

# Call for Papers

## Understanding Deceptive User Interface Designs: How They Unduly Influence Customers' Choices

A Topical Issue of the *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*

Guest Editors: Thomas Schilling<sup>1</sup>, Michael Bošnjak<sup>1</sup>, Colin Gray<sup>2</sup>, Stuart Barnes<sup>3</sup>, and Anastasia Sergeeva<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, University of Trier, Germany

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychology, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA

<sup>3</sup>Business School, Newcastle University, UK

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg

### Focus of the Topical Issue, Aims, and Scope

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Deceptive designs (also referred to as dark patterns) are manipulative design choices in user interfaces (Gray, Santos, & Bielova, 2023; Mathur et al., 2021) that rely on cognitive biases and heuristics (Berthet & de Gardelle, 2023; Ceschi et al., 2019; Stanovich et al., 2008) to coerce, steer, or deceive customers, often without their full and informed consent, into decisions that may have harmful consequences. The website *deceptive.designs* (<https://www.deceptive.design/types>) provides a list of types of deceptive designs with brief explanations.

Researchers have noted that deceptive designs are widespread on digital platforms including social media websites, commercial websites, mobile apps, and video games (European Commission, 2023; European Innovation Council & SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA), 2022; Gray, Sanchez Chamorro, et al., 2023; Gunawan et al., 2021; Mathur et al., 2019; Zagal et al., 2013) and have called for action to ban or regulate the use of these. These calls have of late been taken seriously. The term *dark patterns* was introduced into EU law in the Digital Services Act (European Commission, 2022c), the Digital Markets Act (European Commission, 2022b), and the Data Act proposal (European Commission, 2022a); into US law in the California Privacy Rights Act, California

Consumer Privacy Act, and Colorado Privacy Act (Zhu & Zhu, 2021); and, most recently, also into Indian regulations (Central Consumer Protection Authority, 2023). Over multiple instances, fines amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars have already been issued for the use of deceptive designs (deceptive.design, 2024; Gray, Santos, & Bielova, 2023).

More recently, generative AI models, often with inherent biases, have presented a new set of tools for developing even more sophisticated dark patterns. Dark patterns may be especially pernicious in newly emerging technologies (e.g., AI-generated video and voice, augmented reality, virtual reality) that make their output seem even more realistic and hence potentially more deceptive.

The aim of this issue is to stimulate and foster academic discourse and cross-disciplinary discussions between researchers in psychology, economics, marketing, business, human-computer interaction, and law and to advance theoretical and empirical research related to deceptive designs. We invite research that is empirical/theoretical and conceptual, and we are open to methodological pluralism. Submitted articles for this issue may cover, for example:

- Empirically testing the effect of various deceptive designs and technologies on behavior, including analyses of different design types, different interaction environments (e.g. voice-based interaction, interaction in

augmented, and virtual reality), different products and services being sold, and different types of the same deceptive design category.

- Research on target groups that are vulnerable and more likely/intensely harmed by deceptive designs (Luguri & Strahilevitz, 2021; Sin et al., 2022; Zac et al., 2023), including whether psychological traits may be used and abused in targeting specific people with deceptive designs, similar to other digital marketing techniques (Matz et al., 2017).
- Studies of the costs and benefits associated with the (regulatory) fight against deceptive designs.
- Understanding of various moderators or boundary conditions of individual susceptibility to deceptive designs.
- A meta-analysis of studies that reviews the empirical research and provides estimates of effect sizes.
- Extensions of taxonomies of deceptive designs (Gray, Santos, & Bielova, 2023; Mathur et al., 2021)
- Empirical application and extension of novel theories that guide empirical researchers and those involved in regulations of deceptive designs (Chang et al., 2024; Kitkowska, 2023).
- Theoretical and conceptual work that advances related theories to heuristics and biases (Ceschi et al., 2019; Kahneman, 2003; Oreg & Bayazit, 2009; Stanovich & West, 2014; Todd & Gigerenzer, 2012; Weaver & Stewart, 2012) with a special focus on deceptive designs.

## How to Submit

There is a two-stage submission process. Initially, interested authors are requested to submit structured abstracts of their intended manuscript before submitting the full papers. Authors of the selected abstracts will then be invited to submit full papers. All papers will undergo blind peer review.

### Stage 1: Structured Abstract Submission

Authors interested in this special issue must submit a structured abstract of the planned manuscript before submitting a full paper. The goal is to provide authors with prompt feedback regarding the suitability and relevance of the planned manuscript to the special issue.

**The deadline for submitting structured abstracts is April 15, 2025.**

Feedback on whether the editors encourage authors to submit a full paper will be given by May 15, 2025.

### Submission Guidelines

Structured abstracts should not exceed two pages (font size: 12; lines spacing: 1.5) and should include the following headings.

- (a) Submission Format (i.e., theoretical paper, review, empirical paper, etc.)
- (b) Background (including the research question(s), hypothesis/es, and objective(s))
- (c) Method/Approach (including, if applicable, planned or realized sample size, sample characteristics, study design, analytical strategy)
- (d) Results/Findings
- (e) Conclusions and implications

Structured abstracts should be submitted by e-mail to Thomas Schilling ([thomas.schilling@uni-trier.de](mailto:thomas.schilling@uni-trier.de)).

### Stage 2: Full Paper Submission

Those who have been encouraged to submit a full paper must submit their manuscripts by October 15, 2025, through the online submission system of the journal at <https://www.editorialmanager.com/zfp>. Full papers will undergo a blind peer-review process and will be published in the topical issue. Therefore, the following submission criteria apply.

### Submission Guidelines

- Manuscripts must be written in English.
- Contributions must be original (not published previously or currently under review for publication elsewhere)
- Review articles and meta-analyses should not exceed 7,000 words in length; original papers should not exceed 6,000 words; short reports should not exceed 2,500 words (including references, figures, and tables)
- All manuscripts should adhere to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 7th ed.)
- Supplementary material must be made available through an online public repository such as the Open Science Framework (<https://osf.io>) or PsychArchives (<https://www.psycharchives.org/>)

For detailed author guidelines, please see the journal's website at [www.hogrefe.com/j/zfp/](http://www.hogrefe.com/j/zfp/) and refer to the timeline below for additional guidance.

## Timeline

- April 15, 2025. Deadline for abstract submissions
- May 15, 2025. Call for full paper
- October 15, 2025. Submission of full paper
- January 15, 2026. Reviewer feedback to authors
- April 15, 2026. Submission of revised papers
- May 31, 2026. Decision about acceptance/rejection of revised papers to authors
- October 2026: Publication of the topical issue as issue (4) 2026.

From publication of call for papers to issue publication: 24 months.

## About the Journal

The *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*, founded in 1890, is the oldest psychology journal in Europe and the second oldest in the world. One of the founding editors was Hermann Ebbinghaus. Since 2007, it has been published in English and devoted to publishing topical issues that provide state-of-the-art reviews of current research in psychology. For more detailed information about the journal and its topical issues, please visit the official website at <http://www.hgfi.io/zfp>.

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