

Case Study: Deceptive UX Patterns

Jade Haldane

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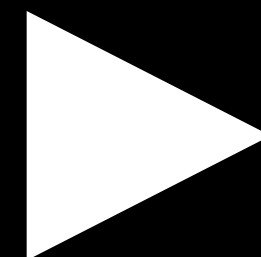
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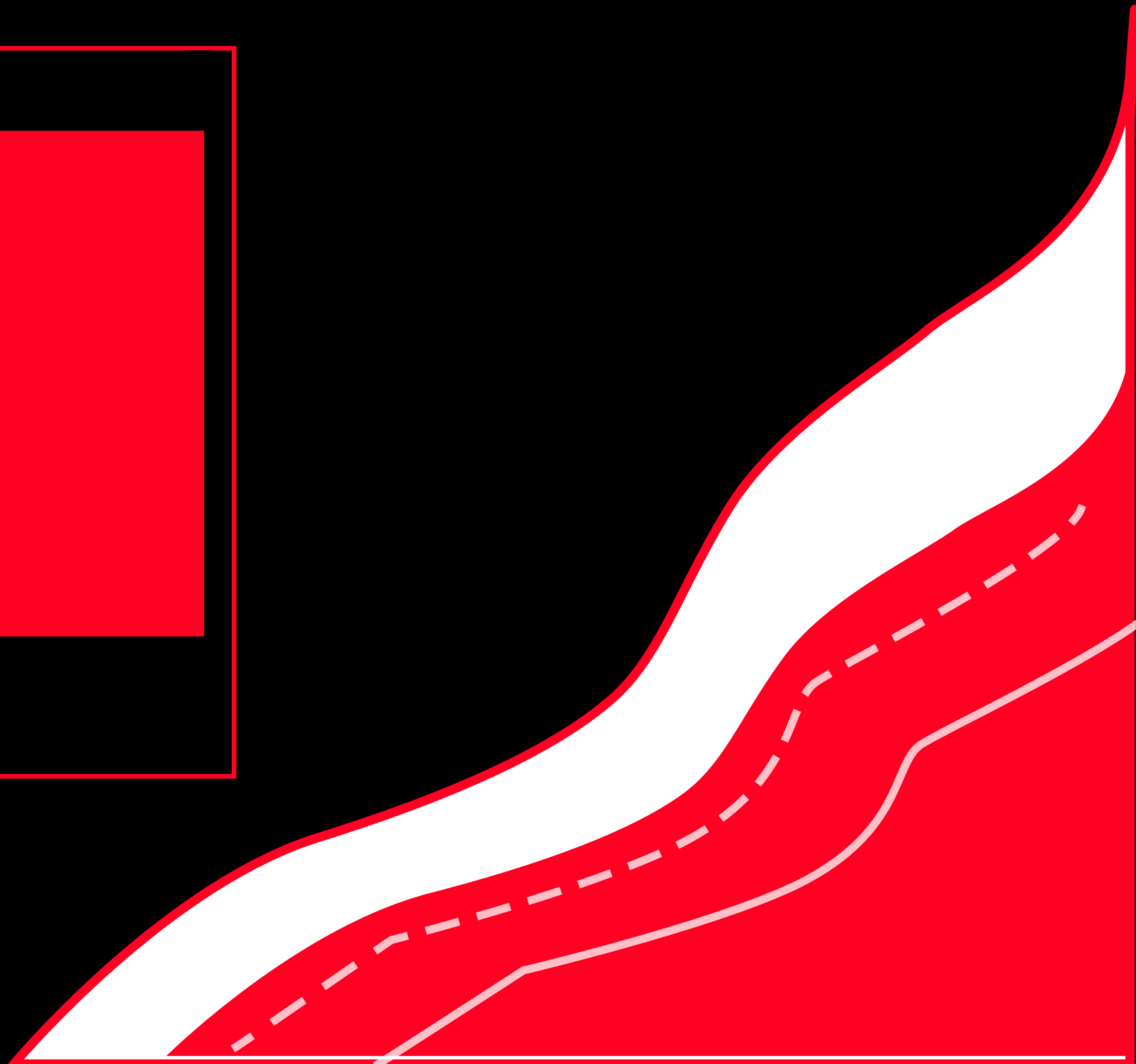
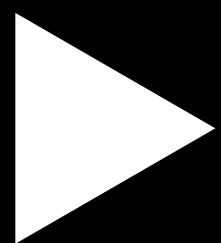
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Overview

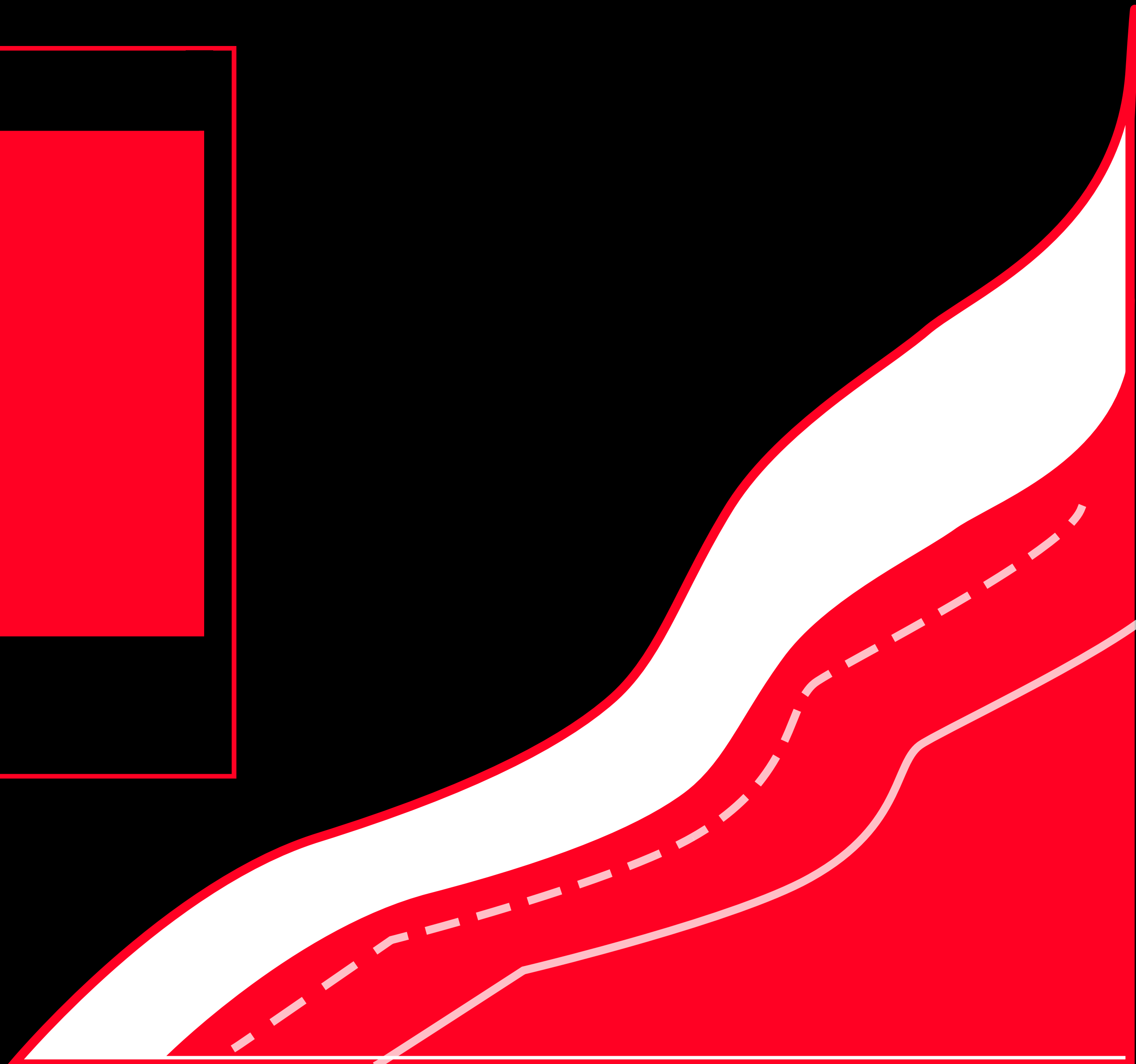
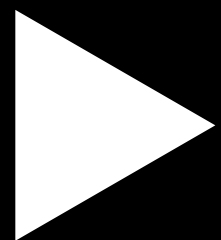




Deceptive patterns are a large part of designing for the web whether you are creating them or trying to avoid them. I feel it is only right as a learning designer I should explore this aspect. Misleading the user on such a popular platform has been all about small adjustments to the regular experience to me. YouTube is used by millions of people each day but few likely pay close attention to it. I focused on adding many small changes that are mostly visual in order to change the experience without changing the quality.

I decided to focus on a very simple user flow with only four screens so that I could really decide how to best implement the deceptive patterns I have learned while also respecting the design of the original flow and user experience.

Research



Research: Deceptive Patterns Case Studies

Before I started looking too far into which deceptive patterns I would implement or searching for them in other studies I wanted to go further into the actual uses and harms these patterns cause, so that I can design mindfully.

“Compromise in User Experience: When the users feel manipulated or deceived. In the long term, users will negatively perceive the company or the product. This would finally lead to user frustration and become a part of user pain points, which will decrease the overall product engagement.” Ade

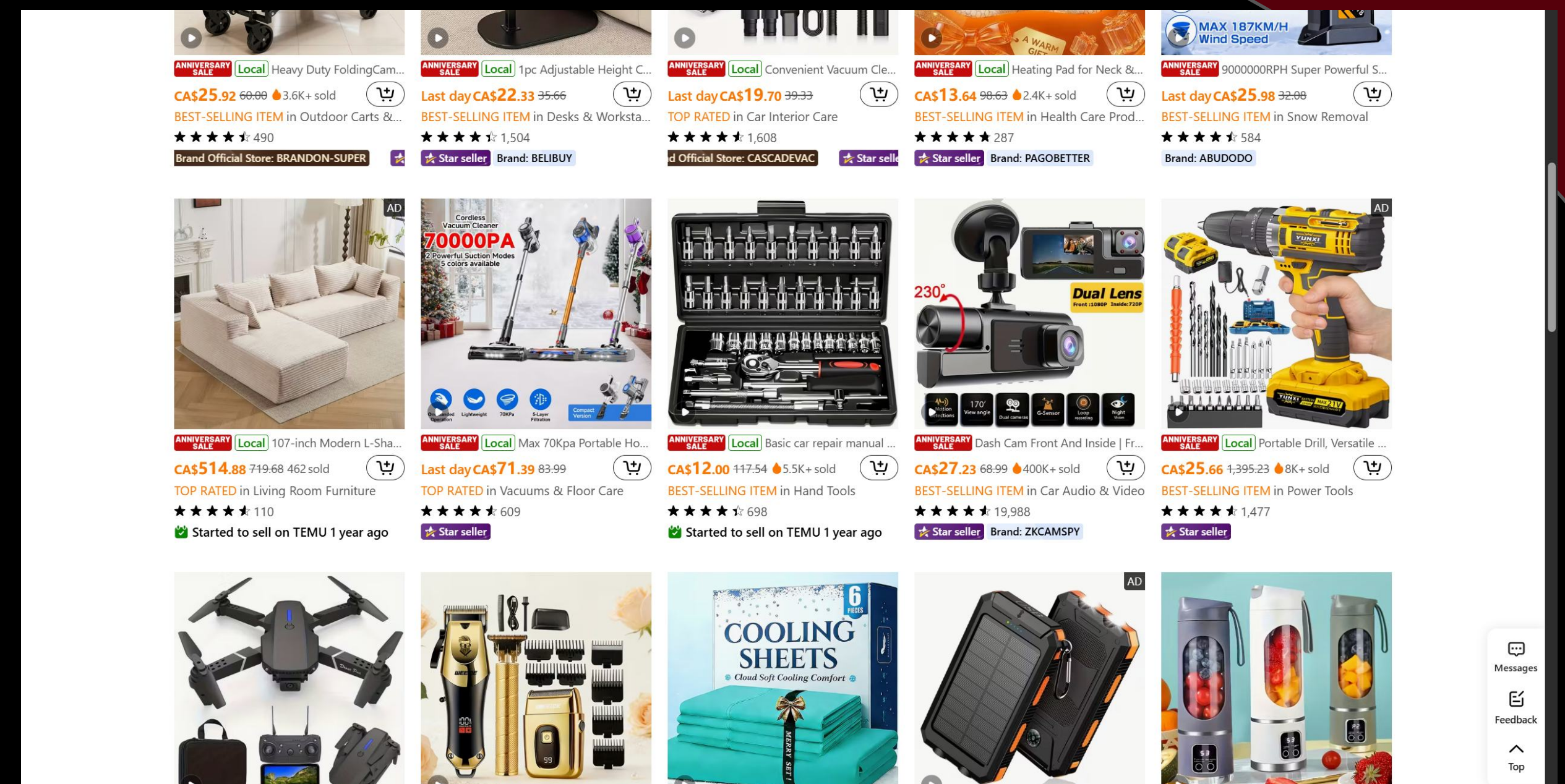
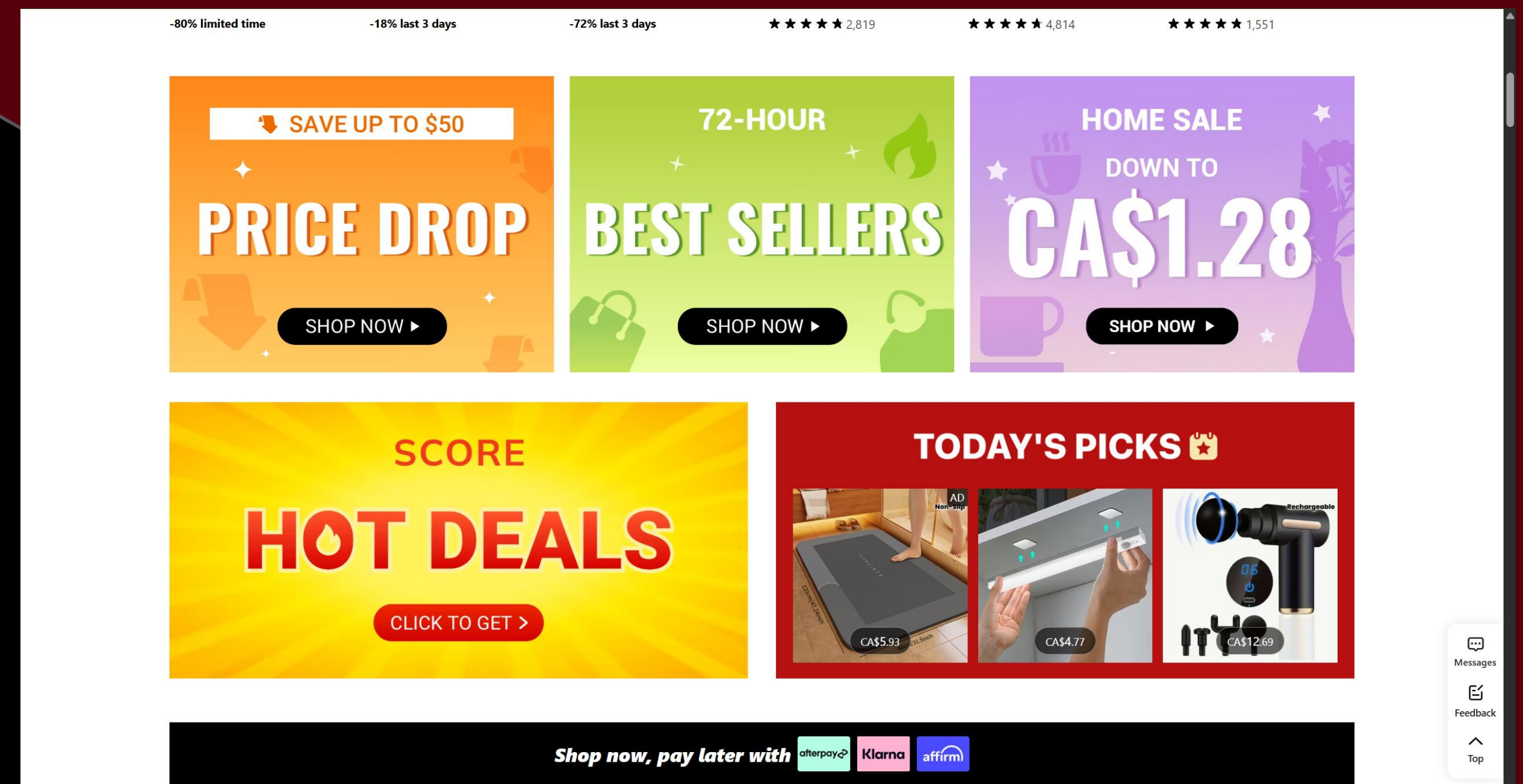
Long term I imagine anything I could design will be harmful to the user experience but keeping in mind that this is highly detrimental to the user experience I will try to keep it less upsetting levels of deceiving. Per the table on the right I also wanted to better understand the harmful effects on the user. I think the learning all these details will help me keep the point of this project in mind while I start designing.

Harmful Effects of Dark Patterns	Dark Pattern Type
Financial Loss	Roach Motel, Price Comparison Prevention, Intermediate Currency, Forced Continuity, Sneak into Basket, Hidden Costs, Disguised Ads, Hidden Subscription, Countdown Timer, Limitedtime Message, Activity Message, Testimonials, Low-stock Message, High-demand Message.
Invasion of Privacy	Hidden Information, Preselection, Aesthetic Manipulation, Toying with Emotion, False Hierarchy, Disguised Ads, Trick Questions, Social Pyramid, Privacy Zuckering, Gamification, Hidden Subscription, Confirmshaming, Visual Interference, Pressured Selling, Hard to Cancel, Forced Enrollment
Cognitive Burden	Roach Motel, Forced Continuity, Bait and Switch, Preselection, Aesthetic Manipulation, Toying with Emotion, False Hierarchy, Disguised Ads, Trick Questions, Privacy Zuckering, Confirmshaming, Visual Interference, Pressured Selling, Hard to Cancel
Loss of Individual Autonomy	All

Mapping table of harmful effects by type of dark patterns (Mathur et al., 2021)

