

**CONFIRMSHAMING IN E-COMMERCE WEBSITE POP-UP MESSAGES
FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF RELEVANCE THEORY**



AN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

**Submitted to the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University as
Partial Requirement to Obtain Bachelor's Degree in English Literature
Study Program**

By

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ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDY PROGRAM

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HASANUDDIN UNIVERSITY

2024



LEGITIMATION

THESIS

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BY

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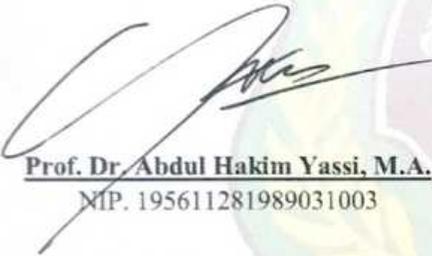
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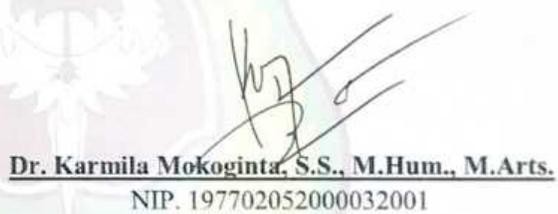
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AGREEMENT

On June 14, 2024, the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by Fransiskus Ivandi Putra Suciadi (F041201009) entitled *Confirmshaming in E-Commerce Website Pop-Up Messages from the Viewpoint of Relevance Theory* submitted in fulfillment of one of the requirements to obtain Sarjana Degree in English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

Makassar, 14 June 2024

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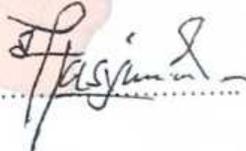
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Hereby, the writer declares that this thesis is written by himself. This thesis does not contain any materials which have been published by other people, and it does not cite other people's ideas except quotations and references.

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With reference to the letter of the dean of Faculty of Cultural Sciences Hasanuddin University No. 1380/UN4.9.1/KEP/2023 regarding supervision, we hereby confirm to approve the undergraduate thesis draft by Fransiskus Ivandi Putra Suciadi (F041201009) to be examined at the English Literature Study Program of Faculty of Cultural Sciences.

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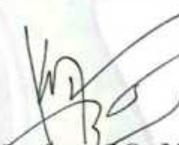
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Makassar, 19 June 2024

The Writer,

Fransiskus Ivandi Putra Suciadi



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ABSTRACT

Fransiskus Ivandi Putra Suciadi, 2024. *Confirmshaming in E-Commerce Website Pop-Up Messages from the Viewpoint of Relevance Theory*. Supervised by **Abdul Hakim Yassi** and **Karmila Mokoginta**.

This thesis aims to investigate confirmshaming in e-commerce website pop-up messages using Relevance Theory by exploring how users perceive and respond to these messages and identifying the factors that influence their relevance perceptions. The study used a qualitative approach and employed thematic analysis to examine responses from a questionnaire given to online shoppers aged 18-64. The findings reveal that most users perceive confirmshaming negatively, feeling disrespected by the guilt-inducing language in the "No" options, which often results in a negative impression of the website and a desire to leave. However, some users find these messages casual, funny, and interesting, leading to a more positive response. The relevance of confirmshaming messages in e-commerce website pop-up messages is influenced by the balance between processing effort and cognitive effects, with less effort and greater benefits perceived as more relevant. Experienced users often see the strategy as manipulative, while less experienced users may respond positively. Contextual factors, such as user goals and offer value, also shape responses. The study suggests that e-commerce sites should use clear and respectful communication to enhance user experience and protect brand reputation.

Keywords: *Confirmshaming, E-Commerce, Relevance Theory, User Experience, Cyberpragmatics, Deceptive Pattern*



ABSTRAK

Fransiskus Ivandi Putra Suciadi, 2024. *Confirmshaming* dalam Pesan *Pop-Up* Situs *Web E-Commerce* dari Sudut Pandang Teori Relevansi. Dibimbing oleh **Abdul Hakim Yassi** dan **Karmila Mokoginta**.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami *confirmshaming* dalam pesan *pop-up* di situs *web e-commerce* dengan menggunakan Teori Relevansi. Penelitian ini melihat bagaimana pengguna memandang dan merespons pesan-pesan tersebut serta faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pandangan relevansi mereka. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan analisis tematik untuk menganalisis tanggapan dari kuesioner yang diisi oleh para pembeli daring yang berusia 18-64 tahun. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kebanyakan pengguna memiliki pandangan negatif terhadap *confirmshaming* dalam pesan *pop-up* di situs *web e-commerce*. Mereka merasa tidak dihargai oleh bahasa yang digunakan dalam pilihan penolakan, yang sering membuat mereka ingin meninggalkan situs tersebut. Namun, ada juga beberapa pengguna yang menganggap pesan-pesan ini santai, lucu, dan menarik, sehingga memberikan respons yang lebih positif. Relevansi pesan *confirmshaming* dalam *pop-up* di situs *web e-commerce* dipengaruhi oleh keseimbangan antara usaha yang diperlukan untuk memproses pesan dan manfaat yang dirasakan oleh pengguna. Pesan yang lebih mudah dipahami dan memberikan manfaat lebih besar dianggap lebih relevan. Pengguna yang lebih berpengalaman cenderung melihat strategi ini sebagai taktik manipulatif, sedangkan pengguna yang kurang berpengalaman mungkin memberikan respons positif. Faktor lain seperti tujuan pengguna dan nilai penawaran juga mempengaruhi tanggapan mereka. Studi ini menyarankan agar situs *e-commerce* menggunakan komunikasi yang jelas dan sopan untuk meningkatkan pengalaman pengguna dan menjaga reputasi merek.

Kata Kunci: *Confirmshaming, E-Commerce, Teori Relevansi, Pengalaman Pengguna, Cyberpragmatics, Deceptive Pattern*



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the research questions, the objectives of the study, and the significance of the research.

