Collaborative Discussion 1 – Research Methods and Professional Practice – Initial Post – Michael Geiger

ACM Ethics case: Dark UX Patterns

In the 'Dark UX Patterns' case described by the Association of Computing Machinery (ACM, N.D.), a programmer is commissioned to change a website design in such a way that it can be misunderstood and not easily recognized by visually impaired. Symbols known through information encoding are used in a negative way, which, in the consensus of UX design, have a functional recognition value for users in order to trigger reflexive actions and thus deceive (Hartson & Pyla, 2018). In addition, the colour combination red-green is used, which visually impaired people with such a visual impairment cannot distinguish and are therefore unable to read.

As a result, several professional standards were disregarded according to the Code of Conduct of the British Computer Society (2022). According to principle 1.b, the legitimate rights of the users were not protected because they were deceived, and according to principle 1.c, disabilities were deliberately exploited in abusive and discriminatory ways, which means that the principle of promoting inclusion (1.d) was not pursued. This practice not only violates the Code of Conduct standards, but may also constitute a criminal offense under the Fraud Act 2006 Section 3.b, as information is intentionally concealed for financial gain (The Crown Prosecution Service, 2020).

The programmer and his manager, as well as the manager who gave the order as a customer, can be made responsible for this procedure. On the one hand, the programmer can be held responsible for the violation of his professional competence and integrity (2.e & 2.f), since he recognized the problem and should have criticized

the procedure and avoided the potential risk of harming others. The programmer's manager, on the other hand, should have prevented such an approach from the outset through internal company guidelines (3.d). According to the Code of Conduct, the clients have not fulfilled their professional responsibilities (3.a) because they made the design changes with full knowledge of the consequences (British Computer Society, 2022).

In summary, it can be stated that a large number of those involved have not behaved ethically and that the Code of Conduct of the British Computer Society has been disregarded at all instances. In addition to ethical concerns, legal consequences of such an approach cannot be ruled out.

References:

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