Research: Lots of Deceptive Patterns

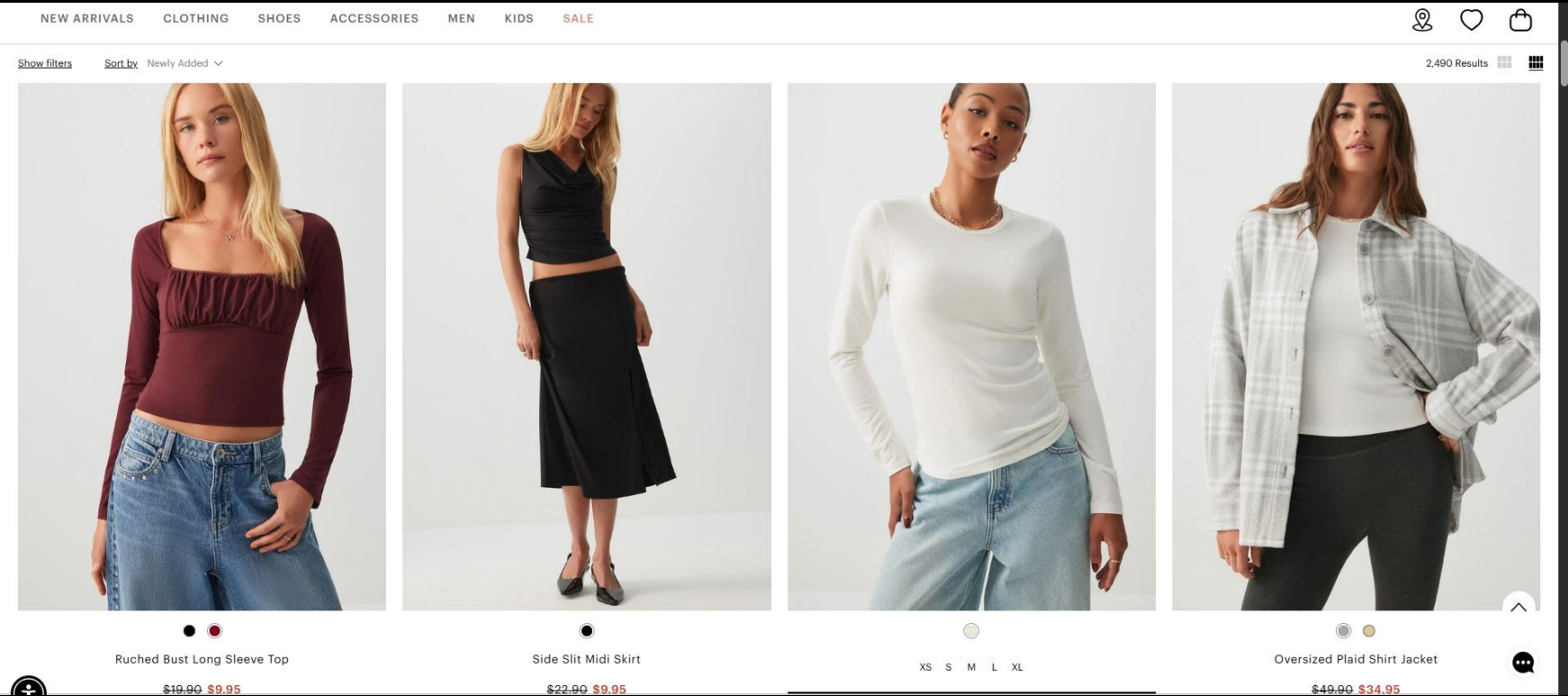
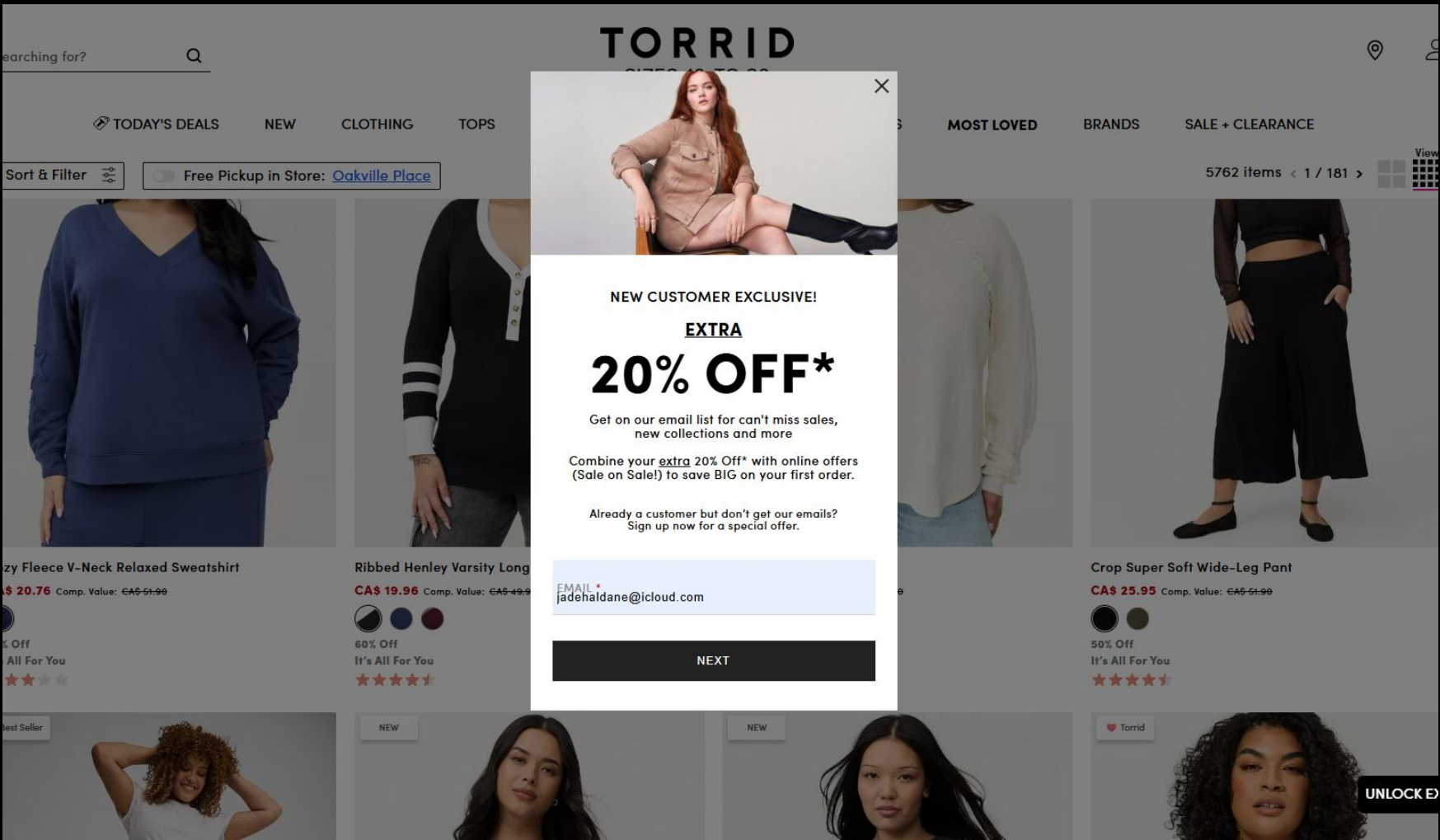
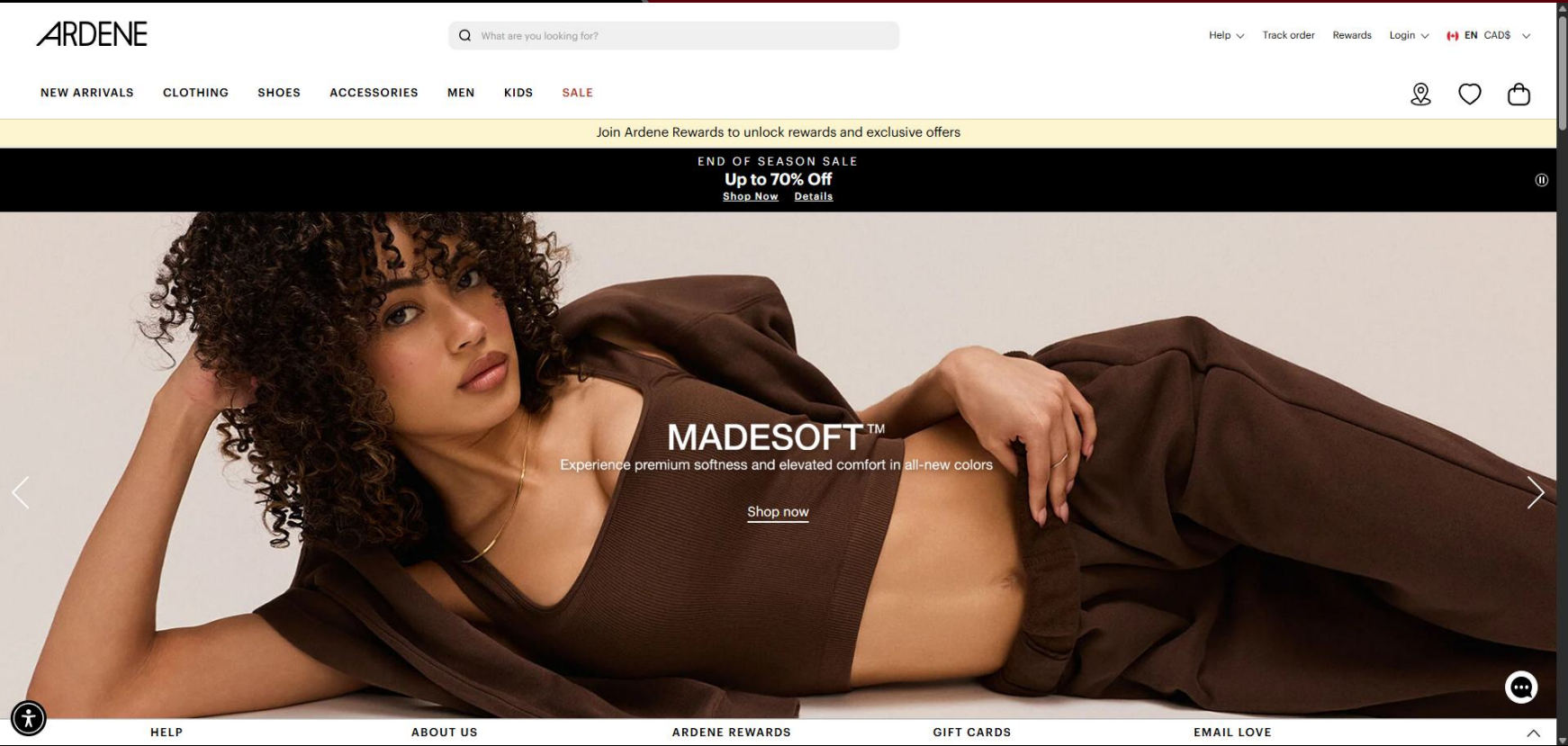
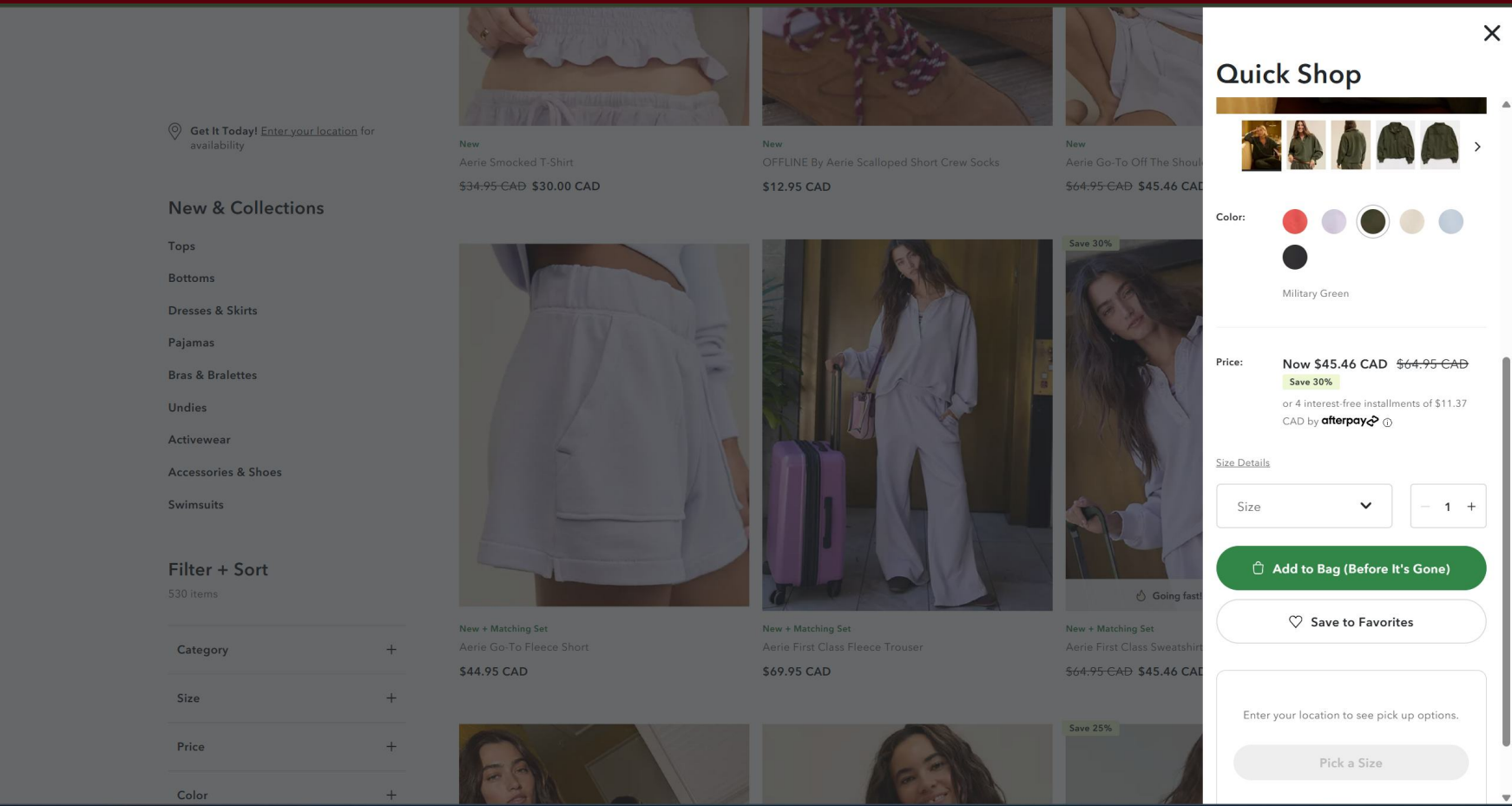
Temu employs so many deceptive patterns I find it a little crazy they even stay properly open due to many deceptive patterns becoming illegal under laws as they evolve. They employ a lot of artificial scarcity tactics to scare users into making purchases, such as a million “get it before it’s gone” sales. They also employ deals they say last a mere 5 minutes to an hour to really rush the user even though the prices are barely lower. They also do confirm shaming when you reject their deals by saying things like “I don’t want to save money today”. I think this level of deceptive patterns only works because of how discounted the items for sale are, while I can learn from this for my own wireframes I do not think I can attain this level of deceptive pattern without making the user experience negative.



Research: Some Deceptive Patterns

Aerie employs some tactics to make the user feel like they need to catch this extra special deal as soon as possible. As common as this is it still feels like a predatory system in order to drive sales based on people’s fear of missing out. Ardene was the website I chose to compare Aerie to to see if this was standard clothing store website design or if Aerie was being a bit deceptive. Ardene’s website even in the sale section does not employ these FOMO tactics it is a website essentially devoid of any deceptive patterns.

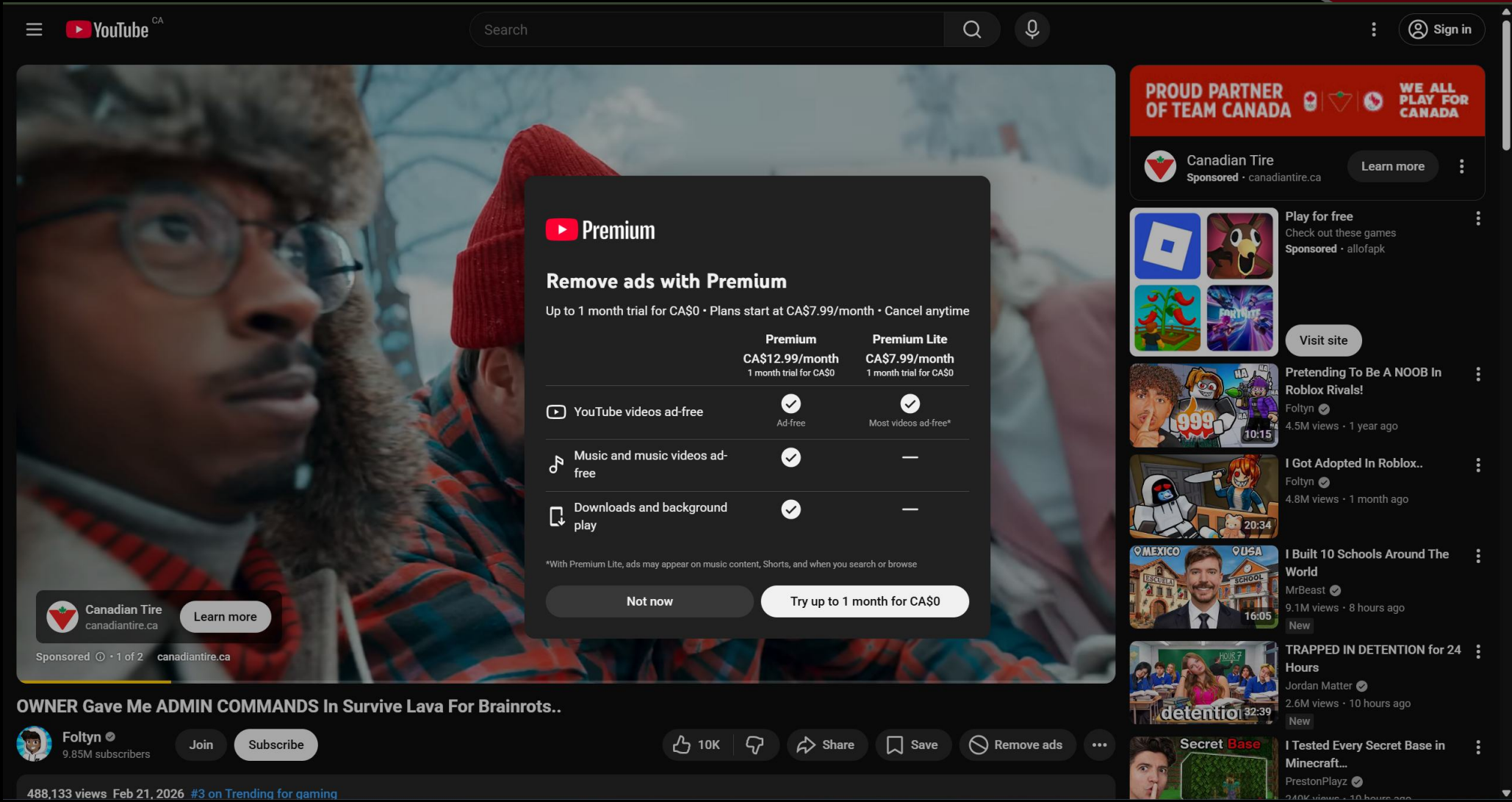
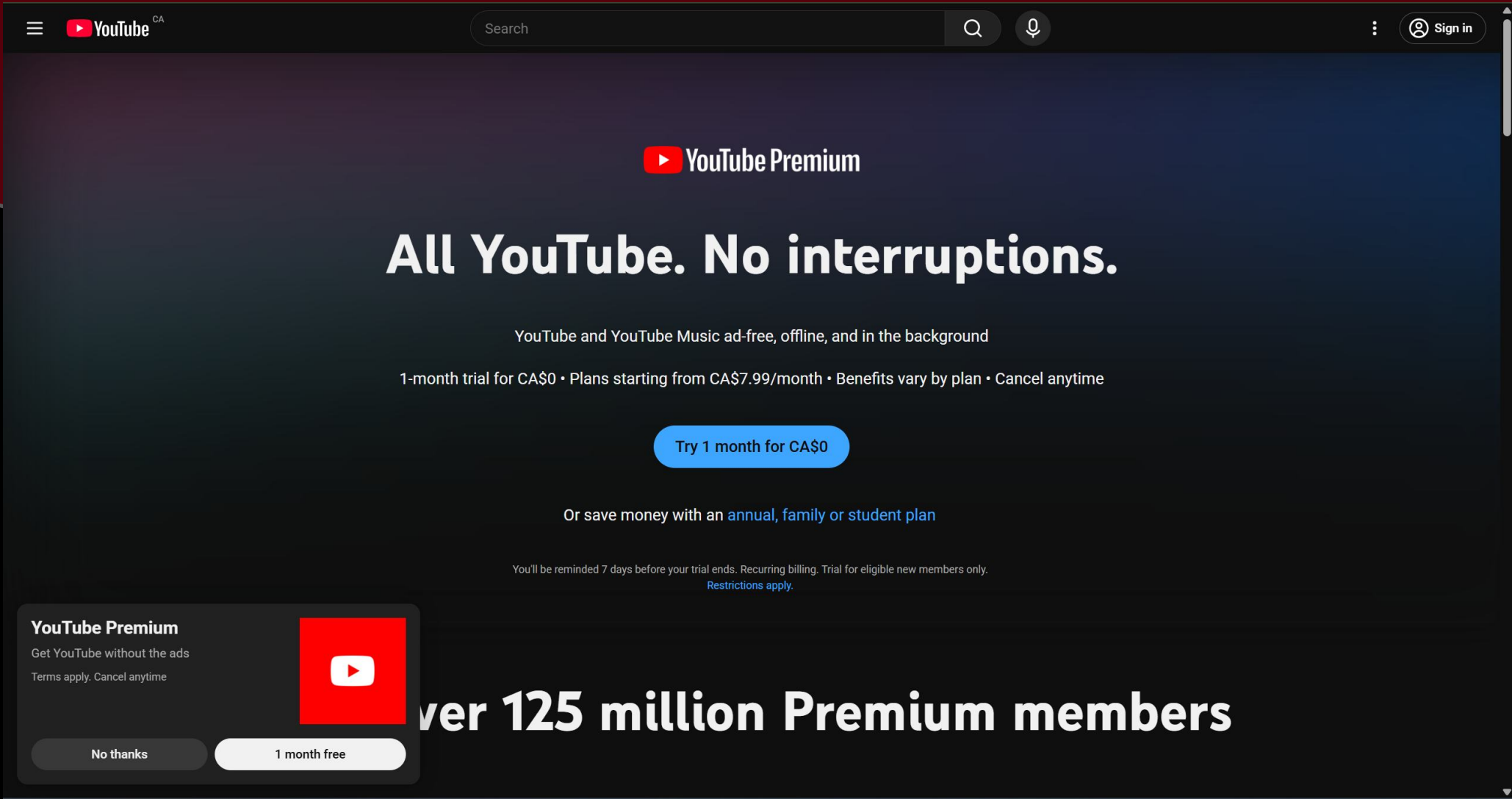
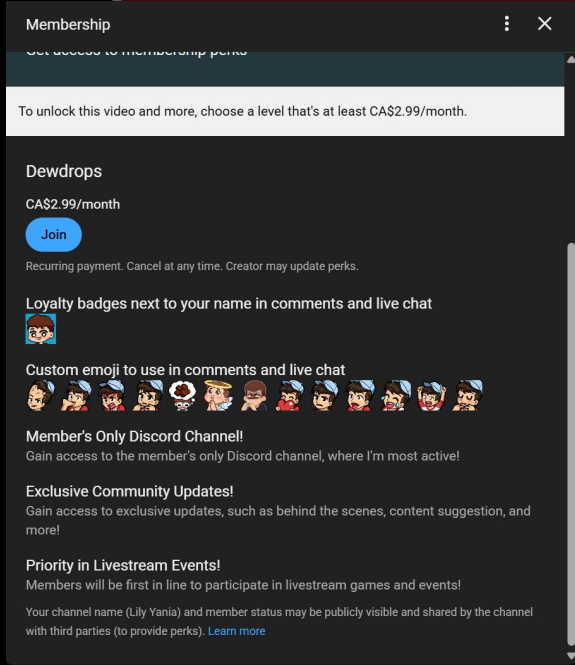
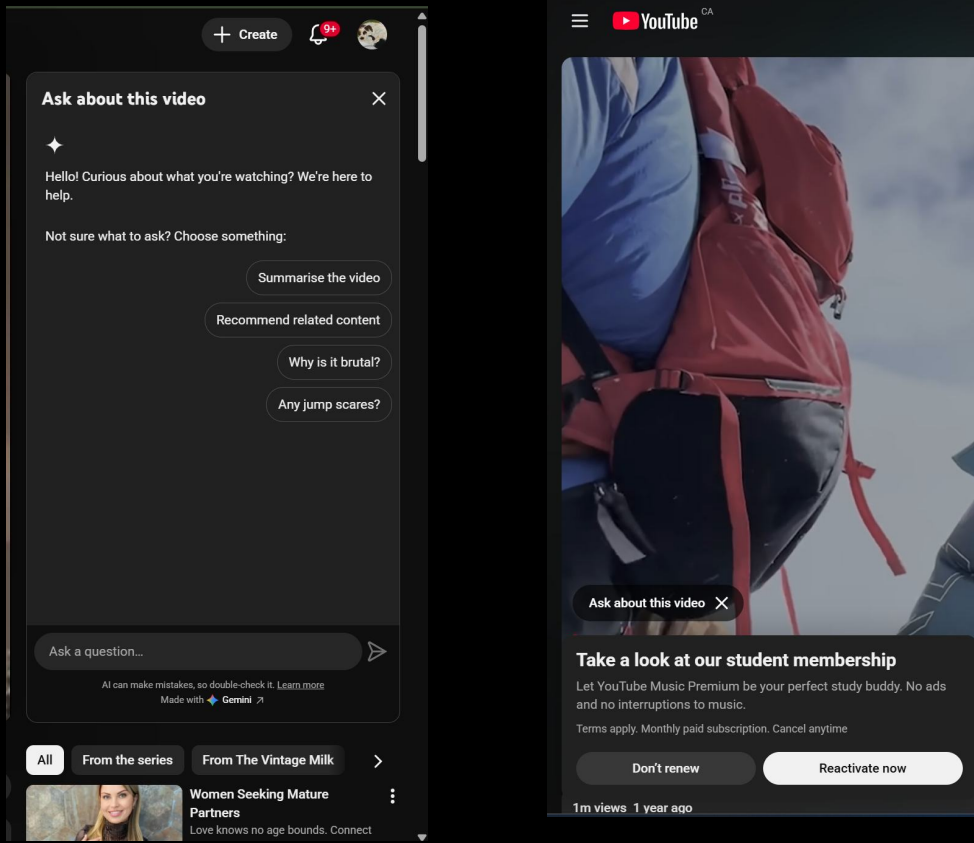
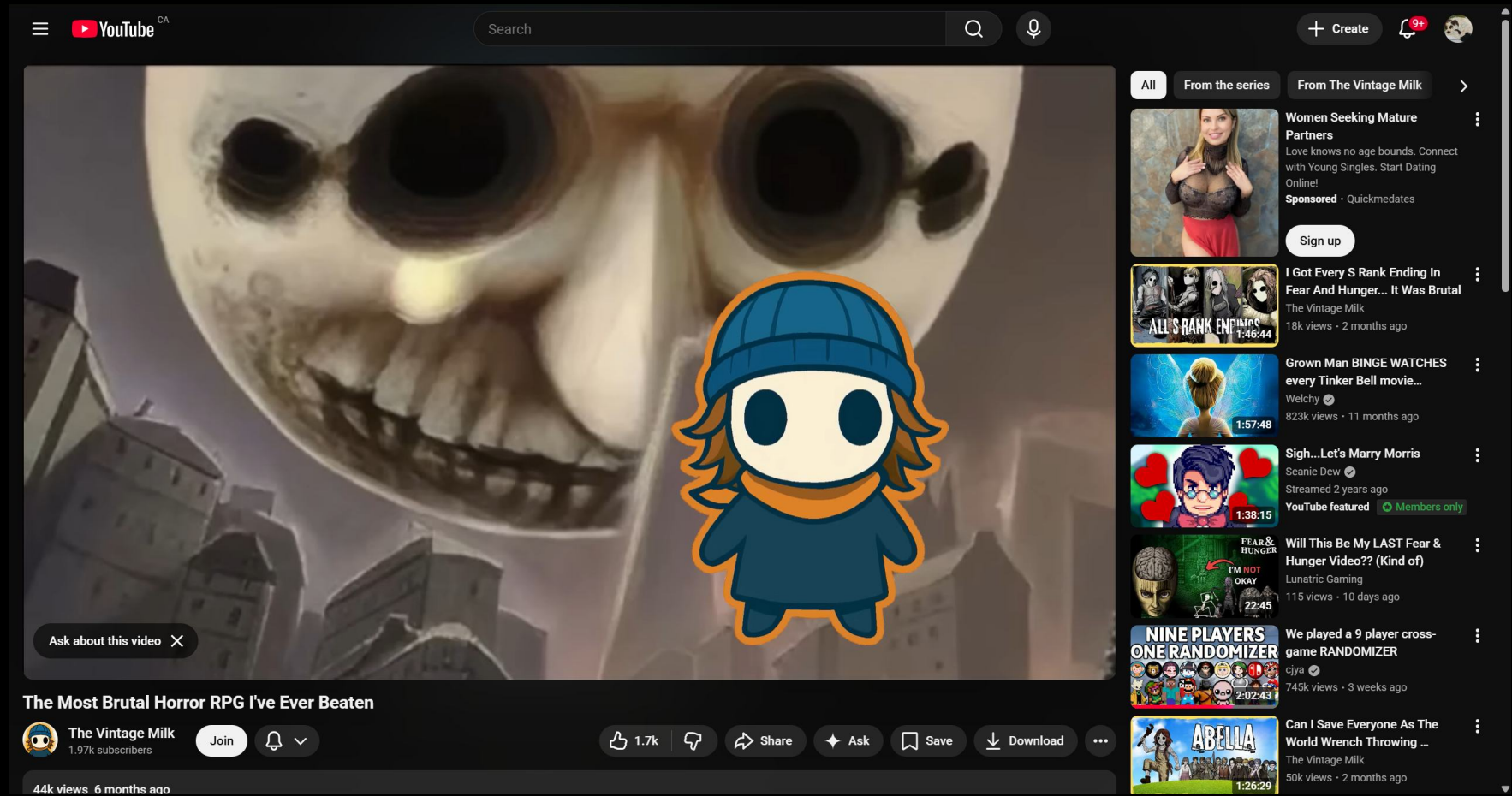
Torrid’s website really surprised me with the auto filled checkbox, while I have made a purchase before seeing my own email prefilled out for a limited sale was jarring and deceptive.



Research: A Few Deceptive Patterns

YouTube has many implementations I wouldn't quite consider to be deceptive patterns, there's a lot of pop-up ads and some ads I just think add a bad air to the site. Many of the ads are small and not disruptive, but I have seen some confirm shaming previously about not selecting a membership for a channel.

I feel that YouTube has a lot of potential to be used for this project, there's a lot of time that the user will be looking at the screen closely that can be utilized.



Research: The Average YouTube User

According to my research comparing across three sources in order to maintain accuracy into the average YouTube user the average user is between 25-34. I feel like age is one of the most important factors to consider because deceptive patterns do rely on user behaviours and expectations, for example certain types of confirm shaming relating to percentage savings would have less impact on a younger audience because they might not fully understand. Another important consideration into the real average user is that YouTube requires users to be above a certain age and has for many years, meaning a not small percentage of these users may have lied about their age or are old long abandoned accounts made by children. Personally I did this as a child, so I will keep in mind the actual average age may be towards the lower end of the 25-34 figure.

