

# When Do Nudges Backfire? The Role of Goal Congruence and Reactance

**Maja Fors**

Stockholm School of Economics

**Aylin Cakanlar**

Stockholm School of Economics/Jönköping University

**Sara Rosengren**

Stockholm School of Economics

**Siegfried Dewitte**

KU Leuven

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## **Abstract**

This paper investigates the impact of nudging in settings where consumers have a strong goal orientation and the nudge does not match the goal orientation. In a field experiment and two lab experiments, we find that nudging can have a backfiring effect in these settings as the nudge has a low perceived goal congruence, which leads to reactance. This, in turn, leads to adverse consumer reactions (increase in undesirable behavior targeted by the nudge; lower brand attitude). Thus, managers and policymakers need to carefully consider consumer goal orientation before implementing nudges.

**Subject Areas:** *Attitude, Consumer Behaviour*

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour