

Cancellation flow

Phase 1: Stakeholder interviews



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Research report
October 2023

Phase 1: Stakeholder interviews

Background

With a vast subscriber base, one of our main goals is to **motivate users to continue their subscriptions**. Among the many factors that can encourage users to maintain their subscriptions, the cancellation flow is also a vital aspect. This serves as a final opportunity to meet users' needs and persuade them to stay on board.

Some brands see **an increase in churn after migration to URS**. Therefore we need an updated understanding of **how the current cancellation flow is performing** across our brands and to better understand the **user experience** of the cancellation flow.

We also need to get an updated understanding of how cancellation is done at our competitors in order to better address best practices, potential **iterations and improvements**.

Process

Stakeholder interviews in order to understand our brands priorities, challenges and wants/needs connected to the cancellation flow.

Mapping of the current cancellation flow across our brands. CBM has already done an amazing job in regards to this.

Mapping of selected competitors' cancellation flow in order to illuminate current standard (and best) practices.

User interviews in order to gather insights on critical pain points and delights for our users when cancelling

Status

- ✓ We're currently conducting the very last round of stakeholders interviews
- ✓ Write-up of summary of key learnings and takeaways from stakeholder interviews.
- ⚙ **Phase 2:** recruitment of users for user interviews/user testing.
- ⚙ Continuous mapping of competitor cancellation flows

Stakeholders interviews

Subscription Norway

- Mia Baglo Skottle
- Anders Guldbrandsen
- Ragnhild Seim
- Kim Hendricks
- Silje Hegret
- Therese Grieves
- Sara Trælvik
- Esten Placht
- Tone Anette Elde (TBC)

Product & UX

- Andreas Bøhler
- Geir Larsen
- Ola Stenberg
- Tomas Roaldsnes
- Linda Braeken

Customer Care

- Lars-Georg Reisænen
- Amin Aleksander Ekberg

Subscription Sweden

- Christoffer Lindvall
- Ulrika Henningsson
- Monaya Rayes
- Vedrana Corluca
- Maria Risshytt

Common Commercial Solutions

- Matias Nydal
- Nicole Golda
- Ida Cotton Breivik
- Therese Berglund
- Emma Brännström

5 most interesting findings

- 1. Emotional Engagement through Personalization:** Stakeholders believe a more personalized communication approach could significantly transform the subscription cancellation flow.
- 2. Innovative Mindset:** There's a clear desire among stakeholders for the ability to frequently test and implement various, targeted holdback activities.
- 3. Power of Discounts:** Despite potential challenges with unwanted cancellation habits, offering a discount during the cancellation process consistently yields strong retention numbers.
- 4. A Unified Anti-Churn Strategy:** A common anti-churn/cancellation strategy with universally-agreed KPIs is seen as valuable among stakeholders for facilitating cross-brand learning.
- 5. Balancing UX and Business:** The conscious initiative to balance ethical user treatment with practical business goals demonstrates a responsibility towards maintaining positive customer relationships while also focusing on performance.

Key learnings from internal stakeholder interviews

The notion that the cancellation flow is too easy or simple isn't necessarily about it being easy or hard to complete in terms of steps, but rather what we say and do - or currently *don't say* and *don't do*.

- Stakeholders advocate for greater personalization and distinct brand presence in the cancellation flow to potentially retain more users
- There's a shared sentiment that enriching the cancellation process with improved tone of voice and strategic holdback activities could increase user engagement.
- Although discounted offers in the cancellation flow positively influence retention rates, stakeholders have expressed a concern about encouraging unwanted user habits, such as actively choosing to cancel for just that.
- Stakeholders unanimously agree on the importance of avoiding 'dark patterns' in order to maintain users' trust and maintain UX best practices.
- A clear desire for increased capacity to experiment with various holdback activities is expressed by a majority of stakeholders.
- Some stakeholders believe that segmented offers, tailored to user behavior, might enhance retention rates, although acknowledging the need for potential additional resources for such customizations.
- Some stakeholders suggest that personalizing the user interface on MyPage to embody individual brand identities and value propositions to a greater extent could enhance users' perception and appreciation of each brand.
- The stakeholders suggest the providing users the possibility to change to other subscription products (up- and downgrades, and pausing) could function as a deterrent to cancellation.
- Stakeholders note the promising initial results shown by the current tests being done with holdback activities in the cancellation flow.
- Many stakeholders emphasize the necessity for a shared cancellation flow strategy and a standard KPI. This uniform approach is highlighted as crucial for defining success and serving as a benchmark for future experimentation.
- Some stakeholders suggest there might be more to learn from the reasons users give in the stop survey when they cancel their subscriptions.

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5 most interesting findings

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The Role of a Personal Tone of Voice

Tone of Voice (ToV)

There is a feeling of us lacking a sense of personal touch through our Tone of Voice and how we choose to communicate with our users. Multiple stakeholders believe a more personal ToV could improve the cancellation flow.

Whether it be a “universal” Tone of Voice for all brands, or if each brand should have the ability to adjust this in terms of their brand identity, needs to be discussed. For example, brands like Vektklubb and Wellobe might want/need to emphasize different factors than our news brands, and VG might want to address their “churn and return” customer base in specific way that does not necessarily align with how our Premium subscription brands wants to address theirs.

Enhancing Cancellation Flow with Strategic Holdback Activities

Holdback activities

The 'exit' for our users, as it is on URS today, also seems too easy in terms of merely 'showing users the door'. Stakeholders believe it would benefit from strategic additions in forms of holdback activities. Multiple types of holdback activities have been suggested, such as value propositions (displaying what features the product offers and what they will lose access to), ability to change subscription, up- and downgrades, discounted offers (including discounted up- and downgrades) and informing that those who have a shared subscription will lose access when cancelling.

These elements could create a pause moment for users to reconsider their decision to cancel their subscription and, potentially, retaining them.

Experimenting with holdback strategies for higher retention

Continuous experimentation

Our stakeholders express a desire for higher capability to implement and experiment with holdback activities. A majority express a desire to test a variety of activities, and target specific user groups. Notions differ when it comes to the experience of how easy this is done, but they all agree on that this is something that needs to be available.

Experimentation should be used as a means to discover effectiveness of the various activities but also in order to inspire and learn across brands. Hence there is also a call for a common strategy and KPIs for a successful cancellation flow. This is currently a work in progress in CBM.

Current initiatives

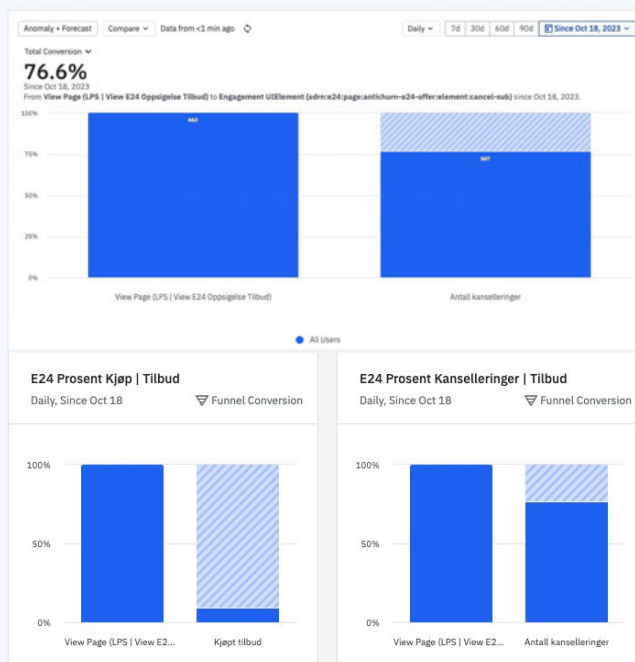
There is ongoing testing with different holdback activities at multiple brands migrated to URS at the moment utilizing VEV and Salesposter Service in order to re-route users to a landing page with some kind of holdback activity. There are tests currently being done at VG, E24, Stavanger Aftenblad, Bergens Tidende and SvD. Both brands are seeing significant results (drop off rates) where a discounted offer is being presented.

Experimenting with holdback strategies for higher retention

E24

A somewhat curious case, E24 is seeing almost a 25% drop-off rate when users are presented with a discounted offer. However, only 10% of the users buy the discounted offer. Meaning about 15% users who are considering cancelling their subscription seem to reevaluate and stop by being shown the discounted offer.

Hence there might be some mechanism triggering users to stay just by displaying a discounted deal. This should be investigated further.



Double-Edge Sword: The Potential Impact of Discounts on Retention and Brand Perception

Discounted offers is the (problematic) gold standard

The testing that has been done so far shows that providing a discount during the cancellation flow always provides good retention numbers compared to other activities deployed.

“If you want to move numbers, discounts are the way to go”.

However it comes with a worry among many stakeholders: while we are getting good retention we are also positively reinforcing unwanted user behavior. In other words, are we teaching our users to continuously cancel their subscriptions in order to get discounts while simultaneously lessening the perceived value of our brands?

Hence, there are ongoing discussions about the use of quarantines in order to prevent “churn-and-return” behavior or to avoid exposing the same users for the same type of offer multiple times. The experience with, current use, and views on the use of quarantines does however seem to differ between brands.

Data-Driven Segmentation: Opportunities and Challenges

Segmentation

Furthermore, multiple stakeholders suggest that being able to segment these activities based on user data could further enhance these mechanisms. Being able to talk to users, inform users of what they will miss out, or provide offers based on their user behaviour can possibly make these activities even more effective.

Unless automated, this type of complexity might however add additional need for resources in terms of keeping these updated and relevant for all the users.

Aligning good UX and business needs in the cancellation flow

No dark patterning

Providing a good user experience - avoiding dark patterning which compromise both ethics and user trust - in the cancellation flow is something all stakeholders emphasise.

All stakeholders have asserted the significance of ensuring a positive user experience during the cancellation flow. They emphasize the need to avoid 'dark patterns' that could jeopardize design ethics, undermine user trust and deter future engagement.

Balancing Ethics with Business Needs

While stakeholders all agree about the need to avoid 'dark patterns' for ethical and trust reasons, they also highlight the importance of commercial interests. They note that while striving for a good user experience, considerations of business success must not be neglected. Thus, achieving a balance between ethical considerations and practical business needs is crucial.

Improving User Experience and Cutting Costs: Self-Service

Cancellation is currently the main reason for visiting MyPage

According to the [CSAT](#) survey deployed on MyPage both in Sweden and Norway, the primary reason that users come to MyPage is to cancel their subscription. Approximately 50% of the respondents who tagged their response with a reason for visiting stated that they came to MyPage for this reason. These findings are also consistent with [previous research](#) conducted on the Schibsted Account Profile pages.

Reduced costs through increased self-service

Subscription cancellations also represent a large volume Customer Care inquiries. Difficulty in independently cancelling subscriptions can lead users to reach out to our customer service. As a result, it's not just revenue loss we face, but also additional operating costs. This increases the financial impact of lost revenue and could potentially also generate unnecessary user dissatisfaction.

Simplifying Cancellation and Understanding User Behaviors

Ease of use

Aftenposten's most recent iteration on their cancellation flow - reducing the amount of steps, while also implementing a holdback offer - has proven that a simplified cancellation flow (in addition to holdback activities) help them “rescue” an increased number of users. This might suggest that the amount of steps during the cancellation flow is not detrimental to churn rates, as long as its combined with a holdback activity.

It might also be important to consider the different kinds of users across our brands. Our brand has a mix of users, and some, with their own ways of engaging and their own habits when it comes to subscriptions. For example, some users frequently come and go (“churn and return”), suggesting a smooth and easy exit process might encourage their return. But that's just one piece of the puzzle. We need to ensure that our solutions take into account the wide variety of user behaviours and needs across our brands.



According to [Deloitte's 2023 Digital Media Trends report](#), 62% of Millennials and 57% of Gen Z cancelled their subscription and renewed (churned and returned) within a 6-month period.

DID YOU KNOW?

Improving MyPage

Enhanced brand identity and value proposition

Some stakeholders brought up that our general UI on MyPage could be tailored more to each brand, going beyond a generic, 'white label' look. They believe that personalizing MyPage can enhance user perception of each brand. In addition to this, making the brand or product's unique selling points more visible can help users realize the full potential of their subscriptions. Not every user may be fully aware of all the different products, content and features they have access to with their subscription, so MyPage could be a perfect place to showcase this. Today this seem to primarily be emphasized on sales posters and in anti-churn activities.

Subscription changes

Furthermore, the ability to make changes to one's subscription is a feature multiple stakeholders point to being something that could prevent churn. Subscription up- and downgrades (for those brands that have multiple products) are primarily mentioned, but the ability to pause a subscription is also mention by some. Niche brands like Vektklubb and Wellobe have an extra interest in such a feature due their specific user groups and needs. It is also mentioned that it doesn't necessarily have to be brand specific, but that providing a glimpse of what exists in the Schibsted portfolio also could be something to consider.

Common strategy and KPIs for the Cancellation Flow

Common strategy for enhanced and cross-brand learning

Some of our stakeholders emphasise the necessity of a common cancellation flow strategy and a KPI that all parties involved can work towards, continuously evaluate and learn from. This is, according to them, key when it comes to defining success. It might not have been clearly defined or communicated where this mandate now sits after the reorganization. They also express challenges related to different cancellation strategies, particularly the overuse of discounts and underutilization of available data. In addition to this, they seek a baseline for the cancellation flow that can be tracked and used as a benchmark for future experimentation.

Current status/structure

AxP team owns and is responsible for the technical solution for the cancellation flow. By providing brands on URS with access to the VEV+LPS solution the aim is currently to provide added flexibility (in the cancellation flow) for the brands, in order to enable them to motivate more users to stay. The aim is for the learnings and results from this testing, in addition to our research, to be used to prioritize further development of URS

CBM (Norway) is responsible for all testing in this solution with brands, and are also responsible for the development of a strategy, OKRs and KPIs for anti churn, holdback and winback.

Setting up the same structure and tools is currently a work in progress on the Swedish side.

Optimizing User Data: 'Stop Reason' Survey Insights

Better utilization of the stop reason survey

Several stakeholders also highlight the data we gather on the 'stop reason' selected by our users when they cancel - both in the cancellation flow and in stop surveys sent out by email. There's a belief that this data can be better utilised and leveraged for both efficiency and profitability. Consequently, there is a call for a strategic review of this information. Additionally, there's some concerns regarding mandate in terms of who should be processing the data and utilising it.

While certain brands (such as SvD) are experimenting with holdback offers determined by user selections, others claim that they're solely collecting this information without intent and/or action.

Evidently, there's also room for enhancements to the survey. Some of the themes we discussed with our stakeholders were:

- If we're asking the right questions
- If we're asking them in the right way
- If we should iterate on the order of the alternatives

Main challenges and discussion points

- Personalization and Tone of Voice
 - Challenge: Striking a balance between maintaining a brand's unique voice and an organizing-wide unified messaging style.
 - Discussion Point: What degree of customization is feasible and effective for each individual brand?
- Holdback Activities and Continuous Experimentation
 - Challenge: Identifying what holdback activities are most effective and implementing a method for continuous experimentation.
 - Discussion Point: How can we improve our approach to testing different holdback activities?
- Discounts and Engagement.
 - Challenge: Discounts during the cancellation flow might encourage users to cancel their subscription to avail of them.
 - Discussion Point: How might we provide incentives to users that promote long-term engagement?

Main challenges and discussion points

- UX Considerations
 - Challenge: Finding the balance between business needs and good UX/avoiding dark patterns.
 - Discussion Point: How can UX and design teams create a positive user exit experience while maintaining good business results?
- Segmentation based on User Data
 - Challenge: Implementing segmentation strategies without adding significant complexity or resource strain.
 - Discussion Point: What user behaviors should we prioritize in segmentation efforts for holdback activities?
- Brand Identity
 - Challenge: Amplifying brand identities on MyPage to enhance loyalty and value perception without diluting the overall Schibsted portfolio brand.
 - Discussion Point: What elements of our brands can be emphasized to best showcase their unique value?

