

Behavioral vs. Cognitive Nudges: Do Sustainability-Oriented Recommender Systems Outperform Sustainable Consumption Communication in Influencing Consumer Choices?

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Abstract

Nudges of various types are increasingly used to promote sustainable consumption. While numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of behavioral and cognitive nudges individually, few studies compared them or analyzed their combination. In this study, we compare a behavioral nudge, i.e., a sustainability-oriented recommender system (SRS), with a cognitive nudge, i.e., a sustainable consumption communication (SCC), and analyze their combined effect on the purchase of sustainable products. With a lab-controlled experiment (2×2 factorial, between-subject design) using an online store simulation and eye-tracking, we find that the SRS increases the purchase of sustainable products (instead of traditional, brown products), whereas the SCC has no significant effect on their purchase, nor the attention given to sustainable products. These findings challenge prior evidence on SCC and suggest further research is needed on SCC design.

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics