

Behind the Scenes: Evaluating Cookie Consent Interfaces

Presented by Hana Habib

Abstract:

This talk will focus on the final chapter of my thesis which evaluated cookie consent interfaces. Many websites have added cookie consent interfaces to meet regulatory consent requirements. While prior work has demonstrated that they often use dark patterns—design techniques that lead users to less privacy-protective options—other usability aspects of these interfaces have been less explored. This study contributes a comprehensive, two-stage usability assessment of cookie consent interfaces. We first inspected 191 consent interfaces against five dark pattern heuristics and identified design choices that may impact usability. We then conducted a 1,109-participant online between-subjects experiment exploring the usability impact of seven design parameters. Participants were exposed to one of 12 consent interface variants during a shopping task on a prototype e-commerce website and answered a survey about their experience. Our findings suggest that a fully-blocking consent interface with in-line cookie options accompanied by a persistent button enabling users to later change their consent decision best meets several design objectives.

Bio:

I am a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Collaboratory Against Hate working with Geoff Kaufman to explore design interventions informed by social psychology that could combat the proliferation of hate on online forums. Previously, I was a PhD student in the Societal Computing program at Carnegie Mellon University, advised by Lorrie Faith Cranor. My research studies people's behaviors and preferences when interacting with technology, focusing on issues that have societal impact such as security and privacy.

Prior to starting my PhD, I completed a Bachelors in Computer Science and Electrical & Computer Engineering from Cornell University and a Masters in Information Technology - Information Security from Carnegie Mellon University. I also worked as a software engineer for the U.S. Department of Defense.