1.1 Background of the Study

As we browse through numerous websites, it is almost inevitable to come across familiar pop-up messages that often grab our attention. Pop-up messages, which are small windows that usually appear while we are browsing, often provide tempting offers, such as discounts on products. They are designed to capture user attention and encourage conversions from visitors into customers by offering attractive promotions or discounts. This strategy is commonly found on e-commerce websites.

From being simple and, for the most part, disruptive, pop-up messages have grown into highly sophisticated tools that become a part of the user experience unnoticeably. For the early pop-up varieties, the general perception was that they were such a nuisance to get in the way of the browsing experience, and many users went so far as to install pop-up blockers. As digital marketing evolves, so does the design and functionality of pop-up messages. Modern pop-up messages are usually



ally relevant and smartly timed to pop up when users are most likely to
with them. For example, just as a user is about to leave the site, a pop-up
discount may come out and motivate users to complete a purchase. They

have been instrumental in the evolution of pop-ups to become an essential tool for any digital marketing strategy, especially for e-commerce sites dependent on them primarily for visitor-to-customer conversion. However, despite the effectiveness of well-designed pop-up messages, some marketers use unethical practices to increase conversions, one of which is confirmshaming.

Confirmshaming is defined as the act of pressuring users to choose something by making them feel bad if they reject it, according to Harry Brignull, a User Experience (UX) expert from the United Kingdom (UK), who first introduced this term along with the term ‘Dark Patterns’ (2010). This tactic is commonly found in website pop-up messages, which typically present two options: “Yes” and “No.” In confirmshaming, the "No" option is written in such a way as to make the user feel embarrassed or guilty for refusing. For instance, a pop-up message may say, “Get 50% off this amazing product now!” and then present the user with two options: “Yes, I want to save money and be happy” or “No, I’m a fool who likes to waste money and be miserable.” This is a clear example of confirmshaming as it uses loaded language to influence the user’s decision-making. This tactic is not just limited to pop-ups but can also be found in the unsubscription processes, where the user wants to stop receiving content they are no longer interested in.

In a study called “Shining a Light on Dark Patterns,” Luguri and Strahilevitz (2021) investigated the effectiveness of dark patterns. They found that about 19.6%



accepted confirmshaming, a type of dark pattern. This shows that confirmshaming is quite effective. Looking at it more closely, some countries have taken steps to fight against the use of dark patterns. The United States Federal Trade

Commission (FTC) has warned companies about using these tricky tactics (2022, p. 1). In India, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has recently set rules to stop and control these practices. In these rules, the CCPA lists 13 types of dark patterns, including confirmshaming (2023, pp. 7–11). Regulatory actions such as these demonstrate the growing importance of protecting consumers from manipulative practices in the digital age.

The writer's primary reason for studying this phenomenon is that we now live in a digital era where a significant portion of our time is spent online. It is crucial to understand the tactics used by websites to influence our choices. Simply by recognizing these tactics, any internet user can protect themselves from unethical online practices. Given that confirmshaming leverages language to manipulate decisions, the writer thought it would be interesting to examine it through the lens of Relevance Theory.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Many online shops employ pop-ups on their websites to capture users' attention, but some extend this strategy through a tactic known as 'confirmshaming.' This subtle method uses guilt-inducing language to make users feel bad about declining offers or invitations. Despite its widespread use, research on how this tactic uses language remains limited, especially in the e-commerce context.

1.3 Research Questions



Based on the problem statement above, the writer aims to answer these research questions:

1. How do users perceive and respond to confirmshaming in e-commerce website pop-up messages?
2. What factors influence users' relevance perceptions of confirmshaming in e-commerce website pop-up messages?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Given the research questions stated above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To analyze how users perceive and respond to confirmshaming in e-commerce website pop-up messages.
2. To identify what factors that influence users' relevance perceptions of confirmshaming in e-commerce website pop-up messages.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This study is anticipated to provide a significant contribution both theoretically and practically.

1. Theoretically, this study aims to enrich and expand existing knowledge on the application of Relevance Theory. As stated in the research problem, this research provides new insights into a phenomenon that has not been discussed before from a linguistic perspective.
2. Practically, this study can be useful for researchers who wish to further examine this phenomenon. Moreover, this research is also expected to be useful for those who work in the field of user experience (UX) and marketing.



1.6 Sequence of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. The study begins with the first chapter, which is the introduction. It includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives of the study, and significance of the research.

The second chapter is the literature review, which contains relevant previous studies to the research. It also includes the theoretical background discussing concepts such as manipulation, deceptive pattern, confirmshaming, cyberpragmatics, user experience, e-commerce, and the main theory used in this research, which is Relevance Theory. This chapter also presents the conceptual framework and operational definitions.

The third chapter describes the research methodology used in this study. This chapter covers the research design, data collection methods, source of the data, data analysis techniques, and research procedures conducted.

Following the third chapter is the fourth chapter, which is the core part of this study: the findings and discussion. The findings section begins by showcasing six examples of confirmshaming in e-commerce website pop-up messages included in the questionnaire to provide context. It then presents the results of the questionnaire, including respondent demographics and their perceptions and responses to confirmshaming in e-commerce website pop-up messages. The discussion section

discusses these findings in the context of existing literature and the theoretical framework.



The study concludes with the fifth chapter, which provides a summary of the findings and offers recommendations for future research on the same or similar topics.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consists of a review of previous studies, the theoretical background, the conceptual framework, and operational definitions of the research.

2.1 Previous Study

To support this research, the writer has identified several studies that could offer direct or indirect guidance for completing the analysis. As a result, the writer would like to present some previous studies that are relevant and useful in the analysis of this research. Here are some previous studies that are relevant to this topic:

Yus (2005) applied Relevance Theory to the analysis of internet banners. The paper argued that internet users are biologically geared to seek and maximize relevance when processing stimuli, such as banners, on the web. It examined how banners, including pop-up messages, could achieve relevance by interacting with the users' background knowledge and current context of interpretation, and by exploiting various design features, such as interactivity, incongruity, and hypertext. The paper also discussed the limitations and challenges of banner advertising in the competitive and fast-paced world of the internet. According to the analysis, an internet banner is effective when the cognitive effect is worth the processing effort

to understand it. This can be achieved by placing banners on websites



related to what users are already interested in, making them more likely to engage with the banner.

