When do defaults backfire? The twofold effect of default options on green consumption when competing motivations are at stake

Beatrice Conte, Ulf J. J. Hahnel, & Tobias Brosch
Department of Psychology and Swiss Center for Affective Sciences, University of Geneva

INTRODUCTION

Green defaults guide consumers towards pro-environmental choices [1]. Nevertheless, when multiple salient motivations are at stake (e.g. doing something good for the environment versus following one’s self-interest), a recommendation can be perceived as a restriction of one’s freedom [2]. In this case, people may deliberately choose to act against it [3]. Through a consumer dilemma task, we investigate the effect of pre-set options that (dis)favor eco-friendliness versus enjoyability of a product on consumer sustainable choices.

KEY CONCEPTS

Nudge: steer people in desired directions [4]
Default: use of pre-set options [4]
Values: stable, trans/situational and abstract motivations and goals in life that influence goal directed behavior [3,4]

REFERENCES


RESULTS

STUDY 1

Environmental values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>95% C.I.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>-10.40, 22.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>17.10</td>
<td>12.22, 21.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hedonic values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>95% C.I.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>-10.40</td>
<td>-10.40, -10.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>-6.00</td>
<td>-10.40, 0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RESULTS

STUDY 2

Environmental and hedonic values had specific impact in participants’ environmental-friendly choices (compared to other environmentally relevant values).

The opposite effect of environmental and hedonic values might describe the dilemma of foregoing personal gain in favor of a more abstract gain to the environment.

The presence of a default, but also backfired, on participants’ eco-friendly behavior;

Different defaults had different effects;

FUTURE DIRECTIONS: How and why?