

Title

Nudging, Dark Patterns and Human Autonomy

Speaker/Company

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Abstract

The advent of behavioural economics, and the various "nudge" decision-making initiatives that it has spawned, is widely thought to be a good thing in both the public policy and commercial realms. But is that necessarily so?

Behavioural economics targets cognitive biases, and one's reliance on heuristics in a complex world, to influence human decision-making. It may well be that nudges aim to persuade rather than compel choices all in a good cause. Yet their subliminal effect runs rough-shod over the concept of informed consent and risks undermining basic human autonomy. And this raises the question of where the responsibility for outcomes, including unintended consequences, finally rests.

There have been long-standing privacy concerns about the use of nudge techniques to collect personal data. More recently, the use of "dark patterns" -- namely, "deceptive designs used in the user experience on digital platforms" -- has attracted growing attention from both financial and market regulators. However, the practical efficacy of the emerging regulatory frameworks seems very much an open question.

The ethical dimension of the responsible use of behavioural economics is a subject of importance to actuaries as well as those who rely on their work.

Biography

Frank Grossman is a Toronto-based actuary with forty-years of experience both in Canada and the United States. He is a fellow of both the Canadian Institute of Actuaries [CIA] and the Society of Actuaries, a member of the American Academy of Actuaries, and received a Bachelor of Mathematics from the University of Waterloo (Joint Honours Actuarial Science & Economics).

Frank is an experienced author and presenter on the topic of ethics and professionalism. He created The Actuarial Ethicist case study series, and was commissioned to write "A Short Introduction to Professionalism" monograph for the CIA's new education program. He has delivered more than a dozen presentations on ethics at actuarial meetings and in collaboration with ACTEX publications.