Main challenges and discussion points

- Subscription Flexibility
 - Challenge: Allowing for flexible subscription changes to prevent user cancellations while maintaining profitability.
 - Discussion Point: How can we make subscription changes more user-friendly and yet beneficial to our brands?
- Implementing Holdback Activities
 - Challenge: Incorporating holdback activities into a simplified cancellation flow without adversely impacting user experience.
 - Discussion Point: What strategies can be employed to introduce holdback activities without overcomplicating the process?
- Utilization of Stop-Reason Data
 - Challenge: Effectively leveraging the valuable 'stop reason' data gathered during user subscription cancellations.
 - Discussion Point: In what ways can we make most effective use of 'stop reason' data to strategically guide our holdback activities?

Main challenges and discussion points

- Common Cancellation Strategy
 - Challenge: Developing a shared cancellation strategy and key performance indicators recognized and utilized by all brands.
 - Discussion Point: How can we establish a common cancellation approach that aligns with multiple brands' needs without losing individuality?

It is important to note that this work is currently well underway in CBM. However, in light of the recent re-org, there might be a need to communicate this mandate even further as there seems to be some uncertainty.

Cancellation flow

Phase 2: Competitor mapping and analysis



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Research report
January 2024

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Background

With a vast subscriber base, one of our main goals is to **motivate users to continue their subscriptions**. Among the many factors that can encourage users to maintain their subscriptions, the cancellation flow is a vital aspect. This serves as a final opportunity to meet user needs and persuade them to stay on board.

Some brands **experience negative trends in Churn and Renewal rates**, which has led to a hypothesis that our current cancellation flow is “too easy”. Therefore we need an updated understanding of **how the current cancellation flow is performing** across our brands and to better understand the **user experience** of the cancellation flow.

We also need to get an updated understanding of how cancellation is done at our competitors in order to better address best practices, potential iterations and improvements. Therefore, we have mapped and analyzed a total number of **24 competitors** in order to **gather insights on current standards and “best practices”** as well as notable trends.

Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Process

Why? In order to provide a strategic direction for Schibsted in terms of common and “best practices” for upcoming cancellation flow iterations/solutions, we’ve conducted a competitor analysis based on 24 brands both in digital news media and brands providing subscription services in other markets matching Schibsted’s own brand portfolio. Inclusion criteria:

- Direct competitors in digital news (e.g Amedia and Bonnier)
- Large user bases in news (e.g. New York Times and Wall Street Journal))
- Popularity as household services (e.g. Netflix and Spotify)
- Matching Schibsted’s non-news portfolio (e.g. Audible and Viaplay)

See the full list of included brands [here](#).

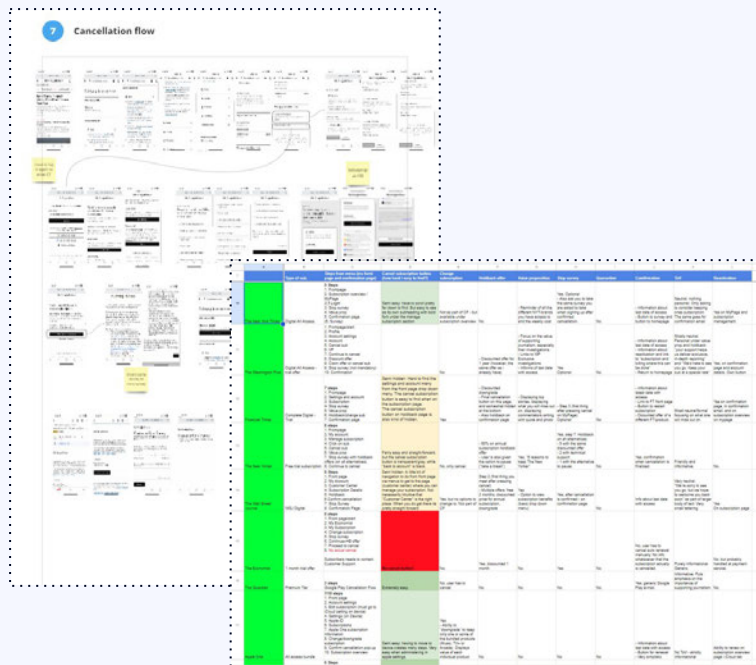
Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Process

How? According to current user data, most users subscribe/make their **purchases on mobile web**. Therefore we followed the same logic when we purchased subscriptions at our selected competitors. Half of the purchases were done on iOS and the other half on Android. We also paid attention to the method of payment, although not originally in our scope, but found out that it occasionally affected the cancellation flow at some of the competitors.

We screenshotted every step of the purchase flow and the cancellation flow in Miro and utilised a spreadsheet where we summarised the number of steps, how easy or hard we experienced that it was to complete the cancellation, the use of holdback offers and retention strategies, Tone of Voice, in what manner our competitors confirmed the cancellation, as well as relevant features such as the possibility to change subscription, reactivate and pause.

Mapping in Miro and thematization in spreadsheet.



Main findings

A typical cancellation flow consists of...

According to our competitor mapping data, **the most frequent number of steps** in a cancellation flow is 6 (frontpage/start included), which essentially outlines a user that goes to profile/settings, clicks on 'manage subscription', scrolls to 'cancel subscription', gets a value proposition or a holdback offer of some sort, followed by a - usually mandatory - stop reason survey and then confirms cancellation.

The trend in **holdback offers** among our competitors is, undoubtedly, to give a discounted offer for a 2 or 3 month period, an annual subscription or the possibility to downgrade the current subscription. It is, however, noteworthy that only half of the total 24 competitors utilizes holdback offers. The same is true for **Value Propositions (VP:s)**, where only 13 of the total 24 competitors utilize them as a holdback strategy in the cancellation flow. The ones that do tend to focus on: most read articles, the importance of supporting journalism, losing access to premium content, general subscriber benefits, account sharing, money saving and personalized content. A handful competitors utilizes VP:s to, in a very creative way, drive engagement, of which we present examples under [Notable trends and inspiration](#).

A majority of our competitors, 20 out of 24, utilizes **stop reason surveys** and in most of the cancellation flows we've mapped out they are required/mandatory, integrated **as a logical next-step in the flow**. Only a minority makes it optional, and commonly post-cancellation.

Most of the competitors we have looked at also offer **some form of reactivation**, either on the account page and/or in (when present) confirmation email.

The cancellation button

We see few examples of dark patterning among our competitors, but some evidently apply the rule of making the actual cancellation button hard to find by adjusting font size to the minimum, using light grey font text, blending it in among other options, utilizing a high opacity button, or reversing the order of colors. One competitor, Financial Times, have made the final step of the flow rather confusing by giving 3 holdback offers with checkboxes in a row, placing the cancel option below - also with a checkbox - to drive change instead of cancel.

In contrast, 11 out of 24 competitors have obviously chosen to make the cancellation button easy to find, clearly visible and highlighted on the account and settings pages. This leaves 13 competitors that are not 'in the green' when it comes to catering for a good user experience.

As a rule of thumb, the cancellation button appears - in terms of *initiating the cancellation process* - during step 3 or 4.



The cancellation button

Streaming services - streamlined cancellation

One common factor for some of the big streaming services chosen for our analysis (Amazon, Apple, HBO) is that their cancellation flow is very efficient. Evidently, a majority of them have prioritised simplicity over a maze of confusing steps and/or deceiving UX and this is true for both Subscription Video On Demand and audio platforms.

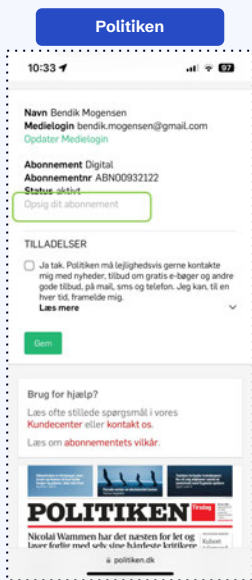
The SVOD platforms have clearly adopted the motto *easy to sign up - easy to cancel*. They have also acknowledged the high “churn and return” behaviour among their user/customer base, which partly is attributed to their content format - such as series/seasons and premieres - and how it’s generally consumed. For audio platforms, the same logic doesn’t fully apply, but points towards a general trend for subscription streaming services regardless of what content format they provide.



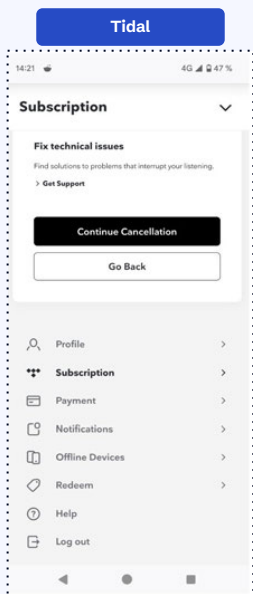
Phase 2: Competitor analysis

The cancellation button

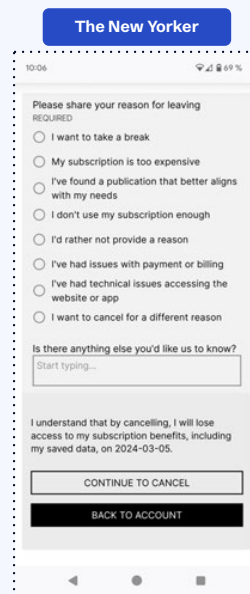
Design and look of CTA-buttons



Small font in light gray with high opacity. **Politikens cancellation button** seems to be designed to be hidden.



Tidal, last step of CF. A very common design choice where the CTA button is colored in order to direct the user to actually make the intended decision.



Reversing CTA colors at The New Yorker. Although rather rare, we've seen a few examples of this almost classic bait.

Interventions

Holdback offers, value propositions and subscription changes

The most common types of intervention deployed in order to convert users from cancelling are, probably as expected, **value propositions** and **holdback offers**. We also see some brands provide options to **change subscriptions** (billing cycles or upgrade and downgrade) at a discounted price. Here we are defining a holdback offer as a “personal” discounted price offer provided for a limited time.

These are utilized at various steps throughout the flow, and there does **not seem to be a given “standard” for when** in a cancellation flow they are implemented. There is also a **variety in whether brands implement one or multiple interventions** during the CF.

It is, however, fair to assume that most competitors also continuously experiment with different kinds of offers.

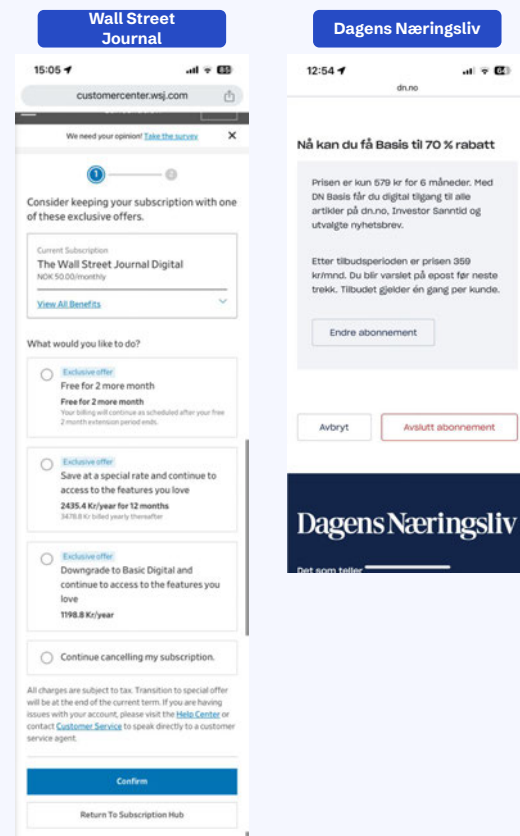


Interventions: Holdback offer

The most common type of holdback offers encountered are some sort of discount on the user's current plan. These do however vary a lot between different brands, but the most common offer seem to be a discounted rate on the current plan for the next months.

- **Current plan at discounted rate** from anywhere between a couple of months and up to year, where 2 months is the most common period (e.g Expressen, WSJ, The Economist, Storytel)
- Change to a **longer billing cycle** (often annual) at discounted rate (e.g The New Yorker, The Washington Post, HBO)
- **Up or downgrading plan at a discounted rate** (e.g Dagens Næringsliv, Financial Times, Washington Post, Tidal)
- Current **plan for free** for 2 months (WSJ)
- **Different product** at discounted rate (Financial Times)
- **Free trial periods with partner** newspapers (Dagbladet)

Discounted offers also seem to be **more prevalent in news subscriptions** than in streaming services (audio and video) where a proposed change of plan is more common.



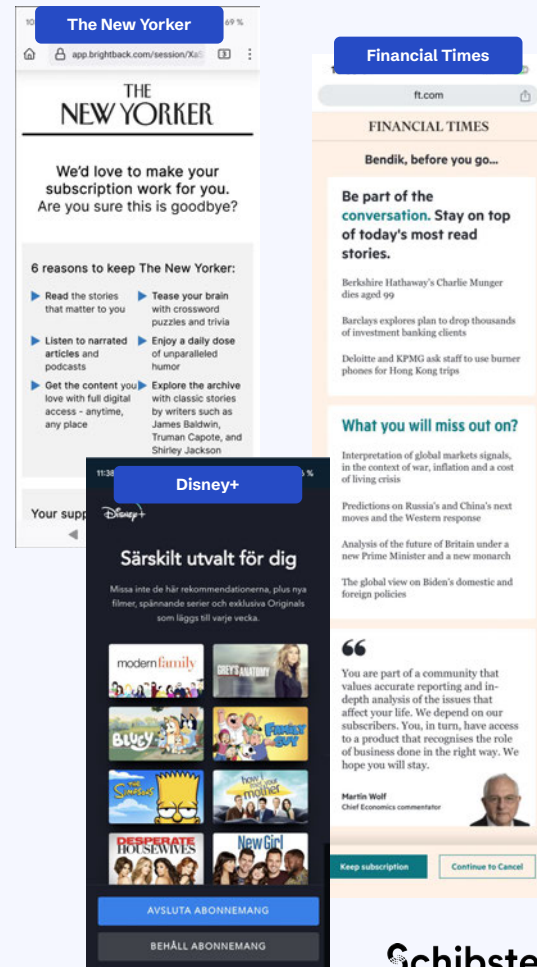
Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Interventions: Value propositions

The majority of brands we have documented implement some sort of value proposition during their CF. These usually address the **content, functionality or the benefits users will lose access to** by cancelling. For newspapers the most common value propositions revolve around losing access to content such as **top stories or exclusive articles and newsletters**, extra products such as **crosswords, e-papers and podcasts**, and **benefits** such as family sharing and discounted offers from partners.

Streaming services has a stronger focus on **personalization** in their value propositions, such as **suggested content** that you will lose access to (Disney+) and **losing access to content** your playlists or downloaded music (Tidal and Spotify).

We have also encountered a few other interesting examples, such as YouTube's display of unused functionality and Spotify's focus on how the user experience will deteriorate by downgrading, all of which we present under Notable trends and inspiration.



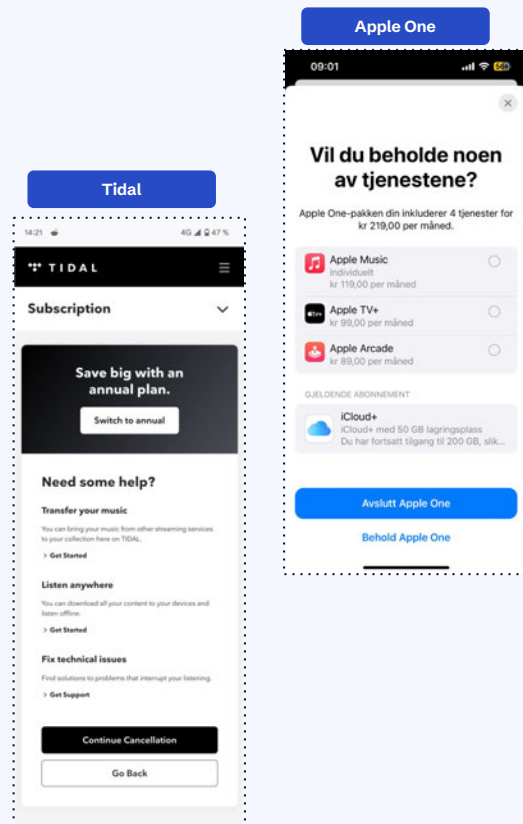
Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Interventions: Change plan/subscription

In addition to the aforementioned holdback offers to change subscription at a discounted price, some brands also implement the option or suggestion to switch ones current subscription or plan during the CF without any “personal” discount.

This option seem to be more common amongst streaming services which offer to **switch between single, duo or family plans** (Spotify) and saving money per person, an **annual billing plan** (Tidal, HBO) and saving money by paying less per month, **removing products from a bundle** (Apple One and Amedia +Alt) or a **plan with ads** (Disney+) and paying less.

