

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Why Johnny Can't Unsubscribe: Barriers to Stopping Unwanted Email

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SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for your interest in participating in our study on email unsubscribing. Please fill out this brief 1-minute questionnaire regarding yourself. We will use your answers to determine if you are eligible to participate in the study. If you qualify, we will contact you via email for a 45-60 minute in-person study session for which you will receive \$10 cash or cash equivalent as a token of our appreciation for your participation. If you do not qualify for participation, your responses will be safely discarded.

1. What is your year of birth?
2. What is your gender?
3. Are you affiliated with Indiana University Bloomington?
4. [If YES to Q3] What is your affiliation with Indiana University Bloomington?
5. [If Q4 is answered as Student] What is your major/field of study?
6. [If Q4 is answered as Faculty or Staff] What department or school are you affiliated with?
7. Are you a resident of Bloomington, Indiana?
8. How long have you been living in the United States?
9. On average, how many emails do you receive in your inbox on a typical weekday across all your email addresses combined (personal as well as professional)?
10. How do you typically access your email?
11. If you qualify for the study, which email address should we use to contact you for scheduling a study session?

STUDY SESSION PROTOCOL

The following protocol was used for the study session:

In this study, we will ask you to unsubscribe from email that you have saved previously in a separate folder as instructed in the study scheduling message. Similarly, we will ask you to unsubscribe from email from your Spam/Junk folder. This will help us evaluate how email senders implement unsubscribing mechanisms. We will record your screen and audio during the study for later analysis.

The most important thing for you to remember is that there are multiple ways to complete the task. The point of the study is to learn about how you use the unsubscribing mechanisms and what you think about them. Your honest responses will be extremely useful in helping us figure out how to improve unsubscribing processes. We are looking for places where the mechanism should be changed, so if it seems like something does not make sense, please point that out. That is exactly the kind of information we are looking for.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Although we do not anticipate this would happen, if you become uncomfortable in any way, feel free to stop at any time.

In this session, we are interested in two things: how you go about unsubscribing and what you think about as you complete the unsubscribing tasks. You will be asked to “think aloud.” I will teach you how to do this and give you a chance to practice. It is very easy to do, and we get a lot of good information from these kinds of studies about where people run into problems with the tasks. It is basically like you are talking to yourself, but loud enough for other people to hear.

[INSTRUCTIONS AND PRACTICE FOR THINKING ALOUD.]

[Begin screen and audio recording. Tell the participant to begin.]

PROTOCOL FOR POST-STUDY SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Unsubscribing practices:

1. Tell us a little bit about why you chose and how you saved these emails.
2. What kind of unwanted email do you receive? How often? How much? Is it personal or work-related or both?
3. How does receipt of unwanted email differ among your various email accounts?
4. How do you deal with the unwanted email you receive? [If the participant mentions manual or automated filtering or classification:] How do you filter or classify unwanted email? Why do you filter or classify it that way?
5. Do you attempt to unsubscribe from unwanted email? If yes, how? What prompts you to do so? If no, why not?
6. What has happened when you tried to unsubscribe from unwanted email? What challenges have you faced when doing so?
7. Have you ever been subscribed to something without your knowledge? If yes, when and for what?
8. Have you ever been forced to subscribe to something? If yes, when and for what?
9. What hinders you from going through the unsubscribing process in everyday life?
10. When, if ever, have you needed to subscribe back to something you unsubscribed from?
11. What do you suggest can be done for improvement to the unsubscribing process?
12. What would you normally do with the email we looked at today if we had not asked you to save it for us?
13. Of the different ways of unsubscribing you encountered, which one did you find the most challenging and why?
14. Of the different ways of unsubscribing you encountered, which one did you find the easiest and why?
15. Can you think of another way you might have unsubscribed?

Specific email messages:

Let us go back to the email message about *[mention specific email message]*.

16. Why did you think you received that email message?
17. Have you received other messages like that one? When?
18. What did you do when you received those earlier email messages?
19. Do you feel like unsubscribing from that email message worked? Why/why not?
20. Can you imagine a way that unsubscribing might work better for you? What could that look like?
21. Do you expect to see another email message like this again? Why/why not?
22. [If applicable, specific question(s) about the attempt to unsubscribe during this session.]

[Repeat Q16–Q22 for another email message or two, as needed.]

Internet behavior:

23. Some websites ask for you to register with the site by providing personal information (such as information that can identify you or information about yourself or your activities that you prefer not to share broadly). When asked for such information, what percent of the time do you enter fake or made-up information? Why do you so? What false information do you provide?
24. How frequently have you personally been the victim of what you felt was an improper invasion of privacy?
25. How much have you heard or read during the last year about the use and potential misuse of the information collected from the Internet?

Study session:

26. What did you think about the experience of unsubscribing during the study session?
27. What do think can be improved in the study?
28. Is there anything that I should have asked?
29. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?