Ayoola (2014) conducted a study on the practice of manipulative SMS sent by Nigerian telecommunications companies. Using Relevance Theory as the theoretical basis for analyzing the messages, the researcher concluded that the messages were manipulative and misleading by exploiting the socio-economic vulnerabilities of the recipients. In addition, several strategies were found to be used by the companies to attract the attention of the message recipients to participate in sales that resembled a lottery. These strategies involved maximizing the optimal relevance expectation by making the recipients believe that the companies are generous and benevolent, maximizing relevance through explicatures and implicatures, using informal language, personalization, and offering attractive prizes, violating the maxim of truthfulness, and reducing processing effort through the creative use of punctuation and capitalization to attract attention and create urgency.

Azuelos-Atias (2015) conducted research on the use of manipulative language that can be considered a "deliberate failure of communication." The researcher described two cases of manipulation with deliberate failure of communication. First, the person being manipulated mistakenly thought that the message was relevant to them. They also assumed that the conclusions they drew

message and their own knowledge were positive, which was not true. The r gave an example by showing an advertisement and explaining that interpretations fell into two groups: those who were influenced by the



advertisement, and those who were skeptical and critical, thinking it was just a gimmick. Then, in the second case, Atias explained how the manipulator deliberately used terms that only certain groups understood. In other words, people outside of that group did not have the same shared knowledge. Atias gave an example of this by showing text from a criminal file (accusation).

Zaki (2017) examined how Arabic religious posts on Facebook communicated gained relevance and encouraged actions such as "Like" and "Share" the posts. This study analyzed 80 posts, focusing on linguistic devices such as commands, questions, and conditional statements used to influence interpretations. Zaki's findings revealed that religious posts often used a combination of positive reinforcement (e.g., promises of spiritual rewards) and negative reinforcement (e.g., warnings of spiritual consequences) to maximize relevance and engagement. The study highlighted the importance of understanding the cultural and religious context when analyzing digital communication, as these factors significantly influence how messages are perceived and acted upon.

Jodłowiec (2023) analyzed the deceptive language of clickbait and applied the principles of Relevance Theory to explain how it worked. Clickbait used uncertainty to attract attention and tempt people to click on links to increase website traffic. The headline of a news story was crafted with manipulative language to exploit the "gray area" to make people feel curious and want to click to fill the area,

clicked, the information available was not what was expected. The r also explained how clickbait is similar to punchlines. Like punchlines, often creates a set-up that leads the audience to form certain expectations,



only to subvert those expectations in a way that surprises or disappoints them. The study concluded that the effectiveness of clickbait lies in its ability to manipulate cognitive expectations and exploit the natural human tendency to seek resolution to ambiguous or incomplete information.

Dybko (2012) examined social slogans in detail using Relevance Theory as the research framework. The researcher analyzed the meaning, context, and effects of several types of social slogans, including those in advertising, political, and social campaigns. The research explained how people captured the meaning of messages and noted that skeptical individuals were more critical and vigilant. The study investigated the mechanisms that slogans used to convey their intended messages, while emphasizing the concepts outlined in Relevance Theory. In addition, Dybko demonstrated how social slogans, particularly in campaigns, served to attract attention, provoke interest, and promote specific actions or ideas. The analysis also integrated the concept of epistemic vigilance, which explained how this concept assists individuals in navigating and evaluating the authenticity and reliability of information presented in social slogans.

Silveira and Ibaños (2014) analyzed advertisements using Relevance Theory. They examined how people inferred meaning in ads that included both words and images. The researchers argued that advertisers need to take into account the audience's expectations and cognitive abilities. Advertisers used clear signals, ostensive stimuli, to prompt viewers to draw conclusions and achieve relevance. To illustrate this concept, the researchers provided examples of that prioritized conveying ideas rather than just promoting products, to



show how the message was inferred from both words and images. The study highlighted the interplay between visual and verbal elements in advertisements and how this interplay could enhance the overall persuasive effect by engaging different cognitive processes simultaneously.

Sparks (2012) examined how speakers communicated with multiple audiences with different intentions, especially in cases of persuasion and manipulation. Using the Relevance Theory framework, the researcher analyzed a hearing in which eight bank CEOs testified before the US House Committee on Financial Services during the financial crisis of 2008. The researcher showed how the speakers used lexical choice, scalar ostension, and epistemic vigilance to convey different meanings to different audiences. The researcher also proposed some modifications to Relevance Theory's notion of presumed optimal relevance to account for cases of communication that were not fully ostensive. The researcher concluded that Relevance Theory could be applied to communicative situations involving multiple audiences and varying degrees of ostension. Sparks highlighted the complexity of maintaining credibility and trust while addressing diverse and sometimes conflicting interests, demonstrating the nuanced strategies employed by the CEOs to navigate such high-stakes communication.

Piskorska (2017) conducted a study to find out the power of verbal offense in communication. To explain it, Piskorska used Relevance Theory as a pragmatic

work. Piskorska argued that verbal offense, which serves to elicit a negative response in the recipient, could be conveyed explicitly or indirectly through various terms, negative judgment, or implicature. It was found that the impact



of verbal offense could vary based on the inferential processes involved in comprehension and the contextual assumptions available to the interlocutor. In addition, it was also concluded that verbal offense delivered explicitly could be mitigated or lessen its impact through several strategies, whereas verbal offense delivered implicitly could be perceived as stronger and more hurtful than explicit verbal offense.