It is also important to mention that many brands do offer the option to change plan or subscription, but this is offered “outside” of their CFs, as a part of subscription management.



Phase 2: Competitor analysis

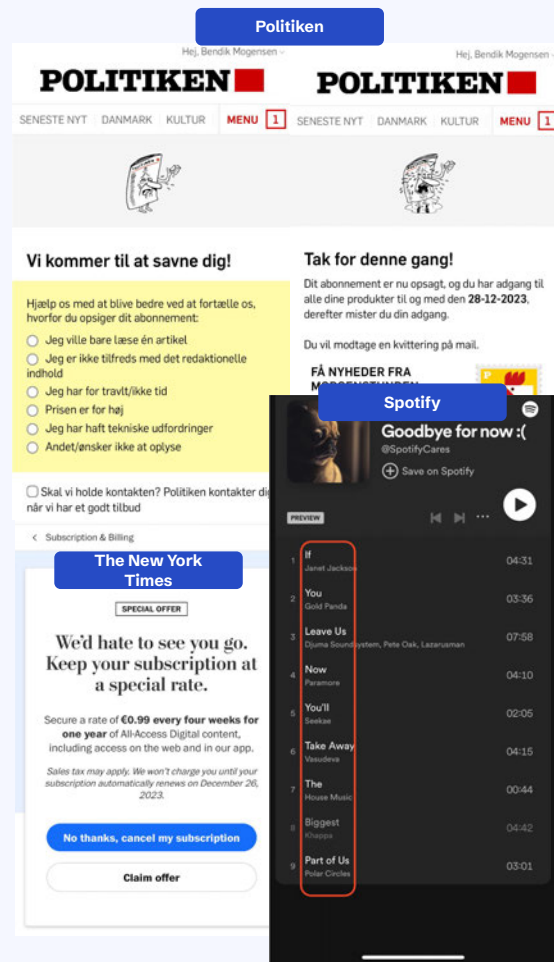
Tone of Voice

The way brands talk to their users might impact both churn and return. During our stakeholder interviews it became clear that there is a belief that by being more personal during the CF, we might be able to make some users stay, and if not stay, be more likely to return at a later point in time.

This notion seem to be shared by other brands as well. We see that most brands in news media adopt some sort of personal Tone of Voice. The degree of *how* personal varies. It does however seem like a **thank you and welcome back** is fairly standard.

The most common form of personal message during CFs is stating that **“we hate to see you go”/“we will miss you”** and **“thanks for subscribing, we hope to see you again”**. This does seem to be **more common among the nordic newspapers** we have looked at compared to the international newspapers (predominantly US), which are more neutral and informative in their tone of voice, and rather focusing on their value propositions.

Spotify is however a worthy mention in creativity with their *Goodbye for now :(* playlist at the end of their cancellation flow.



Phase 2: Competitor analysis

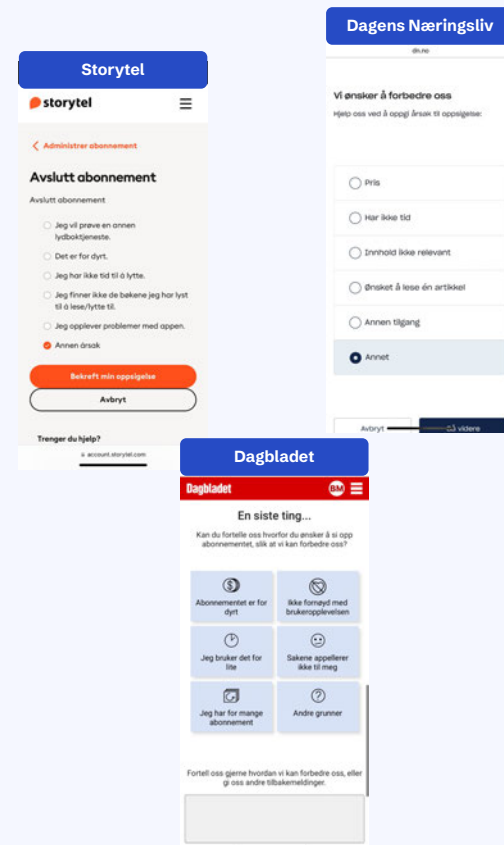
Stop surveys

Every single newspaper we have looked at implement a stop survey in some shape or form. These are **varying in terms of look, number of alternatives, whether they are mandatory or not, rotating their questions and where in the CF they appear.** The option to add a **comment or feedback in freetext** however seem fairly common.

The number of alternatives given range from 6 to 12, where 6 alternatives is the most common. Primarily addressing **price, dissatisfaction with content relevance, content or experience, technical- billing/payment- or delivery- issues, and time constraints.**

See a full overview of the alternatives [here](#).

Some brands, primarily the streaming services, takes more specific approaches addressing brand- or segment-specific challenges such as not having the shows or books one is interested in (Netflix, Storytel etc.).

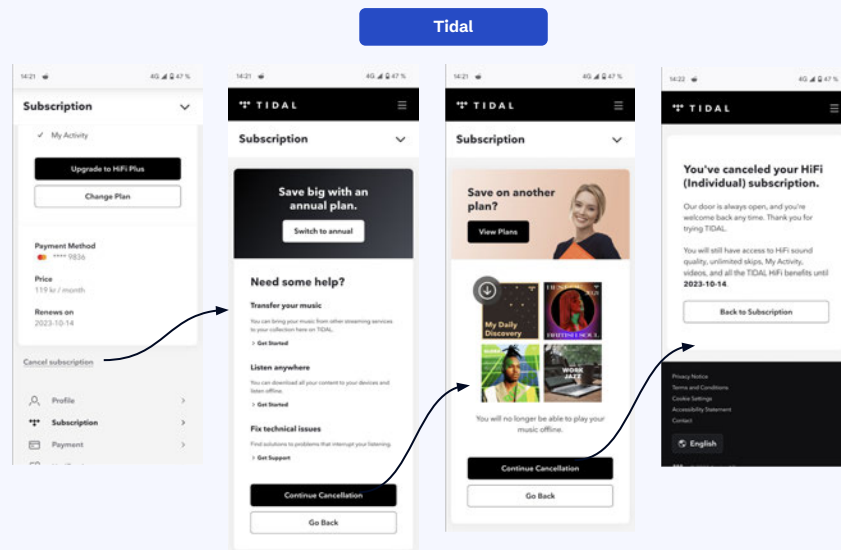


Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Stop surveys

Simultaneously, other streaming services such as Amazon (Prime and Audible), Tidal and Apple skip stop surveys in the CF completely. Possibly an **indication that some big brands might be moving away from stop surveys**. Berlingske Tidende in Denmark have also dropped the stop survey in their CF.

On the other hand, some brands implement a more extended survey activity. **The New York Times** adds an option to answer an extended survey (including demographics etc.) both at sign up and cancellation, **Spotify** adds a question about how likely you are to subscribe again in the future. **ViaPlay** adds follow-up questions for each answer, and **The New Yorker** triggers a specific holdback offer pop-up based your answer in on the stop survey (see examples [here](#) and [here](#)).



Phase 2: Competitor analysis

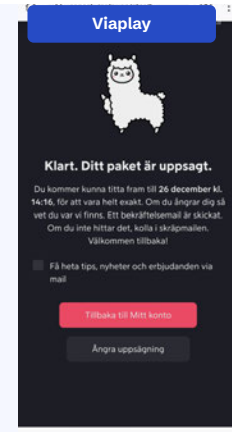
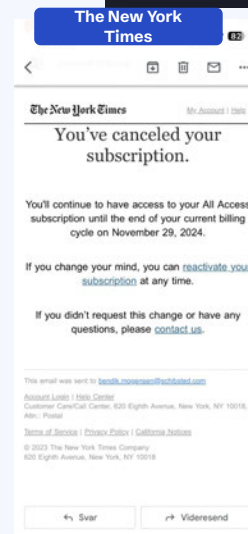
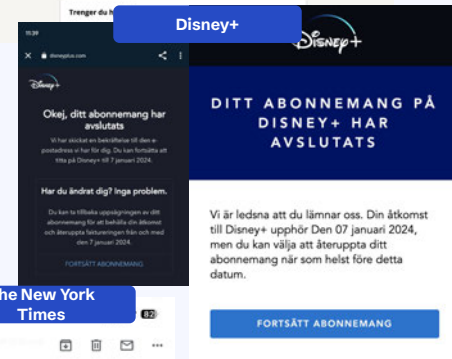
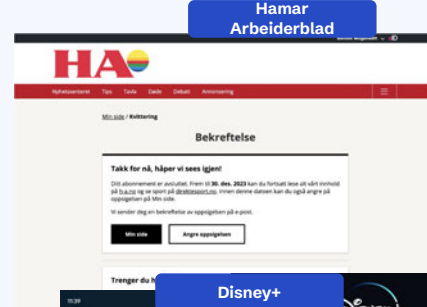
Reactivation

Providing an easy way to reactivate subscriptions is also common among the brands we have looked at. As most users still have access for a while after cancelling, this is **primarily offered on users account pages** after they have cancelled, in some form of reactivation button.

Almost all brands we have looked at provide such a solution on their account pages. Some brands, such as Hamar Arbeiderblad (Amedia local) and The Financial Times also include this on the **confirmation page in the CF**, while others, such as Disney+ add it to their **confirmation email** as well.

All in all, out of the 24 brands we have looked into:

- 18 have a reactivation button on their Account pages
- 7 have a reactivation button or link in their confirmation email
- 5 have a reactivation button on their confirmation page in the CF
- 1 has it in all three (Disney+)



Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Cancellation flow: URS

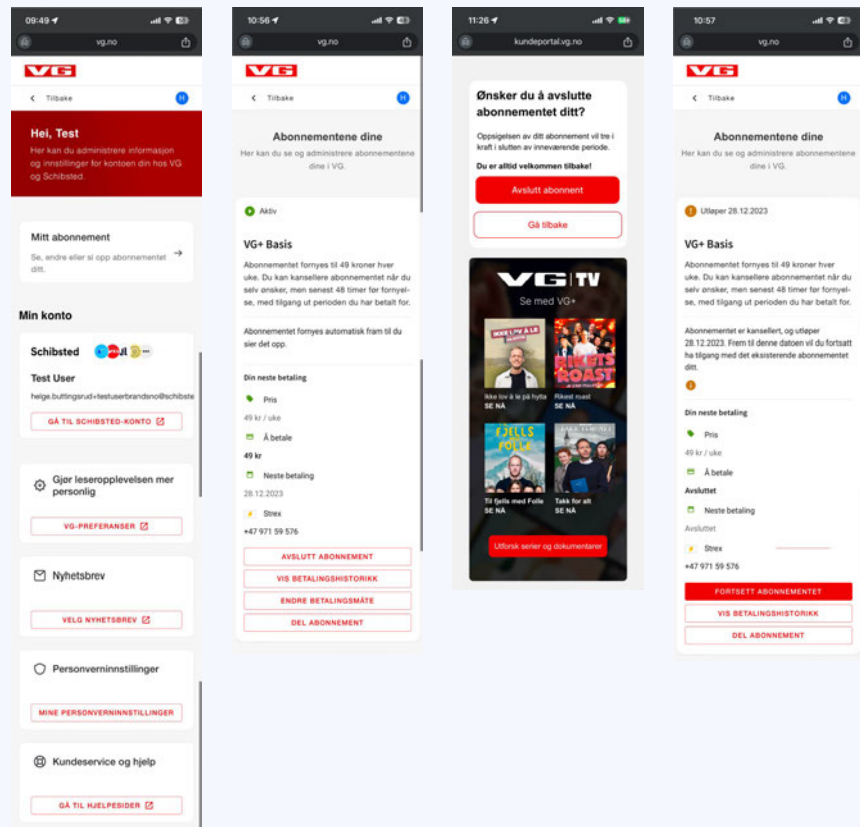
The cancellation flow in URS, here exemplified by VG, is fairly simple compared to most competitors in the news media market.

The amount of steps required is around the typical amount, but at the **lower end of the scale compared to other newspapers**.

In this example we are exposed to a **value proposition** but **no holdback offer**. (We are however currently experimenting with both value propositions and holdback offers).

No stop surveys and the **Tone of Voice can be argued to be close to non-existent**, except for “You are always welcome back!” above the cancel subscription button.

No final confirmation page confirming that the subscription is ended other than changed information on the the account page.



Notable trends and inspiration

Examples from competitors

Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Easy to sign up/easy to cancel - a marketing tactic

Some competitors go to great lengths when it comes to the motto “easy to sign up/easy to cancel” as a marketing tactic. One of them is Netflix, who have it as their mission to be best in class, at least in text. One Eddy Wu, in Product Innovation, makes it clear that Netflix have “always thought it should be easy to sign up and to cancel” and frames it in a way that pays respect to the **value of the transaction** through wording like **hard-earned cash** and **value for their money**. Evidently, Netflix knows that a lot of their subscribers have adopted a “churn and return” behavior, which partly can be tied to the content they provide (series, premieres), and might explain why this type of narrative has become part of their core marketing strategy. It could also be understood as an effect of previously failing to cater to their user needs, which means that it is a reparation of sorts.

Whether or not Netflix is “true” in their mission, it all boils down to **showing empathy with the customer/user, even at the end**, which can also be tied to the Tone of Voice in the actual cancellation flow, where we can confirm that at least some competitors actually put in an effort.

« We’ve always thought it should be easy to sign up and to cancel [...] We hope this new approach saves people some hard earned cash »

- Eddy Wu, Netflix

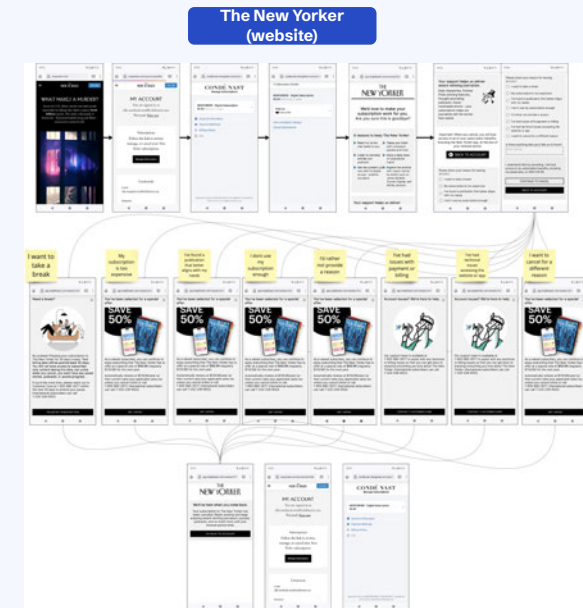
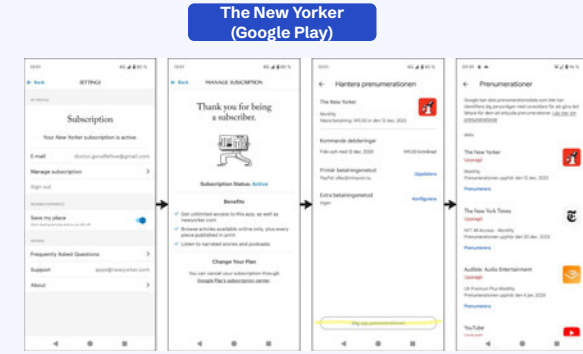
Phase 2: Competitor analysis

In-App purchases and Third Party Payment Processors lessens control over user journeys

In-App Purchases (IAP) along with the PSD2 and the impending revised PSD3, have already begun reshaping the management of digital subscription services. Users are now equipped to handle subscription cancellations directly through various platforms like **Apple's App Store and Google Play**, or through third-party payment processors such as **PayPal and Klarna**. This now circumvents the 'traditional' cancellation processes which would typically be managed by the subscription provider.

This reshaping signals a significant shift in control dynamics - with users being granted more autonomy over their subscriptions and the ability to manage all their subscriptions in a single place. Meanwhile, it **reduces the control subscription providers historically held over these user journeys, thereby constricting their ability to influence the subscription cancellation process.**

One great example of this is the significant difference between in cancellation flow at *The New Yorker* when cancelling through their website where the CF is nine step process with different offers/suggestions catered to users' response on the stop survey and through Google Play where it's a single click on "cancel subscription" in the subscription overview when you go to Google Play.



