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ЭТИКА СТИМУЛИРОВАНИЯ ПРИ ПРИНЯТИИ РЕШЕНИЙ

***Аннотация:** в последние годы в управлении людьми и бизнес-коммуникациях наметился рост популярности наджинга. Наджинг - это теория, внедряемая в самых разных сферах, которая влияет на поведение потребителей и принятие решений, используя структуру выбора. Несмотря на эффективность таких методов, остаются опасения и критика их политики. Некоторые противники описывают наджинг как манипуляцию и злоупотребление властью, в то время как другие поддерживают подобные поведенческие вмешательства. Поэтому в данном материале был проведен обзор этических дебатов, окружающих теорию наджинга.*

***Ключевые слова:** наудж, поведенческая наука, архитектура выбора, автономия, манипуляция.*

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THE ETHICS OF NUDGING IN DECISION MAKING

Abstract: *recent years have seen the rise of nudging in people management and business communications. Nudging is a theory that is implemented in a variety of spheres that influences consumer behavior and decision making, using choice architecture. Despite the effectiveness of such methods, concerns and critique of their policies remain. Some opponents describe nudging as manipulation and power abuse, while others support such behavioral interventions. Therefore, in this essay the review was conducted on ethical debates surrounding the nudging theory.*

Keywords: *nudge, behavioral science, choice architecture, autonomy, manipulation.*

Decision-making is a crucial part of people management. People make hundreds of choices every day, and many companies want to understand the nature of our decisions to utilize them for their profit or our well-being. In recent years, indirect encouragement for our choices is often discussed. One of the most effective and renowned theories in indirect people management is nudging, which gained popularity since the publication of the book «Nudge» by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein in 2008. Nudge theory is a «highly innovative change management methodology for shifting the thinking or mindset of groups of people, entire society, nation, or even the whole world as seen in the event of globalization» (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). This theory has made a vital contribution to behavioral studies, which led to Richard Thaler, one of the authors, to win the Nobel Prize in economics in 2017. At the core of the nudge theory lies the idea that people's decisions can be influenced by changing the presentation of options

instead of changing them. Even though it has been years since this theory was introduced, popularized, and implemented largely, it is still discussed whether this method can be considered problematic, misleading, or manipulative. In this essay, the ethical aspects of the nudge theory.

Firstly, it is important to define the concept of nudging. According to the authors of the theory, nudging is «altering people's behavior in a predictable way without significantly changing their incentives» (Thaler and Sunstein). A nudge could be any subtle aspect that encourages people to make specific decisions. It is believed that people do not act rationally most of the time. As it is presented in the theory, most people make decisions based on cognitive bias: their views, habits, and routines.

This statement is also supported by works of Daniel Kahneman, an Israeli-American psychologist, economist and Nobel Laureate. In his renowned works on decision-making he describes two systems of processing information – a theory of «dual processing».

System 1 is responsible for the brain's automatic, intuitive approach which relies on the surrounding environmental factors, while System 2 is the analytical mode of the brain, which activates intentional thought processes (see Appendix). System 1 processing is activated when a person feels pressured or has to make complex decisions quickly. Understanding these behavioral patterns can help to design situations in which consumers are more prone to making choices in the needed direction. This process is called «Choice Architecture», which often includes psychological mechanisms, such as triggers, default options and social proof. The main goal of this theory is usually finding cost-effective methods that influence consumer behavior effectively, while allowing freedom of choice.

Nowadays, such methods are widely applied in different spheres, from marketing and politics to retail and daily life. Nudge theory is often used in business management in order to increase motivation and improve well-being of companies' employees, which is sometimes called «nudge management». Instead of strict old-fashioned rules modern progressive companies implement small interventions to optimize beneficial behavior in working spaces which are proven to be cost-effective. Such methods may

include a variety of aspects, from food choices and time management to office organization and surrounding infrastructure. «Google», one of the biggest technology companies in the world, follows a similar management system and has its own special «choice architecture».

Moreover, nudging is not only used in the management system of «Google», it is often applied in companies' products like «Gmail» and «Google Messages». As it is stated on the website of the company, users «might see nudges in Gmail, which are old emails at the top of your inbox with a suggestion to reply or follow up» (Google Workspace Learning Center)

Nudging is also one of the most utilized marketing tools online. For instance, nudges can be seen on such big websites as Booking.com – an international hotel booking service. When choosing a hotel, multiple notifications pop up, stating that certain options are «likely to sell out soon» or «being viewed by 10 other people», which is an example of a scarcity nudge. In order to check whether these statements were actually true, people made a refundable booking for a room with a «only 1 room left» nudge. The hotel did not, in fact, «sell out» this option, which can be an evident reason to call these notifications misleading.

