**Summary Post for Collaborative Discussion 1**

**Evaluation of the ACM case study on “Dark UX Patterns”**

Recently, the topic of ethical UX design has gained significant attention in the field of technology ethics, both in academic discussions and in users' daily experiences with technology (Fronemann *et al*., 2022). This brief post aims to review the concept of "dark patterns" based on a case study provided by the Association of Computing Machinery (ACM) (ACM, 2023a). Furthermore, it examines the ethical obligations of UX professionals, as well as legal and social concerns (ACM, 2023b; BSC, 2023). This short post emphasises the importance of prioritising the best interests of users in ethical UX design and assesses the professionalism of such computing professionals with respect to the British Computer Society (BSC) Code of Conduct (BSC, 2023).

UX design could be persuasive to users, but should not manipulate them; if so, designers would abuse their power (Bongard-Blanchy *et al*., 2021). These cases are referred to as "dark patterns", wherein designers leverage their psychological knowledge of human behaviour and desires to implement deceptive functionalities that do not benefit users (ACM, 2023a; Bongard-Blanchy *et al*., 2021). Thus, dark patterns are interfaces that deceive users into performing unintended actions. Nevertheless, psychological pricing, which consists of pricing a product slightly less than an integer number (e.g., £9.99 instead of £10) (Kumar and Pandey, 2017), is a forerunner of dark patterns, which has become more dynamic and personalised for each customer based on algorithmic pricing (van der Rest et al. 2020). 95% of the most popular Android apps contained dark patterns (Narayanan *et al*., 2020). Documenting these patterns is crucial to mitigate them. Although many users may be aware of privacy-related dark patterns, some service providers still have high gains by violating users’ privacy, and these deceptive strategies continue to be effective (Narayanan *et al*., 2020). The safest *medium* to protect against dark UX patterns is to avoid manipulative websites or platforms, especially some social media, such as Instagram and Tiktok, which exploit them for targeted advertisements and maximizing sales (Coldewey, 2022).

Furthermore, the variability of dark patterns may exacerbate social inequalities and exploit vulnerable populations, especially those who rely solely on mobile devices (Narayanan *et al*., 2020).

In the related case study that the ACM presented (ACM, 2023a), Stewart was asked to apply changes to the design that would mislead users into opting for more expensive options, thus violating Principle no. 3.1 of the ACM Code of Ethics, which focuses on the public good (ACM, 2023b). Managers were aware that these changes would have undermined users’ autonomy to boost profits. Nevertheless, Stewart and his manager failed to uphold several other principles of the ACM Code of Ethics, including avoiding harm, thus lacking honesty, fairness, respect for user's rights, basic professional standards, and not implementing any policies that would have supported the Code of Ethics (ACM, 2023a). Conversely, the ACM Code of Ethics (ACM, 2023b) and the BCS Code of Conduct (BSC, 2023) embody ethical and social computing principles. The case study violated various principles of the BCS Code of Conduct, including due regard for the public's health, privacy, security, and wellbeing, consideration of the legitimate rights of third parties, and avoiding harm to others, their property, reputation, or employment.

**References**

Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) (2023a) Case: Dark UX Patterns. Retrieved from [**https://ethics.acm.org/code-of-ethics/using-the-code/case-dark-ux-patterns/**](https://ethics.acm.org/code-of-ethics/using-the-code/case-dark-ux-patterns/). Accessed on 12 March 2023.

Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) (2023b) ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Retrieved from [**https://ethics.acm.org/code-of-ethics/**](https://ethics.acm.org/code-of-ethics/). Accessed on 12 March 2023.

Bongard-Blanchy, K., Rossi, A., Rivas, S., Doublet, S., Koenig, V., & Lenzini, G. (2021) ” I am Definitely Manipulated, Even When I am Aware of it. It’s Ridiculous!”-Dark Patterns from the End-User Perspective. In *Designing Interactive Systems Conference 2021* (pp. 763-776).

British Computer Society (BSC) (2023) BCS Code of Conduct. Retrieved from [**https://www.bcs.org/membership-and-registrations/become-a-member/bcs-code-of-conduct/**](https://www.bcs.org/membership-and-registrations/become-a-member/bcs-code-of-conduct/). Accessed on 12 March 2023.

Coldewey, D. (2022) Instagram gets worse with dark patterns lifted from Tiktok. TechCrunch. Retrieved from <https://techcrunch.com/2022/07/25/instagram-gets-worse-with-dark-patterns-lifted-from-tiktok>. Accessed on 26 March 2023.

Fronemann, N., Pollmann, K., & Loh, W. (2022) Should my robot know what's best for me? Human–robot interaction between user experience and ethical design. *AI & Society* *37*(2): 517-533.

Kumar, S., & Pandey, M. (2017) The impact of psychological pricing strategy on consumers' buying behaviour: a qualitative study. *International journal of business and systems research*, *11*(1-2): 101-117.

Narayanan, A., Mathur, A., Chetty, M., & Kshirsagar, M. (2020) Dark Patterns: Past, Present, and Future: The evolution of tricky user interfaces. *Queue*, *18*(2): 67-92.

van der Rest, J. P. I., Sears, A. M., Miao, L., & Wang, L. (2020) A note on the future of personalized pricing: Cause for concern. *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management*, *19*: 113-118.