Dark Patterns in Digital Interfaces

Nian Kh. Aziz, MSc.
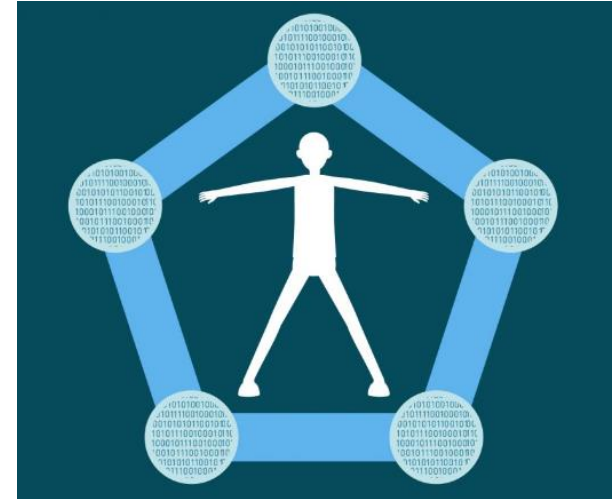
Two approaches to designing software

1. User-Centred
2. Business-Centered

User-Centered Design

Example: User Experience (UX)

- **Usability (Easy to learn)**
- **Usefulness (Do what you expected to do)**
- **Desirability (Do it with Fun)**

Business-Centered

Example: Dark Patterns

o   A **dark pattern** is a design technique used in **user interfaces** that aims to manipulate or **deceive users** into taking an action that they may **not have intended to take**.

o   Dark Patterns are **tricks** used in websites and apps that make you do things that you didn't mean to, like buying or signing up for something.

The designers may resort to what we know as **dark patterns** , user interface design patterns that play on human psychology, cognition and vision as a means of **deceiving** the user.

Example

o In this example from Virgin, we see a rather mild version of a dark pattern. Here, they attempt to trick people into selecting the option that keeps them subscribed to the newsletter.

o By using bold colors and **high contrast** for the option they want users to pick and grayish, less visible colors for the one they don't, they steer the attention of the user.

o
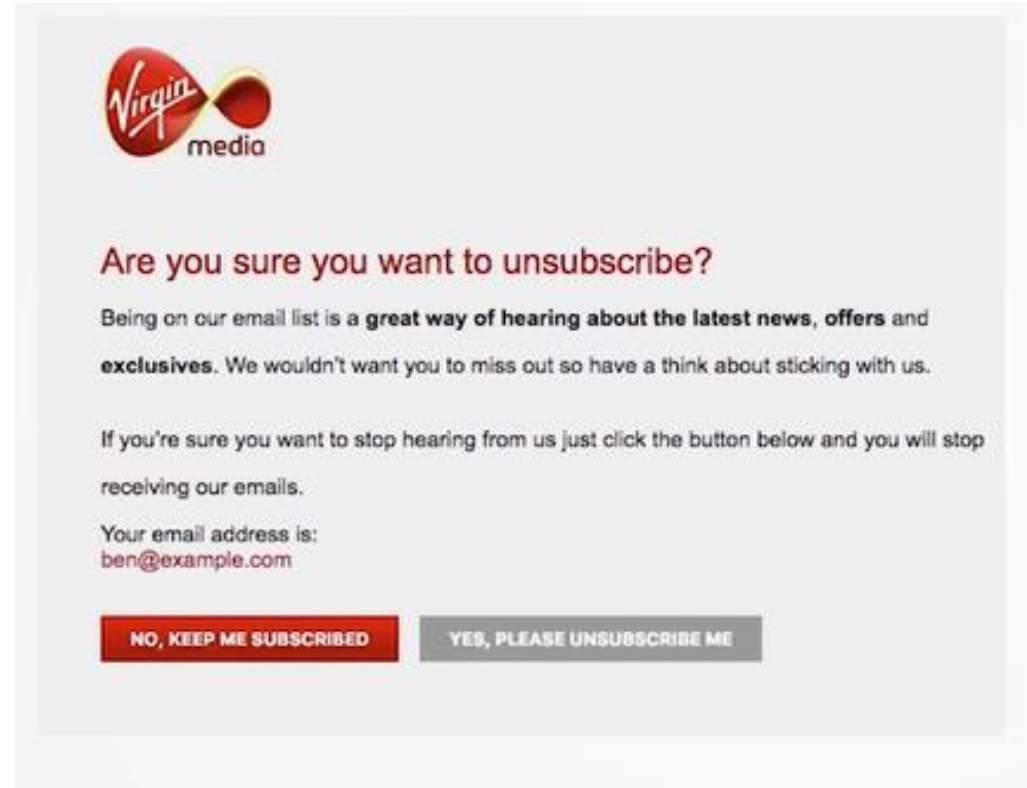
Example:

Harvest
User's
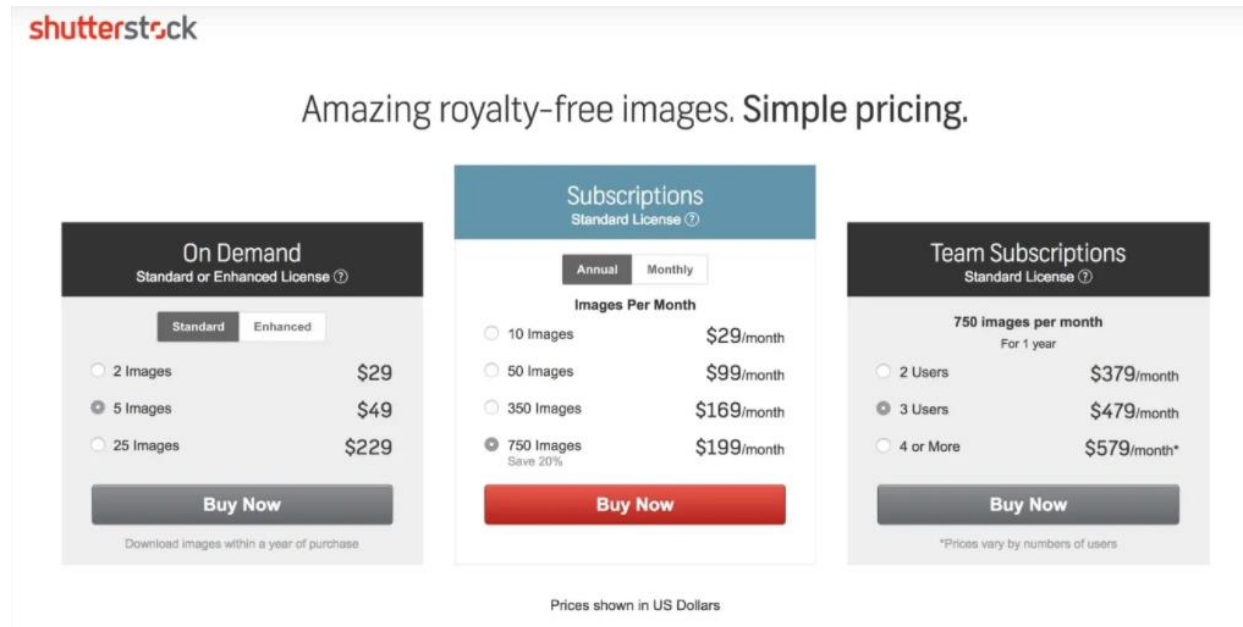Information
with forced
Registration
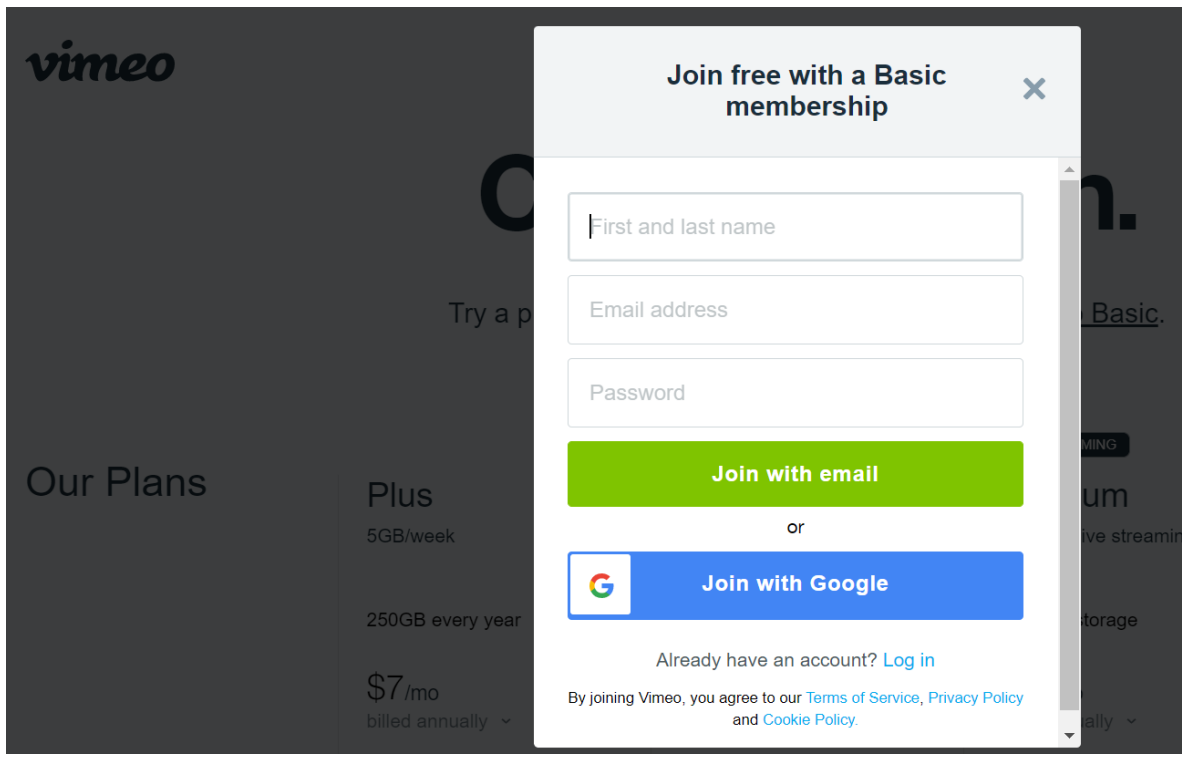
Example
Take a look at the email newsletter message below; the designers have obviously chosen colors that are intended to confuse the user and make the job of finding out how to unsubscribe harder due to visual obstacles. By using grey font for the email address on a slightly lighter grey background, it is very difficult