The main goal of these methods is influencing decision making indirectly, which is at the same time the main concern. While nudging does allow freedom of choice, the choice, to some degree, is no longer genuine, it is pressured. As some opponents say, «nudgers pull our strings and employ tricks to get us to do what they want» (Hausman & Welch, 2010, p. 128). This discussion often roots from the uncertainty of the definition of «freedom of choice». It is closely knit with moral philosophy, which makes it hard to evaluate rationally.

«Nudging» people into making specific decisions is often described as «power abuse» and «manipulation». If we consider the fact that some private companies are only focused on getting profit, it is not hard to imagine how their choice architecture may encourage unhealthy decisions and behavior. Some experts even say that «nudges can undermine freedom of choice and hence are not as «liberty-preserving» or «easily resistible» as proponents would have us believe» (Grüne-Yanoff, 2012; Rebonato,

2014). It is also important to note that consumers are already noticing and adapting to nudging methods. It is now easier for the general public to spot nudges, since they are becoming more frequent and repetitive. This may lead to a significant drop in effectiveness of certain methods in the future and even have a reverse effect, undermining consumers' trust to specific brands.

Undoubtedly, nudging still has many advantages and profits, especially for businesses. Since this theory is mostly based on behavioral science and consumer analysis, they are surely effective, powerful and relatively inexpensive at the same time. Nudges can be even completely free to implement since some of them are not even visible to the consumer. According to statistics, nudges have also shown much greater results compared to other traditional methods, since consumers tend to prefer them over direct people management. It does not limit their decisions but only endorses them. Moreover, nudging isn't only used to drive sales by making products more appealing. It is often used to endorse beneficial behavior for people's well-being. For instance, using nudges has become popular to promote healthier lifestyles or environmental habits and it has shown great results.

Even though nudges are often considered behavioral interventions, they do not coerce people and still allow autonomy and freedom of choice. Nowadays, nudges are applied almost everywhere.

According to the authors of this theory, «choice architecture seems inevitable» (Sunstein, 2015a, pp. 420–422) and all ethical responsibility is on the person who frames the decision options, the «choice architect» using nudges. Many supporters of this theory justify such interventions as helping consumers to avoid «decision-making biases» that may lead to harmful irrational choices.

Views of experts on nudging differ from case to case, which leads to the solution that people need to evaluate the ethics of the theory according to its specific application. While some «choice architects» use these mechanisms to coerce consumers, others encourage beneficial behavior for both the person and the society. Thus, whether a nudge can be considered ethical depends on many factors: reason, transparency, and

content. In order to identify if a nudge is ethical, the «choice architects» should ask themselves: What is the end result? How does it affect the consumer?

In this essay the ethical debate of the nudging theory proposed by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein. The basic ideas and decision-making theories that are interrelated with nudging, as well as arguments for and against the usage of the theory in different spheres of application. The connection of culture and ethics is evident. Many scientists discuss this problem in their researches. Decision-making process is complicated system of different items, including using of language. Also law culture and ethics are correlating spheres. It is necessary to mention «Правовая культура предполагает трансляцию системных идеалов, норм поведения, правового опыта от одного поколения к другому, развития правового сознания не только отдельной личности, но и общества в целом» [7, p. 168]. It is evident that nudge theory is used successfully by many companies and businesses, both private and public, including politics and welfare. Such methods have shown cost-effective results, which makes the system even more appealing. Nevertheless, not all methods of nudging have positive effects on consumers and the society in general. Whether the applications of the theory are ethical is a discussion that is open this day. Ethical debates on this topic are often closely knit with moral philosophy, which makes it hard to assess rationally. To conclude, all nudges should be transparent and not misleading, while people who wish to use behavioral interventions must understand their responsibilities and possible consequences.

System 1	System 2
Does not require working memory	Requires working memory
Autonomous	Cognitive decoupling; mental simulation
Fast	Slow
High capacity	Capacity limited
Parallel	Serial
Non-conscious	Conscious
Biased responses	Normative responses
Contextualised	Abstract
Automatic	Controlled
Associative	Rule-based
Experience-based decision making	Consequential decision making
Independent of cognitive ability	Correlated with cognitive ability

Fig. 1. Characteristics of System 1 and System 2 of Daniel Kahneman's decision-making model

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