page, as shown below. The top box of content on the page is a [disguised ad](#), using the same font and the same dark blue button style used by thetrainline.com.
- Having clicked a continue button a few times during the checkout process, you're very likely to think you need to click this button too, just to finish your booking. In fact, this isn't true.



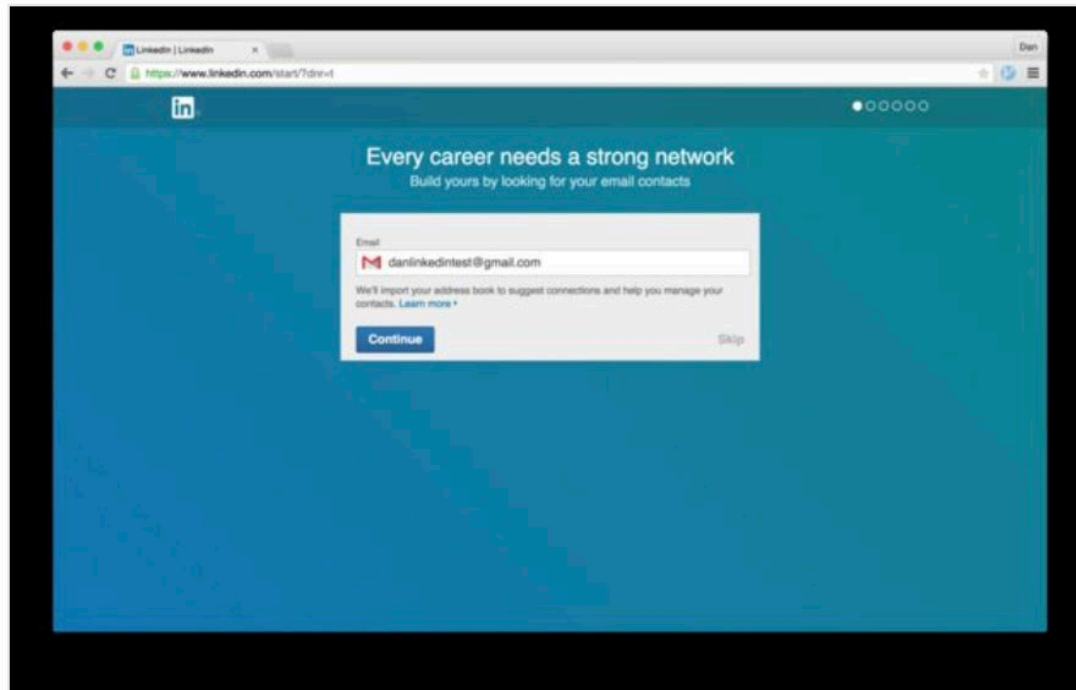
Forced Continuity

- When you click the continue button, you're taken to another site (one-time-offer.com), which tries to convince you to sign up for a £20 money-off voucher.
- If you sign up to this service, you are enrolled into a £15 a month subscription which continues forever

A screenshot of a web form for 'Complete Savings'. The form is divided into three numbered steps. Step 1: 'Enter your name, address and email' with fields for First Name, Last Name, Email, and Post Code, plus a 'Find Address' button. Step 2: 'Provide us with a credit or debit card.' with a 'Choose Card' dropdown, 'Card No.' field, 'Expiry Date' (Month/Year) fields, and a VISA logo. Step 3: 'Create a password and click YES!' with 'Password' and 'Verify Password' fields. A large green 'YES! Click here now' button is at the bottom. To the right, there is a sidebar with 'Offer and Billing Details', 'Click here for more benefit information', 'Click here for full details on your £20 cash back voucher', 'Complete Savings Terms of Service Privacy Policy & Cookies', and logos for Norton, McAfee SECURE, and TRUSTe.