for the user to see exactly what it says. Likewise, although the 'subscription settings' text is underlined, the user will not necessarily recognize the link—and that's thanks to the confusing nature of the colors used in the display. By the designer's flouting the convention of using blue underlined text for inline links, the user may not notice that the text is actually clickable and linked.
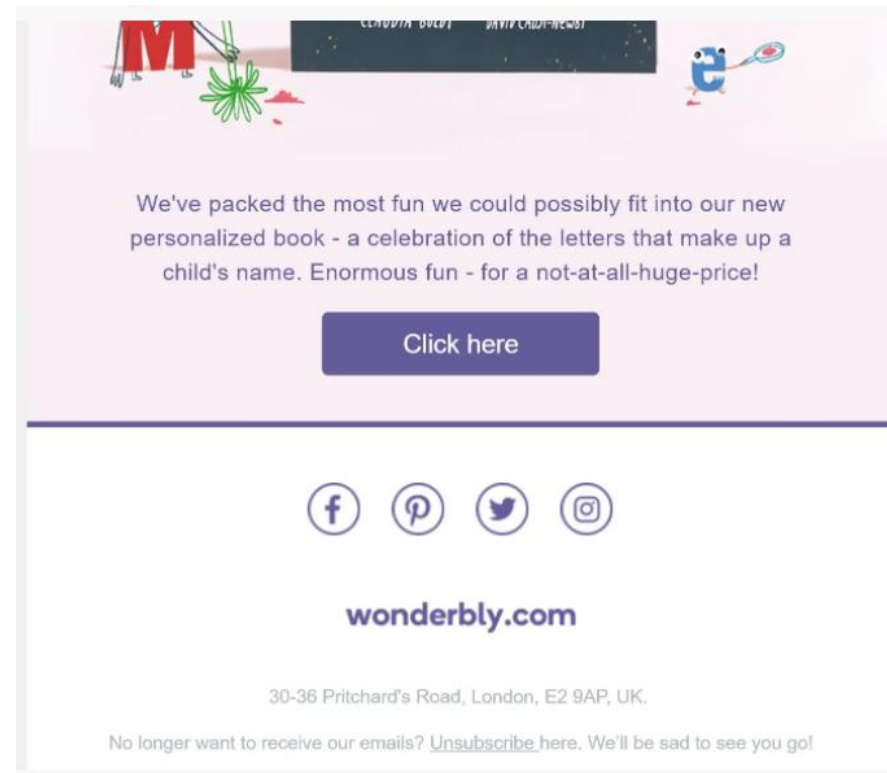
Example:

Shutterstock uses color to make a particular subscription stand out. The other subscriptions appear to be inactive, due to the greyscale that is used.

Example

In this example from Code academy, the text "Terms of Service" doesn't stand out as clickable at first sight. Combining it with an implied consent design pattern, this solution attempts to persuade users to sign up without reading these terms.

Learn to code interactively, for free.

SIGN UP AND START CODING IN SECONDS.

Email

Password

Username

SIGN UP

G Google   f Facebook

By signing up, you agree to our Terms of Service.
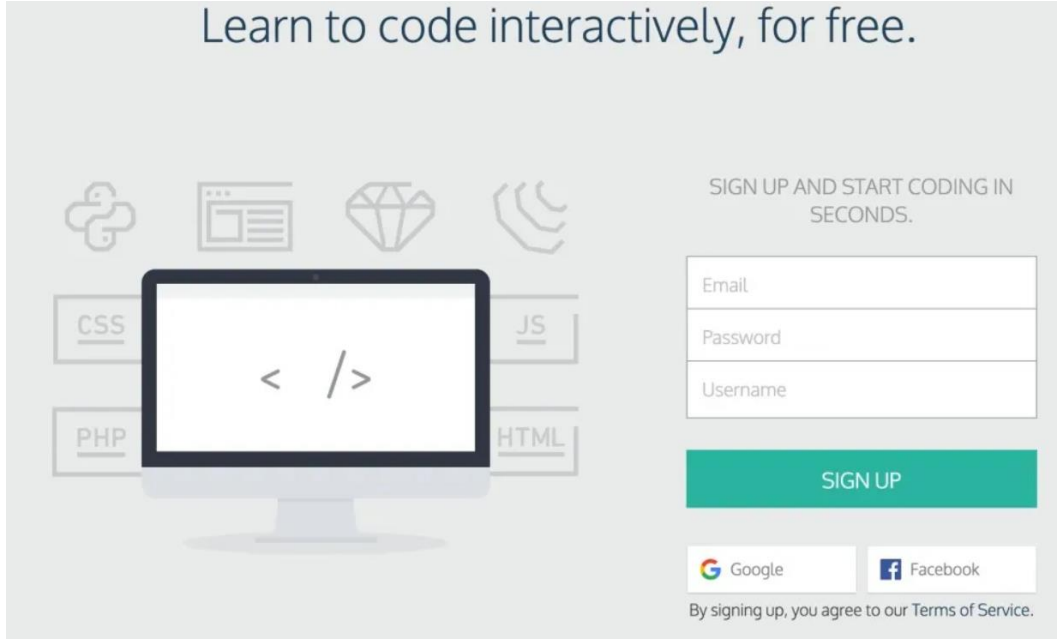
Getting Users' Long-Term Commitment with a Monthly Charge

The Oxfam website, shown here, doesn't offer the option to give a one-off donation, but forces the user to commit to a monthly bank transfer. A social conscience and the use of free will in helping others are commendable things; however, when they are caged into a long-term commitment, it can be quite off-putting and understandably so.

YOUR MONTHLY DONATION

Monthly amount:
£ 4

If you are a UK taxpayer, the value of your gift can be increased by 25% under the Gift Aid scheme at no extra cost to you.

☐ Yes, I am a UK tax payer and I would like Oxfam to treat all the donations I make from 1 April 2009, until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations.
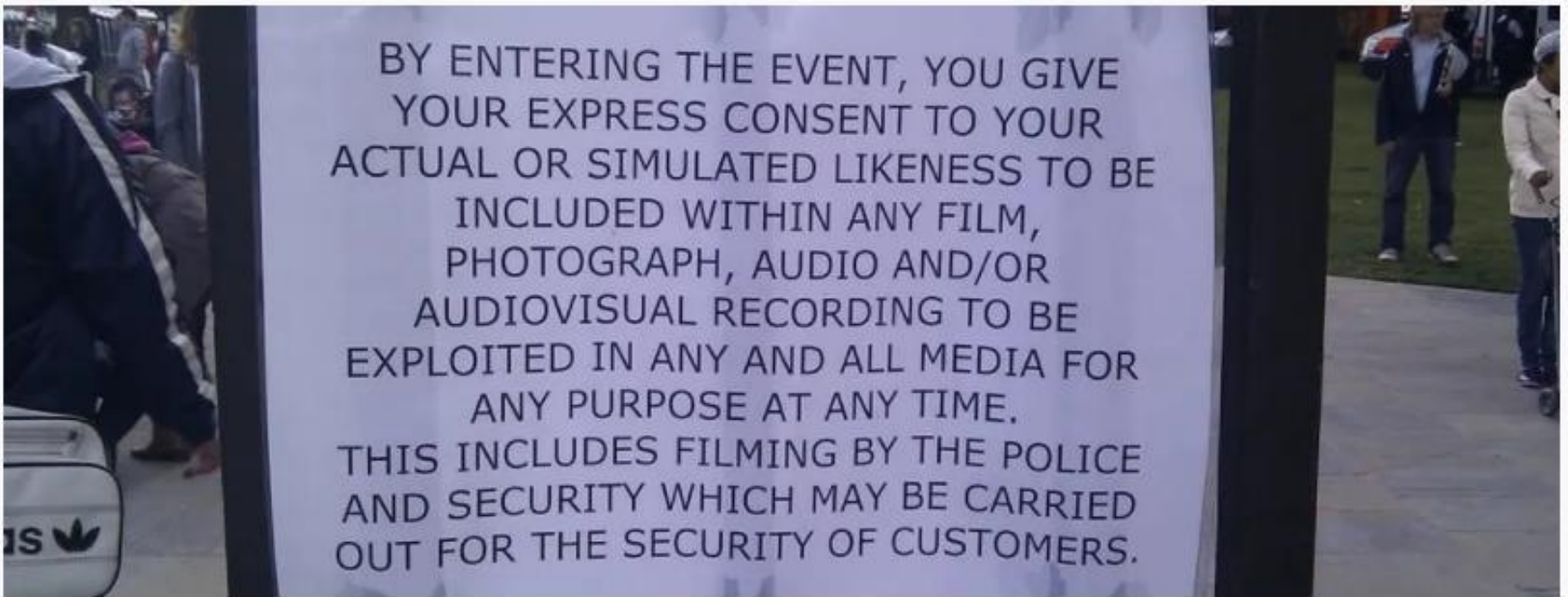
giftaid it

With Gift Aid, your donation of £4 would be worth £5.00 at no extra cost to you.

Your donations are eligible for the scheme if you pay enough income tax and/or capital gains tax to cover the amount of tax that all charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs you donate to will reclaim for each tax year (6 April to 5 April). Council tax and VAT do not count.

Reduce the Likelihood of Rejection with Implied Consent

Regulations and guidelines that developers and designers can follow to **avoid using dark patterns**

Thank you