

Essays on behavioral economics:
Nudges, food consumption and procedural fairness

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AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

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Nudging to reduce meat consumption: Immediate and persistent effects of an intervention at a university restaurant

Changing dietary habits to reduce the consumption of meat is considered to have great potential to mitigate food-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. To test if nudging can increase the consumption of vegetarian food, I conducted a field experiment at two university restaurants. At the treated restaurant, the salience of the vegetarian option was increased by changing the menu order, and by placing the dish at a spot visible to customers. The other restaurant served as a control. Daily sales data on the three main dishes sold were collected from September 2015 until June 2016. The experiment was divided into a baseline, an intervention, and a reversal period where the setup was returned to its original state. Results show that the nudge increased the share of vegetarian lunches sold by around 6 percentage points. The change in behavior is partly persistent, as the share of vegetarian lunches sold remained 4 percentage points higher than during the baseline period after the original setup was reinstated. The changes in consumption reduced GHG emissions from food sales around 4.5 percent.

Keywords: nudging, field experiment, meat consumption, climate change mitigation

JEL classification: D12, C93, Q50, D03

Nudging à la carte: A field experiment on food choice

We tested the effect of framing of a menu on the choice of ordering climate-friendly dishes in a randomized controlled experiment. We varied the convenience of either the vegetarian or the meat option out of three dishes offered. Rearranging the menu in favor of vegetarian food had a large and significant effect on the willingness to order a vegetarian dish instead of meat. However, this effect decreased over the three-week treatment period. We discuss potential channels through which our intervention might affect behavior and how our results can be interpreted with respect to those channels. Our results demonstrate that small, inexpensive interventions can be used toward decreasing carbon emissions from food consumption.

JEL classification: D12, Q50, C93

Keywords: nudging, field experiment, decision heuristics, food choice

Fairness versus efficiency: How procedural fairness concerns affect coordination

We investigate in a laboratory experiment whether procedural fairness concerns affect how well individuals are able to solve a coordination problem in a two-player Volunteer's Dilemma. Subjects receive external action recommendations, either to volunteer or to abstain from it, in order to facilitate coordination and improve efficiency. We manipulate the fairness of the recommendation procedure by varying the probabilities of receiving the disadvantageous recommendation to volunteer between players. Our main finding is that while recommendations improve overall efficiency regardless of their implications for expected payoffs, there are behavioural asymmetries depending on the recommendation: Advantageous recommendations are followed less frequently than disadvantageous ones and beliefs about others' actions are more pessimistic in the treatment with recommendations inducing unequal expected payoffs.

Keywords: coordination, correlated equilibrium, recommendations, procedural fairness, volunteer's dilemma, experiment

JEL Classification C72, C91, D63, D83

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