YouTube is also:

- roughly 53% male 47% female
- roughly 2.55 billion users
- nearly half of internet users (~44%) use YouTube
- India has the most users, followed by the United States

Knowing all this, my average user is male and about 30, but it is important to keep in mind that there's a low difference in the number of men and women as well as a wide age range. Gender shouldn't play a role in my design decisions but I do feel like I better understand what kind of users I should design for.

Research: YouTube UX Case Study

I wanted to look into what people think about YouTube's current UX design on a serious level and I found this case study by Micheal Wong. The study details why YouTube's current design is so effective and some of the key points in it, which I thought would really further inform my own design decision.

"YouTube is designed to surround you with content at all times. Videos in the sidebar, suggestions on what to watch, links, promotions – it's an engagement loop designed to keep you hooked on the site." Wong

I think the notion that YouTube is simply covered in content is helpful for my designs as I can keep that in mind because I can simply add in my deceptive patterns with the large amount of content already available. I can turn some of the promotion and link or outside content into my own content as it will easily blend into the rest.

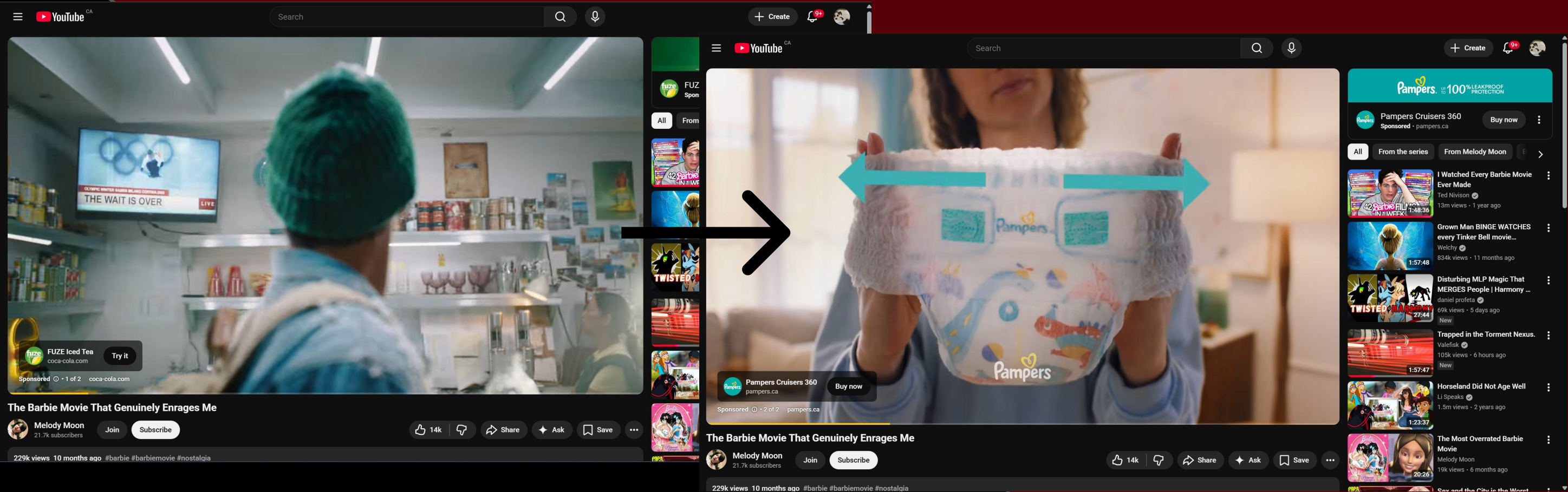
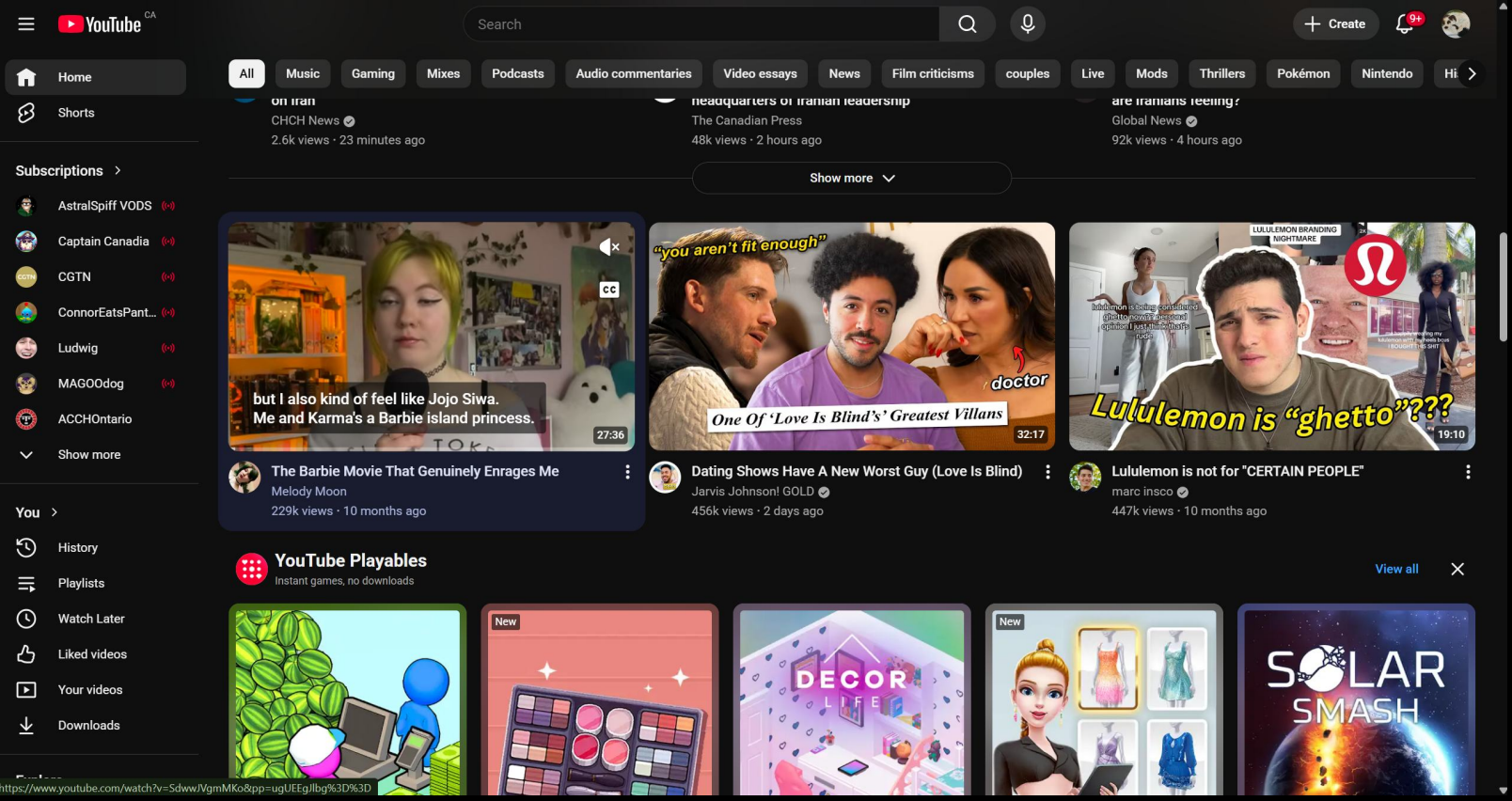
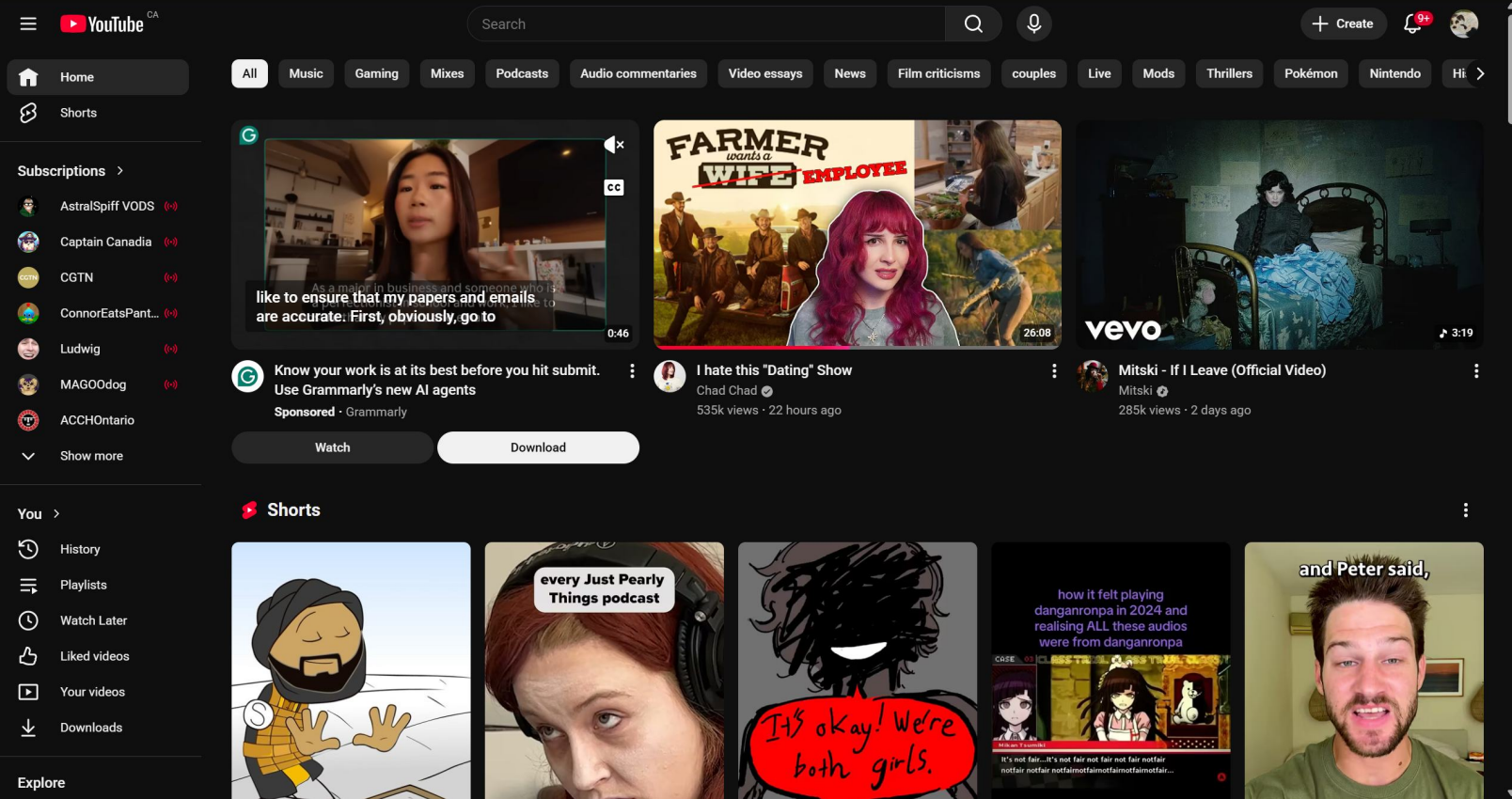
"The auto-play feature enables what Youtube describes as a 'lean back' experience for the user. Relevant videos continue playing without you even needing to reach for your mouse.

Taking everything into account that YouTube knows about you (which, I hate to say, is a lot more than you think), autoplay helps to keep you on the site longer by literally continuing to play content for you.

This kind of system is a God-send for those looking to use the platform for background music or a binge-watching session. It also helps to take the guessing work out of deciding what to watch next." Wong

This nonchalant user attitude is part of what I intended to consider in my designs as well, many deceptive patterns focus on the user not fully paying attention or operating on autopilot. YouTube's 'lean back' experience will stop the users from thinking too hard and lend itself extremely well to misleading the user.

Research: YouTube User Flow

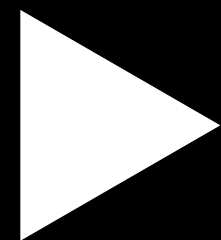


YouTube has a very limited number of screens in an average interaction because there will be some ads on the homepage and some ads before the video but overall the user experience is very streamlined.

What did I Learn: Research

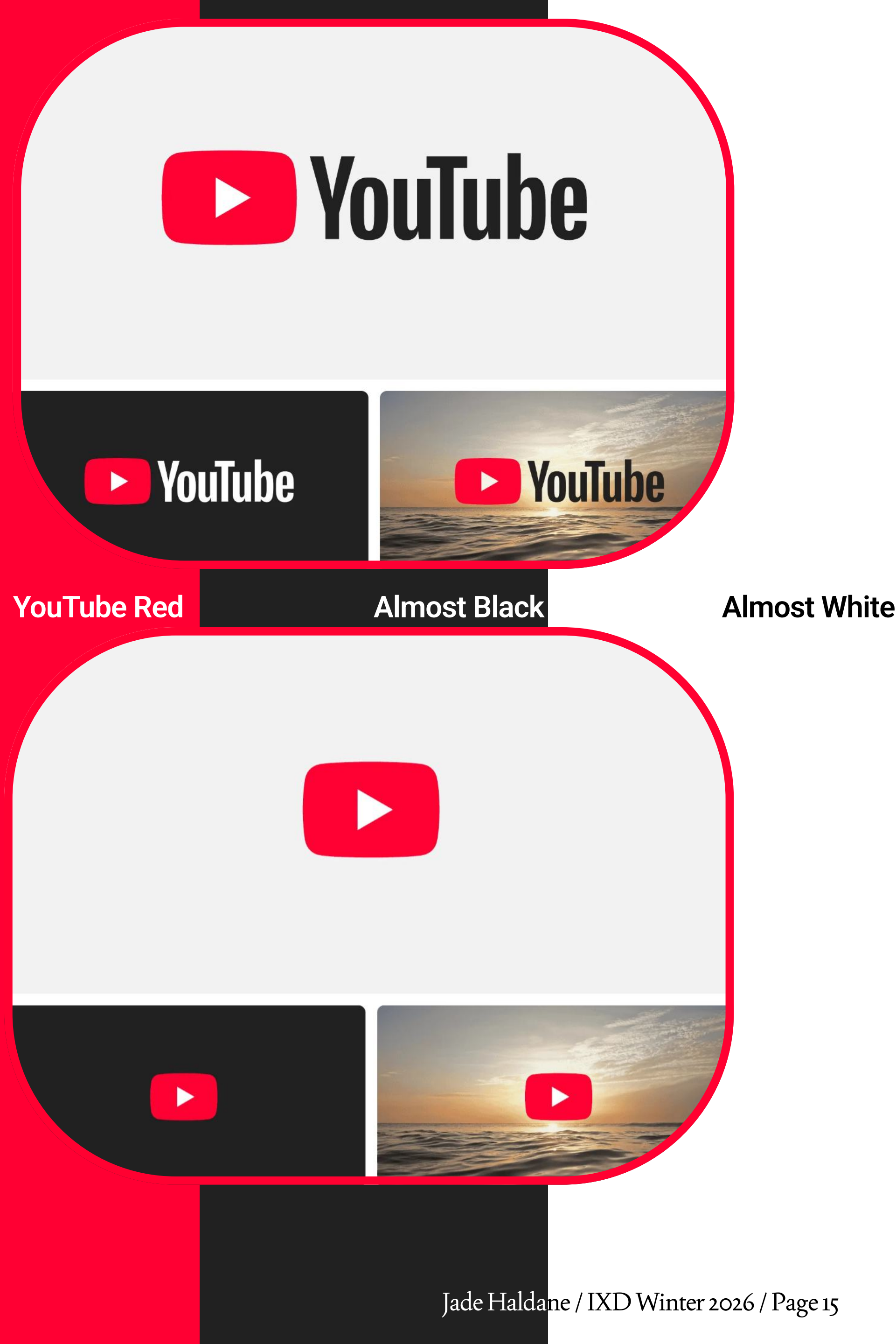
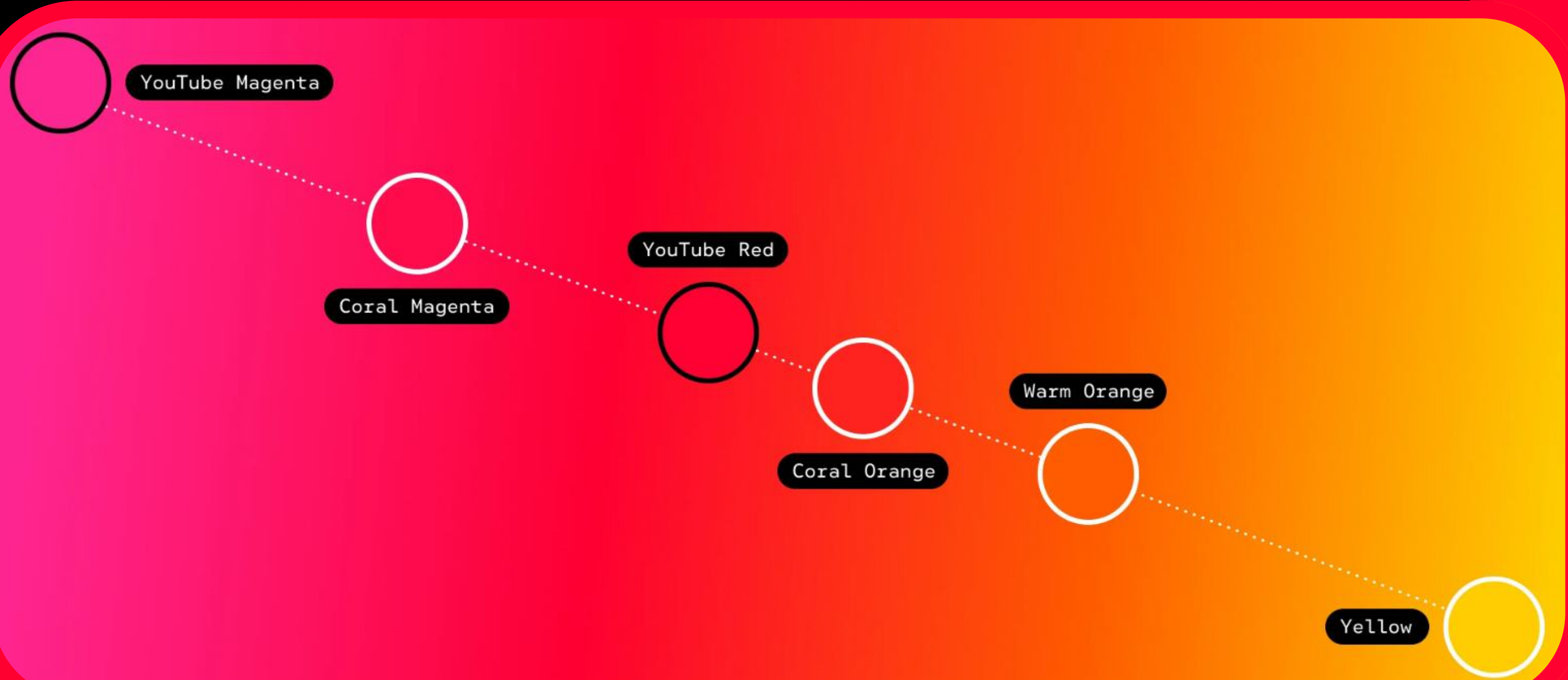
YouTube currently includes some minor deceptive patterns with lots of room for further deceptive patterns, especially based on the average user aged 25 - 34. I also learned more about how deceptive patterns are implemented into websites I already know and use in a variety of different kinds of sites such as clothes shopping, general shopping and YouTube itself. The current user flow does not include a ton of screens in order to get from the home page to the video but it does have lots of space for ads and to add in new deceptive patterns. The screen flow being optimized works in favour of the deceptive patterns because it means small new hindrances to the way the user interacts with the interface don't taint the full interaction because it starts at a baseline of not annoying.

Visual Research



Visual Research: Branding Standards

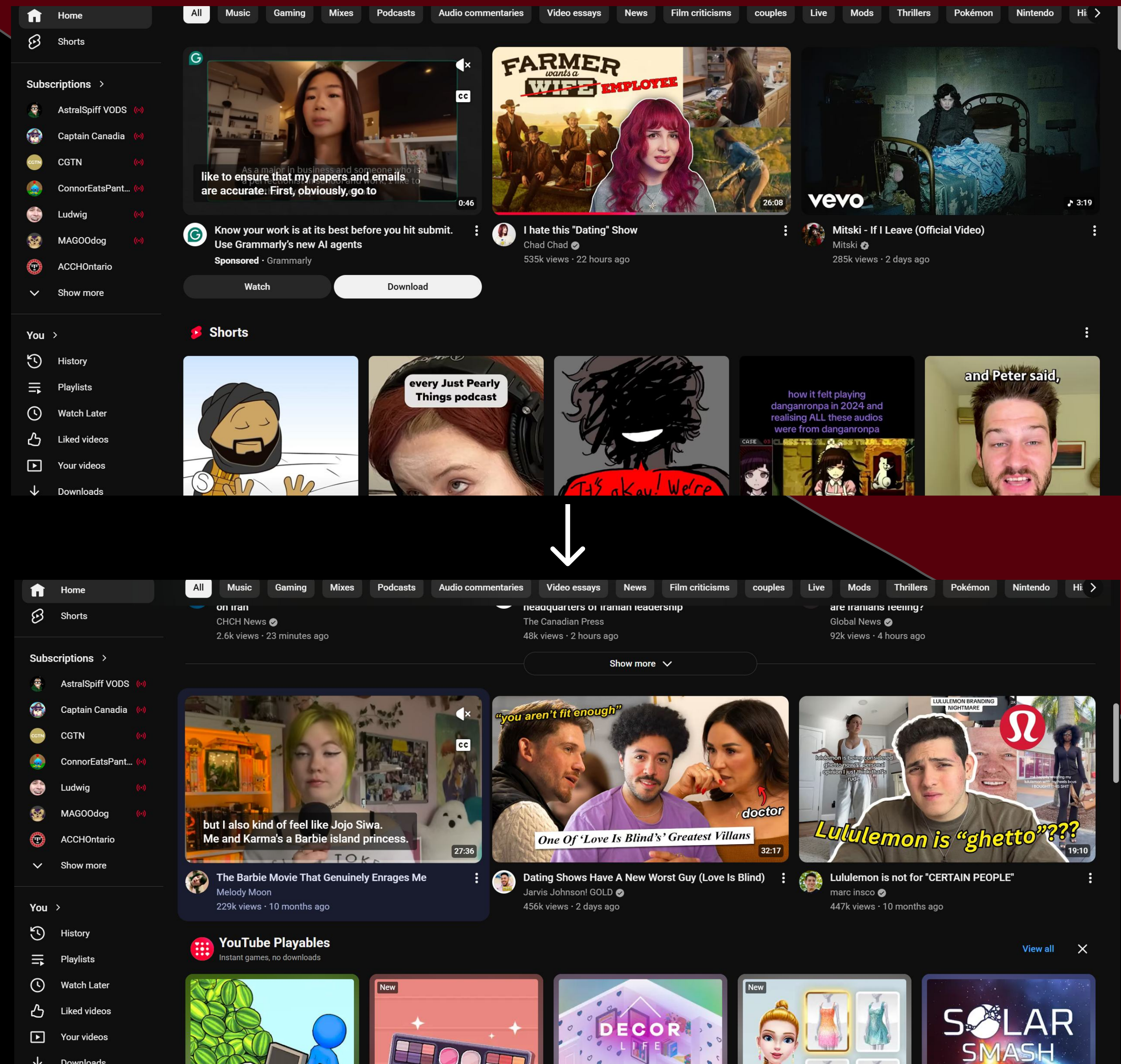
YouTube does make it easy to identify what they use for their branding standards as it is readily available on Google's own page. Adding magenta as an accent colour has been a relatively recent change but does add some colour variety to the otherwise blander palette. The typeface used in most of the things YouTube does is Roboto, though the logo font is different.



YouTube User Flow Stage One

Scrolling through the YouTube homepage there is plenty of space for new deceptive patterns to fit in as there is plenty of space in general. These YouTube screenshots are taken of my own personal signed in account which is why there are already targeted videos and advertisements. however knowing that nearly 45% of internet users have used YouTube I don't think this impacts my design.

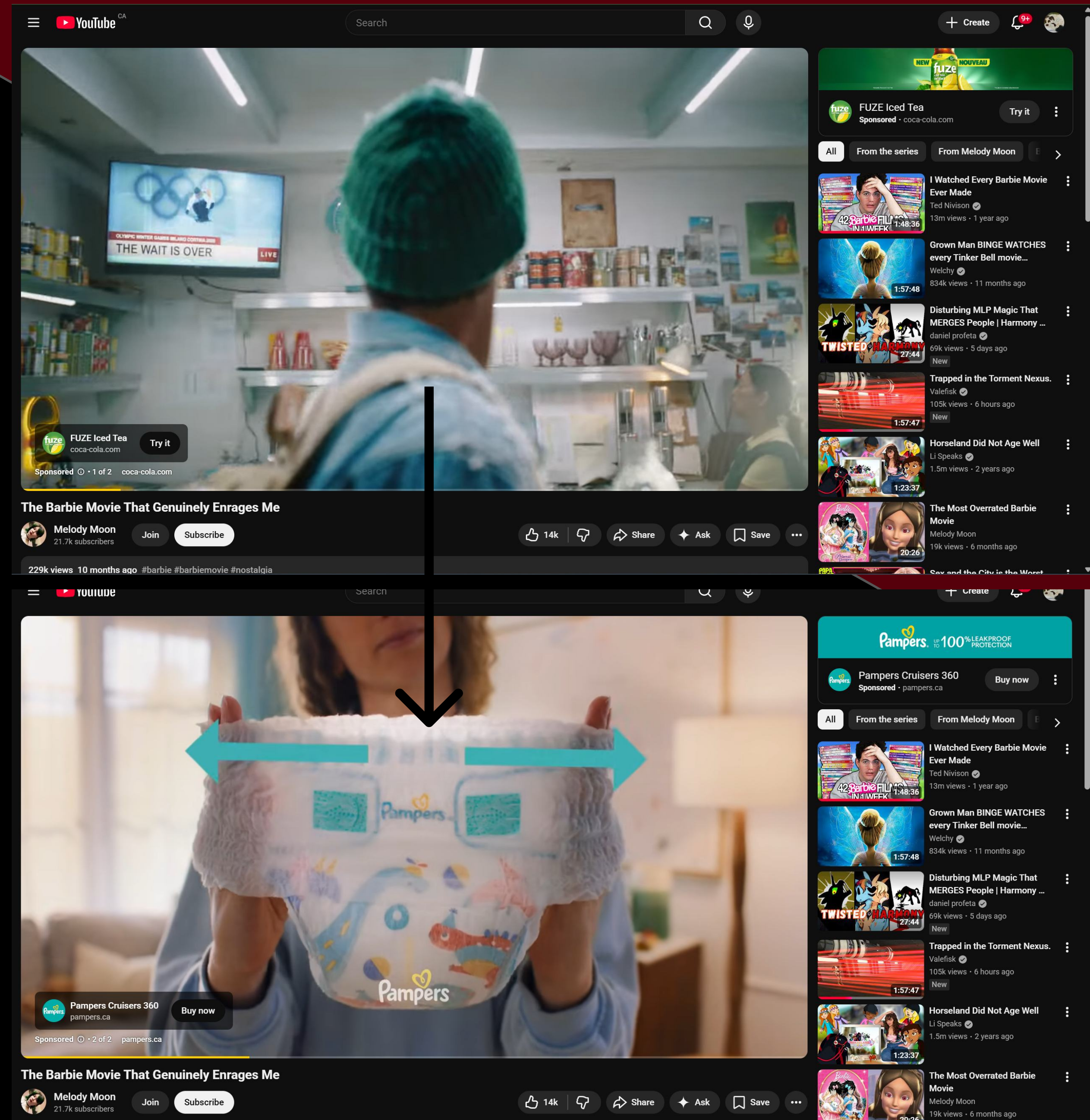
I think it would be most impactful to add timed advertisements for YouTube premium with a combination of fake scarcity and urgency. Something like confirm shaming wouldn't work yet as the user is not emotionally drawn in but having the home page give you flashy and urgent advertisements would catch the eye of many users.



YouTube User Flow Stage Two

While at one time the idea of back to back ads on a YouTube video was an insulting slap in the face for long time users as I remember when it was first implemented it created a lot of backlash, it's become the standard. However, this unwanted standard provides yet another opportunity for a deceptive pattern capitalizing on the emotions of the user.

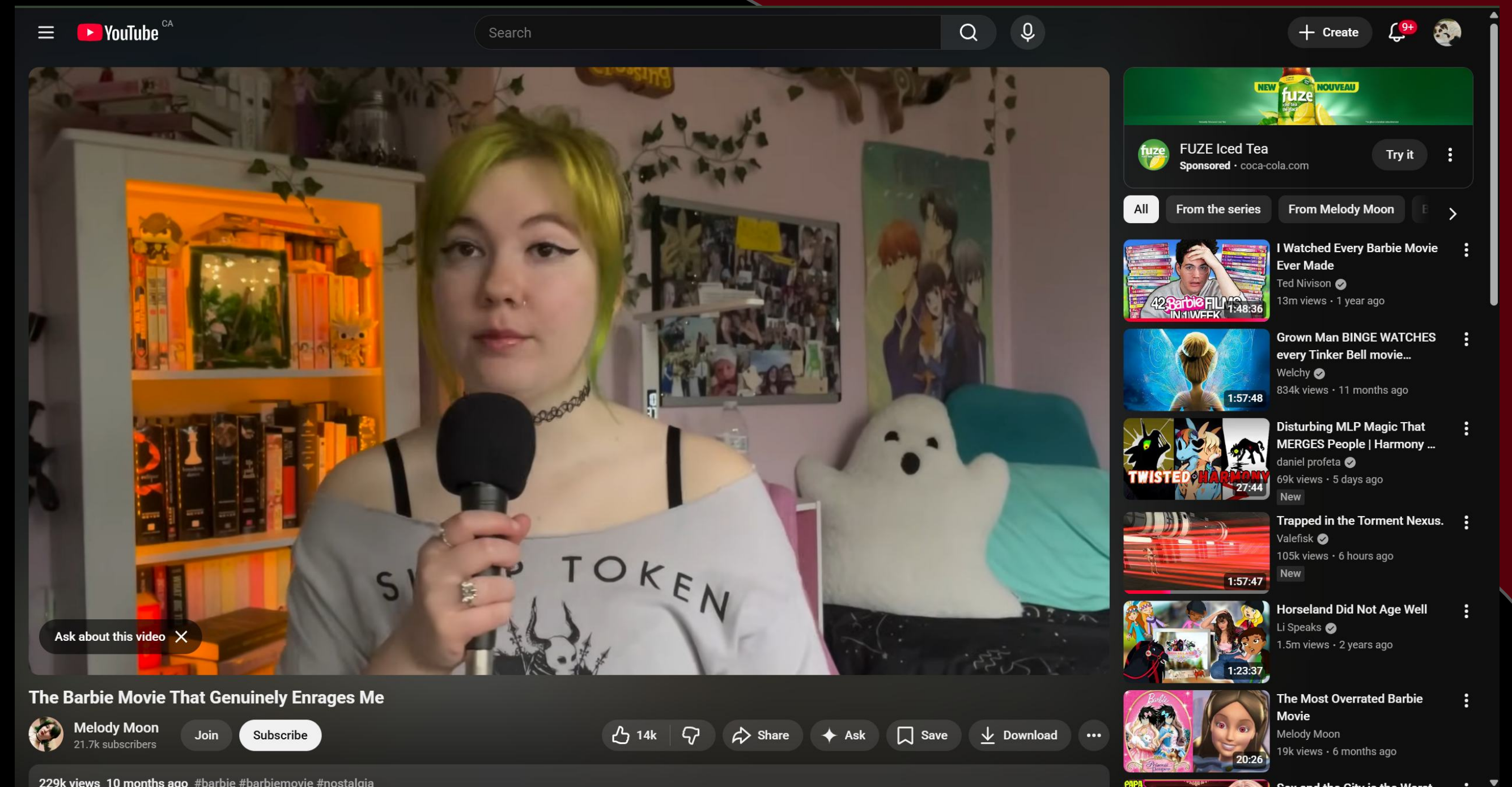
For this deceptive pattern I think the skip button can be brought back as it's already absent, but if the user clicks on it I want to it then bring up a pre-checked checkbox that does not block the screen that once again asks the user about YouTube premium in order to skip this usually unskippable ad.



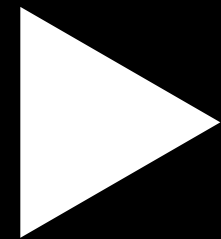
YouTube User Flow Stage Three

For this final stage of watching a video, getting to the actual video I want to advertise individual channel memberships with a deceptive pattern rather than YouTube premium again. Channel memberships are relatively recent in the lifespan of YouTube but they have already become very widespread as a means of replacing Patreon and other websites like it.

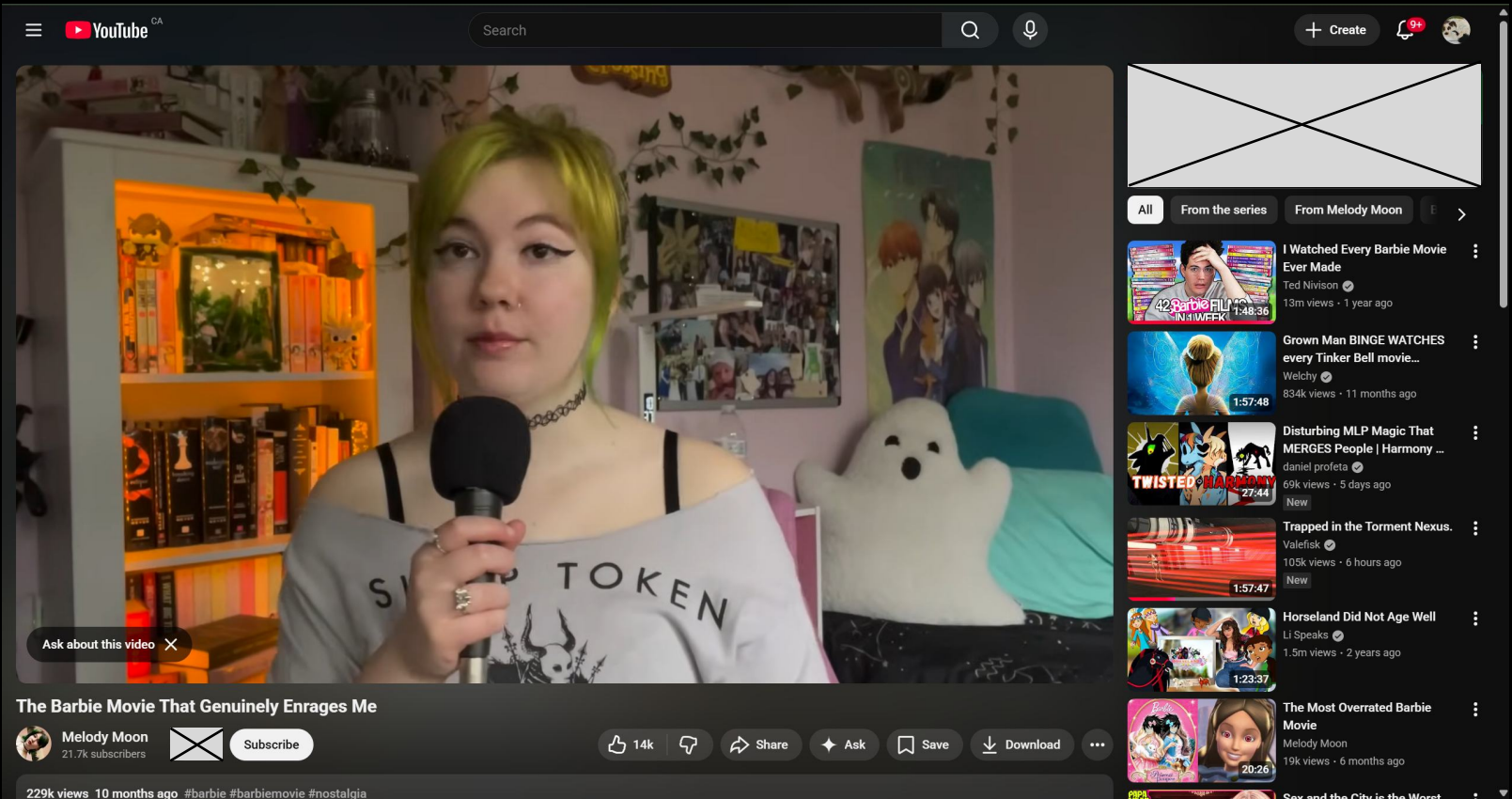
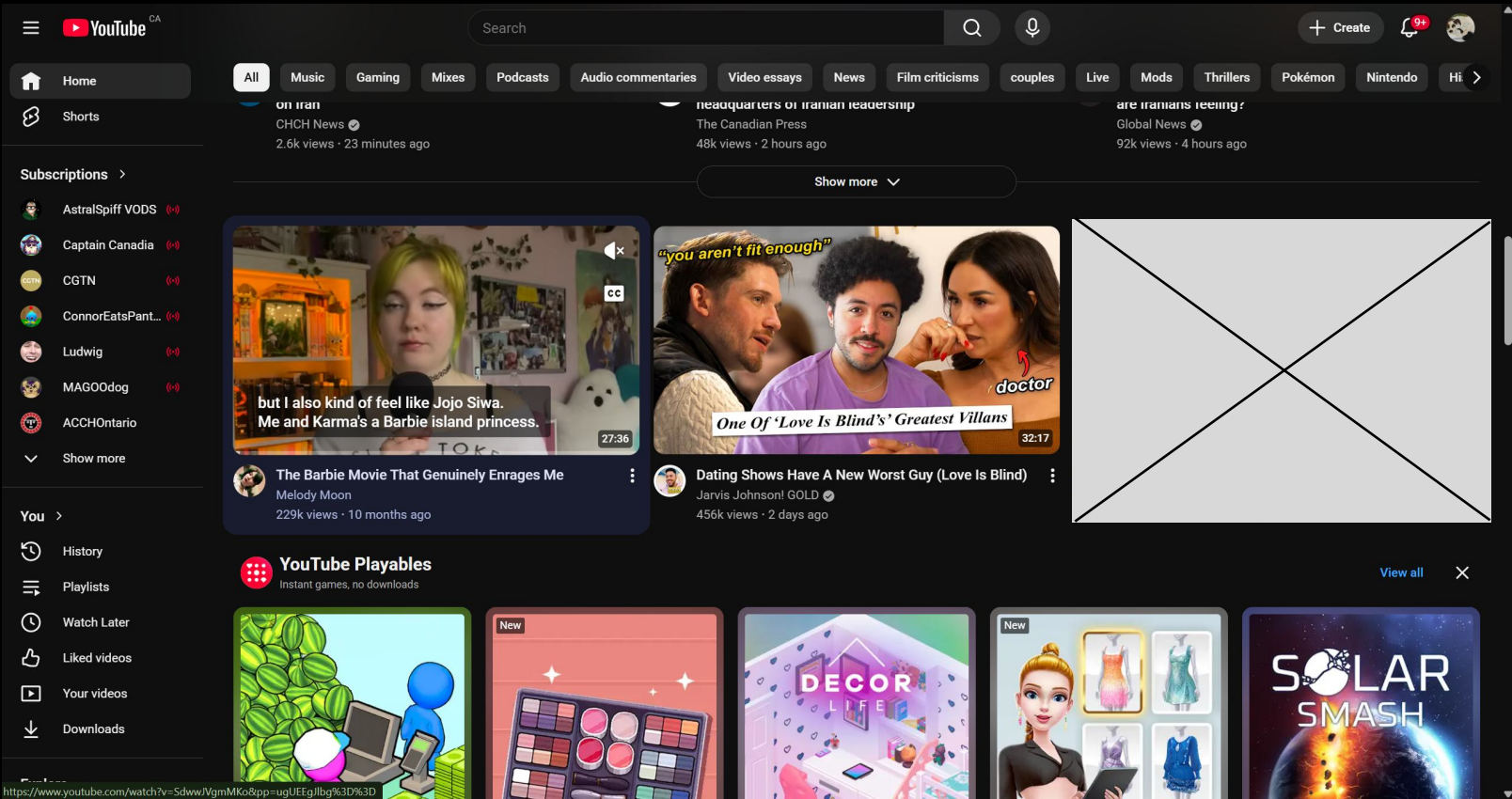
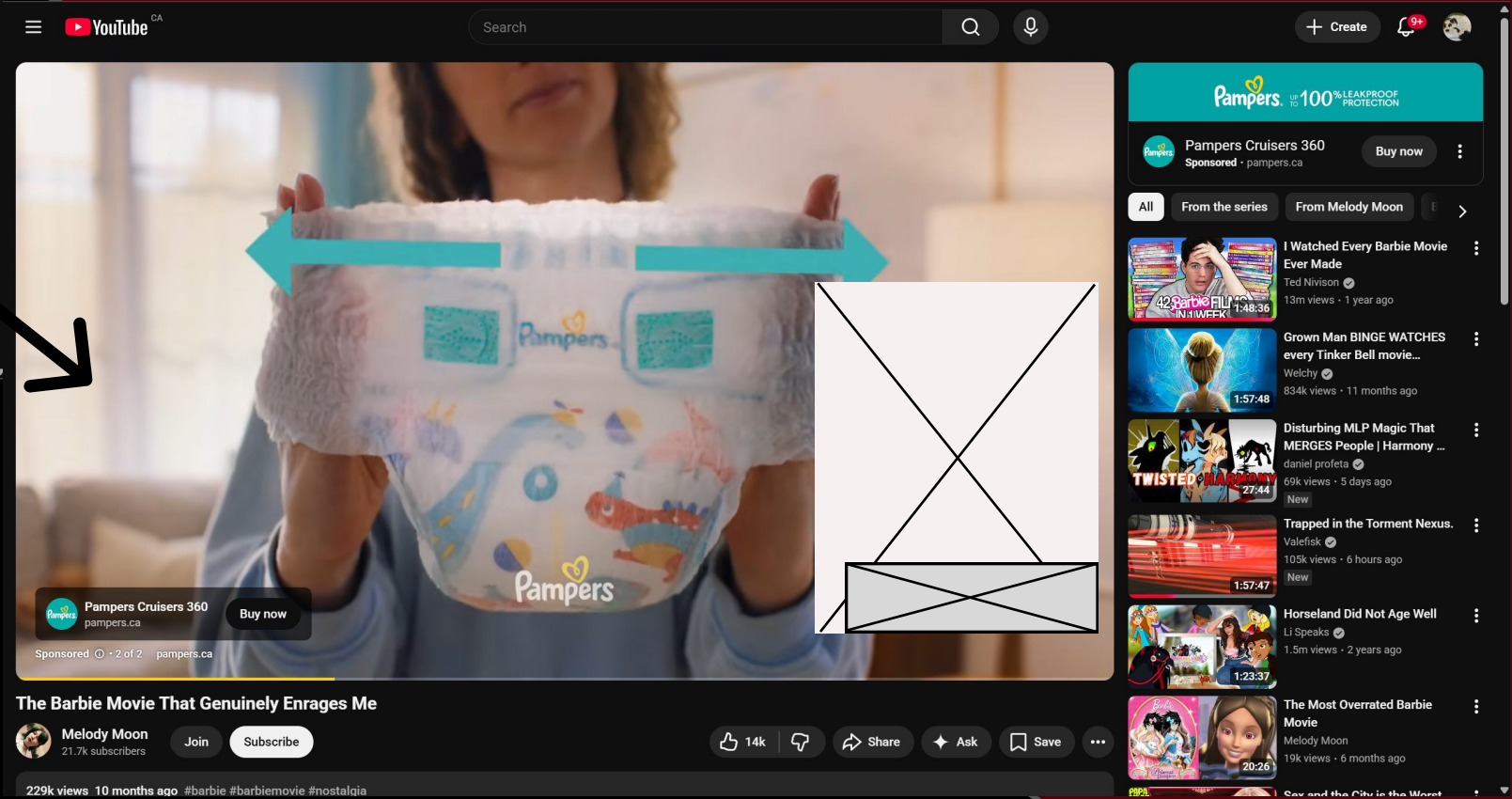
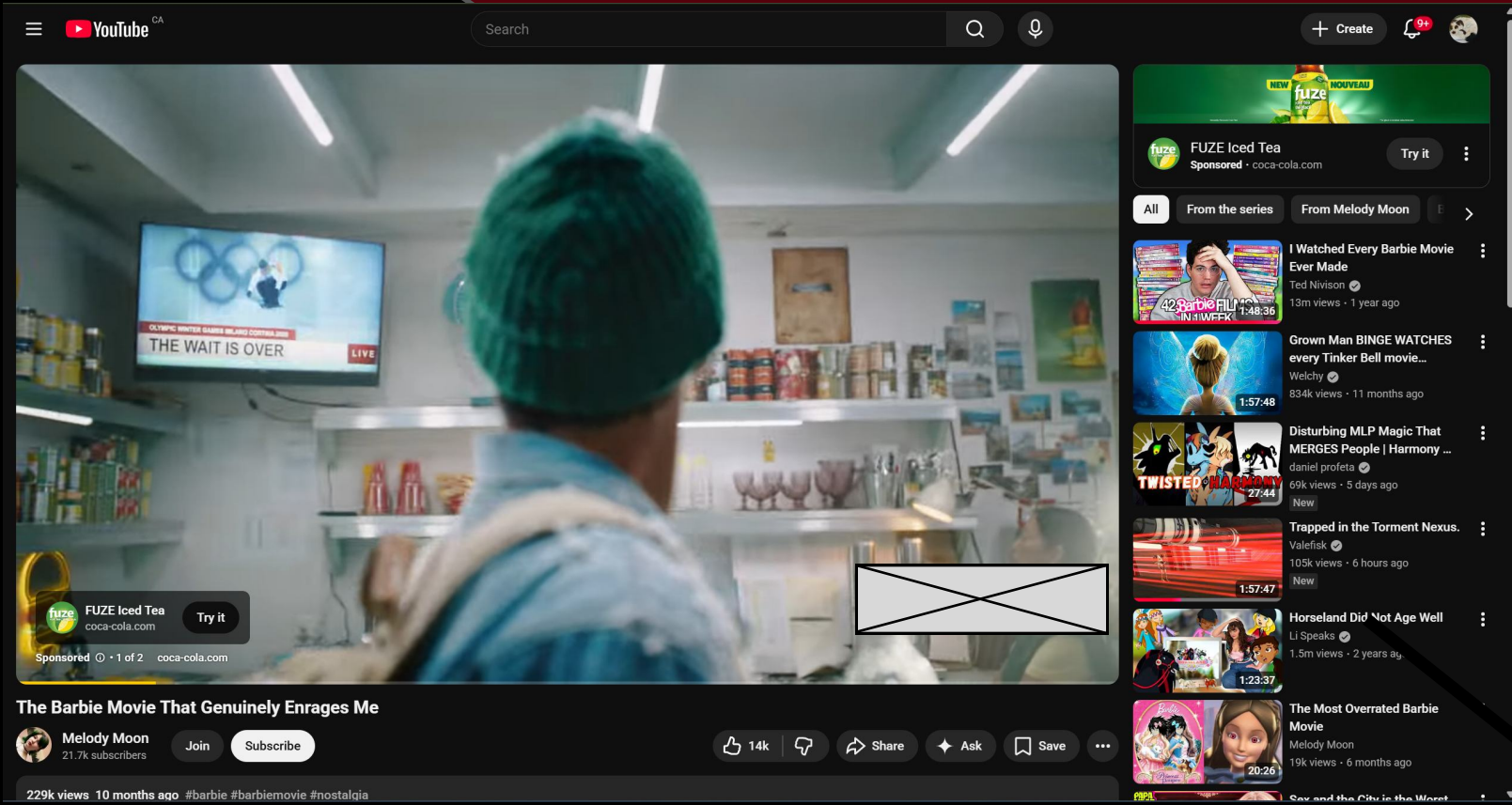
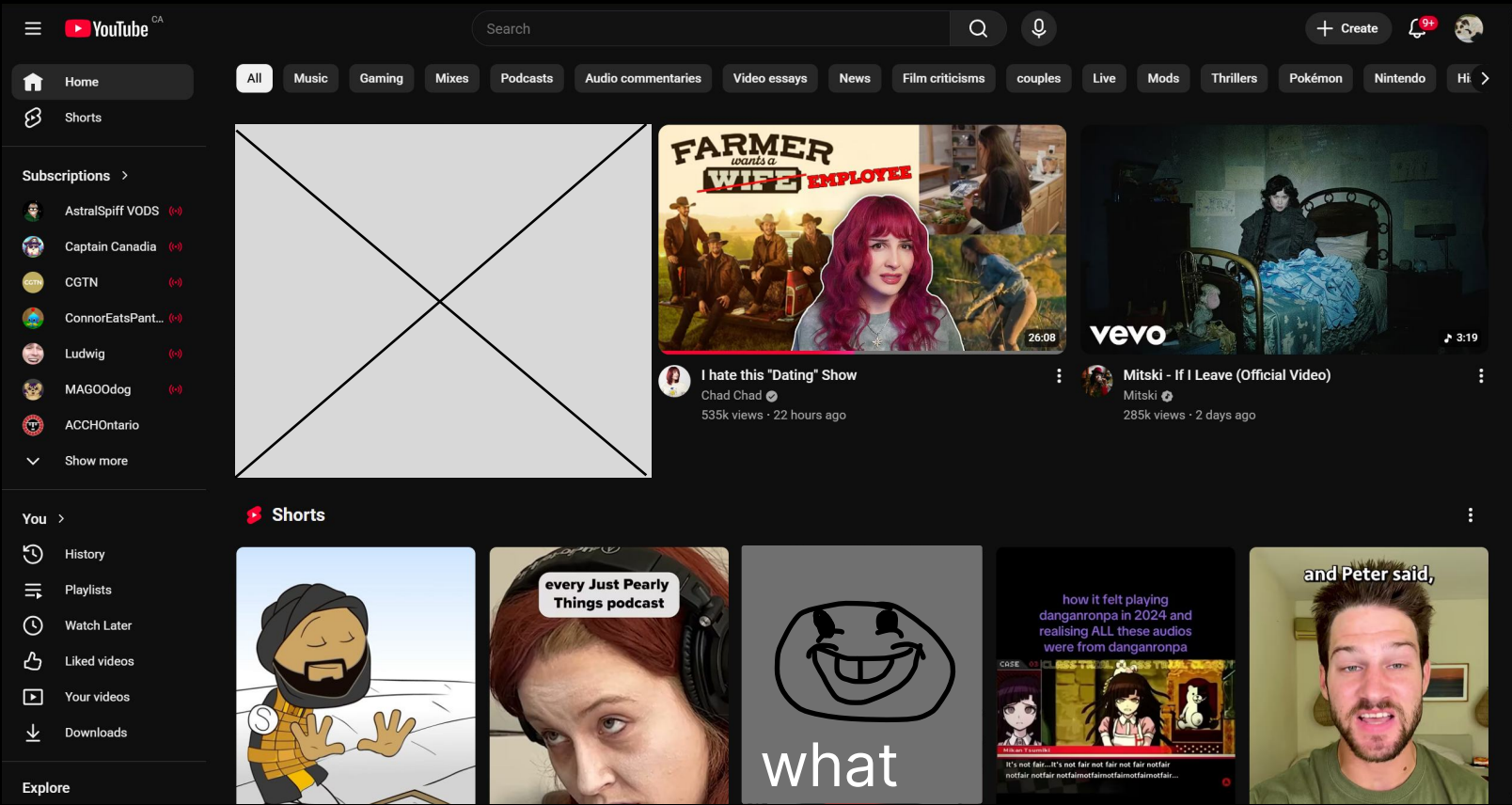
For this deceptive pattern I think that now the user has invested time and effort into navigating the site and getting through the rest of my tricks I can add in confirmshaming. Currently YouTube's ads towards membership make it clear that the creator themselves must convince you it's worth it but I have decided that the old advertiser space is better used for this.



