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SCHOOL OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

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Non-User Evaluation Methods and Their Applications to Deceptive Pattern Detection

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Abstract:

To record the prevalence of Deceptive Patterns, researchers use a cognitive walkthrough-like method to collect data. Researchers step through selected interfaces, performing predefined tasks a user might do (e.g., creating an account), and then code recorded videos or screenshots for Deceptive Pattern types. This method is often criticized for its lack of reproducibility, the subjectivity of findings, and its failure to capture the true user experience. At the same time, Deceptive Patterns are inherently tricky to detect, and most users are unaware of their existence. Relying solely on user evaluations could significantly understate the potential prevalence of Deceptive Patterns.

In HCI research, other evaluation methods exist that do not rely on users (e.g., heuristic evaluations) but these methods have not been applied in Deceptive Pattern research. In a scoping review of non-user evaluation methods in HCI, we map the landscape of these methods and explore the methods' different applications in existing academic literature. By systematically charting and coding prior work, this review provides insights into the strengths and limitations of non-user evaluation methods, offering guidance for their application in general assessments and specifically for evaluating Deceptive Patterns. Moreover, the outcome of this review may lead us to a better method of detecting the prevalence of Deceptive Patterns.