And lastly, Raj and Usman (2020) conducted research on communicative relevance and manipulation of the cognitive environment in President Trump's blame of China for COVID-19. They examined the discourse of President Trump, who repeatedly said that COVID-19 originated from China by mentioning several times the phrase "The Chinese Virus." The researchers argued that Trump's informative intention was to blame China for its origin and spread, and also to gain public sympathy for his own administration's response. However, his informative intention failed to achieve communicative relevance with the audience due to differences in cognitive environment, assumptions, and perceptions on the issue. In other words, people disagreed with what Trump was saying and eventually challenged his claims and exposed his motives.

Based on the above-mentioned studies, it is clear that Relevance Theory serves as a fundamental theoretical framework for all researchers in examining various phenomena. These studies also collectively emphasize strategies that

can employ to counteract utterances from speakers who may seek personal study is in line with these previous studies in terms of its theoretical but distinguishes itself through its unique focus on the phenomenon of



confirmshaming. This different object of study makes this research distinctive and contributes to the broader discourse on language manipulation.

2.2 Theoretical Background

2.2.1 Manipulation

According to the Psychological Dictionary, manipulation refers to actions taken with the intention of exploiting or influencing someone to achieve certain objectives (n.d.). In the context of communication, individuals aim "to form or change (or sometimes maintain) a certain opinion or attitude on a given subject, based on the communicator's interests" (Árvay, 2004, p. 232). Asya, in the article titled "Linguistic Manipulation: Definition and Types," reveals that manipulation operates in a manner that goes unnoticed by the listener: "Manipulation is a pragmatic aspect that achieves its goals without evident detection of communicative intention: the speaker deliberately selects a form of expression that lacks direct signals of their intentional condition" (2013, p. 78). The person who performs manipulation can employ various persuasive techniques available out there, one of which is persuasive appeals.

Persuasive appeals, also known as rhetorical appeals, are a concept introduced by Aristotle for argumentation, and they are divided into three parts: logos, ethos, and pathos. Logos is a technique used to convince individuals through the presentation of facts and evidence. Ethos relates to the credibility and authority of

er. Lastly, Pathos is a persuasive argumentation technique that leverages emotions of the audience to gain their support for the speaker's argument or to establish a connection with them (*Pathos, Logos, and Ethos*, n.d.; Rapp, 2023).



However, it is important to note that Pathos can be misused in certain instances. For example, an appeal to fear occurs when techniques are used to scare individuals by exaggerating a potential problem, while an appeal to guilt seeks to evoke feelings of pity or guilt (Heather, n.d.). One illustrative example of an appeal to fear is the statement, "If you don't invest, you will face financial difficulties and struggle in the future."

2.2.2 Deceptive Pattern

Deceptive patterns or dark patterns are manipulative practices used in websites and apps to lead users to take unintended actions. For example, users may be influenced by fake ratings and testimonials that make the product look more popular than it actually is. The types of these patterns are very diverse, ranging from the previously mentioned example referred as fake social proof, to fake urgency which pressures users to buy immediately by making them believe that the item is only available for a limited period of time. In addition, there are also practices such as hidden costs, hidden subscriptions, hard to cancel processes, and more. One other practice that is the main focus of this study is confirmshaming. Despite many companies implementing dark patterns on their websites or apps, many of them end up facing significant fines and penalties. For instance, Epic Games paid \$245 million to settle allegations that they employed these practices in the Fortnite game payment system. Noom, a diet app, also paid \$62 million for implementing these tactics in their subscription and automatic renewal processes. AT&T, too, paid \$105 million for adding service charges to customers' phone bills without their knowledge or consent. There are many legal cases due to these practices. As of



2024, there were a total of 16 deceptive patterns implemented by websites. Below is the list (Brignull et al., 2023):

Table 1.
Type of Deceptive Pattern

No	Type of Deceptive Pattern	Description
1	Comparison prevention	Users have difficulty comparing one product with another because the required features and information such as price, features, and so on are deliberately made difficult so that users feel discouraged to compare them.
2	Confirmshaming	The wording of the choice options is made in a way that makes the user feel guilty about their choice.
3	Disguised ads	Users mistakenly assume that a button or element is part of the website, but after pressing it, it turns out to be an advertisement.
4	Fake scarcity	Users feel pressured to take an action because they are shown a description that the product is highly in demand and therefore limited in stock.
5	Fake social proof	Users feel persuaded by very positive and seemingly credible reviews that are actually fake.
6	Fake urgency	Users feel pressured to take an action because the item offered is only available at a limited time.



7	Forced action	When a user wants to do something, a website gives the user what they want but in order to get it the user has to do something first.
8	Hard to cancel	When users want to cancel a subscription or delete an account, the procedure is made difficult by having to contact the company first.
9	Hidden costs	When users are about to purchase an item, they are suddenly surprised by another unplanned charge.
10	Hidden subscription	Users are unknowingly enrolled and engaged in a subscription without their consent.
11	Nagging	When users are about to do something, they are constantly interrupted by requests that do not match what they are doing.
12	Obstruction	Users are constantly bombarded by features on a website that prevent them from doing something. The goal is to make the user give up and finally agree to what the website wants.
13	Pre-selection	Users are presented with a default option that the website itself has chosen for them with the intention of influencing them.
14	Sneaking	Similar to hidden costs, the website intentionally puts unwanted items in the user's cart.



15	Trick wording	Users are directed to perform an action due to confusing or misleading language presentation.
16	Visual interference	Users initially expect information on a website to be presented clearly and predictably. However, the website deliberately makes it small, hidden, camouflaged, and so on.