Friend Spam

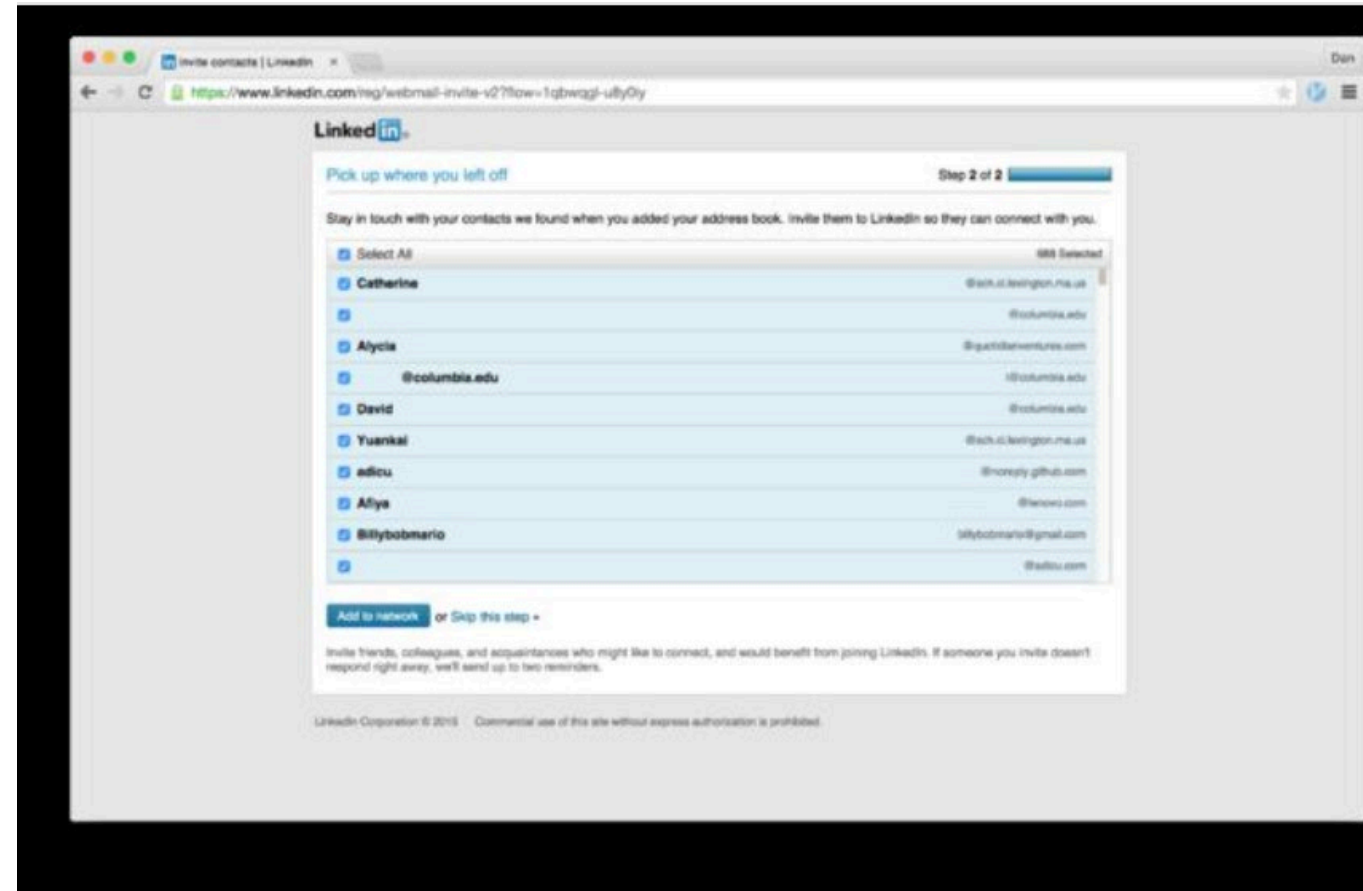
The product asks for your email or social media permissions under the pretence it will be used for a desirable outcome (e.g. finding friends) but then spams all your contacts in a message that claims to be from you.



- As part of the sign-up process to LinkedIn, they encourage you to give them access to your email account, on the premise that it will give "your career a strong network".

Friend Spam

If you allow yourself to be guided through the steps, you're taken to the next page. If you click the innocent-sounding button "Add to network" you are inadvertently giving LinkedIn permission to spam every person you've ever emailed.



Dark Patterns: **In-Class Activities**

DARK PATTERNS

DARK PATTERNS		Right or Wrong 1..10
Sneak into Basket	<i>"I never put that item in my basket .."</i>	
Hidden Costs	<i>"It was such a good deal.... until delivery charge was double the price of It ..."</i>	
Confirmshaming	<i>"I really don't want it but I feel silly not taking it ..."</i>	
Trick Questions	<i>"I never opted-in to that. Why are they emailing me?"</i>	
Misdirection	<i>"How did I not see that I had subscribed to that?"</i>	
Disguised Ads	<i>"I just clicked on an ad when I thought I was pressing the download button .."</i>	
Roach Motel	<i>"I don't want to subscribe anymore but I can't get out .."</i>	
Forced Continuity	<i>"I had a free trial but I don't want to subscribe now .. How can I get out of it?"</i>	
Privacy Zuckering	<i>"How can people see my posts? My privacy settings should prevent this .."</i>	
Bait & Switch	<i>"Why did that happen? As far as I am aware I did not do it .."</i>	
Friend Spam	<i>"Why is my email being spammed?"</i>	
Price Comparison Prevention	<i>"I can't find the price for the plans that are being described .."</i>	

DARK PATTERNS: Activity 1

► CONTEXT:

LauraLynn's mission is to provide a Community of Care that delivers evidence-based, personalised services to children with palliative care needs, complex care needs and complex disabilities, while also providing family support services and a home to our residents where quality-of-life is paramount.

