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Ethical checklist for the construction of digital nudges

Objective

The goal of this document is to help you evaluate the created nudges in terms of their ethical acceptability. There are several ethical considerations that need to be considered while creating digital nudges such as autonomy and transparency of the nudges. For instance, as stated by Lembcke, et al (2019, p.9), “digital nudges must preserve the entire freedom of choice of individuals, and to enable this, the autonomy of nudges must be preserved when being subject to digital nudging.”

The checklist consists of 4 parts: Autonomy, transparency, target audience, and goal/impact, and consists of 11 statements in total. Using the checklist provided, you may decide whether the nudge can be accepted or needs further modifications.

Autonomy / Freedom of choice

- The nudge nudge-intervention is easy to avoid (e.g. by a simple mouse click)
- The choice architecture is presented in the most simplified way.
- There are no costs to avoiding the nudge. For example, there are no unintended negative consequences such as malicious intent and monetary disadvantages for the target group.
- No incentive / coercion was introduced to influence the choice

Transparency

- The nudge can be clearly identified by the target group of the nudge.

The target audience / Potential users

- The target group has been thoroughly identified
- The preferential choice of your target group has been identified

Goals / Impact

- The goals are in alignment with the users' preferential choice set and/ or stem from good intentions.
- The goals benefit and do not harm the user.
- The potential impact is predictable.
- The nudge is consistent with the original goal and useful to influence the target behavior.

Overall evaluation

The nudge is:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Not accepted	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs modification	<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted

Comments:

Evaluator:

Date:

References

Lembcke, T.-B.; Engelbrecht, N.; Brendel, A.B.; Kolbe, L.M. (2019): „To Nudge or Not To Nudge: Ethical Considerations of Digital Nudging Based on Its Behavioral Economics Roots”, in: Proceedings of the European Conference on Information Systems.

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Mesce, C. and Amojó, I (2020). Ethical Guidelines for the Construction of Digital Nudges. Proceedings of the 53rd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences.

<http://hubscher.org/roland/courses/hf765/readings/meske2020.pdf>