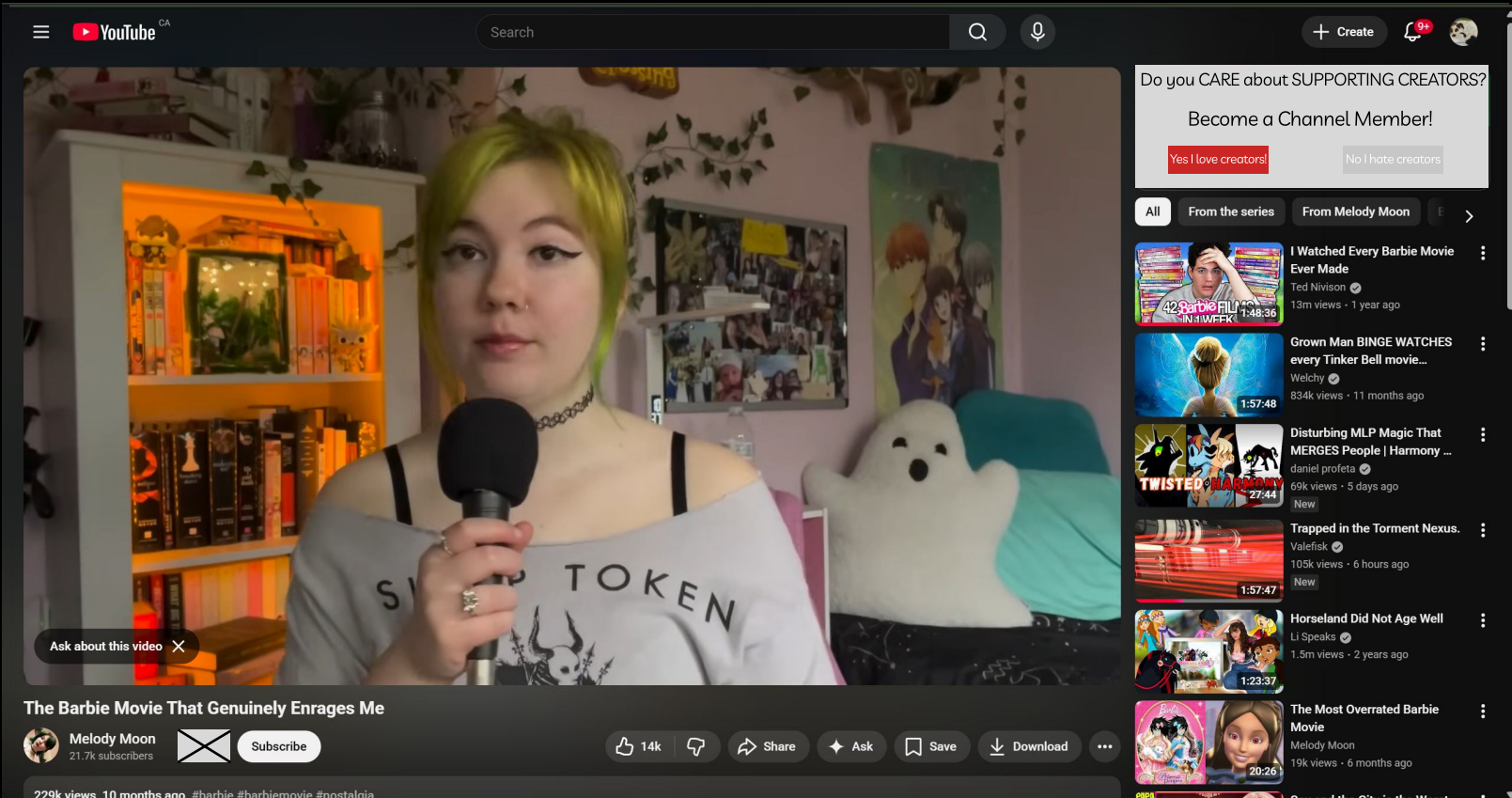
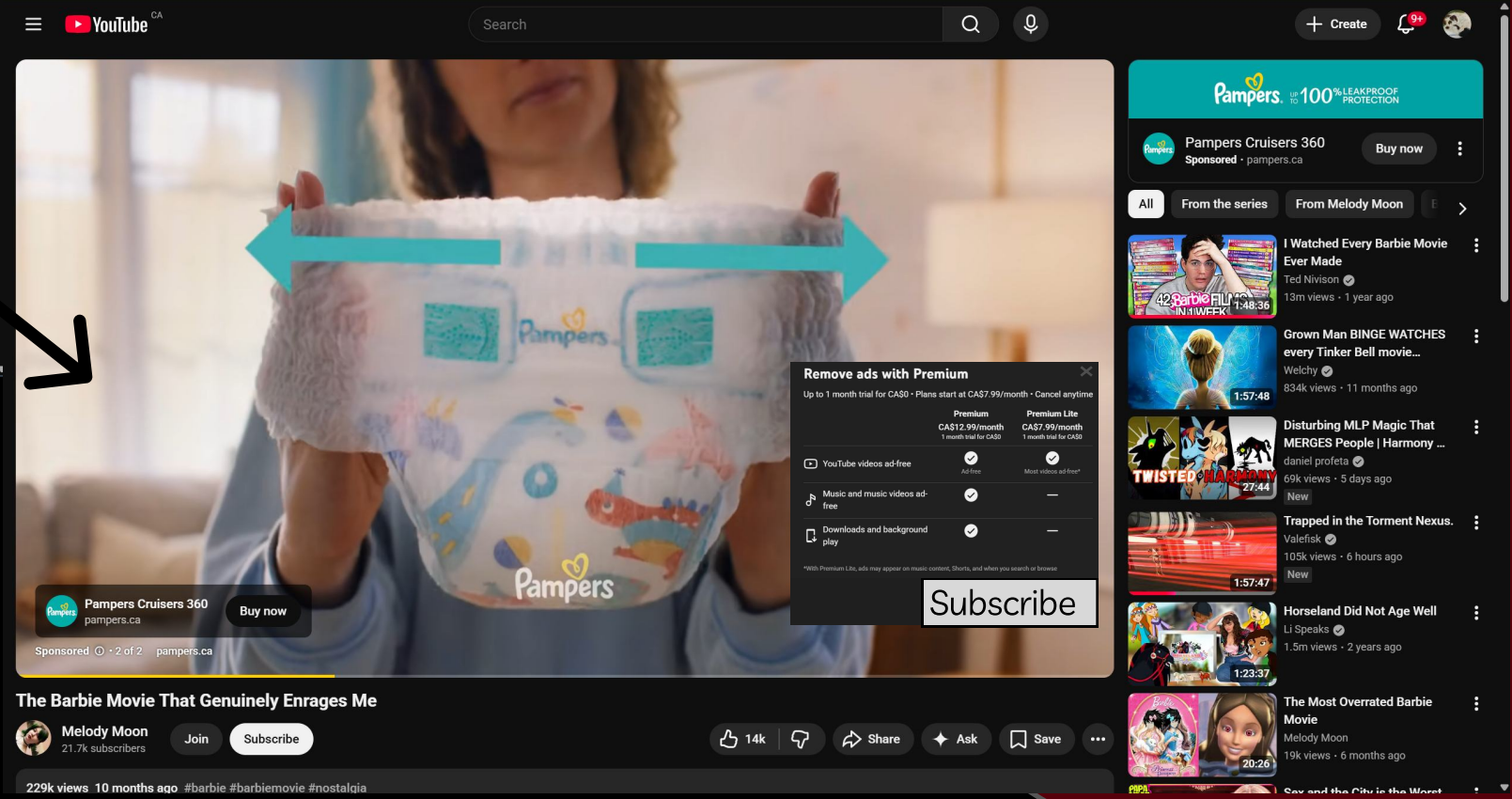
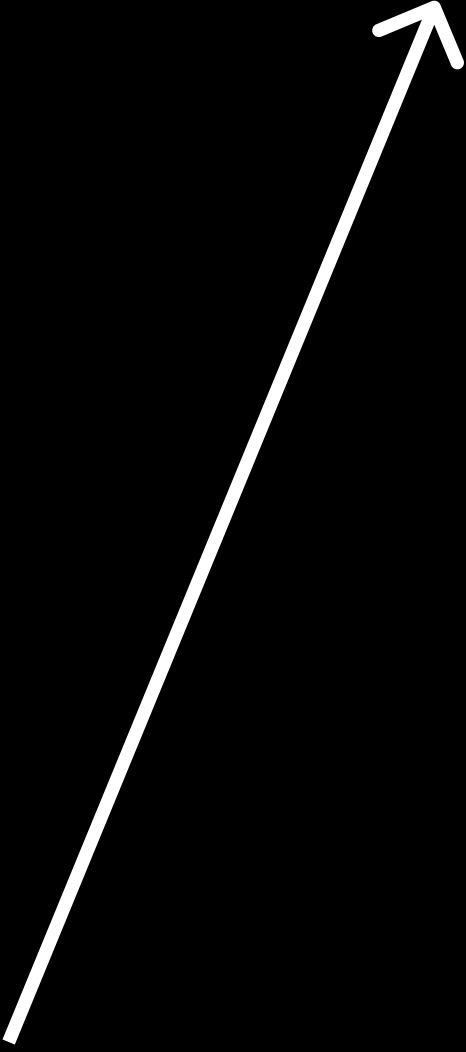
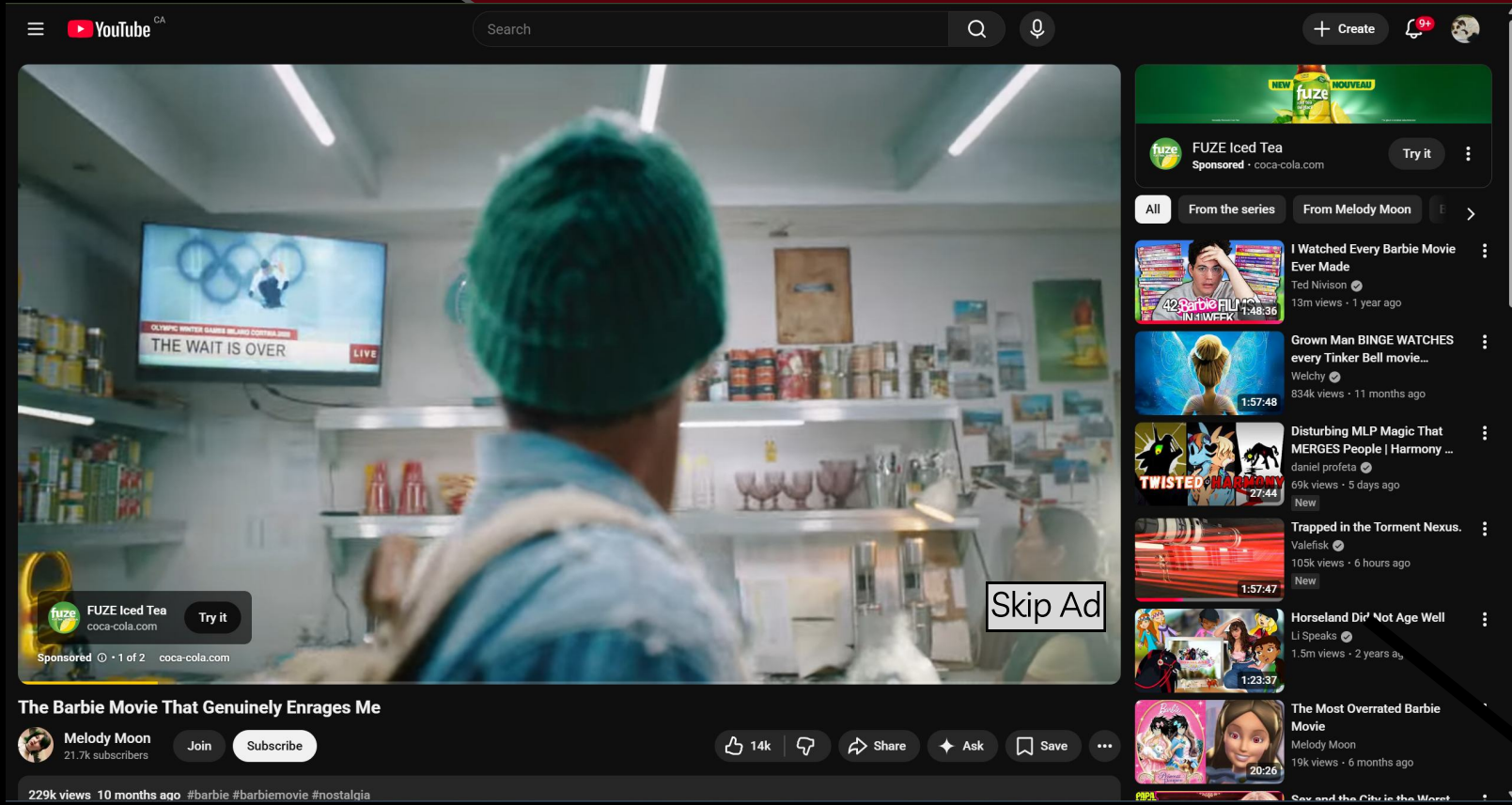
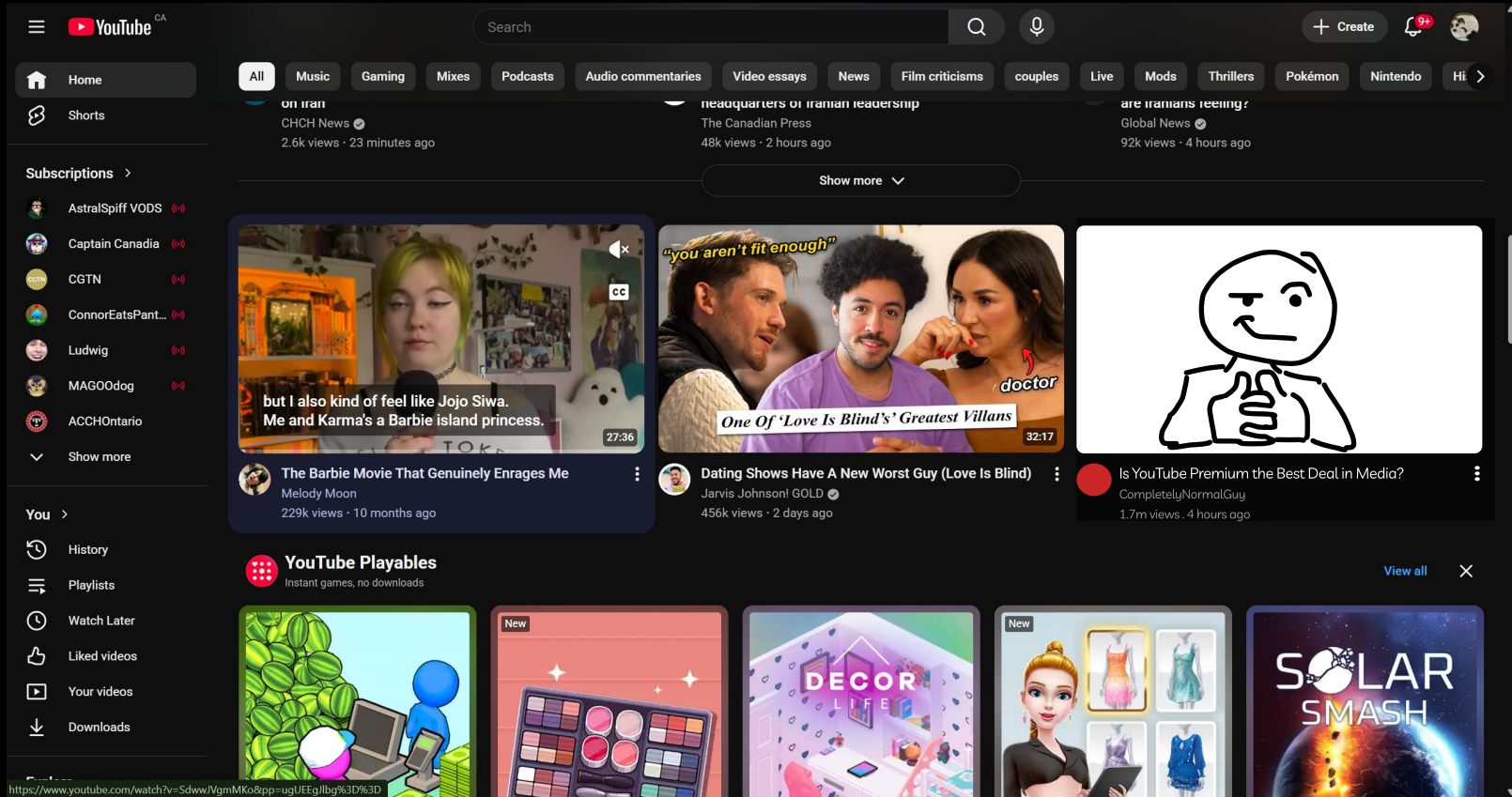
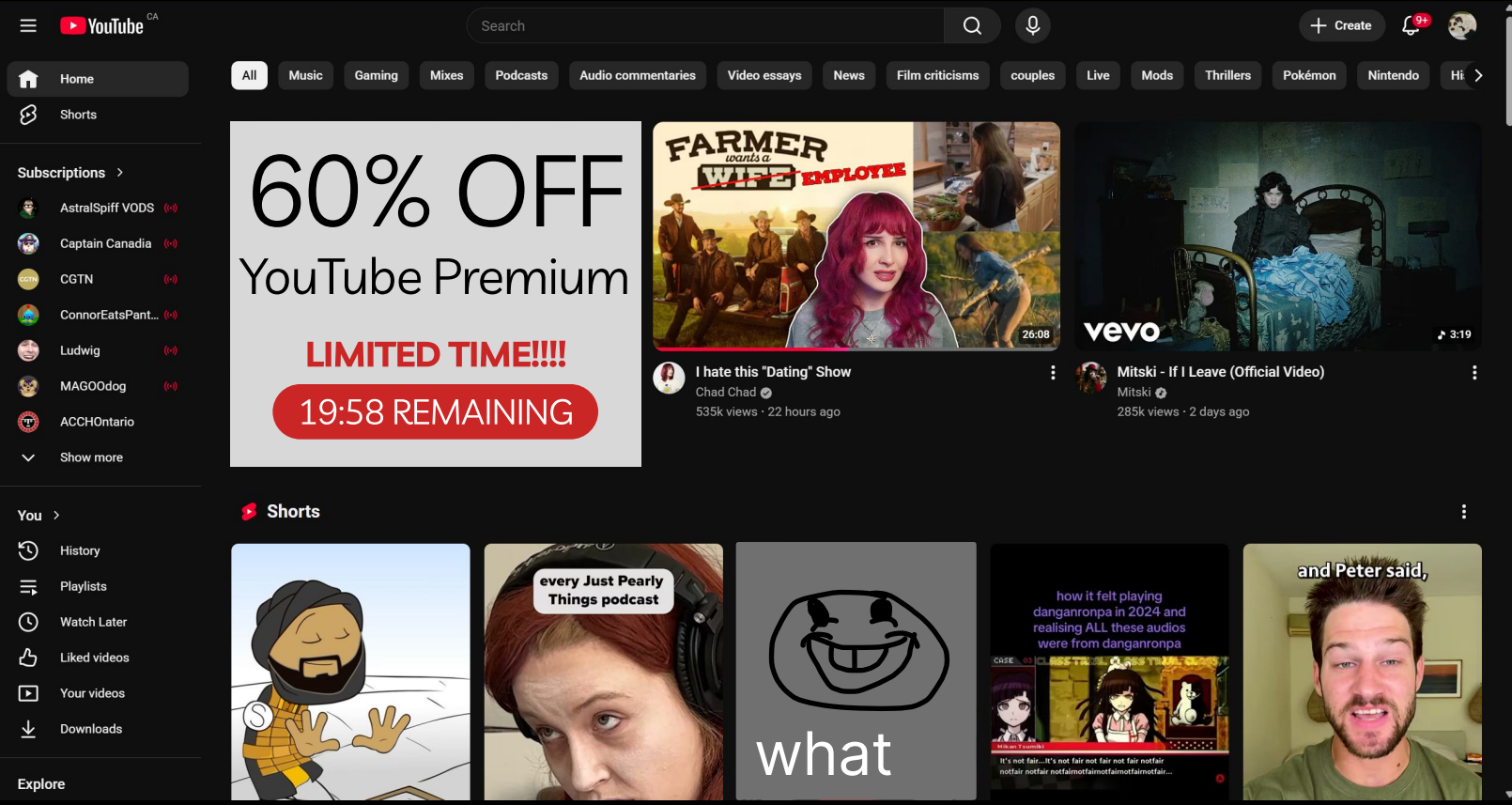
Design Direction