<https://www.lauralynn.ie>

► ROLE PLAYING

- You are a **parent** or relative of a child with complex disabilities
- You are a **child** with a terminal illness
- You are a **volunteer** working for the LauraLynn charity
- You are a **donor** to the LauraLynn charity

DARK PATTERNS: Activity 1

► REFLECTIONS

- Take a good look at their web site and at their use of Dark Patterns while assessing their Virtue Ethics.
- What are the Virtue Ethics and how do you look at the Dark Patterns on their web site?

Virtue Ethics by Aristotle

1. **Courage** in the face of fear
2. **Temperance** in the face of pleasure and pain
3. **Liberality** with wealth and possessions
4. **Magnificence** with great wealth and possessions
5. **Magnanimity** with great honours
6. **Proper ambition** with normal honours
7. **Truthfulness** with self-expression
8. **Wittiness** in conversation
9. **Friendliness** in social conduct
10. **Modesty** in the face of shame or shamelessness
11. **Righteous indignation** in the face of injury

DARK PATTERNS: Activity 1

➡ GROUP DISCUSSION

If an organization is using Dark Patterns, and the organization is a charity using the patterns for the best of reasons, is it truly wrong?

DARK PATTERNS: Activity 2

► CONTEXT:

McCabes Pharmacy is Ireland's leading pharmacy chain, with over 110 pharmacies nationwide, they offer expert healthcare advice, prescription services, and a wide range of health and wellness products.

<https://www.mccabespharmacy.com>

► ROLE PLAYING

- You are **caring for your elderly parent** and wondering if she should get a flu vaccine
- You are **an adolescent** and are concerned about the quality of your skin
- As a **new parent**, you're unsure about how to handle your child's teething
- You are a **pharmacist** and are being asked advice on health and beauty products

DARK PATTERNS: Activity 2

► REFLECTIONS

From the perspective of **McCabes Pharmacy**, what are the consequences (good or bad) of each of the dark patterns?

► GROUP DISCUSSION

If an organization is declaring to provide expert healthcare advice, prescription services, and a wide range of health and wellness products, and using Dark Patterns, is this acceptable?

DARK PATTERNS: Activity 3

Wizz Plan WIZZ & services Help Centre Find Booking Sign in



Barcelona El Prat **BCN** Milan (All Airports) **MIL** Anytime for 1 week 1

Close search


☒ Return ☐ One way

Leaving from Barcelona El Prat **BCN** Destination Milan (All Airports) **MIL** Date Anytime for 1 week Passengers 1 adult Search

Cheap flights from Barcelona El Prat

 **Milan (All Airports)** 
 In December 1 Return 1h 45m
 Promotion

Regular price
 from **€37.78** €39.98

 **WIZZ DISCOUNT CLUB**
 from **€37.78** €39.98

 Did you know? By joining the Standard Wizz Discount Club, you can save up to 60 EUR on a trip for two.

Airbus A321neo (operated by Wizz Air Malta)

Fri, 5 Dec 2025
 13:10 UTC+1
 Barcelona El Prat
 1h 45m
 14:55 UTC+1
 Milan Malpensa

Free under-seat bag
 Personal item 40x30x20 cm under the seat

Free online check-in between 24 and 3 hours before departure
 Check-in at the airport costs 40 EUR

WIZZ SMART
 2 cabin bags, priority and seat selection

Free under-seat bag (40x30x20 cm)

Free normal seat selection
 Excluding row 1 to 4 and extra legroom seats

10 kg trolley bag on board
 55cm x 40cm x 23cm

Free online check-in between 30 days and 3 hours before flight departure

WIZZ GO
 20kg checked-in bag and seat selection

Free under-seat bag (40x30x20 cm)

Free normal seat selection
 Excluding row 1 to 4 and extra legroom seats

20 kg checked-in bag

Free Airport & online check-in between 30 days and 3 hours before flight departure

WIZZ PLUS
 32 kg checked-in bag, 2 cabin bags, and seat selection

Free under-seat bag

Free premium or no
 Including front row and extra legroom seats

32 kg checked-in bag

Free Airport & online check-in between 30 days and 3 hours before flight departure

10kg trolley bag on board
 55cm x 40cm x 23cm

Online flight change fees
 Fare difference fee may apply

Refund to Wizz account
 Within 72 hours. Refund conditions. Credit will be issued following the issuance of the refund.

+ €33.21
 per passenger on this flight


+ €46.98
 per passenger on this flight

+ €73.98
 per passenger on this flight

SHOW ALL BENEFITS

Free online check-in between 24 and 3 hours before departure with Wizz Basic and between 30 days and 3 hours before departure with Wizz Smart. For Wizz Basic and Wizz Smart, check-in at the airport can be purchased on the website during the booking process for 13 EUR. Without this service applied at the airport.

All prices are per passenger and include all applicable taxes. Wizz does not charge Air Passenger Duty ("APD") taxes for any passenger departing from the United Kingdom. Schedule times

 Be prepared for the unexpected with **WIZZ Flex**

We have a helping hand for travel uncertainties. If you have change of plans, or there are new travel restrictions in your destination country, you can **change your flight** or **ask for refund**. What is included in WIZZ Flex?

☒ Online flight change without flight change fees

☒ Refund to your WIZZ account if you wish to cancel your reservation. Credit will be available for use for 90-days following the issuance date.

€14.85

WIZZ Flex Terms and Conditions

1. PASSENGER (ADULT)

FIRST NAME LAST NAME ☒ Female ☐ Male

Do you have Privilege Pass? [ACTIVATE](#)

It is cheaper to add bags now.

BARCELONA EL PRAT → MILAN MALPENSA

Checked-in baggage

10 kg
 €17.50

20 kg
 Recommended
 Select

25 kg
 Select

32 kg
 Select

☐ I don't want a checked-in bag.

Travel with sports equipment?

Onboard baggage

Add 2 cabin bags & Priority
 Popular choice

Extra 10 kg trolley bag on board (55x40x23 cm max)

Free under-seat bag on board (40x30x20 cm max)

Priority check-in desk & Priority boarding

Add WIZZ Priority

No, free under-seat bag is enough for me

Baggage allowance and size

Special Assistance

Does anyone need Special assistance at the airport? **Mandatory**
 This information helps us arrange the necessary equipment to assist you and ensure a smooth departure

Yes No

CONTINUE

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- Trick questions
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DARK PATTERNS: Activity 3



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WIZZ SMART 2 cabin bags, priority and seat selection

- Free under-seat bag (40x30x20 cm)
- Free **normal** seat selection Excluding row 1 to 4 and extra legroom seats
- 10 kg **trolley bag** on board 55cm x 40cm x 23cm
- Free online check-in **between 30 days and 3 hours before** flight departure

WIZZ GO 20kg checked-in bag and seat selection

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- Free **normal** seat selection Excluding row 1 to 4 and extra legroom seats
- 20 kg checked-in bag
- Free Airport & online check-in **between 30 days and 3 hours before** flight departure

WIZZ PLUS 32 kg checked-in bag, 2 cabin bags, priority and seat selection

- Free under-seat bag
- Free **premium** or no seat selection Excluding front row and extra legroom seats
- 32 kg checked-in bag
- Free Airport & online check-in **between 30 days and 3 hours before** flight departure
- 10kg **trolley bag** on board 55cm x 40cm x 23cm
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☒ Yes ☐ No

CONTINUE

Price Comparison Prevention
Hidden Costs
Forced Continuity



DARK PATTERNS: Discussion Cards

<p><u>Discussion Card</u></p> <p><i>Dark Patterns are bad.</i></p>	<p><u>Discussion Card</u></p> <p><i>If I was asked to write an interface with a dark pattern, I wouldn't do it, even for €1 million.</i></p>
<p><u>Discussion Card</u></p> <p><i>It's the users' own fault if they fall victim to a dark pattern.</i></p>	<p><u>Discussion Card</u></p> <p><i>I rarely read everything when interacting with a site and have been caught out by the interface.</i></p>
<p><u>Discussion Card</u></p> <p><i>Some Dark Patterns are worse than others.</i></p>	<p><u>Discussion Card</u></p> <p><i>Some organisations have plausible explanations why they have interfaces that use dark patterns.</i></p>

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www.Ethics4EU.eu

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Ethics WG

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ECSS is a community event your opinion and contribution matters!!



Learning Outcomes

On completion of this activity, participants will be able to:

- A. Demonstrate a clear understanding of the concepts and models associated with dark patterns.
- B. Critically assess and evaluate computer interfaces for potential dark patterns.
- C. Relate concepts associated with ethics to the development and evaluation of dark patterns.
- D. Compare and contrast how different types of dark patterns use different psychological factors (Trust, Ignorance, Fear, Greed, Moral duty, Urgency, Panic, Anger) to succeed.