2.2.3 Confirmshaming

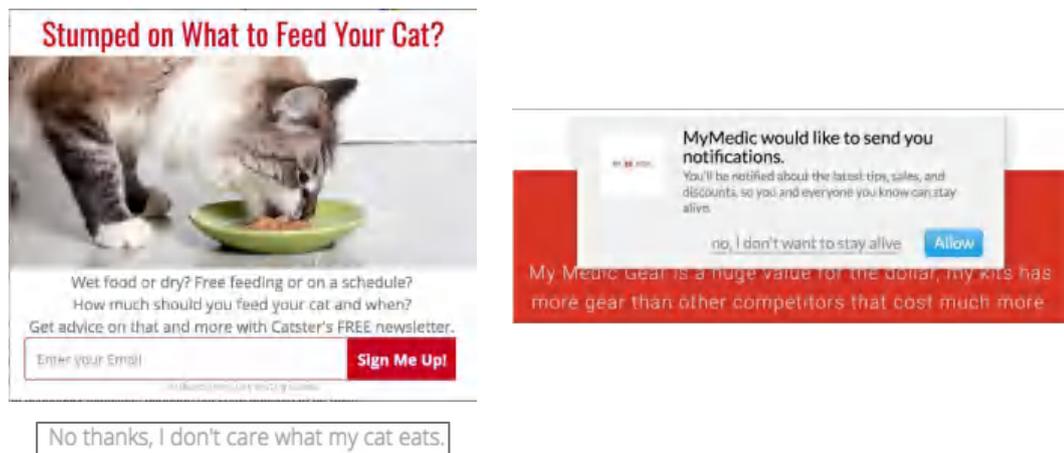
Confirmshaming, also known as manipulink, has emerged as a problematic issue within the user experience (UX) field and is recognized as one of the dark patterns. It entails a manipulative strategy employed by designers to attribute blame or belittle users who choose not to engage with a service or feature being offered. The objective of confirmshaming is to drive micro-conversions by coercing or persuading users to accept or take advantage of the offered service (Brignull, 2010; Gray et al., 2018, p. 7; Moran & Salazar, 2017).

In practice, confirmshaming follows a specific pattern. Visitors are typically presented with two options in response to an offer, such as a discount or newsletter subscription. The "Yes" option is prominently displayed, encouraging users to accept the offer. In contrast, the "No" option is deliberately downplayed and accompanied by language designed to make the user feel guilty or ashamed for the offer. This language often uses the first-person point of view, as if the users are coming directly from the user. The wording is explicit and intended to create a sense of blame.



For instance, consider a health website offering a newsletter with valuable tips and tricks for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The choice to decline the offer might be framed as "No, thanks. I don't care about my health" or "I choose to neglect my health." This approach deliberately distorts the simple act of saying "No," portraying it as a negative or undesirable decision. The goal is to manipulate the user into feeling that declining the offer is a reflection of poor judgment or a lack of self-care, thus pressuring them to accept the offer instead. Below are other examples of confirmshaming:

Figure 1.
Example of Pop-Up Messages Containing Confirmshaming



While language manipulation often operates covertly, confirmshaming in e-commerce websites' pop-up messages is a form of overt linguistic manipulation.

Unlike the subtle techniques described by Asya (2013), which achieve goals



evident detection of communicative intention," confirmshaming explicitly language designed to make people reconsider their choices.

2.2.4 Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory, first detailed in the seminal book “Relevance: Communication and Cognition” published in 1986, is a theory proposed and developed by cognitive scientists Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson. This theory evolved from H. Paul Grice’s Cooperative Principle Theory and subsequently established itself as a significant framework within the field of pragmatics. Relevance Theory explores how human cognition influences communication, emphasizing that understanding and determining the relevance of an utterance is shaped by an individual’s cognitive abilities and the context at hand (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, p. 119).

We need to determine when something is considered relevant or not. According to the theory, "Relevance is a potential property not only of utterances and other observable phenomena but of thoughts, memories, and conclusions of inferences" (Wilson & Sperber, 2006, p. 608). In Relevance Theory, what we receive can be deemed relevant if it connects to the knowledge an individual possesses at that moment, as mentioned earlier. In other words, information is relevant if it helps answer questions, provides new insights, updates previously held beliefs, or confirms something within the person's current understanding. Inputs that are considered relevant are referred to as positive cognitive effects. "A positive cognitive effect is a cognitive effect that contributes positively to the fulfilment of cognitive functions or goals" (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, p. 265).



humans, we naturally seek efficiency. Sperber & Wilson propose that the relevance of an input can be measured by two factors: If an input can be processed

with minimal effort and yield significant cognitive effects, then it is considered relevant. On the other hand, if processing the input requires a lot of effort, it may be seen as less relevant (Carston & Powell, 2008, p. 342; 1995, p. 145; Wearing, 2015, p. 89). To understand this further, here is an illustration provided by Sperber and Wilson: Let us assume there is a woman named Mary. She is allergic to most meats, especially chicken, so she will always ask the waiter about the menu provided. There are several possible utterances that the waiter might say:

- (1) We are serving meat.
- (2) We are serving chicken.
- (3) Either we are serving chicken or $(72 - 3)$ is not 46.

Of the three utterances, utterance (2) is the most relevant answer for Mary. Although all the utterances provide relevant information, utterance (1) lacks specific information for Mary, so it is not very useful. Meanwhile, utterance (3) requires a deeper understanding to comprehend compared to the more straightforward utterance (2), "We are serving chicken" (2006, pp. 609–610). In conclusion, utterance (2) is strong communication because the listener takes little responsibility in choosing the interpretation, whereas (1) and (3) are weak communication where the speaker leaves the listener with more responsibility in choosing the interpretation.



1. Cognitive Principle of Relevance Theory

Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance.

Sperber and Wilson state that our natural tendency to focus on relevant information allows us to anticipate and even shape the minds of others (2006, p. 611). By understanding this, we can create situations or present information that might catch their attention. This can guide them to access certain memories or ideas and lead them to the influencer's desired conclusion or outcome. Hence, *ostensive-inferential* communication comes into play. It is divided into two parts:

- 1) **Informative intention:** The intention to inform an audience of something.
- 2) **Communicative intention:** The intention to inform the audience of one's informative intention.

