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Authors

Liu, Xingyu (Shirley)
McKenzie, Craig R. M.
Sher, Shlomi
et al.

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Are self-nudges effective?

Xingyu (Shirley) Liu

University of California San Diego, La Jolla, California, United States

Craig R. M. McKenzie

UC San Diego, La Jolla, California, United States

Shlomi Sher

Pomona College, Claremont, California, United States

Lim Leong

UC San Diego, La Jolla, California, United States

Abstract

Nudges have been shown to be successful behavioral interventions. However, nudges have also been criticized to be paternalistic and infringe upon decision makers' (DMs) autonomy. One solution that has been proposed is self-nudges—let DMs nudge themselves. Using default nudges, we tested whether self-nudges are as effective as traditional nudges. Participants were presented with a choice between two videos. We either nudged the participants by preselecting one video as default on their behalf, or asked participants to self-nudge by preselecting a video for themselves prior to their choice. We found that a much larger percentage of participants stayed with the default option and watched the preselected video when they preselected the video themselves (82.5% on average between the two videos) than when we preselected the video for them (59.5% on average between the two videos). Our findings provide preliminary evidence for the efficacy of self-nudges.