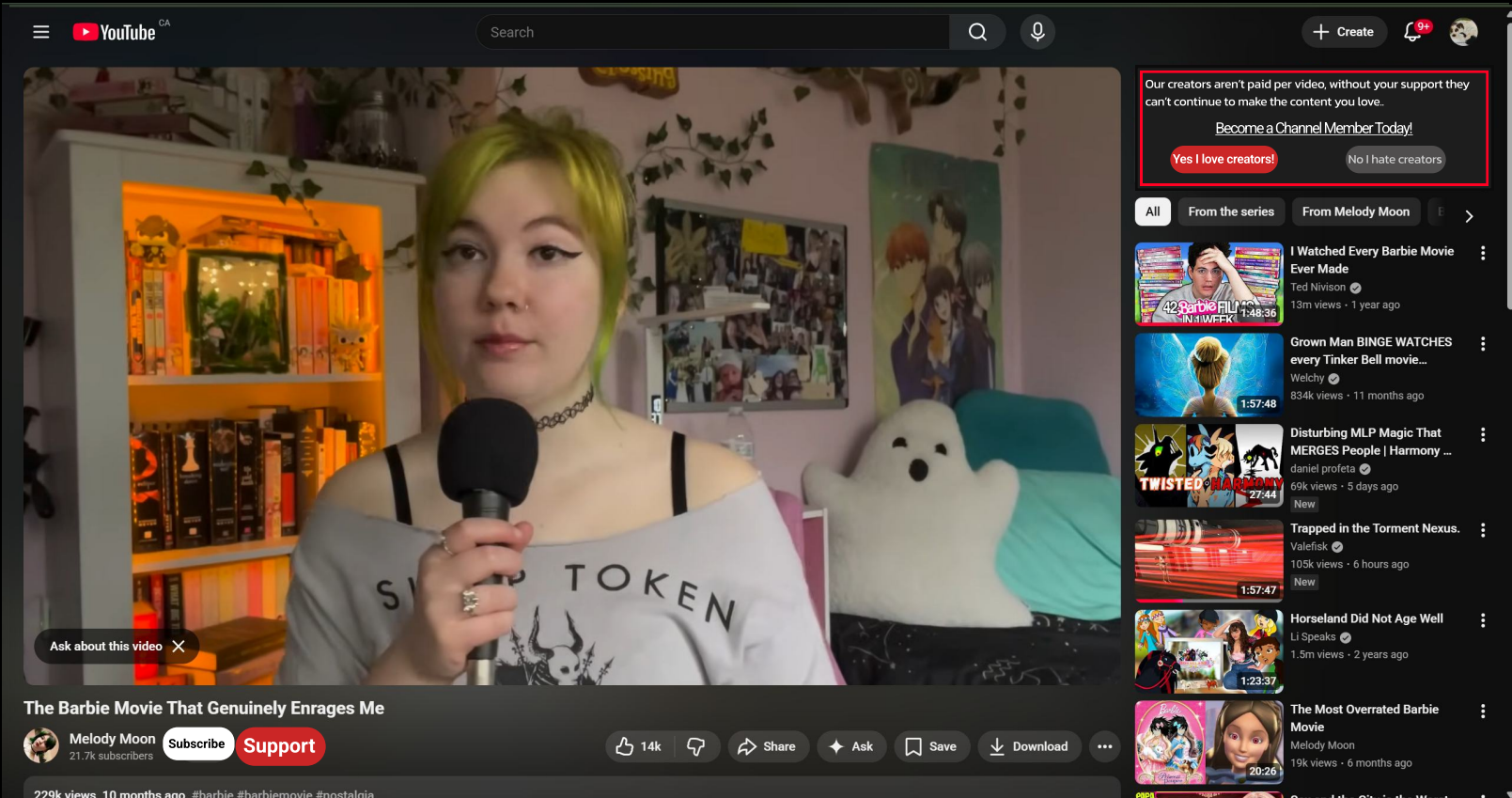
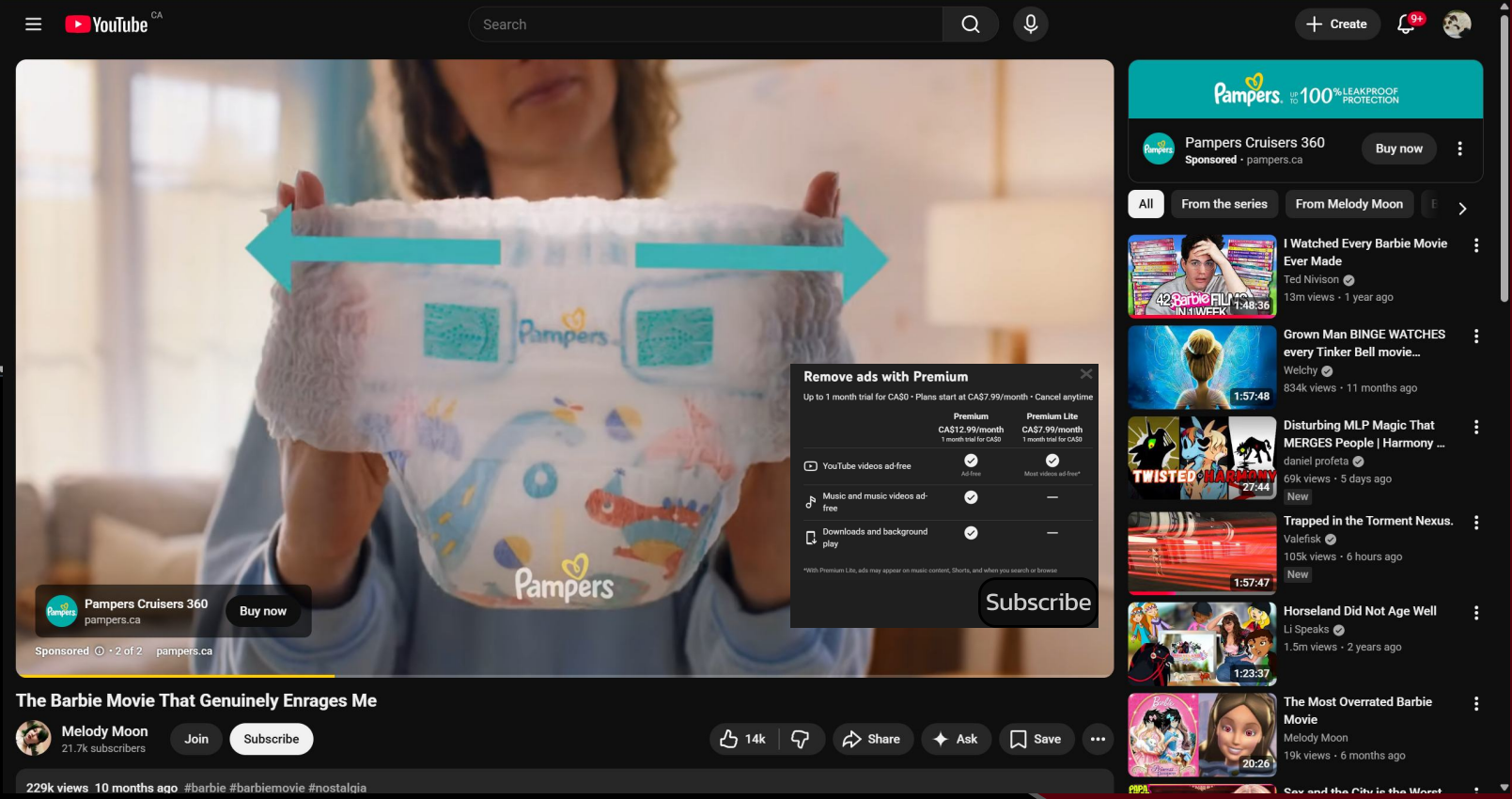
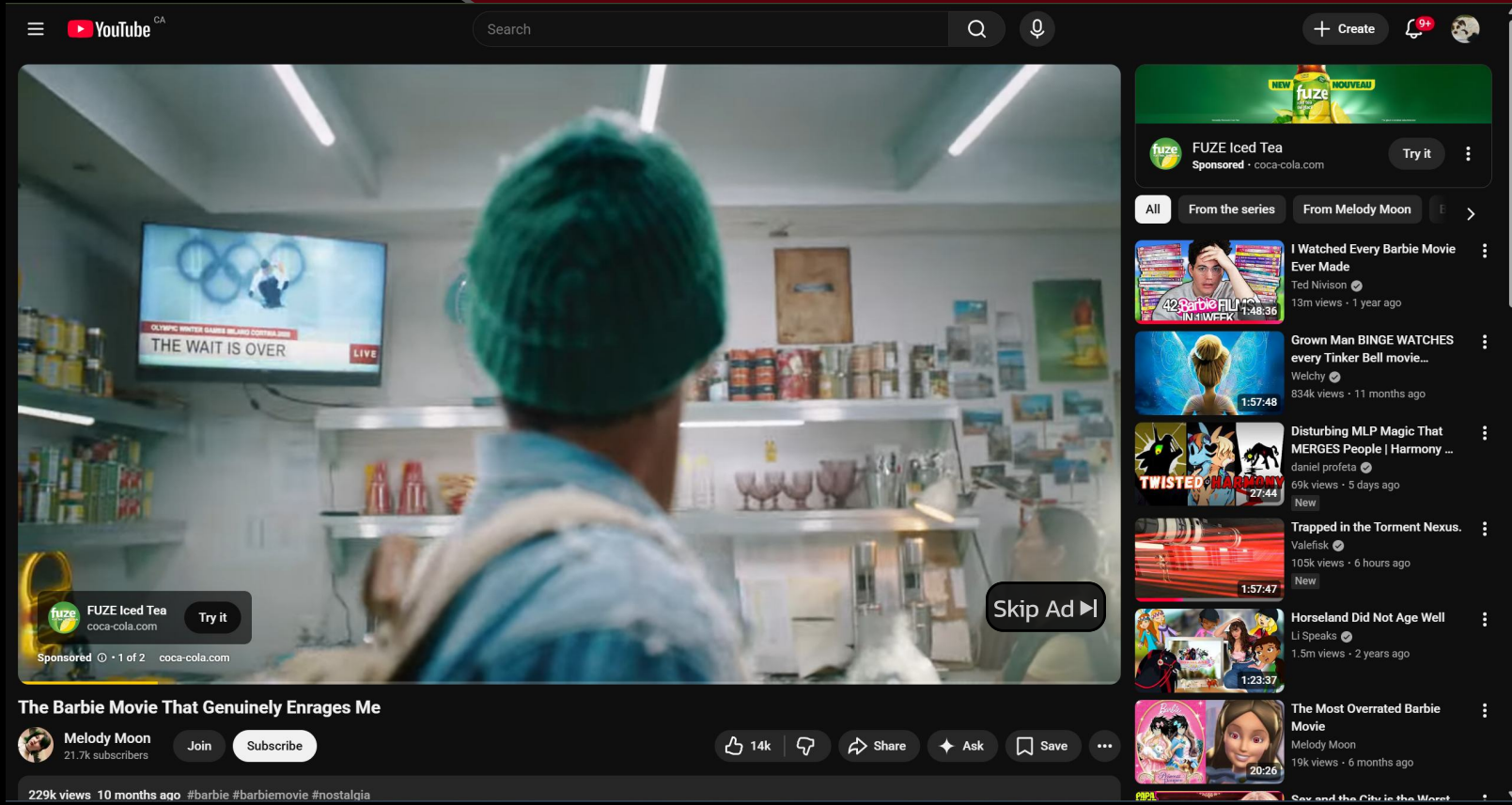
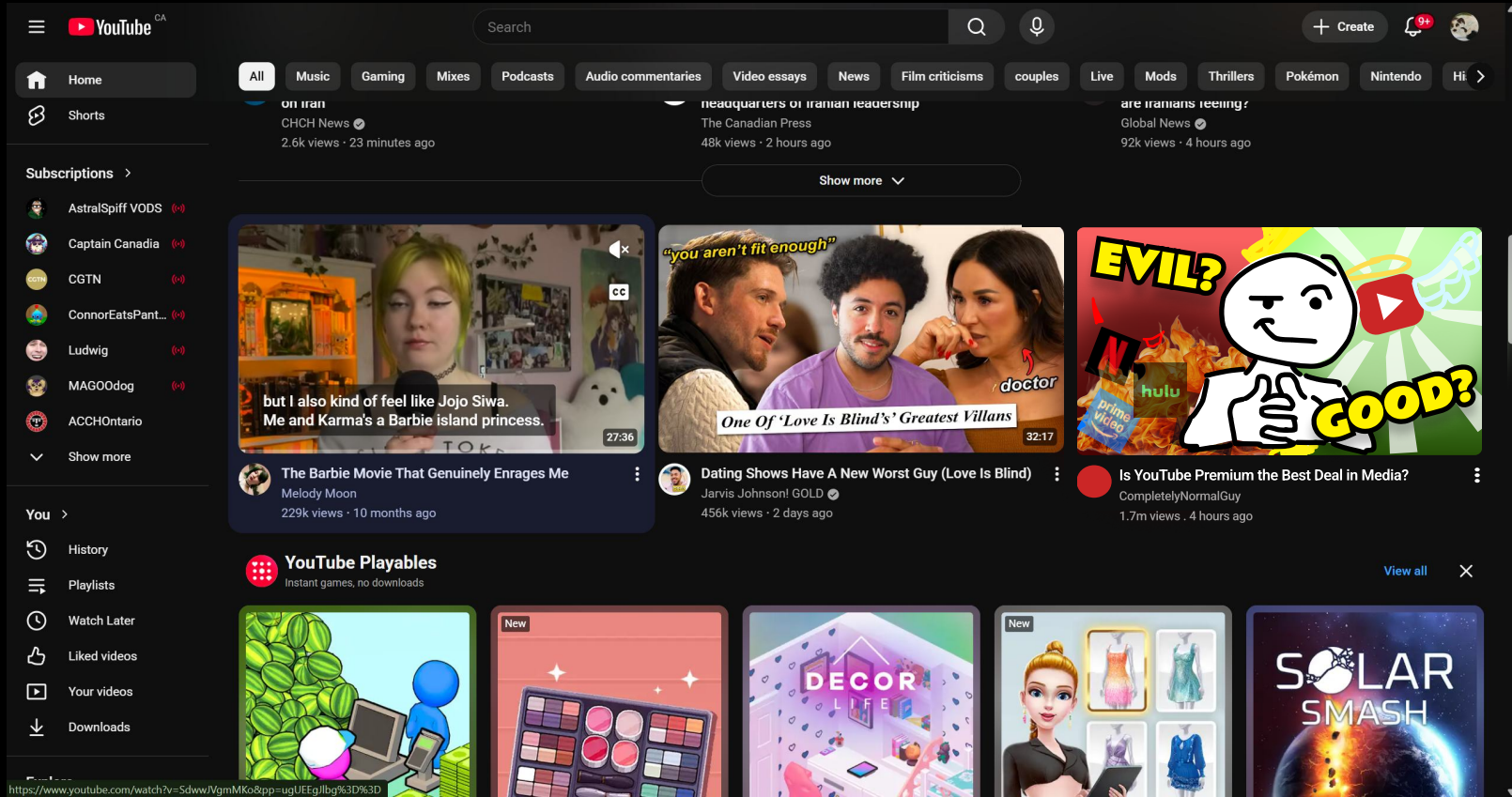
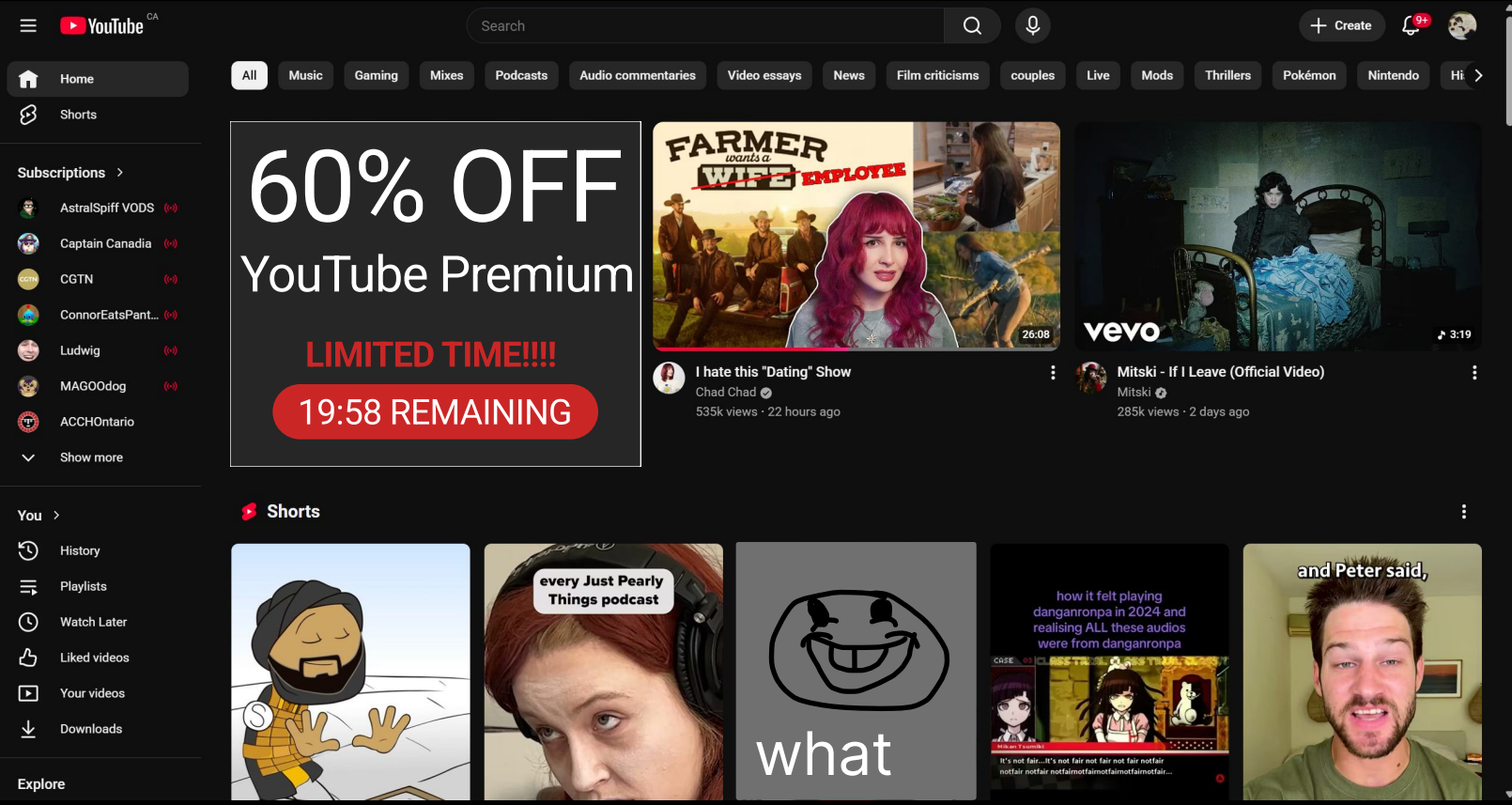
Wireframe Development: Low



Wireframe Development: Mid



Wireframe Development: High



Wireframe Development: A/B Testing

I asked five people to choose between these two options based on which one of these makes them feel more emotion. I didn't specify what kind of emotion because confirmshaming can slowly work its way into someone's mind by being anger inducing just as well as shame or sadness can. The first option is more like what I imagine YouTube would actually consider if they chose to go down this route, while option b is based on similar ads on sites like Temu that I saw in my research.

The results had three people choosing option a and two choosing option b. This was anonymously answered with a survey so I do not know who selected what or why, but my personal opinion is that option b is very angering but it doesn't make me feel empathetic whereas option a is much closer to achieving both.

● Option A

Our creators aren't paid per video, without your support they can't continue to make the content you love..

Become a Channel Member Today!

Yes I love creators!

No I hate creators

● Option B

Do you CARE about supporting your favourite CREATORS?

Become a Channel Member !

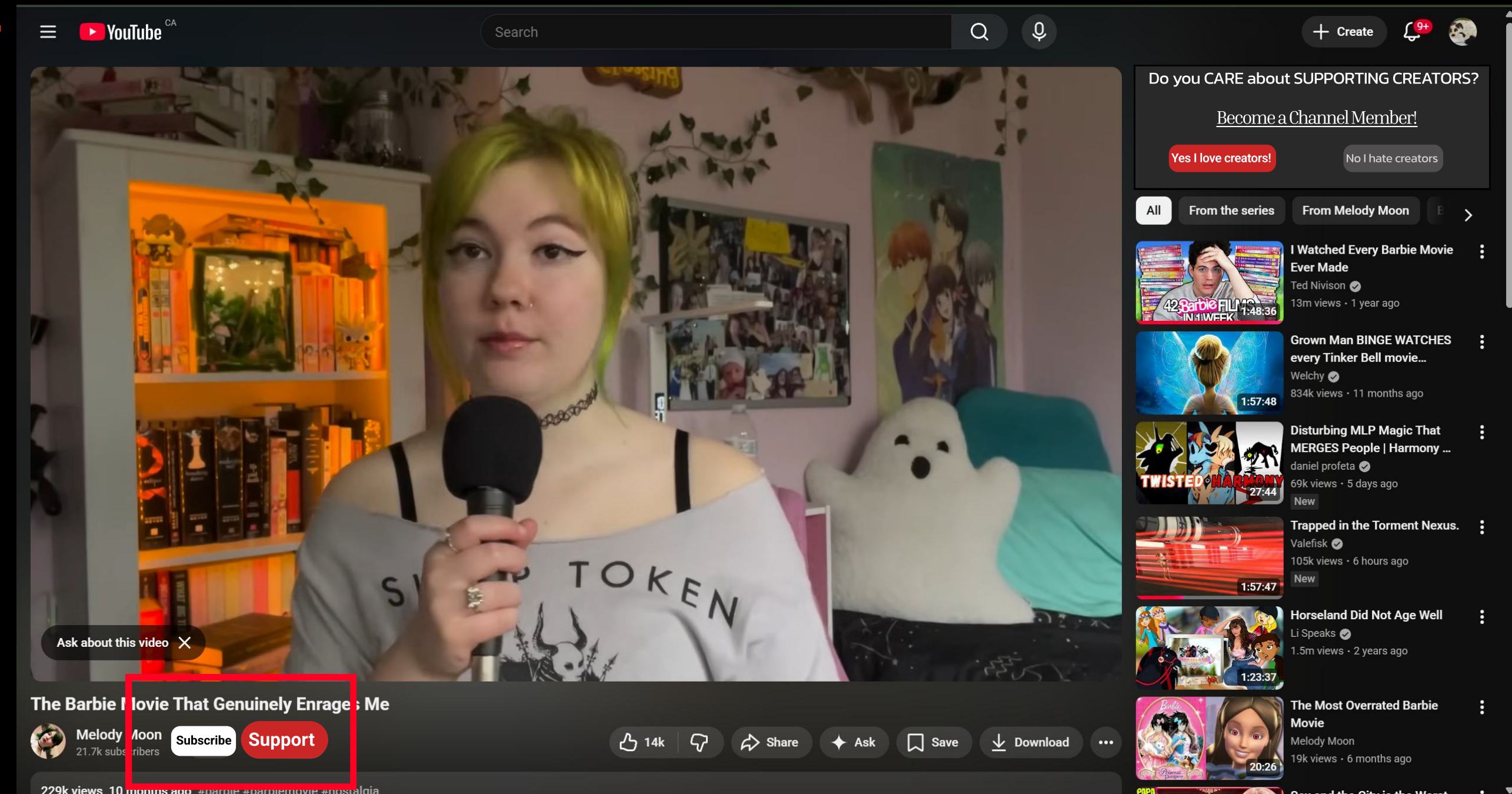
Yes I love creators!

No I hate creators

Wireframe Development: Prototype Feedback

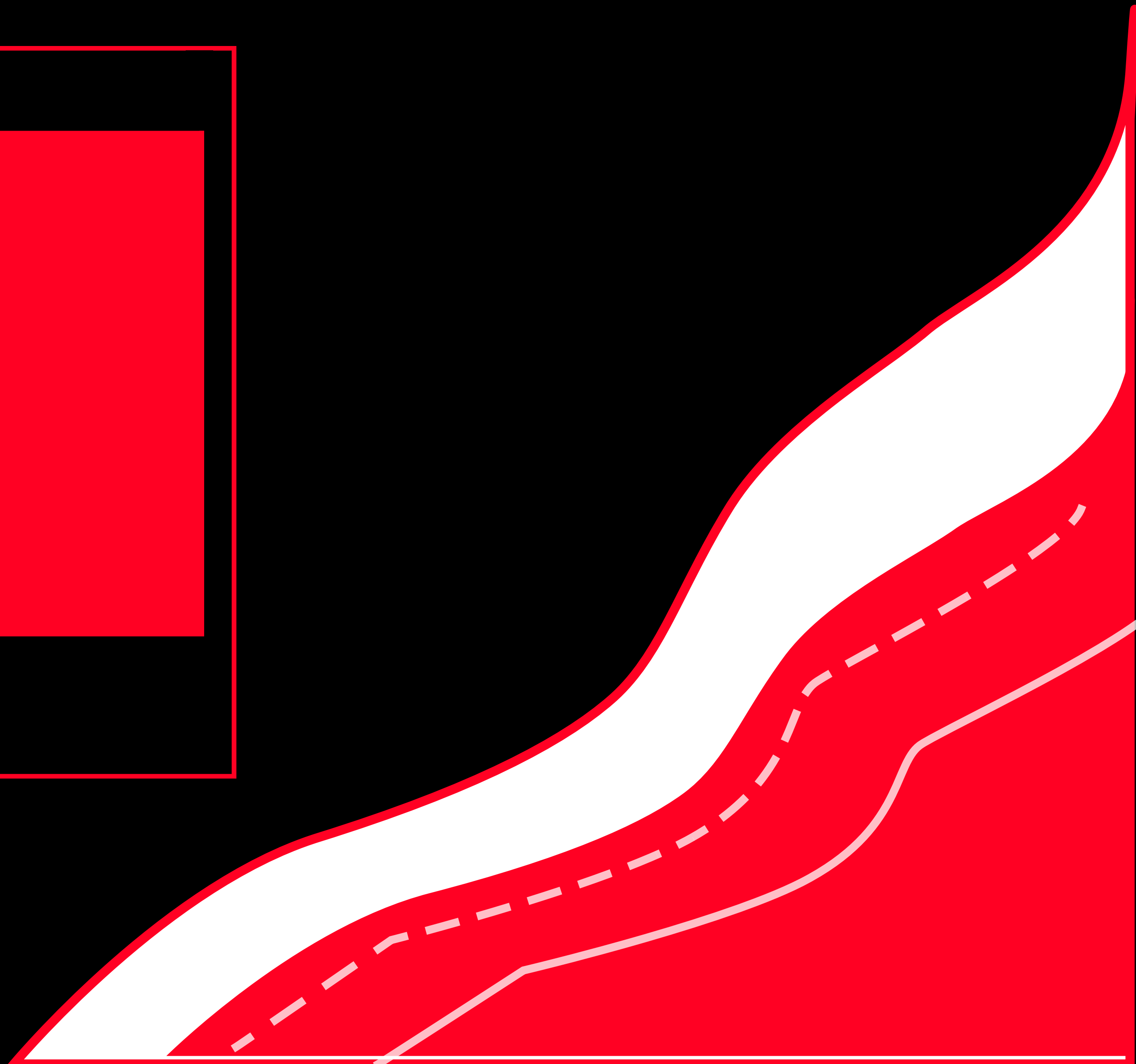
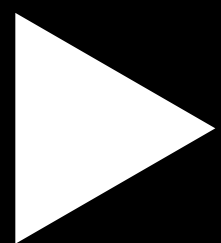
One of the main tests I did to see how the user experience was progressing was giving my user the task of navigating through my screens in a Figma Prototype with the goal of this specific video. I also asked them to try to achieve this quickly and subscribe to the creator as I thought that would be reflective of the quick and laid back way the average user behaves.

Switching the spot of the subscribe button was simply too far a push and made the user experience drastically worse, which was never my intention. My User reported that this was single handedly the worst aspect of my new design. Hearing this negative feedback I have opted to remove that entirely and focus on my other deceptive patterns.

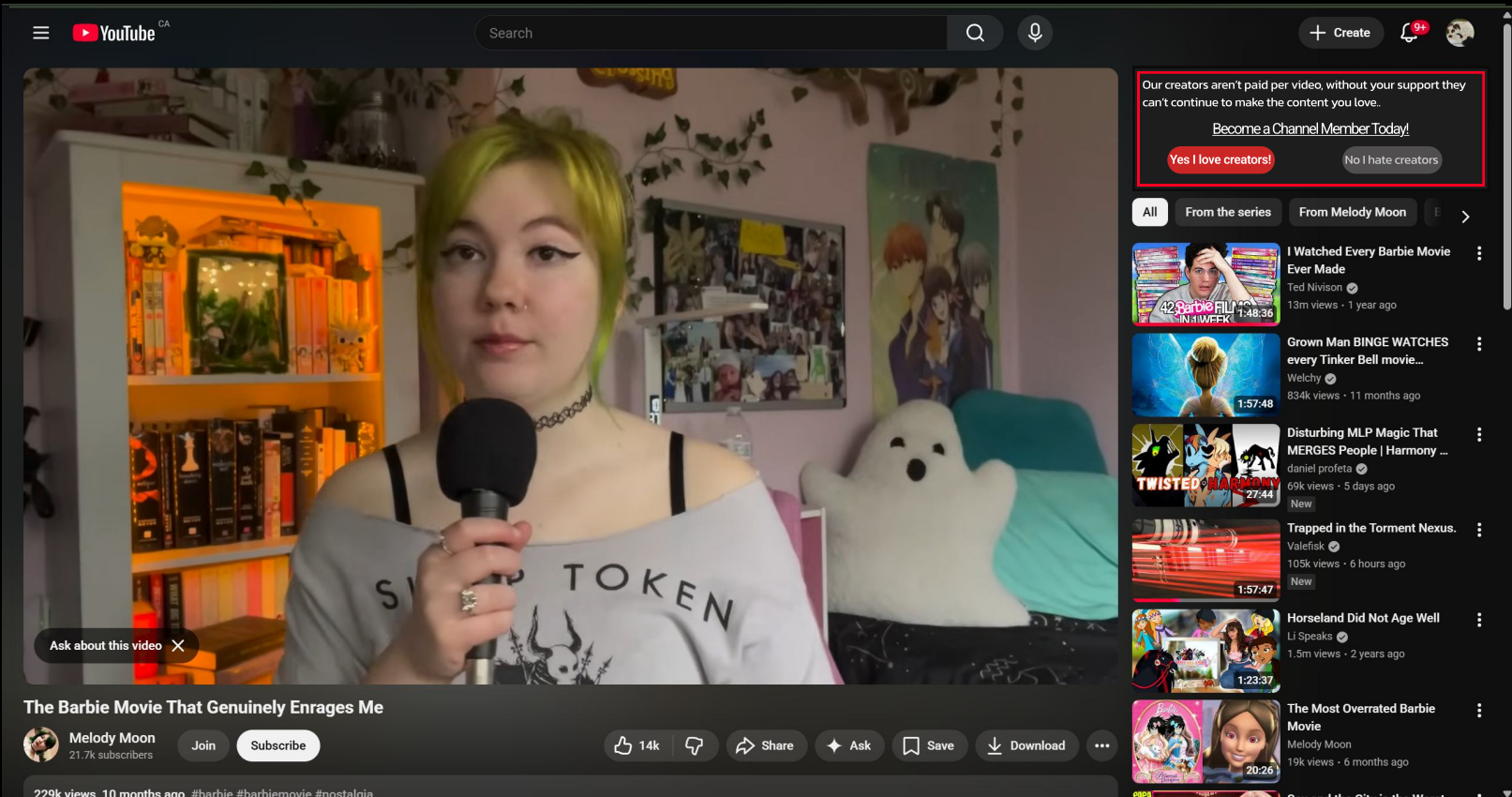
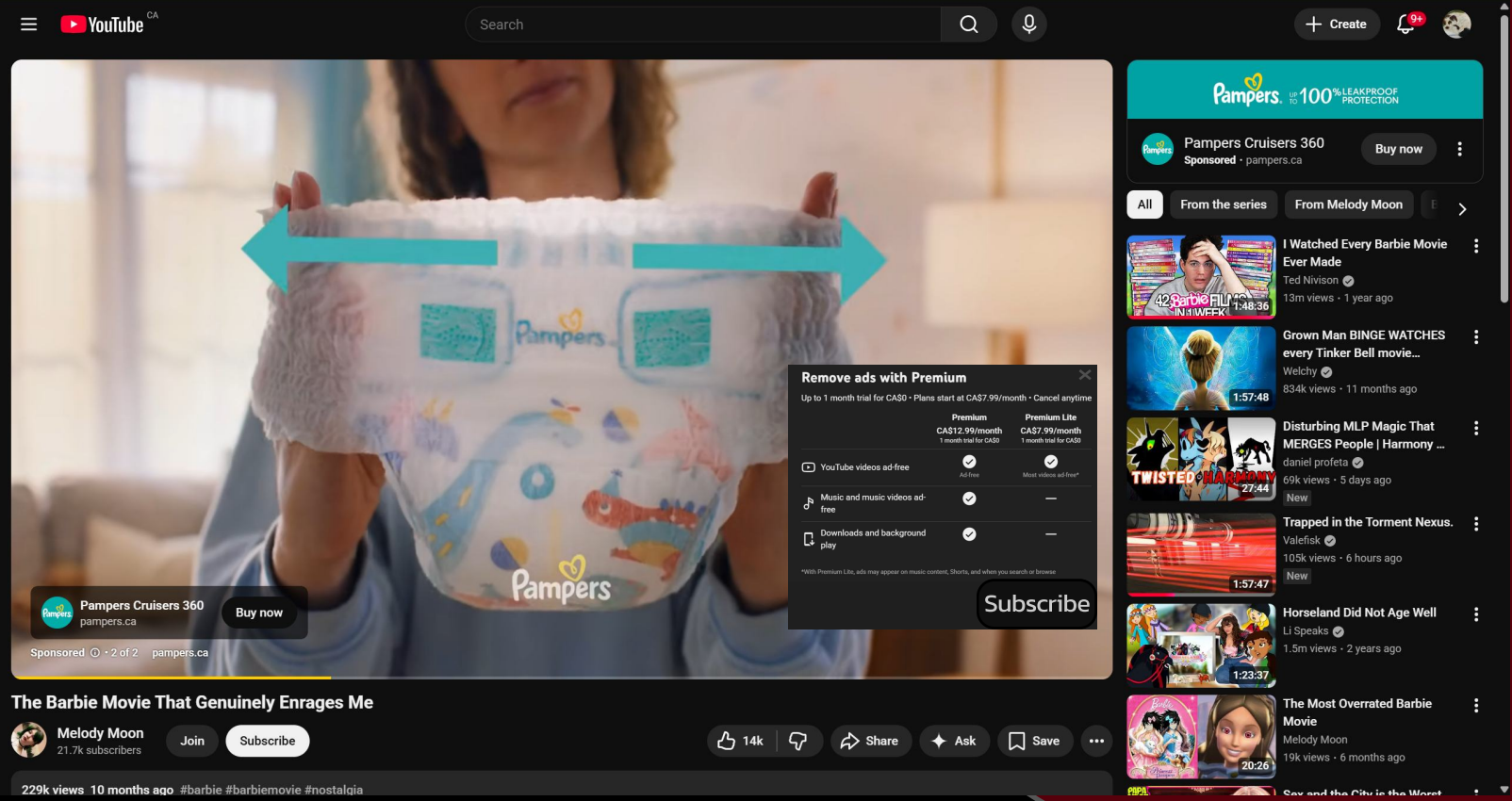
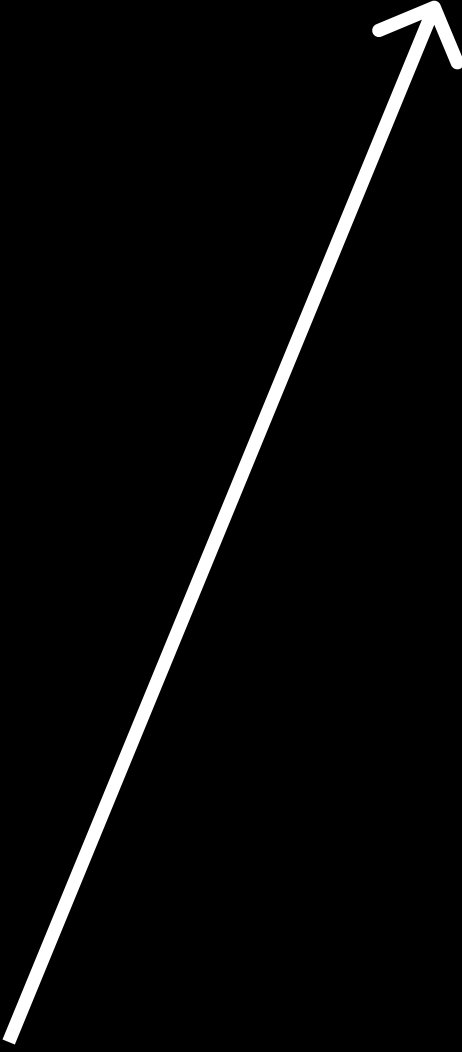
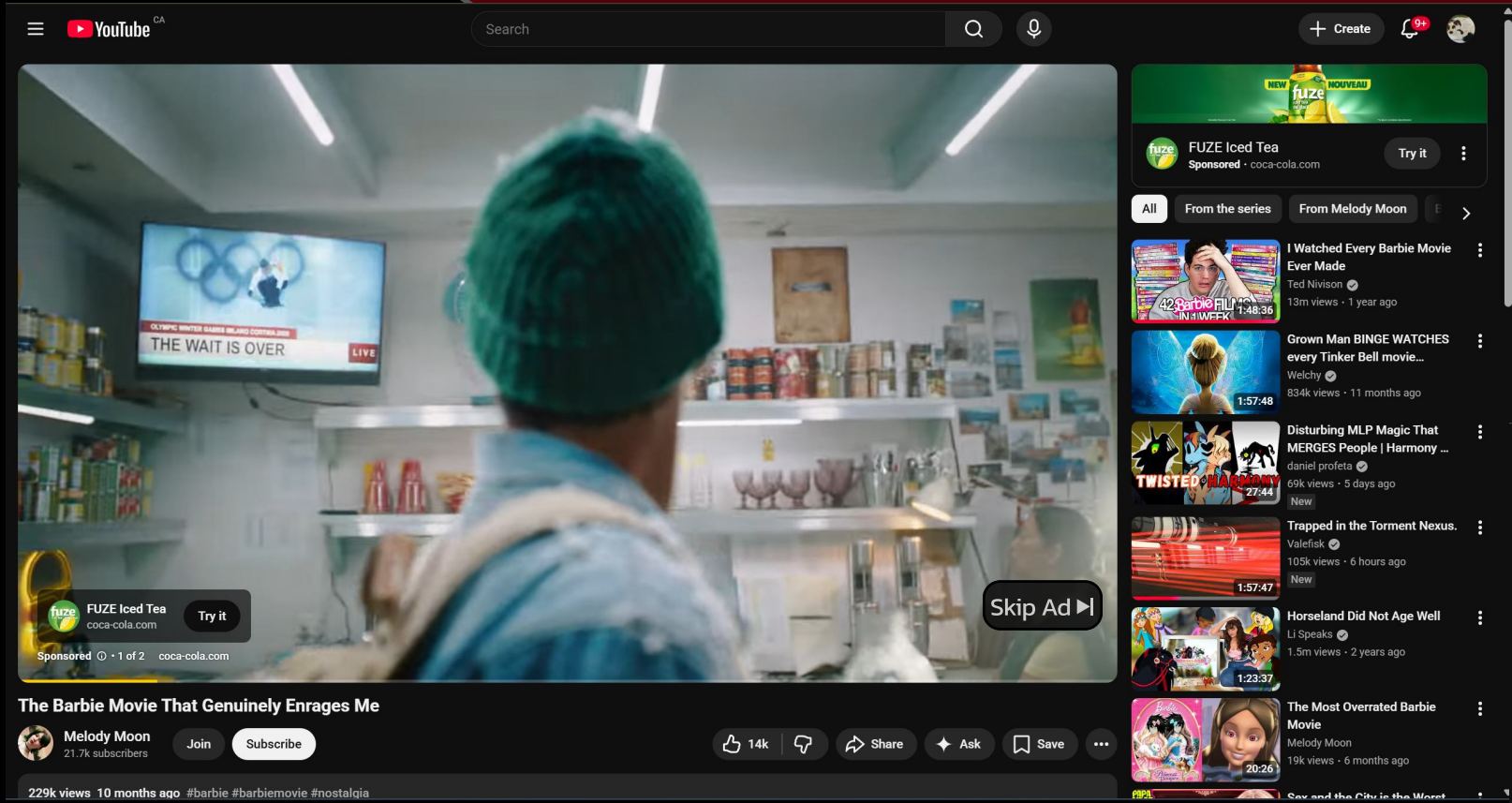
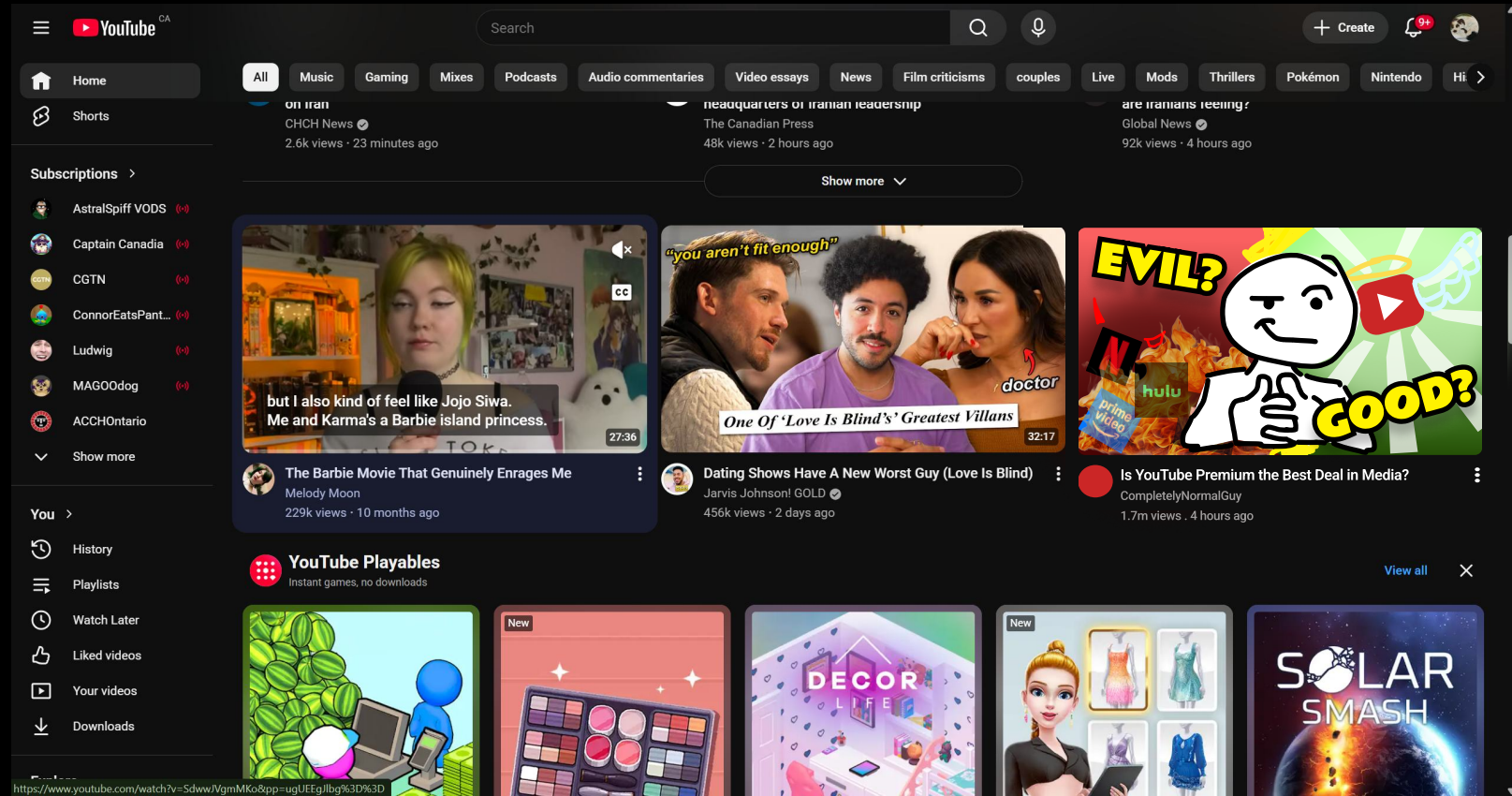
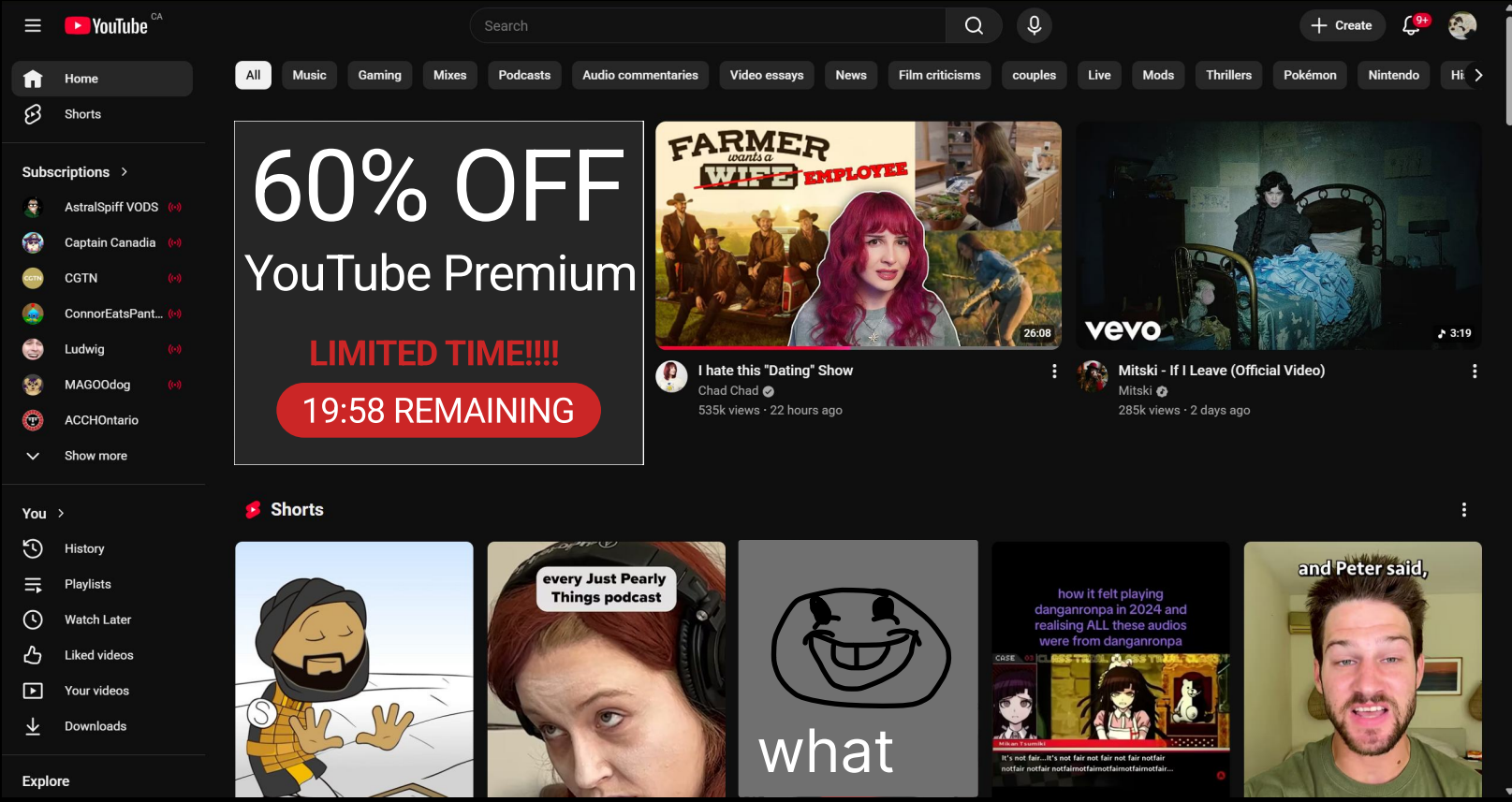


Overall the User did not have a big problem navigating the new layout as there weren't many core changes, however they did not like many aspects especially the fake skip button. While I completely empathize with that, that is meant to create frustration specifically. They pointed out the ads but did not even recognize the undisclosed ad, perfect!

Solution

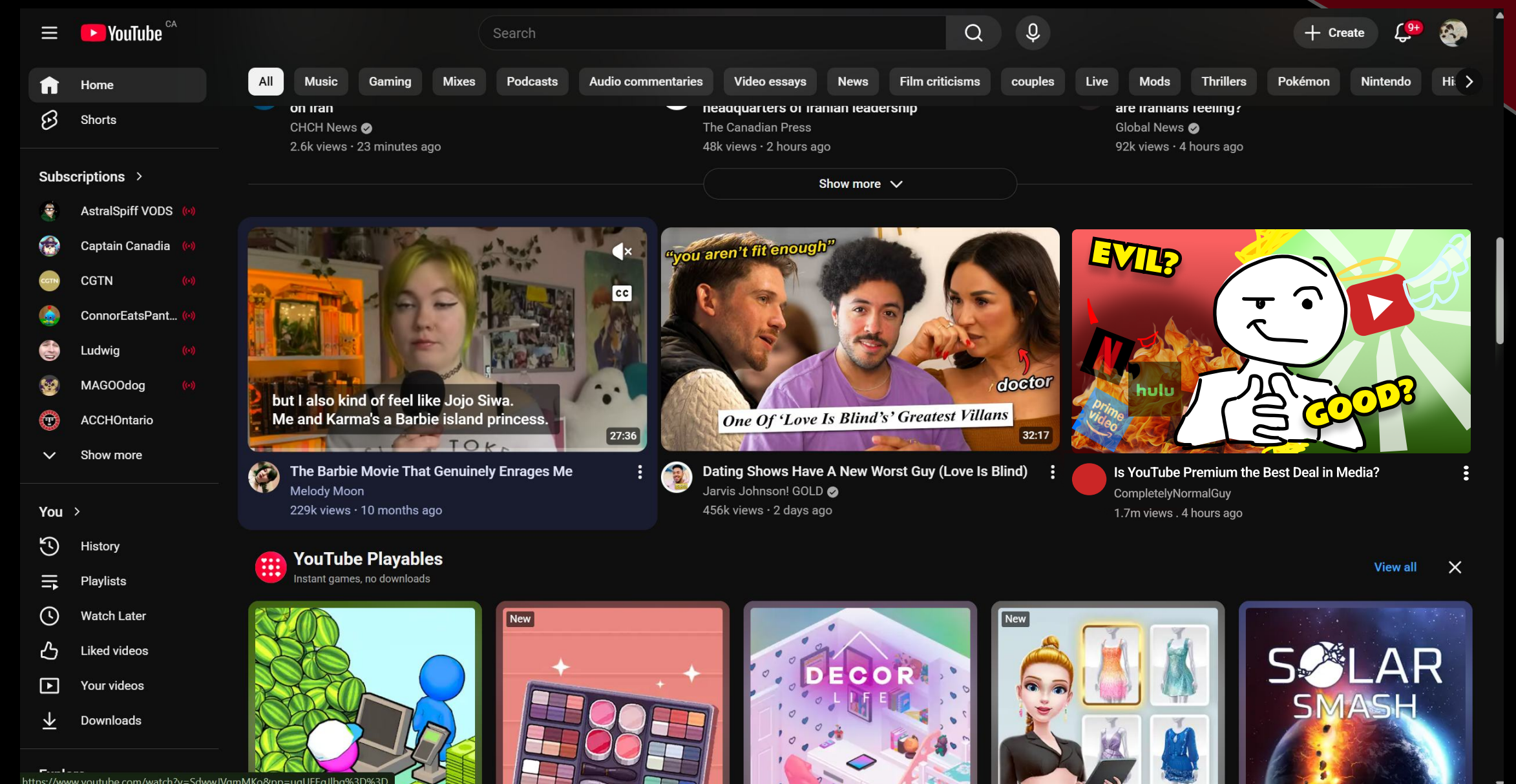
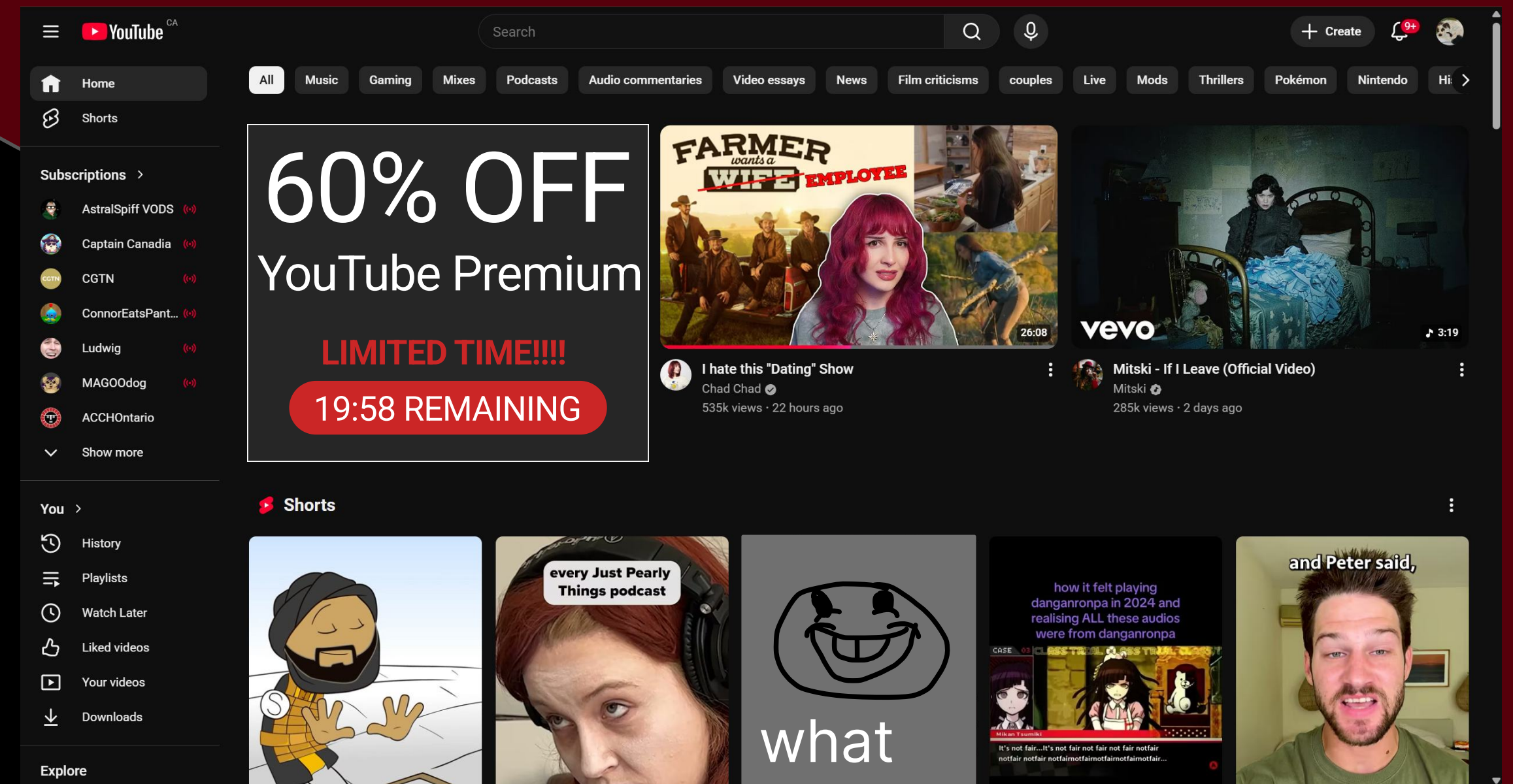


Final Screen Flow



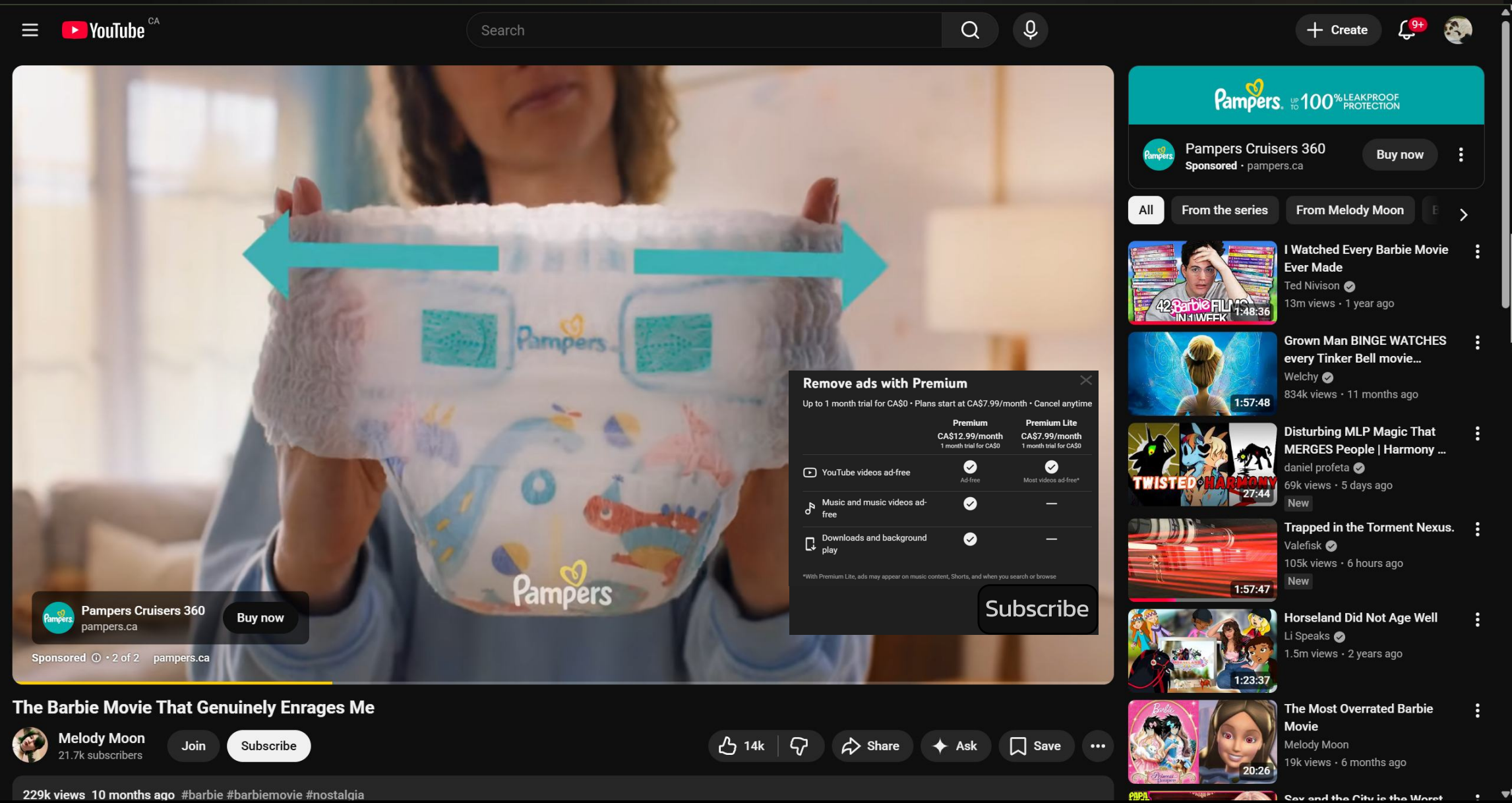
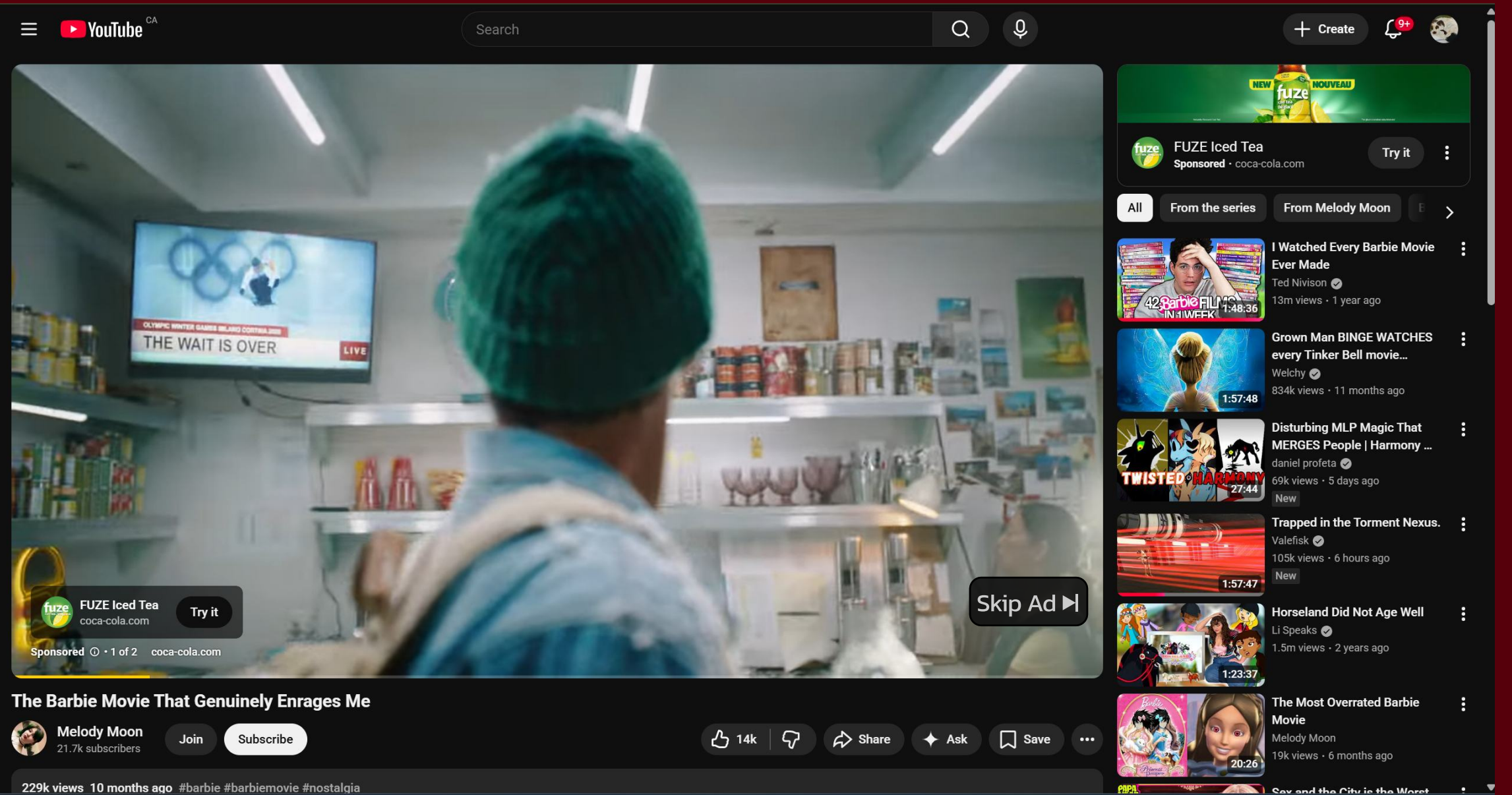
YouTube User Flow Stage One

I was able to implement my ideas of a limited time ad on screen one and an undisclosed ad on screen two in the form of a video. I like how both of these turned out and I feel like they serve their purpose. The limited time ad is big, eye-catching, and mildly stressful whereas the undisclosed ad is sneaky and looks like it could be a real video.



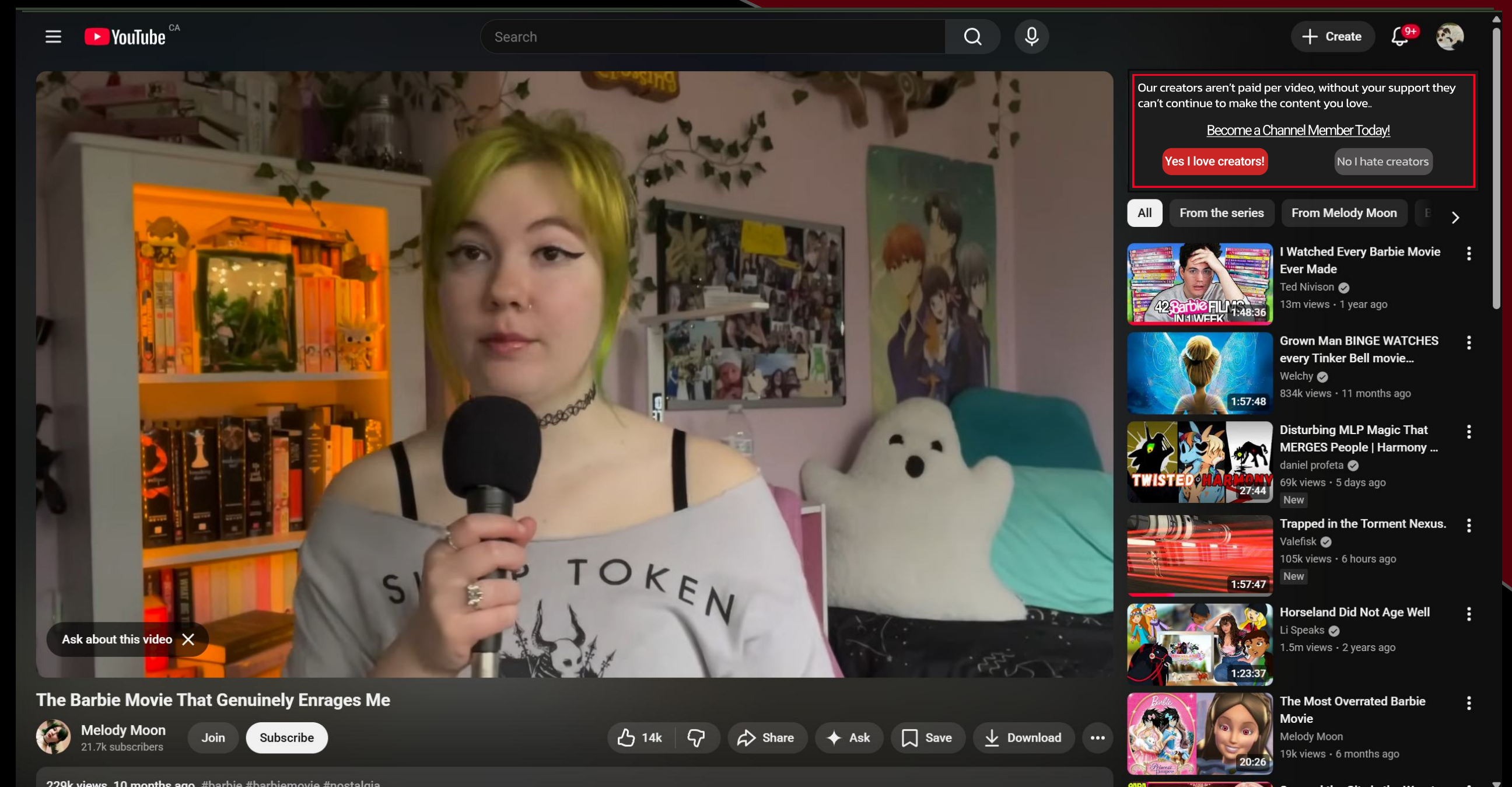
YouTube User Flow Stage Two

I was able to implement my idea of simply adding back the skip button that YouTube took away but adding a payment option to make it happen. I think this is my most harmful implementation because users could actually just accidentally hit that button though they would still need to pay, it could cause real financial losses.

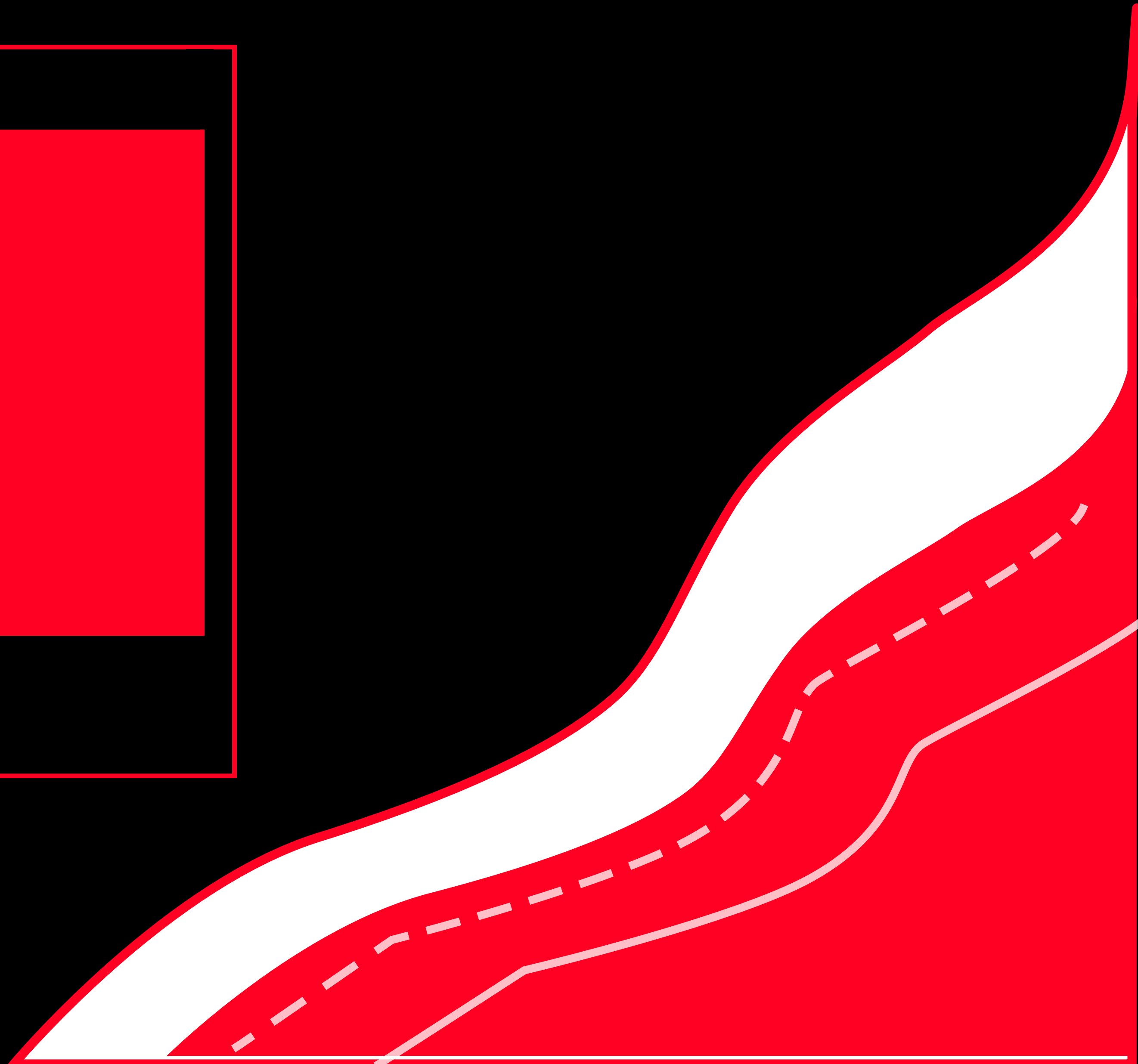
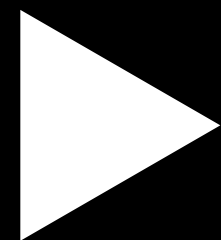


YouTube User Flow Stage Three

I was able to implement my idea of adding in a confirmshaming ad about YouTube Premium. I feel like this is a good place for it as it is far enough into the user journey that it isn't immediately just too irritating. It isn't too intrusive either, I like the state that it is currently in.



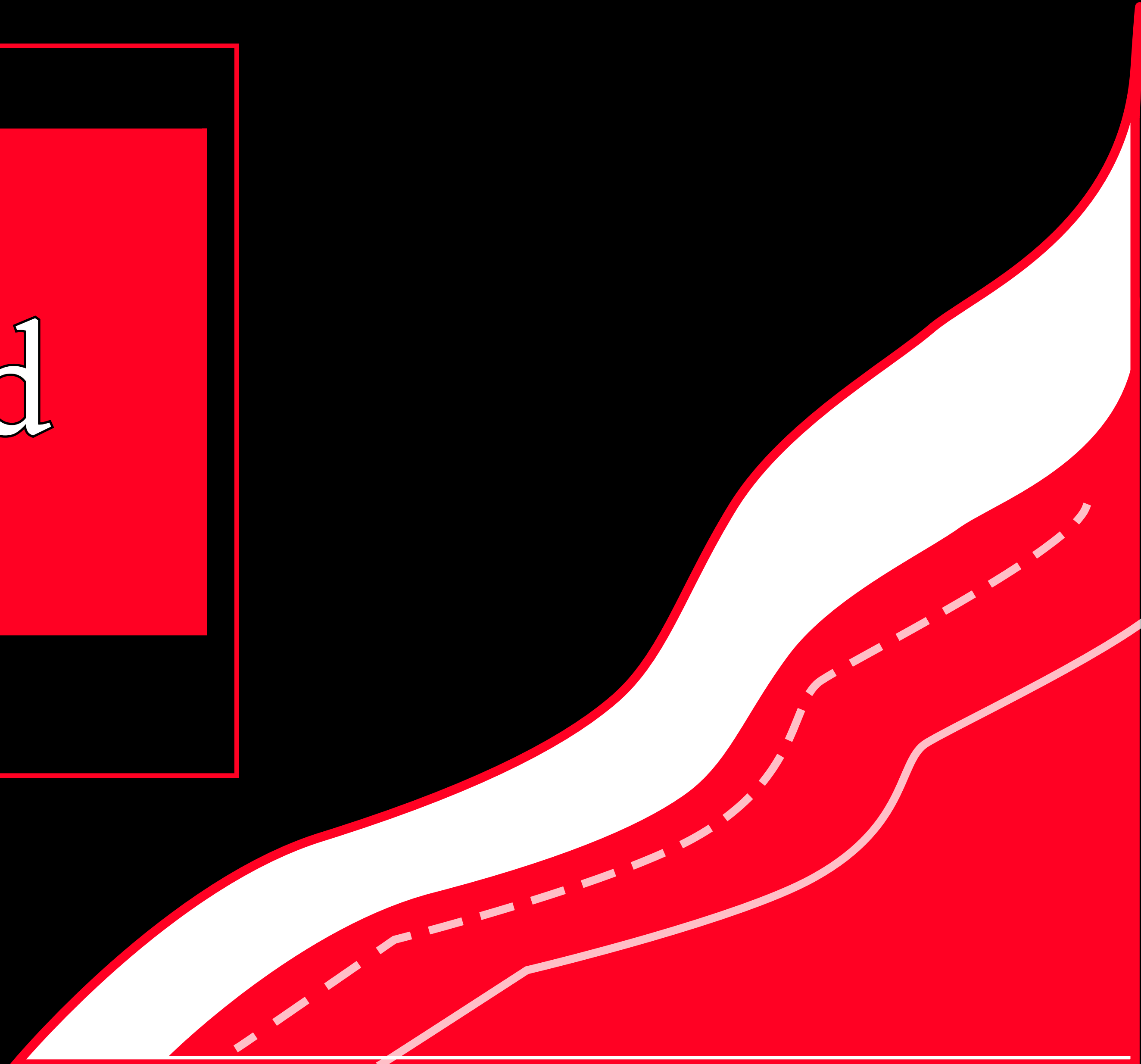
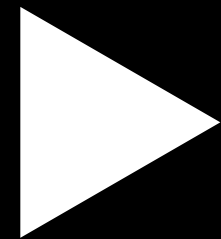
Reflection



Reflection

Learning about how deceptive patterns are so common in the user experience and oftentimes hard to notice especially for those that aren't the most technologically literate has opened my eyes to more aspects of design. Prior to this study I knew that it was not uncommon to find websites that feel deceptive in nature or cause the user frustrations but I genuinely did not consider just how frequently those experiences would be for someone who is not online as frequently as my peers or I. I will always be referring back to this reminder when creating my future designs as I do not want to contribute to a negative online experience, especially considering those who will be most affected by this issue.

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