Ostensive-inferential communication involves what is called an ostensive stimulus which is something that is used to draw the listeners' attention to us, be it a gesture, a sound, a string of words, or anything else (Wearing, 2015, p. 89; Wilson & Sperber, 2006, p. 611). For communication to be successful, these two intentions must be fulfilled. Consider the example of a non-verbal situation:



- Mike and Laura are at an event. The music is very loud, and they are quite far apart but still visible to each other. After a while, Laura starts to feel dizzy and wants to go home. Laura turns her gaze to Mike. Mike also sees her and waves his hand. Because of the distance and the noise of the music, it is impossible to talk, so Laura moves her hand to mimic driving a car, so that Mike can infer that she wants him to give her a ride home.

In this situation, it is important for Mike to realize that Laura's movements are deliberate and not ordinary dance moves. Through the gesture, there was a message she was trying to convey. Once Mike understood that Laura was intentionally gesturing to him, he needed to figure out what she was trying to convey. If he correctly interprets Laura's gesture as ("I want you to take me home,") then Laura's communicative intention is fulfilled, and Mike understands her informative intention. In verbal communication, we normally recognize someone's communicative intention right away (such as when someone starts talking to us, we know that they want to communicate). This allows us to immediately focus on understanding the actual message (informative intention) (Yus, 2009, pp. 758–759).

2. Communicative Principle of Relevance Theory



Every ostensive stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance

The Communicative Principle of Relevance indicates that when someone intentionally signals to us (**ostensive stimulus**), we presume it is significant enough to consider (**presumption of relevance**). Since all ostensive stimulus has a presumption of relevance, an ostensive stimulus will achieve its **optimal relevance** to an audience if:

- 1) It is relevant enough to be worth the audience's processing effort;
- 2) It is the most relevant one compatible with communicator's abilities and preferences.

Once the speaker has conveyed their message, the listener will follow general inferential procedure to interpret it. This procedure known as the Relevance-Theoretic comprehension procedure:

- 1) Follow a path of least effort in constructing an interpretation of the utterance (and in particular in resolving ambiguities and referential indeterminacies, in going beyond linguistic meaning, in supplying contextual assumptions, computing implicatures, etc.).
- 2) Stop when your expectations of relevance are satisfied.

(Wilson & Sperber, 2006, pp. 256–259; Yus, 2009, p. 756)

3. **The Difference Between Explicit and Implicit Meaning in Utterance Interpretation**

Relevance Theory explains the process of interpreting utterances through the concepts of *explicature* and *implicature*. According to



Sperber and Wilson, when a listener tries to understand what a speaker means, they consider three aspects:

- a) The explicit content (the actual words spoken)
- b) The implicit meaning (the intended message behind those words)
- c) The contextual information (knowledge about the environment or situation)

Sperber and Wilson argue that interpretation is not a sequential process where the listener first understands the literal meaning of words and then seeks deeper meanings if the literal interpretation does not make sense. Instead, listeners process everything simultaneously. They continually seek the most reasonable interpretation that aligns with the conversational context. Therefore, when a speaker communicates, the listener actively integrates all three aspects to comprehend what the speaker truly intends to convey. The following steps illustrate the sub-tasks involved in the Relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure:

- a) Construct appropriate hypotheses about explicit content (*explicatures*) via disambiguation, reference assignment, and other pragmatic enrichment processes.
- b) Construct appropriate hypotheses about the intended contextual assumptions (*implicated premises*).



- c) Construct appropriate hypotheses about the intended contextual implications (*implicated conclusions*) (2006, pp. 261–263; Yus, 2009, p. 764).

To begin understanding an utterance, the listener first picks up on the basic meaning of the words, which stands alone without context. This basic meaning is then expanded upon to form a complete thought or message (*explicature*). This expansion includes a series of thoughtful steps:

1. **Reference Assignment and Free Enrichment:** Reference involves identifying the referents for words (e.g. pronouns, adverbs), which indicate specific individuals or objects. Free enrichment adds missing information to make the message complete and relevant to the context. For example:
 - a) “She’s really fast.” [at doing what?]
 - b) “That’s a high score.” [compared to what]
2. **Disambiguation:** When an utterance contains polysemous words, the right meaning is figured out from hints in the situation where the conversation is happening.
3. **Conceptual Adjustment:** The concept conveyed by a word can be broadened or narrowed to meet the listener's expectations of relevance, which leads to the formation of ad hoc concept. For instance:



- a) **Broader concept:** “I’ve got a thousand things to do this morning.” [many tasks, not literally a thousand]
- b) **Narrower concept:** “Maria has a brain.” [an outstanding brain; she is very intelligent]

In metaphorical contexts, this ad hoc concept plays an important role. For example, in the utterance "My daughter is a princess," the concept of "*princess*" is broadened to include spoiled, overindulged girls, while excluding actual royal status (Yus, 2009, pp. 764–768).

4. Practical Application

To illustrate how all the processes described above are implemented, let us take a look at an example provided by Yus:

Tom: So... Did you buy that table I told you about?
 Ann: It’s too wide and uneven.

To understand Ann's response correctly, Tom must use inference to develop the schematic logical form provided by Ann’s utterance into a relevant interpretation. This involves:

1. **Reference Assignment:** Tom must recognize that “it” refers to the table.
2. **Disambiguation:** Tom needs to clarify the meaning of “uneven” (e.g., the surface or legs).



3. Free Enrichment: Understanding “too wide” [for what?]

The outcome of this process might be the proposition: "The table that you told me about is too wide to go through the bedroom door, and its surface is uneven." This is the explicature. However, this does not directly answer Tom's question, so Tom must also consider the contextual information (implicated premises). In this case, his encyclopedic contextual information (knowing that it's unlikely someone would buy a table that's too wide for the door and has an uneven surface) leads him to the implicature: "I didn't buy the table that you told me about" (2009, pp. 767–768).