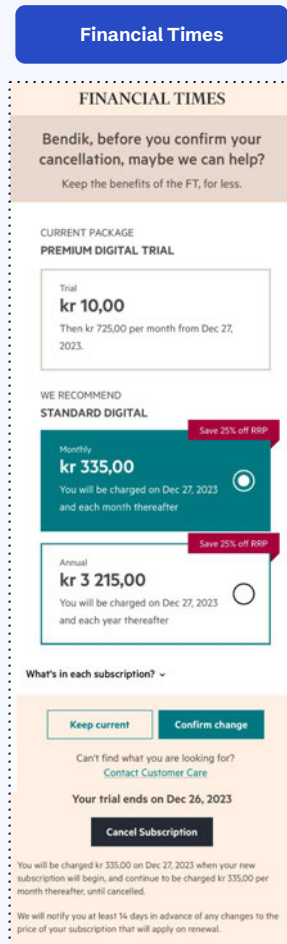
Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Dark patterns

Our key stakeholders unanimously agree on **the importance of avoiding dark patterns** in the cancellation flow in order to maintain user trust and maintain UX best practices, and while conducting our competitor analysis, **we've found a few good reasons** not to pursue this path.

While dark patterns commonly refers to actions that are invisible to the user, we would like to argue that deceptive design also should qualify as dark patterns, which is something that **we should avoid**.

Financial Times, for example, utilizes deceptive design in their cancellation flow, intended to **force the user to make a change** rather than continue their cancellation. The Cancel Subscription CTA (bottom-right) is placed below Keep current and Confirm change (in green), which is likely what a user would habitually interact with. In addition, “confirm change” is also a continuation of the copy in the question “...before you *confirm* your cancellation...” which can also be misleading.



Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Discounted subscription changes

We see a lot of newspapers who offer discounted subscription changes as a type of holdback offer. **Rather than receiving a holdback offer consisting of one's current subscription** at a discounted price, the newspaper offers you to **change your subscription at a discount**. The Financial times and Dagens Næringsliv offers a downgrade to their basic subscription at a discounted price, but for a 6 month subscription.

While sacrificing/decreasing short-term profits, this strategy is thought to **foster lock-in and predictability in the user base**, promoting a more reliable and stable user retention model over time.

Financial Times

FINANCIAL TIMES

Bendik, before you confirm your cancellation, maybe we can help?
Keep the benefits of the FT, for less.

CURRENT PACKAGE
PREMIUM DIGITAL TRIAL

Trial
kr 10,00
Then kr 725,00 per month from Dec 27, 2023.

WE RECOMMEND
STANDARD DIGITAL

Monthly
kr 335,00
You will be charged on Dec 27, 2023 and each month thereafter. **Save 25% off RRP**

Annual
kr 3 215,00
You will be charged on Dec 27, 2023 and each year thereafter. **Save 25% off RRP**

What's in each subscription? ▾

Dagens Næringsliv

dn.no

Nå kan du få Basis til 70 % rabatt

Prisen er kun 579 kr for 6 måneder. Med DN Basis får du digital tilgang til alle artikler på dn.no, Investor Sanntid og utvalgte nyhetsbrev.

Etter tilbudsperioden er prisen 359 kr/mnd. Du blir varslet på epost før neste trekk. Tilbudet gjelder én gang per kunde.

Endre abonnement

Avbryt Avslutt abonnement

Phase 2: Competitor analysis

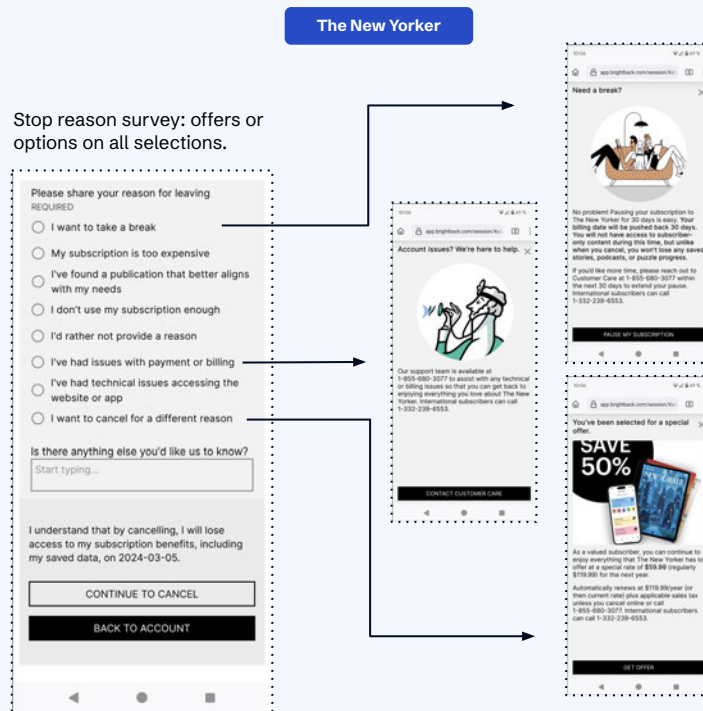
Rotating survey and HB on all options

The New Yorker

As previously mentioned, The New Yorker have **different offers and options on all stop reasons** that cater to what the user selects. The New Yorker also **rotate the stop reasons**, which can effectively eliminate order bias and minimize the risk of **primacy bias** (users picking the first option) and **recency bias** (memory response, top-of-mind).

The logic of the stop reason survey is as follows:

- “I want to take a break” leads to pause subscription.
- Issues with payment or billing + technical issues leads to Customer Care.
- The rest of the options leads to a “Save 50%” holdback offer.



Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Extended stop surveys

As previously mentioned, some brands expand on their stop surveys in some shape or form during their CFs. Among the brands we have looked at, The New York Times, Spotify and Viaplay have a survey somewhat outside of the “general norm”.

NYT

Ask users to fill out a 19 question survey, different from the stop survey, both at purchase and cancellation. Including questions related to the purchase, general attitudes and sociodemographic questions.

The New York Times survey form consists of two main sections. The first section asks 'Why did you decide to subscribe to The New York Times? (Select all that apply)'. It features a grid of 10 options: 'Access to NYT Cooking', 'Credibility and accuracy of reporting', 'Access to NYT Games (including the Crossword)', 'Have been meaning to subscribe for a long time', 'Want to stay up to date on current events', 'I find it interesting and insightful', 'Access to non-news content (e.g., Style)', 'To support quality journalism', 'Switching from another news source', 'Current political, economic or social climate', 'It was recommended to me', 'Access to Wincluster', 'Good price', and 'Other (please specify)'. Below this is a text box for 'Please tell us more about why you decided to subscribe to The New York Times.' The second section asks 'Which categories describe you? (Select all that apply)'. It features a grid of 8 options: 'Prefer not to answer', 'Middle Eastern or North-African', 'American Indian or Alaska Native', 'Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander', 'Asian', 'White', 'Black or African-American', and 'Not listed here (optional, please specify)'. Below this is a text box for 'Where would you place your political ideology in relation to that of The New York Times?' and a dropdown menu for 'My political ideology' with radio button options: 'Very liberal', 'Liberal', 'Moderate', 'Conservative', 'Very conservative', and 'Prefer not to answer'. At the bottom, there is another dropdown menu for 'The New York Times political ideology'.

Spotify

Adds a second question to stop survey asking how likely the user is to sign up again in the future.

The Spotify Premium stop survey is a mobile app interface. It starts with a confirmation message: 'Du har avsluttat Spotify Premium.' followed by 'Abonnementet ditt avslutas 11.3.24. För å behålla oss med å förbehåll Premium, ta drag gjerna et styrblick till å fortälla oss om hvorfor du avsluttet.' Below this is a question: 'Hva er hovedårsaken til at du avsluttet Spotify Premium?' with radio button options: 'Jeg bytter til et annet Spotify Premium-abonnement', 'Jeg har ikke råd til Spotify Premium', 'Jeg har hatt tekniske problemer knyttet til bruk av Spotify Premium', 'Jeg bruker ikke Spotify Premium nok', 'Jeg finner ikke musikken eller podkastene jeg liker', 'Jeg har funnet en annen lyd- eller musikkjeneste jeg liker bedre', 'Jeg hadde problemer med bakreffeise av abonnementet', and 'Jeg hadde problemer med betaling og fakturering'. Below this is a question: 'La oss få vite mer om hvorfor du avslutter:' with a text input field. At the bottom, there is a question: 'Hvor sannsynlig er det at du abonnerer på Spotify Premium igjen i fremtiden?' with radio button options: 'Extremt sannsynlig', 'Sannsynlig', 'Nøytral', 'Usannsynlig', and 'Extremt usannsynlig'. There are 'Hopp over' and 'Send inn' buttons at the bottom.

Viaplay
Adds a follow-up question to ask answer alternatives in stop survey.

The Viaplay stop survey is a mobile app interface. It starts with a confirmation message: 'Du har avsluttet Viaplay Premium.' followed by 'For å behålle oss med å forbeholdt Premium, ta drag gjerna et styrblick till å fortälla oss om hvorfor du avsluttet.' Below this is a question: 'Hva er hovedårsaken til at du avsluttet Viaplay Premium?' with radio button options: 'Jeg bytter til et annet Spotify Premium-abonnement', 'Jeg har ikke råd til Spotify Premium', 'Jeg har hatt tekniske problemer knyttet til bruk av Spotify Premium', 'Jeg bruker ikke Spotify Premium nok', 'Jeg finner ikke musikken eller podkastene jeg liker', 'Jeg har funnet en annen lyd- eller musikkjeneste jeg liker bedre', 'Jeg hadde problemer med bakreffeise av abonnementet', and 'Jeg hadde problemer med betaling og fakturering'. Below this is a question: 'La oss få vite mer om hvorfor du avslutter:' with a text input field. At the bottom, there is a question: 'Hvor sannsynlig er det at du abonnerer på Spotify Premium igjen i fremtiden?' with radio button options: 'Extremt sannsynlig', 'Sannsynlig', 'Nøytral', 'Usannsynlig', and 'Extremt usannsynlig'. There are 'Tilbake' and 'Fortsatt' buttons at the bottom.

The Viaplay stop survey follow-up question is a mobile app interface. It starts with a confirmation message: 'Du har avsluttet Viaplay Premium.' followed by 'For å behålle oss med å forbeholdt Premium, ta drag gjerna et styrblick till å fortälla oss om hvorfor du avsluttet.' Below this is a question: 'Varför vill du säga upp ditt paket?' with radio button options: 'Innehållet är inte tillräckligt bra', 'Viaplay ingår via mitt tv-utbud', 'Jag har Viaplay genom', 'Tillta', 'Content (TV2)', 'Baser', 'Visual (Allians)', 'Canal Digital (Allians)', 'Teleor', 'Seppa', 'Jag har tillgång till Viaplay ändå', 'Jag har tillgång till Viaplay ändå', 'Berätta gärna mer', 'Jag delat konto med någon jag känner', 'Jag har fått tillgång till Viaplay via ett erbjudande', 'Inget av ovanstående', 'Annet skäl', 'Viaplay är för dyrt', 'Jag tycker inte att Viaplay fungerar bra', 'Berätta gärna mer', 'Berätta gärna mer'.

Pausing subscription

Drawing on insights gathered from our Stakeholder interviews, previous in-house research and business cases, we **kept a close eye on whether or not** the chosen **competitors provided a pause feature** as an alternative to cancelling the subscription. It appears that this is something that some competitors are - somewhat intermittently - experimenting with but not providing at all times.

There are plenty of sources who emphasize that **giving the option to pause** a subscription **greatly increases the lifetime value** and significantly helps reducing churn rates and - which is no less important - can strengthen the overall customer relationship. A pause doesn't mean an ending, but provides a break that cater to what is often a temporary need and gives the opportunity for **easy re-engagement**.

The 2022 Subscription Economy: a Transformed World report clearly states that **consumers want choices beyond cancelling** and have **moved past a binary on/off mentality**: “Many consumers would rather pause or change their subscription plan or accept an offer than cancel their subscription outright. Therefore **it is clear that subscription businesses** should give customers more **choice and flexibility** in order to retain them.”

One interesting take on providing a pause feature is in terms of using it **as a marketing tool** which means that brands should proactively inform subscribers about the option and the **added flexibility** it gives. This aligns with our mission of providing flexible subscription solutions, and could be proven a good addition to our toolbox.

Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Pausing subscription

At first glance, a pause function may appear to be a minor addition to our toolbox, but there's more to it. According to Joe Macleod, author of the acclaimed book "[Engineering: Designing Consumption Lifecycles That End as Well as They Begin](#)", such a feature signifies a larger **commitment to customer care** and could enhance the overall user experience in terms of **loyalty, ownership and perceived value and control**. The ending should, according to Macleod, be as good as the onboarding *because this is what our customers remember the most*.

Introducing a pause function would meet the expectations of our current users who anticipate consuming content in this manner, for instance subscribers who specifically purchase access for a live game. A pause function would also align us better with current content and consumption preferences, which - according to [Deloitte's 2023 Digital Media Trends report](#) - looks vastly different compared to a decade ago. A "Churn and return" purchase behavior is, according to Deloitte's report, something of a golden rule among younger user/customer segments and a pause function could provide an opportunity for us to meet this behavior with new kinds of solutions.

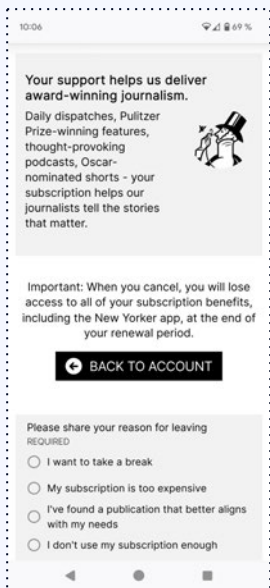
Although most of the competitors that are *actively vouching* for a pause function are SVOD services, among them Netflix who *currently offers a monthly pause*, we can confirm that this is something that the internationally known news brands at least experiment with. The New York Times, for example, provided a pause function that utilized a credits system for subscribers who chose to pause their subscription. Disclaimer: we can't confirm the current status of the possibility to pause your NYT subscription, or if it's currently only for US subscribers. The possibility is stated in the FAQ, but not in the actual Manage Subscription tab.

Phase 2: Competitor analysis

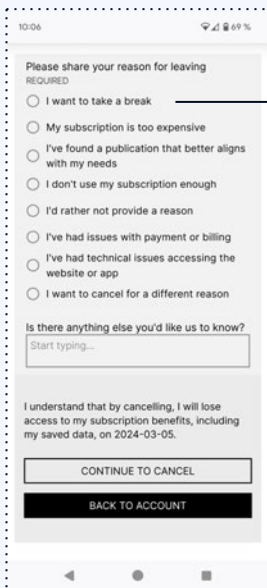
Pausing subscription: examples

The New Yorker

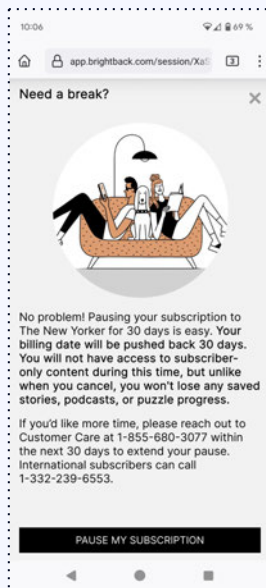
Manage subscription and select stop reason (required)



Stop reason: "I want to take a break"



The New Yorker gives the user the alternative to pause their subscription for 30 days.

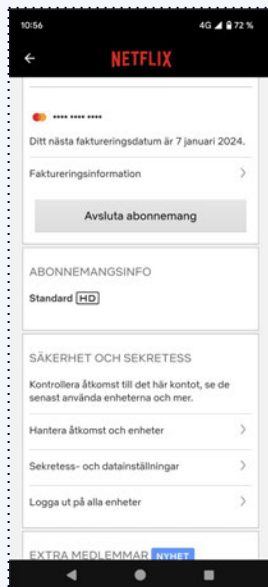


Phase 2: Competitor analysis

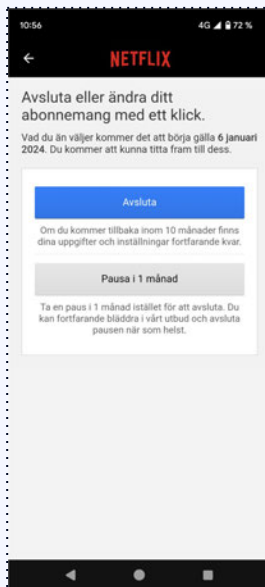
Pausing subscription: examples

Netflix

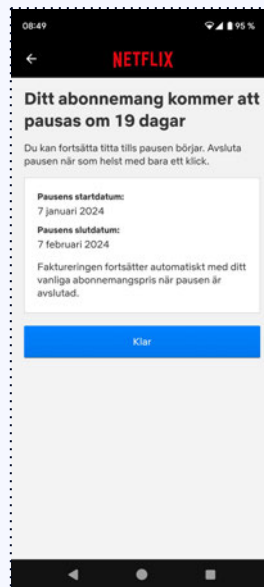
My account -> cancel
subscription



Cancel or pause for a 1
month duration



Done! Subscription paused
for 1 month, starting at the
end of current subscription.

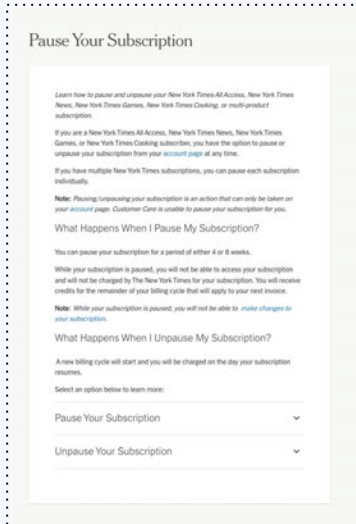


Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Pausing subscription: examples

The New York Times

The New York Times FAQ



Pause Your Subscription

Learn how to pause and unpause your New York Times All Access, New York Times News, New York Times Games, New York Times Cooking, or multi-product subscription.

If you are a New York Times All Access, New York Times News, New York Times Games, or New York Times Cooking subscriber, you have the option to pause or unpause your subscription from your [account page](#) at any time.

If you have multiple New York Times subscriptions, you can pause each subscription individually.

Note: Pausing/unpausing your subscription is an action that can only be taken on your [account page](#). Customer Care is unable to pause your subscription for you.

What Happens When I Pause My Subscription?

You can pause your subscription for a period of either 4 or 8 weeks.

While your subscription is paused, you will not be able to access your subscription and will not be charged by The New York Times for your subscription. You will receive credits for the remainder of your billing cycle that will apply to your next invoice.

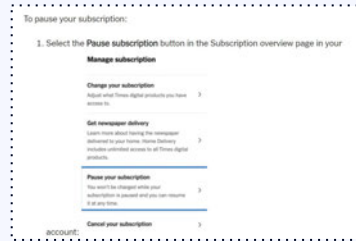
Note: While your subscription is paused, you will not be able to make changes to your subscription.

What Happens When I Unpause My Subscription?

A new billing cycle will start and you will be charged on the day your subscription resumes.

Select an option below to learn more:

- Pause Your Subscription
- Unpause Your Subscription



To pause your subscription:

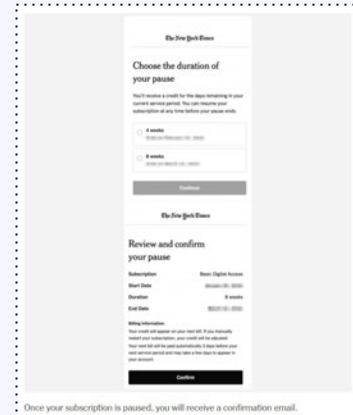
1. Select the **Pause subscription** button in the Subscription overview page in your account.

Manage subscription

- Change your subscription
- Get newspaper delivery
- Pause your subscription
- Cancel your subscription

Manage subscription->
Pause your subscription...

... Choose the desired duration of your pause. The New York Times didn't do refunds for the pause, but utilized a credits system.



Choose the duration of your pause

You'll receive a credit for the time remaining in your current billing period. You can receive your subscription at any time before your pause ends.

4 weeks

8 weeks

Review and confirm your pause

Subscription	News, Digital Access
Start Date	01/04/23 (01/04/2023)
Duration	8 weeks
End Date	03/01/2023

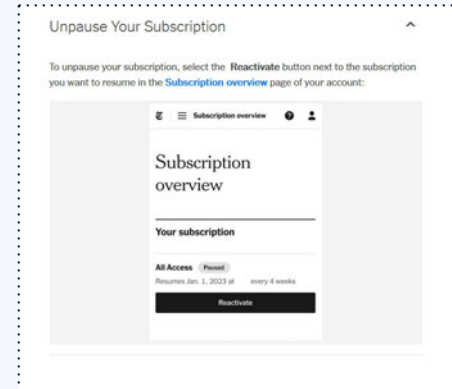
Why pause?

You can pause your subscription at any time. You'll receive a credit for the time remaining in your current billing period. You can receive your subscription at any time before your pause ends.

Once your subscription is paused, you will receive a confirmation email.



Despite being described in their FAQ, this functionality does not seem to be available in the actual subscription management



Unpause Your Subscription

To unpause your subscription, select the **Reactivate** button next to the subscription you want to resume in the [Subscription overview](#) page of your account:

Subscription overview

Subscription overview

Your subscription

All Access **Paused**

Resumes Jan 1, 2023 at every 8 weeks

Reactivate

Unpause at any given time.

Phase 2: Competitor analysis

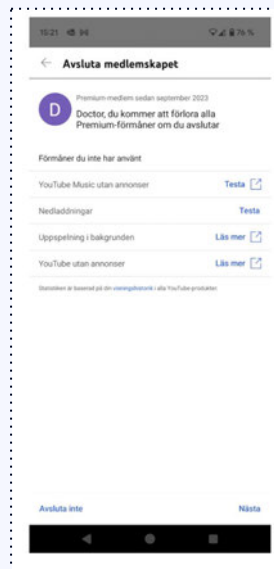
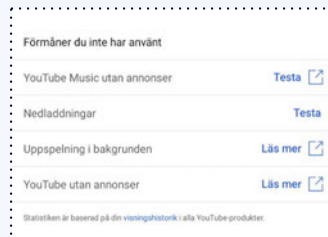
Engagement as holdback

YouTube Premium

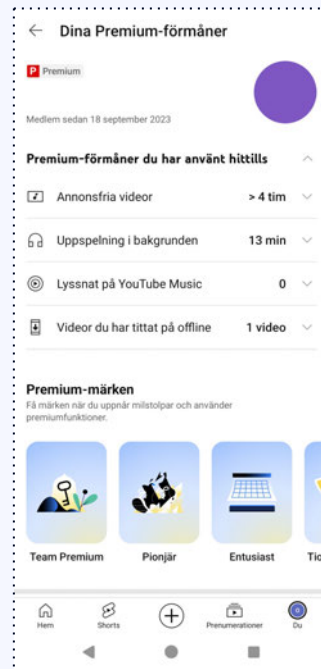
Although relatively rare, some competitors make creative use of reminders of **unused benefits/features in the cancellation flow** as a holdback/retention strategy. One example is Google's YouTube Premium, where users get to see both actual use and what they haven't used or done. This is a **different approach to consumer logics** compared to reminding users what *they have* and *what they will lose* if deciding to cancel, which we've already experimented with.

Naturally, features like this shouldn't solely be featured in the cancellation flow, but readily accessible on the profile page, to drive engagement and enhance the overall user experience.

We believe that the inclusion of such nudging elements, and possibly with the addition of gamification elements - achievements for instance - **could prove beneficial for us.**



Discover more: YouTube Premium reminds the user of unused features when cancelling. These will be filled with data/stats over time (see below)

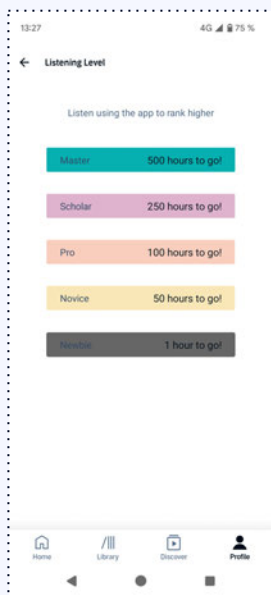
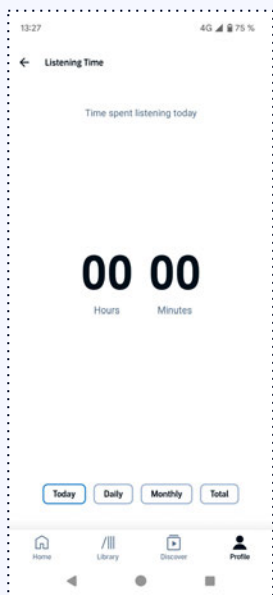
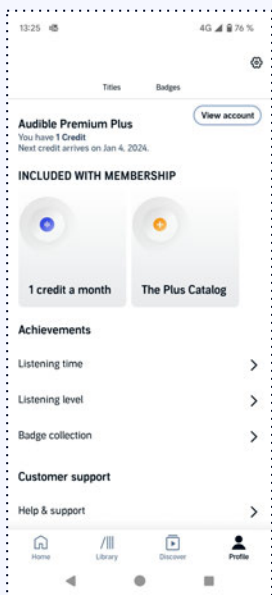


Phase 2: Competitor analysis

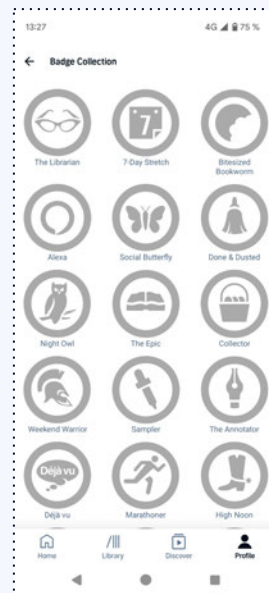
Engagement/gamification as holdback

Audible (Amazon)

Another example of reminders of unused benefits/features in the cancellation flow. Although defined as Engagement, we believe that this is part of a holistic retention strategy, like on YouTube Premium.



At Audible, we even have **gamification elements**, in the form of **badge collection**, added to the mix.



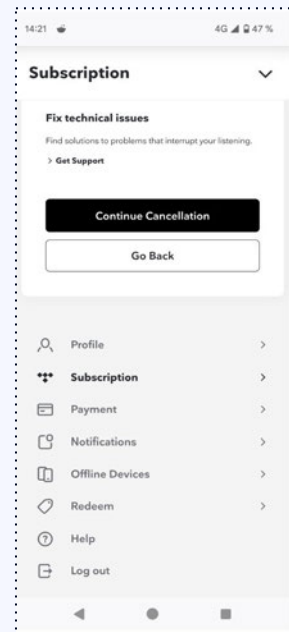
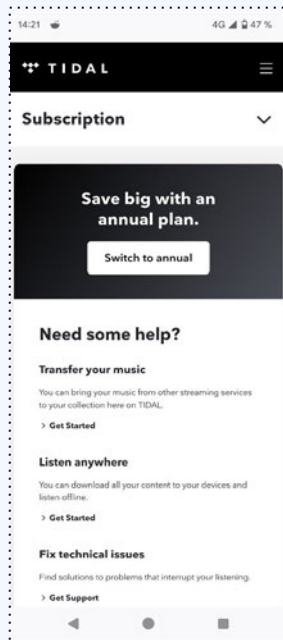
Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Engagement as holdback

Tidal

Tidal provides a third example of engagement as holdback, where the user is reminded of features, given general tips and gets a suggestion regarding technical support, should that be the issue, in the cancellation flow. This is a quite common feature among streaming services.

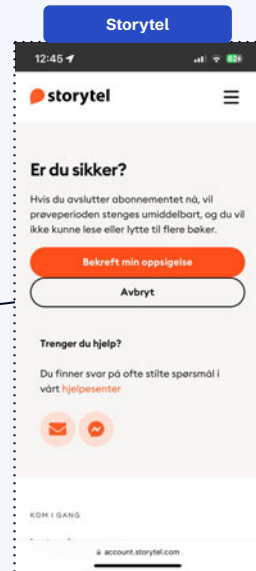
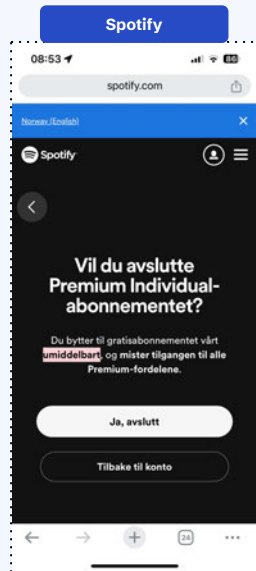
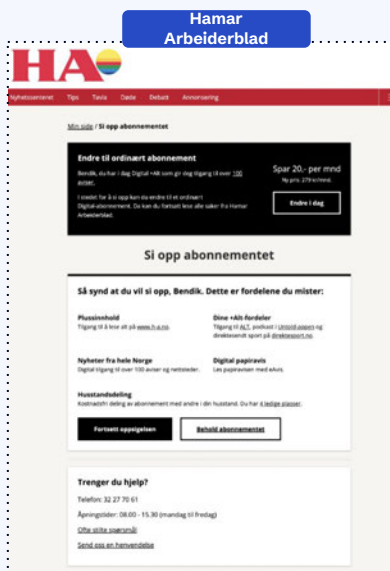
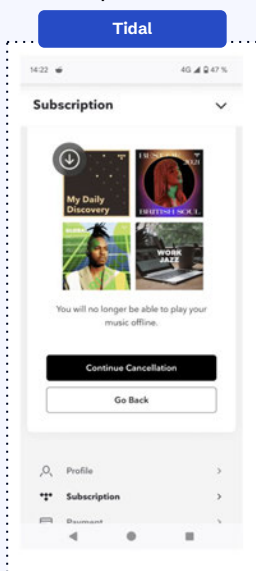
However, there's a fine line between being informative versus adding steps to slow down the cancellation process. The overall experience in the Tidal cancellation flow gives the impression that some of these steps are unnecessary, rather than genuinely trying to showcase more of the product, in order to generate curiosity and let the user discover more of the service.



Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Value proposition: what you will lose

Listing subscriber benefits, eg. **what you will lose** if cancelling, **is a common strategy among our competitors**. And while a majority of our competitors let their subscribers use their service until end of subscription, some actually stops immediately after cancellation. This is, as far as we can tell, only represented among streaming services and on trial subscriptions.

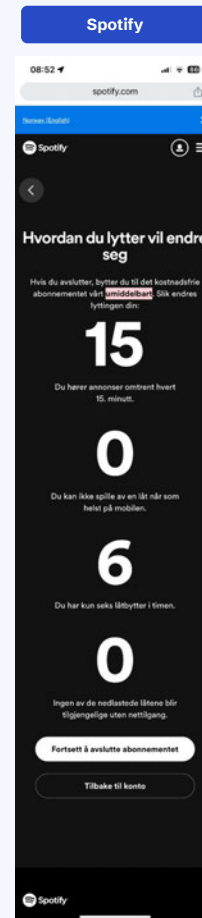


Full stop when cancelling your trial subscription on Spotify and Storytel.

Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Spotify: Emphasizing decreased product quality and user experience

Rather than emphasizing on the positive functionality in the premium subscription users will lose access to, Spotify has taken an approach highlighting how the **free alternative** is worse and will **lead to a worse experience**. Having to listen to ads, limited number of skips etc.



Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Visual cues: Displaying steps in the cancellation flow

A few brands, Viaplay, Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times, implement numbering on the pages of their cancellation flow. This might function as a way to create both predictability in the flow and help users to understand when the cancellation is indeed finished and confirmed.

The image displays three mobile app cancellation flows side-by-side, each with a blue header and a red box highlighting a step indicator.

- Viaplay:** The flow starts with a question "Varför vill du säga upp ditt paket?" (Why do you want to cancel your package?). It features a progress indicator at the top with three steps: 1 (active), 2, and 3. The flow continues with a confirmation screen "Klart. Ditt paket är uppsagt." (Clear. Your package is cancelled).
- Wall Street Journal:** The flow starts with "We need your opinion? Take the survey". It features a progress indicator with three steps: 1 (active), 2, and 3. The flow continues with a confirmation screen "Confirm" and a "Go Back" button.
- The New York Times:** The flow starts with "We offer several ways to cancel your All Access subscription." It features a progress indicator with three steps: 1 (active), 2, and 3. The flow continues with a confirmation screen "Confirm" and a "Continue" button.

