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Talk

Nudging Can be Sophisticated with Evolutionary Insights: From Plastic Recycling to Energy Conservation

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ABSTRACT

Nudging is a term coined in the context of Behavioral Economics to softly motivate people to make better choices without forbidding any options. Although this concept emphasizes people's intuitive decision-making relevant to human evolution, there has been no consistent theory for designing nudges, and the applications have been based on trial and error. Evolutionary insights may provide a meta-theory that can help to design interventions more efficiently. To specify this new concept of what we call "Evolutionary Nudging," we developed a messaging method to promote the acceptance of technologies that might potentially be perceived to have risks, using insights obtained from simulation models of altruistic evolution. The messages highlighted the indirect kin support of older generations incurred in establishing these technologies for environmental sustainability. Significant intervention effects were identified in multiple countries (i.e., Japan, Canada, and the US) for topics such as plastic recycling and offshore wind power, suggesting the universality of these new nudging messages. We are currently planning to expand these applications from attitude levels to the promotion of actual energy conservation behaviors, with preliminary results also being discussed.