2.2.5 Cyberpragmatics

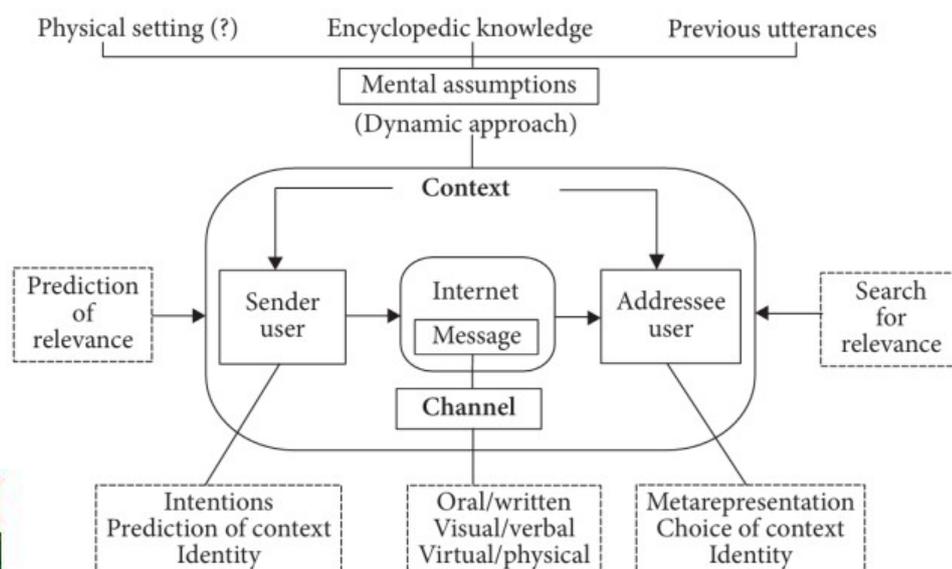
With the development of technology, the spread of information has also changed. What once required face-to-face interaction to exchange information can now be done using the internet, providing us with endless information and the flexibility to communicate. On this basis, the term "cyberpragmatics" came to the surface. This term was first proposed by Francisco Yus in 2001. The main focus of this concept is to study how internet users produce and interpret information on different platforms on the internet such as web pages, blogs, social networks, e-so on. It is important to note that the underlying theory of this concept is the Theory.



There are several key assumptions that form the basis of *cyberpragmatics*. First, internet users have communicative intentions and convey their messages with the expectation that they will be relevant and correctly interpreted. Second, users employ inferential strategies to understand messages. Individuals search for relevance in the processed message and use the same inferential procedures both physically and virtually. Third, internet users expect their audience to access the contextual information necessary for correct interpretation. Fourth, the features of online communication platforms (such as chat rooms, email, messaging applications, web pages, and social networks) affect access to contextual information, the amount of information received, the comprehension of messages, and the effort required to process them (Yus, 2011, pp. 13–15). Below is a diagram that summarizes all the key assumptions above (Yus, 2011, p. 15):

Figure 2.

Internet-Mediated Communication, as Explained by Cyberpragmatics



Cyberpragmatics is more than just the exchange of information, as the concept also includes understanding the intentions, attitudes, emotions, and feelings of fellow users on the internet. It recognizes the importance of contextual cues in interpreting messages and measuring their relevance. Although digital worlds are all virtual interactions, cyberpragmatics emphasizes that inferential processes for understanding stimuli remain consistent in both physical and virtual settings (Yus, 2011, pp. 13–19).

2.2.6 User Experience

UX, short for user experience, refers to the general experience a user gains while doing any interaction with any product, system, or service. When talking about user experience, there could either be a good or bad experience. One will consider a good user experience if the product used is useful, it helps in getting things done, is easy to access and use, and provides enough information to the user. On the other hand, bad user experience takes place when the product brings stress, is confusing, and makes one feel uncomfortable using it. The concept of user experience has been in existence for quite a long time, even since the formation during the beginning of the course of modern industrial technology development (Newman, 2015b).

Before the term User Experience (UX) became known to many, the terminology Human-Computer Interaction, popularly known as HCI, first emerged in the 1930s. The reason that HCI has appeared is that more and more people began using computers at home, which were previously used by professionals only who had taken special education in order to operate them. As a result, scientists



and developers started paying more attention to the enhancement of human–computer interaction, trying to make it easier and more enjoyable (Newman, 2015b). This involved developing systems that were easier to use, more intuitive, and user centered.

The term "user experience" only became widely known after cognitive science researcher Don Norman joined Apple in 1993 and popularized it (Nielsen, 2017). However, user-centered design had been emphasized by Norman all along in his seminal book "The Design of Everyday Things," first published in 1988—long before he joined Apple. Another major figure who complemented Norman's work on user experience was Jakob Nielsen, who developed several usability guidelines that reflect user-centered design. The principles he described are in his book titled, "Usability Engineering," published in 1993.

UX surrounds us everywhere, not only in digital products, like websites, software, and so on, but also in physical products, services, and spaces. UX principles have been used in areas such as health, education, and transportation to make things easier and more secure to use. A user experience expert named Carol Huang often showcases on her Instagram account (*@iconicdiary*) how UX principles are applied in Japan—from transportation down to food and drink packaging.

There are many procedures involved in UX ranging from user research to reation, journey mapping, prototyping, and usability testing. User research understanding the needs and attitudes of users through interviews,



questionnaires, observation, etc. Personas will be the identities developed as a result of the outcome of user research. Journey mapping is the visualization of the interaction of users with a product that marks the pains and possibilities of improvement. Prototyping is an early version of a product tested for problems to be repaired (Klasnja, 2015; Newman, 2015a; Toyama, 2015). As time goes by and technology continues to evolve, user experience is an essential element to make any product or service a success.

2.2.7 E-Commerce

E-commerce means buying or selling merchandise via the internet. With the advance of times, and at a fast rate of progress in technology, millions worldwide carry out all dealings regarding buying and selling of goods or services online. As far back as the history of e-commerce can be traced, e-commerce started in the 1960s due to the invention of the technology of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). EDI allows businesses to exchange purchase orders and invoices electronically. By the 1970s, since EDI allowed information to be exchanged, orders placed, and at the same time conduct electronic transactions through computers, many companies started using it. However, EDI gradually lost its steam over time because of the high prices and technical problems (Tian & Stewart, 2008, pp. 1–2).