Each flow includes a "Cancel Online" button and a "Call Us" button. The New York Times flow also includes a "Return to Subscription Hub" button.

Key learnings and recommendations

- The hypothesis that the **cancellation flow is “too easy”** (ref: [phase 1](#)) should (still) be understood as **“we can do more”**. There is, evidently, a lot we can and should experiment with in terms of providing **a good user experience and strengthening customer relationships**. We need **strategic holdback activities in the CF** and now we have a source of inspiration.
- Many of our competitors put great effort into **customer care in terms of Tone of Voice** even ‘at the exit’, and some evidently work hard on **building loyalty through wording**. The plausibility of that this has a good effect on loyalty, trust and the feeling of “being in charge” is high.
- **A pause feature, for a limited duration**, is something we suggest that we should experiment with, given that it is believed to **improve customer lifetime value**.
- We should **consider visual cues** for the steps (1, 2, 3) in our cancellation flow (eg. Viaplay) for clarity and comprehension.
- **Stop reason survey - rotating alternatives** can minimize **primacy bias and recency bias**. We should also consider the opportunities it gives when it comes to **better matching of holdback offers** on different stop reasons. The [Subscription Economy: a Transformed World](#) report points towards a notable increase in - and expectations of - such solutions.
- **Nudge change instead of churn**. Optional in CF, but definitely as an option in subscription management.
- **Dark patterns/deceptive design is a no-go**, as customers tend to remember the ending the most.
- **Is this really it?** Cancellation flows that are too sparse have, on a personal level, seemed lacking. Our experience is that something is missing during the flow. As the “standard” is to at least implement some form of intervention, those who do not utilize any seem odd. This could possibly lead to some confusion, as we at least, experienced a feeling of uncertainty as to whether this could actually be the only steps?

URS cancellation flow checks off on most of INMAs essential elements for Cancellation Flows

Five essential elements

1. **Ease:** It should be as easy to unsubscribe from a product or service as it is to subscribe
2. **Benefits:** Companies should demonstrate all the benefits provided by the subscription (VP)
3. **Offer:** Providing subscribers with an offer to stay increases retention
4. **Confirmation:** Make it clear to the subscriber that they have cancelled their subscription, and also let them know what access they may have for the remainder of their subscription.
5. **Regain:** A subscriber win-back campaign at the point of cancellation is a massive subscription retention and growth opportunity.

How does URS check off:



Ease: URS flow is uncomplicated and easy to use.



Benefits: Brands are experimenting with different types of VPs, but often as a single intervention, not in combination with offers.



Offer: Brands are experimenting with different types of HBs, but often as a single intervention, not in combination with value propositions.



Confirmation: URS brands have differing confirmation solutions. Some have a pop-up or page that covers the most important information, some takes the user back to MyPage where the information is displayed



Regain: Not all brands have formalized winback campaigns.

Opportunity space

1. **Ease:** Make sure copy and design components such as buttons are unambiguous, clear, concise and uniform
2. **Benefits:** Continue utilizing but experiment with new types of VPs and content/focus in VPs.
3. **Offer:** Continue utilizing offers are seen as the most effective also by users. Experiment with new types of offers and rewards.
4. **Confirmation:** One common confirmation solution for all brands. Make sure copy and visual cues are clear, and send confirmation emails to all users for greater reassurance.
5. **Regain:** Strengthen Winback initiatives and experimentation with new personalized winbacks for greater reactivation.

Competitor Flow Overview

Competitor Cancellation Flow overview

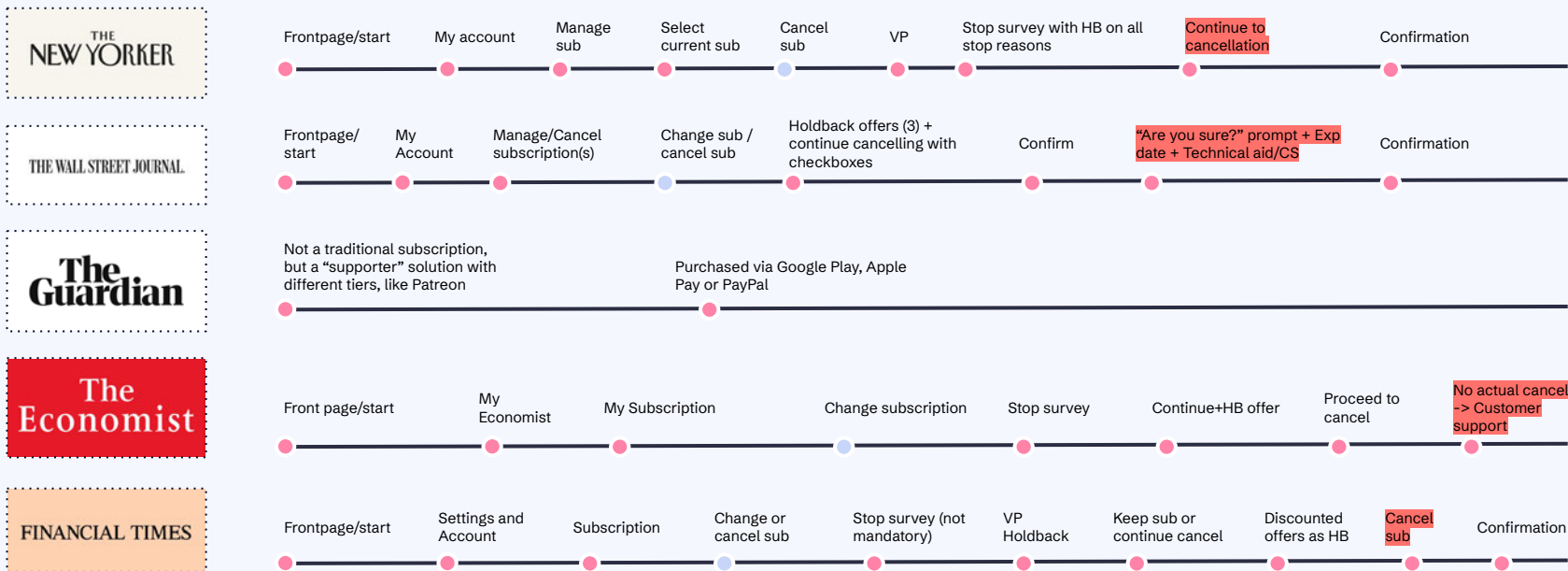
Brand/company

The New Yorker
The Wall Street Journal
The Guardian
The Economist
Financial Times
Expressen
The Washington Post
The New York Times
Politiken
Berlingske
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Dagens Næringsliv
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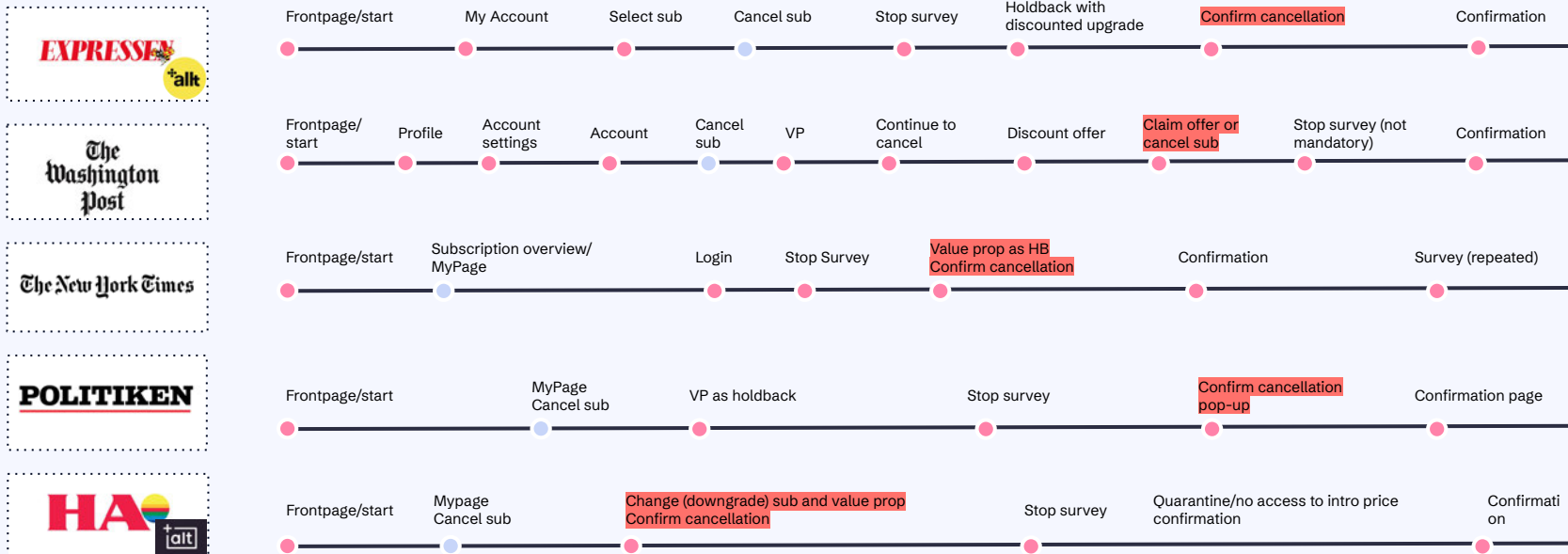
Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Competitor Cancellation Flow overview



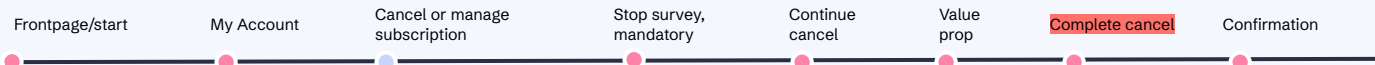
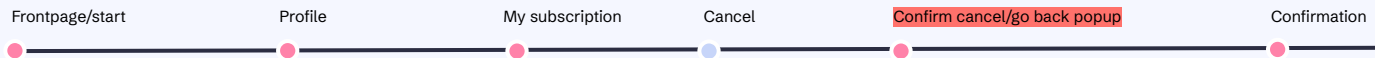
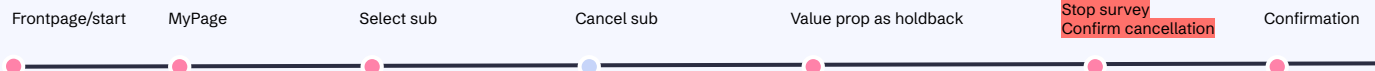
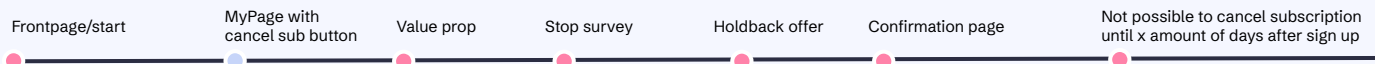
Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Competitor Cancellation Flow overview



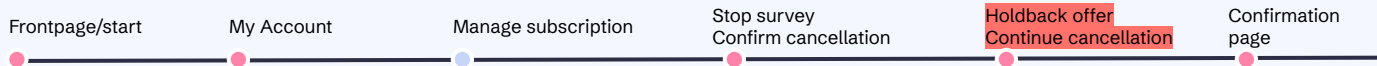
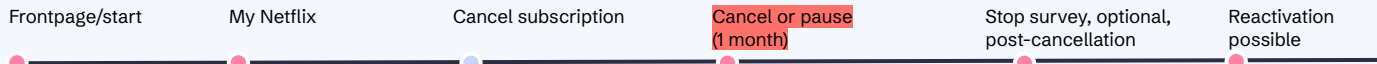
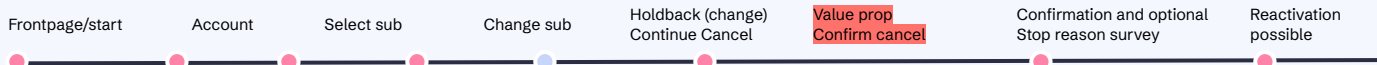
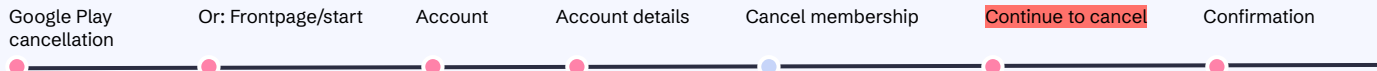
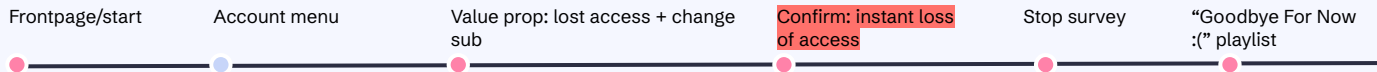
Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Competitor Cancellation Flow overview



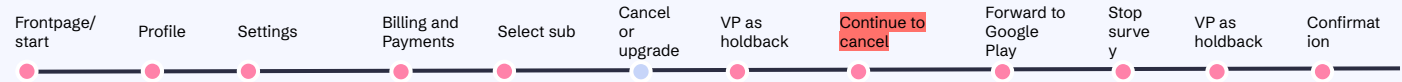
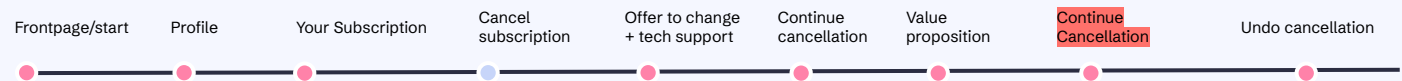
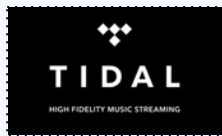
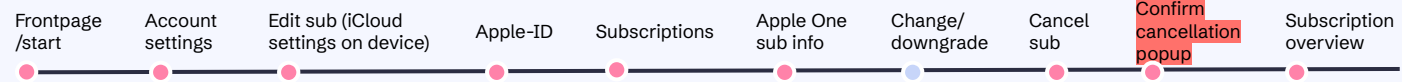
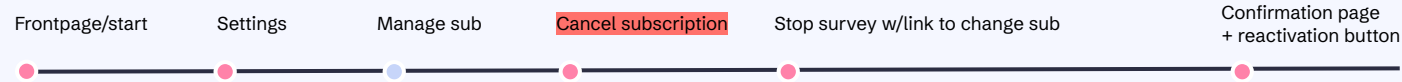
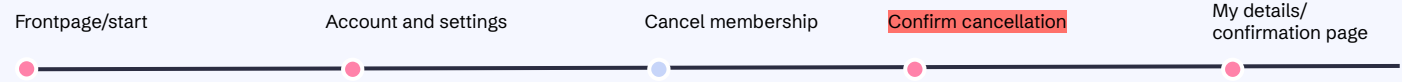
Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Competitor Cancellation Flow overview



Phase 2: Competitor analysis

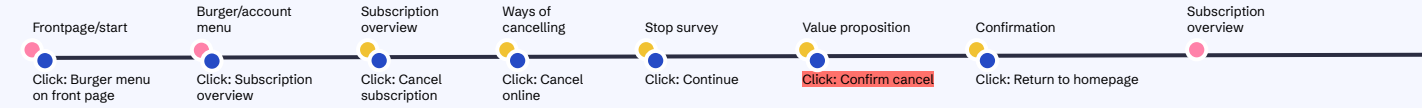
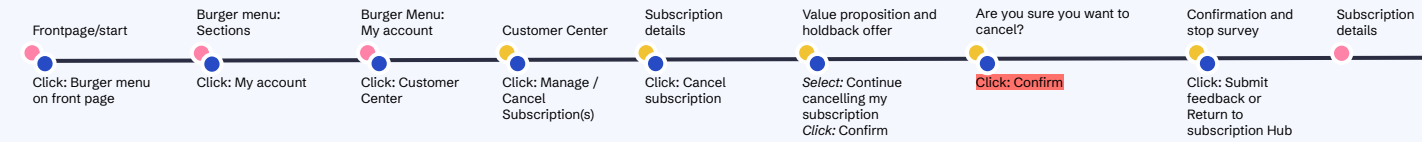
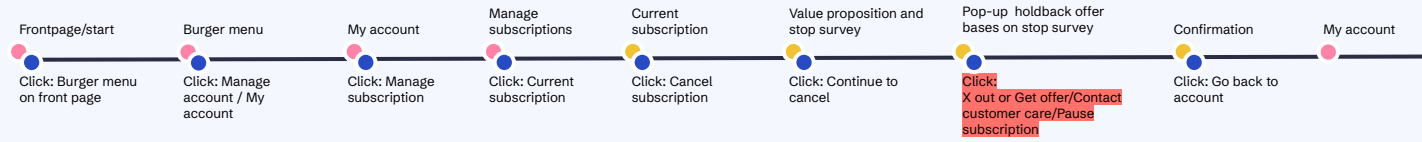
Competitor Cancellation Flow overview



Phase 2: Competitor analysis

Competitor Cancellation Flow overview

- Current page
- Current page in cancellation flow
- User action
- Critical step (subscription cancelled)



Bendiks alternative overview

References

Deloitte Insights 2023: [Digital media trends. Immersed and connected.](#)

Macleod, Joe 2021: [Engineering: Designing consumption lifecycles that end as well as they begin.](#)

Minna/FT Strategies 2022: [Subscription Economy: a Transformed World.](#)

INMA 2024: [INMA - Using Subscription Cancellations to Retain News Customers](#)

Cancellation flow

Phase 3: User interviews



Olle Stenbäck
Cross Brand Experience Team



Bendik Mogensen
Cross Brand Experience Team

Research report
February 2024

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2. Method and process: why, how and who
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Background

With a vast subscriber base, one of our main goals is to **motivate users to continue their subscriptions**. Among the many factors that can encourage users to maintain their subscriptions, the cancellation flow is a vital aspect. This serves as a final opportunity to meet user needs and persuade them to stay on board.