E-commerce made a real breakthrough toward the beginning of the 1990s with the birth of the Internet. In addition to that, it was the time when the invention of the first e-commerce platforms as Amazon and eBay took place. Jeffrey Bezos started Amazon, originally starting to sell books online before extending into a wide range of products. eBay was primarily set up by Pierre Omidyar as an auction

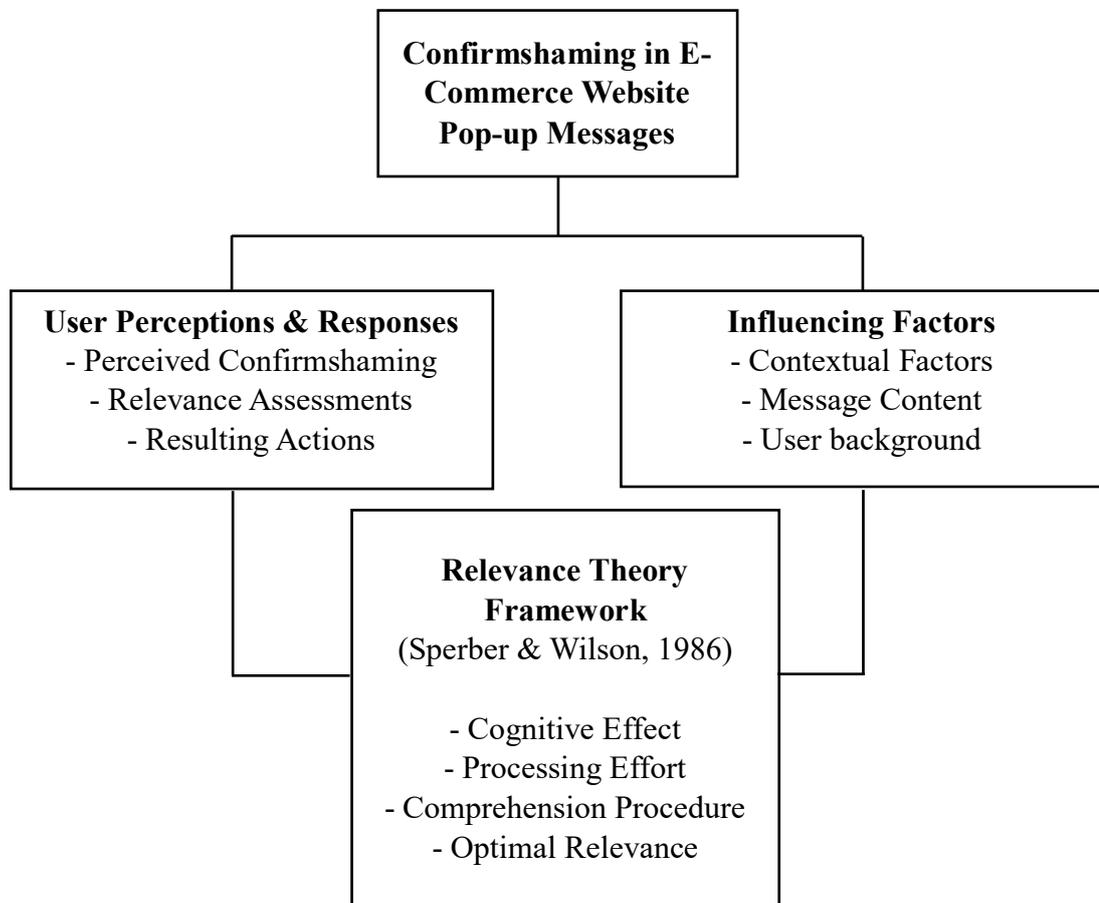


site and for consumer to consumer sales. The major reason that e-commerce has grown this much could be the fact that internet has been highly adopted and access is easy (Tian & Stewart, 2008, pp. 3–6). This is the age of almost everything going online; selling is not restricted to some e-commerce portals because it is also happening on social media. It would only imply that as activities regarding online-based buying and selling started to take off, requirements to do something about ease and sufficient information kept on growing.



2.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 3.
Conceptual Framework



2.4 Operational Definitions

To avoid any misunderstanding when reading this study, the following are definitions of the terms used:

1. **Pop-up messages** refer to the small boxes that appear on the screen while browsing a website. They are created with the aim of getting the attention of internet users by providing attractive offers such as discounts, new product announcements, and so on (Durzyńska, 2023).
2. **Confirmshaming** refers to a tactic where the "No" option on a pop-up message is intentionally written to make the internet user feel ashamed or guilty for choosing that option. The goal is to lead the internet user to click the "Yes" option or comply with what the pop-up message say (Brignull, 2010).
3. **Cognitive aspect** refers to the mental processes used to identify and focus on the most relevant information from the surroundings. It is about how the brain filters and prioritizes information that offers the greatest cognitive benefit. Essentially, attention is given to what is found most useful or important at the moment (Yus, 2009, pp. 753–754). This aspect helps in understanding how people process and evaluate confirmshaming in e-commerce website pop-up messages to determine its importance.
4. **Communicative aspect** refers to the clear expression and recognition of intentions through communication. In short, it involves conveying intentions so that others can understand and interpret them. It is not just



about the exchange of messages, but also about grasping the context, making inferences, and interpreting the intentions behind the messages (Yus, 2009, pp. 755–756). This aspect helps in understanding how individuals react to confirmshaming in e-commerce website pop-up messages and how they communicate their responses.

5. **Ostensive-inferential communication** refers to the type of communication that involves the use of ostensive stimuli (e.g., gestures, signals) to attract the listener’s attention and convey both informative and communicative intentions (Wilson & Sperber, 2006, pp. 255–256).
6. **Explicature** refers to the explicitly communicated content that results from decoding an utterance and enriching it with contextual information (Yus, 2009, pp. 764–765).
7. **Implicature** refers to the implied meaning that is not directly communicated but inferred from the context and the speaker’s choice of words (Yus, 2009, p. 765).