Some brands **experience negative trends in Churn and Renewal rates**, which has led to a hypothesis that our current cancellation flow is **“too easy”**. In our report from phase 2, [Competitor mapping and analysis](#), we conclude that this is not entirely wrong but **should be understood as “we can do more”** with the means of **experiments and strategic holdback activities** in the Cancellation Flow.

In this final report of the cancellation flow project, we provide an **updated understanding** - drawing on insights from 13 interviews (SE and NO) with churned subscribers - of **how our users perceive our current cancellation flow** to better address where we have room for improvements to decrease churn.

Method process

Why?

In order to provide a **strategic direction for cancellations** across Schibsted Media, we've conducted interviews with **churned users across all of our brands** to acquire updated insights on how they experience the current cancellation flow. These insights are key in order to **better address where we have room for improvements to decrease churn**. What are their main pain points and delights when cancelling a subscription? Why is this so? What improvements should we make, and which should we prioritize?

How?

We've conducted **a total of 13 interviews with recently churned subscribers**: 12 on URS and 1 on ABO. The interviews lasted for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and were conducted via Google Meet. The respondents are in the ages 16 to 59, residing in different parts of Norway and Sweden respectively, and **they all have a go-to news brand** that they keep coming back to. While **some of them classify as discount hunters**, most of the respondents are better described as **intermittent subscribers**.

The interviews were **coupled with a usability test** where we followed the users through our current cancellation flow. See the interview script [here](#).

Who have we talked to?

Norway



Female (50-59)
Aftenposten



Male (16-19)
VG



Female (25-29)
Bergens Tidende



Male (40-49)
E24



Female (25-29)
Aftenposten



Female (35-39)
Stavanger
Aftenblad



Male (20-24)
Aftenposten
(ABO)

Sweden



Male (25-29)
Aftonbladet



Female (30-34)
SvD



Female (35-39)
Aftonbladet



Female (40-49)
Aftonbladet



Male (30-34)
Aftonbladet/SvD



Female (25-29)
Aftonbladet

Media use

Media habits

The majority of users we talked to **described themselves as frequent consumers of news**. Their main channel of consumption is their phone, except for when at work, where some might use their computer instead.

News consumption starts **in the morning by checking the phones** to get an update and overviews of the news, and for many this routine continues throughout the day, with a last **brief news overview** as the last thing they do **before going to bed**. How frequently the check the news throughout the day varies.

Reading news consists of - for many of the respondents - to **scrolling over and only read headlines**. If there are topics that interest them particularly, or **major events or happenings**, such as gang-violence in Sweden, they will **read further** into the articles. News reading is for many also **seen as entertainment** and as **a way to kill time**, such as when waiting for, or riding, the bus.

The majority of respondents were also interested in **local news**, and multiple also subscribed to their local newspapers. For some local news are more interesting to read further into than “general” news, and for some these might also be **relevant in their professional lives**. Hence it seem as though local news is a factor that keeps users engaged and coming back as subscribers.

“

I read quite a lot. It's usually the first thing I do in the morning. Especially when there's so much going on an international level. And before i go to bed. And sporadically throughout the day. If i'm in a boring class I might get a quick update on what's happened. It feels good to be updated.

- Male, 25-29, Aftonbladet

”

Phase 3: User interviews

Users as subscribers

The majority of the users we talked to were **frequently purchasing and canceling subscriptions**. Users do however have their **go-to news brands** that they keep coming back to.

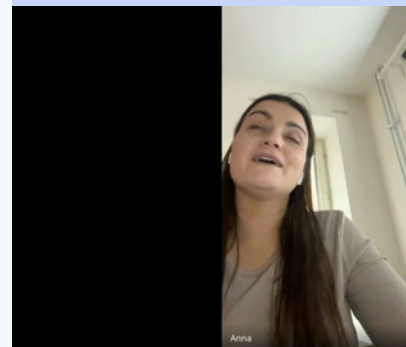
This seem to be particularly **common to news subscriptions**, but also **evident when it comes to certain SVOD** subscriptions which they also **churn and return to**.

This behavior is driven by a couple of different factors;

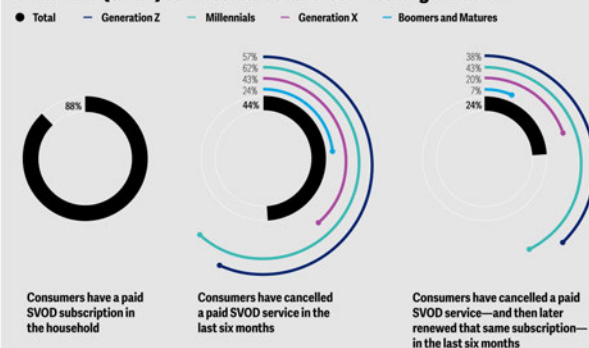
- Too many subscriptions gives a feeling of not utilizing each enough
- Too many subscriptions becomes too expensive
- Premium content isn't worth the money
- Consumed what they paid for (a certain movie, series, article etc.)
- Want to try different/new products

This churn and return behavior as a result of a combination of **economic pressure, value seeking and needs for flexibility** is also highlighted in the MINNA report *Subscription Economy: a Transformed World*, which also finds that Gen Z is driving this shift towards demand for **greater levels of control, flexibility, enhanced user experience and personalization** among other things. Deloitte also finds that Gen Z and Millennials are the generations reporting the highest rate of churn and return behavior (see graph).

Despite having a fleeting relation to most subscriptions, **Netflix and Spotify** can however be considered **“must-have” subscriptions**, as users seldom consider canceling these.



Millennials churn—and churn and return—through paid streaming video on-demand (SVOD) services more than those in other generations



Note: N (All US consumers) = 2,020.
Source: Digital media trends, 17th edition (April 2023).

Phase 3: User interviews

Discount hunters

Most users were also quite aware of, and diligently taking advantage of, the **frequent campaigns** they are offered **from news brands**.

For the ones that are the most used to looking for and utilizing campaigns, it is somewhat of a no-brainer, **cancelling one campaign subscription** and easily **starting up another one**, even on the **same brand**.

This type of campaign/discount hunting is also driven by multiple factors, many related to the previous slide. For many it's an easy way to **save money, and some even express that they see no point in paying full price** when they know **they'll be offered a new cheap campaign** price after they cancel. It's also an easy way to try new products and see if it's worth paying for after a trial period, or get access to the article they wanted to read.

However, many **underline the fact that the campaign price is so low** that that they don't see a point in not buying it. Hence, for many of these users, it's **not content that drive purchase** intent, as the premium content isn't necessarily what interests them, **the deal is simply too good**, and premium access will create **ease of use** (access to everything without hindrances) rather than content they are particularly interested in.

“



When cancelling and then getting another discounted price at 1 kroner for another 30 days, of course I'll do that. That's money saved.

- Male, 20-24, Aftenposten (ABO)

”

Phase 3: User interviews

Reasons for subscribing

As mentioned on the previous slide, **multiple users subscribed to our brands through campaign offers**, and viewing them as **too good not to take**. The majority of them are nonetheless returning their familiar/go-to news paper. Hence it is fair to say that **a majority has some relation to their preferred brand**.

Some of the users do also point to **specific articles or events as purchase triggers**. That can be specific articles covering a topic they are interested in, gaining access to specific content such as *Ikke lov å le på hytta*, or subscribing for a limited time during sporting events such as european or world championships. Single article purchases seem to be most attractive when they cover local news. If its a bigger happening of more “generic” news, most believe they can find that information elsewhere.

Some compare a monthly subscription (churn and return) with a **one time purchase or rental**, for example a one month subscription on Disney+ in order to watch that one show, further **underlining the want for flexibility**.

According to MINNA, “With the cost of living continuing to impact spending decisions, the **ability to instantly adjust their product preferences** based on their personal circumstance is key as users are now using subscriptions as a way to manage spend flexibly month-to-month”.

“

I'm a student and I got a student discount through some of the student services, and I thought “why not”.

- Female, 30-34, Aftonbladet

I purchased to see a specific show and canceled again when it was finished... a bit like renting a movie, but I ended up watching and reading more.

- Male, 16-19, VG

BT itself is uninteresting. I only read the one thing and did not go back after that.

- Female, 25-29, Bergens Tidende

”

Cancellations

Expectations and wants

When asked about their experience with cancelling subscriptions in general, most users describe a process with a couple of hurdles, **not expecting it to be easy and/or seamless**. Most easily reference some nightmare example (see next slide) involving a cumbersome process with too many steps, annoying prompts or outright deceptive design. Suggesting that bad cancellation experiences are remembered.

On the other hand, it is **important to underline** the fact that while most users theoretically see **every extra step involved** in a cancellation process as annoying, interventions seem to have become such an **integral part of a cancellation flow** that they are **simultaneously expected** and in certain cases viewed positively. All users express an **understanding for utilizing different interventions** (Holdback offers, Value Propositions etc.) in the cancellation flow, and **few are opposed to them as long as they don't hinder or confuse their process**.

The **openness to interventions** in the cancellation process is also **colored by the users relation to the given brand**. The stronger relationship a user has to a brand, the more accepting they seem to be of interventions.

The majority also express an expectation for some form of confirmation that their subscription is cancelled. Also receiving this in an email seem to further reassure users.

“

Keep it simple so i don't fear that i'll never be able to get out of the subscription if I sign up.
- Female, 35-39, Stavanger Aftenblad

”

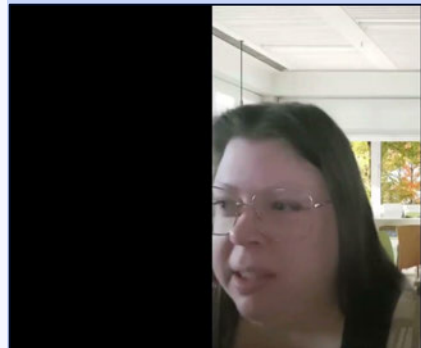
Cancellations: the good and the bad

When asked about what their “dream scenario” cancelling a subscription would look like, users describe a process that is very **clear and concise both in visual elements and copy**. When it comes to copy it's as if it can't be clear enough.

Few, however, can point to a particular cancellation flow they found to be good, but rather describe it as a flow that is **easy to use, seamless and hassle-free**. One example that is brought up is the ability to easily manage multiple subscriptions through Apple's App Store, described as both a easy-to-understand UI and providing the ability to easily turn subscriptions off and on.

The examples of bad experiences, on the other hand, are many. Users mention among others Amazon Prime and Audible as **a maze of steps** and Dagens Næringsliv who won't let users cancel their subscription until a couple of days after sign-up. Brands such as Squeeze, Hello Fresh and other delivery subscriptions where users have had to contact customer support by phone or email are also mentioned. **Not being able to self service** seem to be a great pain for users in cancellations.

“



[...] Then you feel cheated
- Female, 35-39, Aftonbladet

”

Reasons for cancelling subscription

As previously mentioned **a majority of the users reference some economic factor as their primary reason for cancelling** their subscription, being either a **“clean up”** in all their subscriptions, a feeling of **not getting their money's worth** through premium content, the subscription **not being worth the full price** or simply **not using their subscription** enough.

Some users say they might cancel their subscription right after purchase, but **most seem to give the subscription a try** as a way to evaluate whether it is worth paying for or not. This provides brands with **a window of opportunity to reach them with content** or offerings giving them a reason to stay.

The **most common trigger** for cancellation, if not done right away, is **the first invoice or bank statement** with a payment to a given brand. Especially if their subscription price has rolled over from a campaign price to a regular price. Many users say they **often end up paying for an extra month** as they don't realize their subscription is running. This leads to many expressing the **desire for an email or notification of renewal**, while simultaneously showing an **understanding of that being “bad for business”**.

“

I got a student discount, costing 9 kronors i think. And now the discount period was about to end ... I also looked over my expenses in relation to moving, and figured i might as well cancel the subscription as I don't read the plus-articles. The one thing I think was really nice and will miss is the SF Anytime code I got once a month.

- Female, 40-49, Aftonbladet

”

Cancelling their Schibsted subscription

When asked about how their **recent experience cancelling a Schibsted subscription**, the majority of the respondents **recall it as being very easy**. Few remembers it in detail and say they might have it mixed up with other cancellations.

Some mention encountering **Value Propositions, Hold Backs or Stop Surveys**, but **no one mention these being of particular annoyance**. They might not have been interested in it, but as long as the “continue” button is easy to find, these pages seen to be unproblematic.

The majority also mention that they were presented with some form of confirmation, either on site or in an email. **Confirmations are of importance** to the majority as these can, as mentioned earlier, provide **a sense of greater reassurance** that their subscription is in fact cancelled.

“

It was very easy. I just clicked on my account and chose to quit. I think I cancelled maybe two weeks before the subscription period ended. I was surprised over how few steps there were. I expect it to be complicated, I do.

- Female, 35-39, Aftonbladet

Oftentimes there's an offer, but once I've made up your mind, I'll continue cancelling. "I wont jump on that offer"... It's also easier to become a subscriber again if it's not difficult to opt out.

- Female, 35-39- Stavanger Aftenblad

”

In cancellation mode during the flow

What becomes apparent when talking to the majority of the users is that many say they are **in a “cancellation mode”** while going through the cancellation flow, meaning that they are **not really open to**, or even paying (conscious) attention to **what is presented to them in the steps** of the cancellation process - that being VPs, or HBs.

They are **primarily looking for the button that will take them to the next step and final cancellation confirmation**. This means that visual cues, such as consistent colors on buttons driving a task are key components of the flow. These design **elements can therefore lead to frustration if they become inconsistent** and not taking them where they were expecting to go. Financial Times' cancellation flow is a great example of altering the “meaning” of the color scheme on buttons, making the flow less seamless.

It is however important to note that **even though many say they do not pay attention** to the interventions applied in cancellation flows, **they simultaneously do say that really good discount offers might catch their eye**. In other words, it is fair to say that they do pick up on some of these things subconsciously regardless of how focused on cancelling they are.

Even though most users view a good offer in the cancellation flow as something positive there can be some negative connotations. **Some express an annoyance with the fact that we value them enough to give a discount first when they're leaving**. Others also express an expectation of there being some kind of catch if the offer seems to good. Mainly referring to lock-in periods.

“

I was pretty determined to cancel, so didn't really pay attention to what was presented during the steps.

- Female, 50-59, Aftenposten

It would take a REALLY good offer [to stay]

- Female, 30-39. Stavanger Aftenblad

”

Usability test

Overall impression

The overall impression among the respondents is that **our cancellation flow is very easy and straightforward**. None of the users found it overwhelming and could complete their task with low effort. Only one user got lost in navigation and ended up in Schibsted Account, where they mixed up deleting account(s) with cancelling current subscription. This user got confused in the E24 burger menu and landed on account settings instead of MyPage. Our conclusion is that this is a rare event, but something we should be aware of.

Several users were surprised due to us **not showing them any resistance**, which they apparently have gotten used to via other brands/services. To show resistance should not be understood as making it harder, but **to experiment with offers and providing more options**, both on MyPage, in the cancellation flow and possibly also on the confirmation page.

MyPage is designed mobile-first, and a few users, all on desktop, commented on the appearance of MyPage and the row of buttons in particular and thought it looked a little “work in progress”.

“

It was very smooth [...] And that is a positive thing, although it's not really positive that you cancel something, but it makes the experience better and you get a better picture of the newspaper in one.

- Male, 30-34, Aftonbladet

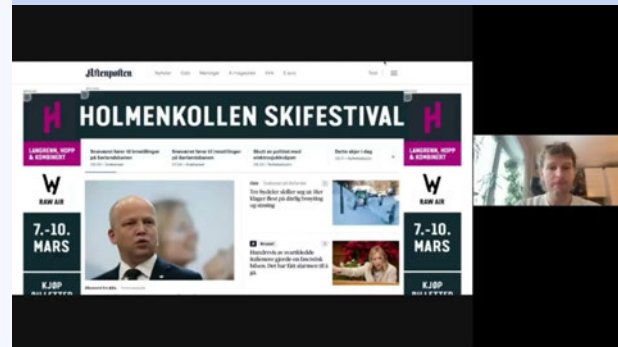
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Phase 3: User interviews

Double login: a frequent pain point

Multiple respondents found it annoying that they had to sign in twice in order to get to MyPage, which is something that we should address. This is a frequently expressed pain point in prior user research.

In Norway, the “continue as” prompt popped up and caused some slight frustration. In Sweden, multiple users had to login twice - with password - to reach MyPage, which caused notable frustration.



This is a typical example of something annoying, now i have to confirm that I'm still me another time, even though i'm already signed in

- Female, 25-29, Aftenposten



Interventions

As previously mentioned, **users expect us to show some resistance when cancelling**, whether it is presenting an option to up- or downgrade/change or different forms of holdback like discounted offers, personalized offers or even rewards and other incentives for staying on board. While the respondents appreciate an effortless cancellation process, they have gotten used to interventions on other brands/services, thus expecting something from us too, whether this is finding a better-suited option that meets their needs or their budget.

In summary, this underscores the important of **proactive measures to retain our subscribers, even when they express an intention to cancel.**

“

The company should show some resistance. An offer. Do something to keep the user. A discount on further subscriptions. The flow (on AB) is pretty straightforward, and that is good, as one might not want to come back if its a negative experience

- Male, 30-34, Aftonbladet

”

Phase 3: User interviews

Interventions: Holdback

Very few are bothered by holdback offers. For most of the respondents, HB is an expected part of the cancellation process. Even though most users say that they rarely or never utilize them, because they came to finish a task (to cancel the subscription), **they don't mind them being there** - as long as they're not interrupting what they intend to do.

But more importantly, some **feel unappreciated** because they got **no offer** until the moment **they are about to cancel**, which may in fact strengthen their decision to proceed. Seeing it holistically, these needs are **closely intertwined with winback** and a **wish for us to better cater to their individual needs while subscribing**, and not to rely on a generic one-size-fits-all approach.

Naturally there's some skeptics among the interviewees, for example when it comes to offers that seem **"too good to be true"**. This leads them to believe that there has to be **some kind of catch somewhere**, in fine print, leading them to do something they didn't intend to.

There's also some reflections regarding solutions that we do not currently offer. For example one user that expects that she seamlessly could jump on a HB-offer, having it starting automatically, without having to reenter any payment info.

“

I got a 70% discount when I cancelled DN. Why didn't I get that offer earlier?

- Male, 40-49, E24

It's not a problem as long as it's still easy to see where I should click.

- Male, 16-19, VG



”

Phase 3: User interviews

Interventions: Pause

The feedback on implementing a pause option for subscriptions is mixed. Some users question the necessity, since the cancellation process is perceived as easy, and is unsure of whether they would personally use it. And if used to save money, there's a concern that it could yield unintended consequences, such as resuming without their awareness.

However, others see **the potential value** in having this functionality, considering it an expected feature in subscription services. Most envision a 1-3 month pause with a preference for automatic reactivation and a reminder feature. They exemplify through gym memberships, where pauses are likened to **sudden changes in life situations, or less to no usage**.

Overall, the feedback suggest that while a pause option may not be embraced by all, **there is indeed a segment of users who see it as a beneficial addition**, if implemented in a way that can **minimize unintended consequences**.

As we mentioned in the [Competitor mapping and analysis report](#), a pause feature is believed to improve customer lifetime value, and many expect it as an option.

“

When it's so easy to cancel, I don't see the point of pausing anything. I can just resubscribe, I have the login info anyway.

- Female, 25-29, Aftonbladet

I wouldn't want to pause completely, but maybe just some of the extras. If I were to take a break from using it completely, I would probably have forgotten about it.

- Female, 30-34, SvD

”

Interventions: Change sub

Drawing on the respondent data, up- or downgrade/change subscription evidently can mean a lot of different things and **some users find it hard to envision what a change of subscription could be**. There is, however, many great suggestions that could inspire our forthcoming work.

One suggestion refers to the possibility **to pick and choose content** on the same brand, for example deselect sports and lowering the fee, which implies **a debundling of sorts**. Another suggestion refers to being able to read locked content, but **not having to pay for other bonuses** tied to the subscription.

A third suggestion refers to us **better utilizing personal data**, like reading history, and make **an offer based on this**.

Downgrade is the most discussed option as the majority of the respondents is **cancelling in order to save money**.

“

You could also have suggestions for other subscriptions. After I cancel - definitely. I am prepared for a difficult process, but if it was good, I lower my guard and am more receptive to other types of abo at other prices.

- Male, 16-19, VG

A dream scenario would be if there were several services to choose from. I mean even those that are not part of the conglomerate. And you paid one sum, and you could manage them there. And also that you could pick your favorite categories from your newspaper.

- Female, 30-34, SvD

We used Strim, and were very happy with it, but it was expensive. There I wish we could have changed to a different subscription type... a proposal to test out the smaller package for some fee.

- Female, 35-39, Stavanger
Aftenblad

”

Interventions: Stop survey

There's **mixed feedback** regarding stop surveys and **the overall mood** plays a big part in their approach. While some are genuinely interested, inclined to give us detailed feedback on their particular stop reason. Some - and less surprisingly so given that some expect things to be complicated - find stop surveys annoying, emphasising that they just want to **continue their cancellation**. Our user data confirms that there's a fine line between what is perceived as acceptable and what might instead cause frustration in this particular flow. However, **a majority of the users understand why** we (when present, depending on brand) have a stop survey and that **we continuously collect data to improve our services**.

Some feedback circulates around that the survey does **not necessarily cover their particular reason**, that they're **overlapping**, and that a **multiple choice solution** would be a better fit. This would improve **level of detail**/data granularity, but naturally requires a **bigger effort processing it**.

As we mentioned in the competitor analysis, some competitors have made their stop survey optional, post-cancellation, a solution that would greatly **diminish the chances of acquiring stop reason data**.

“

I usually just write a few short words... a motivation to why I find it too expensive or something like that. But I still feel that at this stage, once I get here, I just want to finish.

- Male, 25-29, Aftonbladet

”

Interventions: Winback

A majority of the users are OK with being contacted as part of the winback process, and this is also **expected to some degree**, although we need to be cautious of **how soon and how often** we contact them to **diminish the risk of us coming off as intrusive**. However, none of the users expect us to completely cut ties with them after cancellation. We have, so to speak, an intermittent relationship with them. Some put emphasis on trust being the key in terms of acceptance, and point out that they trust their brand of choice and Schibsted (when aware of the relationship) on a general level.

Several users express that we could and that they occasionally expect us to **better cater to their needs** when it comes to winback, whether it's offers based on **previous reading habits or interests**. This is closely related to **change/downgrade** and being able to **purchase a personalized experience**.

“

If Aftonbladet has an overview of what I have read and what I care about, they can send offers of access for a limited period to news events I am interested in, for example the coming US election.

- Female, 25-29, Aftonbladet

”

Phase 3: User interviews

Confirmation

A majority of the users put emphasis on the importance of a confirmation page with **clear, concise and easily understood information**. There's no disadvantage in being **overexplicit**.

Taking the user feedback into account, we should also maintain a **uniform vocabulary**/choice of words to avoid confusion. For example, “prenumerationsperiod” and “bindingstid” (AB) is not completely interchangeable and caused some concern upon closer look. Most users also express a need to get clear information of how long their current subscription will be active.

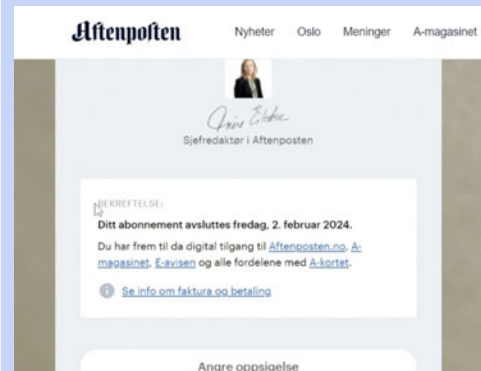
Most users expects a twofold confirmation: a clear indication of that the subscription really is cancelled, and an email to further confirm that they actually succeeded with their task. The only difference in experience found between URS and ABO was a lacking information on the confirmation page on ABO. The user was missing information about payments (see image).

It appears that there's a **greater acceptance of offers post-cancellation**, which leads to a hypothesis that we could **experiment** with product offerings **on the confirmation page**. For example, we could 1) remind them what they still have access to, 2) present undiscovered content (INMA), and 3) showing more of the product portfolio.

“

It says that the ‘lock-in period’ ends. Then suddenly they use ‘subscription period’ instead. I would like uniform expressions throughout so that you immediately understand what is what.

- Female, 35-39, Aftenbladet



A little difficult to know what I have paid and whether there is anything that needs to be paid? Does what I have paid apply going forward or not? It doesn't say anything about that.

- Male, 20-24, Aftenposten (ABO)

”

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion and recommendations

1. **You'll be remembered for a bad cancellation flow, not necessarily for an easy one.** Cancellation flows are thought of as cumbersome, and users almost expect it to be a hassle. Bad experiences are remembered, while hassle-free ones are not. *Therefore brands might not have very much to win in a cancellation flow, but a lot to lose. We thus see it as a big risk making the flow less clear.*
2. **Cancelling a subscription on URS is seamless but there is room for more.** The cancellation flow in URS is thought of and experienced as easy and seamless. Few users remember it in detail, other than it being easy, and have the same experience when testing it during interviews. Even though users express a want for a hassle-free experience as possible, they are both used to and expect some sort of "push-back" from brands. In other words, interventions (hold back offers, value propositions) aren't necessarily a bad thing - in some cases sought after - as long as they don't get in the way of the task the user came to complete (cancel). *We therefore believe that we have more room for experimentation with different interventions in the cancellation flow, as long as our design components remain clear and obvious.*
3. **Clear copy and confirmation creates reassurance.** While design components driving the task should be obvious and unambiguous, so should copy and confirmation. There's no disadvantage in being overexplicit. The copy in the cancellation flow should be concise, the confirmation page should address the most important information: that their subscription is in fact cancelled, how long they access for, and whether they have any outstanding invoices. This can also be sent by email for even greater reassurance. *The URS copy and confirmation is generally good, but we believe we will benefit from establishing a uniform schema or check list to formulate all copy and confirmation pages after, while also making sure that all brands send out confirmation emails. We also believe there to be room experimenting with interventions on the confirmation page, as users might be more open for this information at this point in the flow.*

Conclusion and recommendations

1. **Trusted brands have more leeway in the cancellation flow.** A user's relationship with or impression of a brand also seems to impact how open they are for interventions in a cancellation flow - the more positive/trusting a user is towards a brand, the more open they are towards interventions in a cancellation flow. *As Schibsteds brands generally seem to be brands users have a positive relationship towards, this further underscores our belief that we have room for more experimentation with different types of interventions in the cancellation flow.*
2. **Churn and return as subscription flexibility.** According to Minna, “subscription customers expect to manage their subscriptions - and their recurring spending - fluidly”, and we see clear evidence of that happening with our users as well. Users are managing their economic load by both seeking out campaign offers and continuously switching out news subscriptions. *We believe that we should find ways to better cater to this user behaviour. In addition to experimenting with new types of interventions, can we make it even easier for users to reactivate their subscriptions, or remind them of new content based on previous use in win back efforts? Can we provide rewards for returning users, such as certain discounts or benefits? Can we give the users the ability to adjust or edit their brand access on the go?*
3. **Content is not necessarily the main driver for purchase.** Among the users we have talked to, content isn't necessarily what made them purchase the product. Price, ease of use or a combination of these seem to be stronger drivers as well. Many had been presented with a campaign deal that was too good not to take regardless of their interest in the brand, or they liked the ability to unbothered read whatever they want, not because they have a strong impression of what the subscription provides or interest in the premium content. *We thus believe that we can take advantage of this to a greater extent by i.e. emphasising the ease of use a subscription will provide in value propositions. We should also consider how our campaign prices are promoted/deployed and consider other/new types of discount-models, or discuss how different user groups should be catered to/valued.*

URS cancelation flow checks off on most of INMAs essential elements for Cancellation Flows

Five essential elements

1. **Ease:** It should be as easy to unsubscribe from a product or service as it is to subscribe
2. **Benefits:** Companies should demonstrate all the benefits provided by the subscription (VP)
3. **Offer:** Providing subscribers with an offer to stay increases retention
4. **Confirmation:** Make it clear to the subscriber that they have cancelled their subscription, and also let them know what access they may have for the remainder of their subscription.
5. **Regain:** A subscriber win-back campaign at the point of cancellation is a massive subscription retention and growth opportunity.

How does URS check off:

1.  **Ease:** URS flow is uncomplicated and easy to use.
2.  **Benefits:** Brands are experimenting with different types of VPs, but often as a single intervention, not in combination with offers.
3.  **Offer:** Brands are experimenting with different types of HBs, but often as a single intervention, not in combination with value propositions.
4.  **Confirmation:** URS brands have differing confirmation solutions. Some have a pop-up or page that covers the most important information, some takes the user back to MyPage where the information is displayed
5.  **Regain:** Not all brands have formalized winback campaigns.

Opportunity space

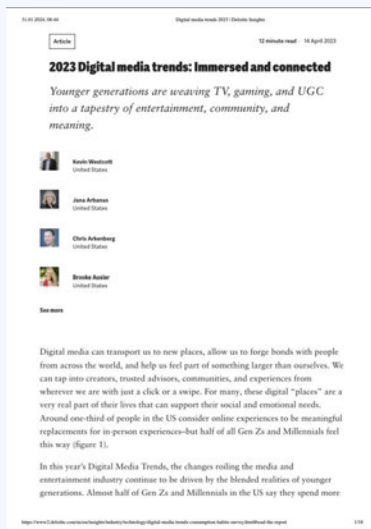
1. **Ease:** Make sure copy and design components such as buttons are unambiguous, clear, concise and uniform
2. **Benefits:** Continue utilizing but experiment with new types of VPs and content/focus in VPs.
3. **Offer:** Continue utilizing offers are seen as the most effective also by users. Experiment with news types of offers and rewards.
4. **Confirmation:** One common confirmation solution for all brands. Make sure copy and visual cues are clear, and send confirmation emails to all users for greater reassurance.
5. **Regain:** Strengthen Winback initiatives and experimentation with new personalized winbacks for greater reactivation.

Phase 3: User interviews

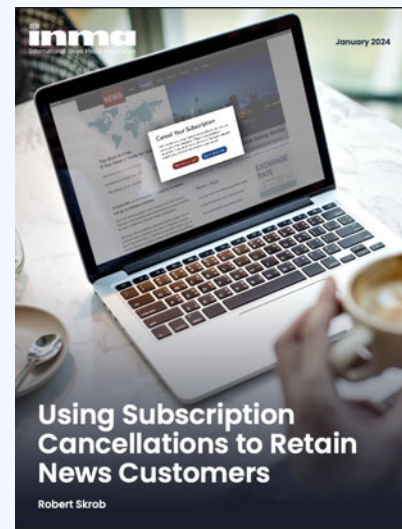
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