

Topic: Birth of sludges and their storyline.

Type: Master thesis

Supervisor: Ana Ines Estevez Magnasco

Contact: ana.estevez@ilr.uni-bonn.de

Our research group: <https://www.ilr1.uni-bonn.de/en/research/research-groups/sustainable-nutrition>

There is a lack of data about which are sludges interfering with decision-making for healthier sustainable purchases in supermarkets. Numerous research projects published in recent decades have emphasized the role of nudges in promoting the consumption of healthier products (Fechner & Herder, 2021; Federal Environment Agency, 2022; WHO, 2022). The impact of nudges in supermarket environments and their influence on the purchase of nutritious products has been widely acknowledged (Ensaff, 2021; Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). However, little attention has been given to "sludges," which are actions that affect people's behaviour and impede them from making healthy purchases in the supermarket environment. The term "sludge" has recently been defined as interventions that introduce friction into the decision-making process, making it more difficult to reach a decision (Petticrew, 2020; Soman et al., 2019; Sunstein, 2022). Some have described sludges as factors that generate friction and lead to outcomes that are detrimental to a person's well-being, while others have identified them as "undesirable defaults" (Sunstein, 2022; Thaler, 2018); (Lemken, 2021). Given the prevalence of nudges that steer individuals toward unhealthy products in supermarket environments, it is essential to examine the factors that impede the purchase of healthier options. In the context of supermarkets, sludges can be defined as elements that make choosing a healthier product more difficult.

Unfortunately, the term is relatively new and there is little to non evidence talking about their effect/presence on the different areas of the food system. Through this thesis the student should conduct a comprehensive literature review to understand the existing research on sludges and preventive factors related to purchasing healthy product(if there is).

Some scientific publications on the topic:

Ensaff, H. (2021). A nudge in the right direction: The role of food choice architecture in changing populations' diets.

Proceedings of the Nutrition Society, 80(2), 195–206. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0029665120007983>

Fechner, W., & Herder, E. (2021). *Digital Nudging for More Ecological Supermarket Purchases*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3450614.3464620>

[//doi.org/10.1145/3450614.3464620](https://doi.org/10.1145/3450614.3464620)

Federal Environment Agency. (2022). *How sustainable are german supermarkets*.

https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/sites/default/files/medien/479/publikationen/texte_107-2022_wie_nachhaltig_sind_die_deutschen_supermaerkte.pdf

Lemken, D. (2021). Options to design more ethical and still successful default nudges: A review and recommendations. *Behavioural Public Policy*, 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1017/bpp.2021.33>

Petticrew, M. (2020). *Dark Nudges and Sludge in Big Alcohol: Behavioral Economics, Cognitive Biases, and Alcohol Industry Corporate Social Responsibility*.

Soman, D., Cowen, D., Kannan, N., & Feng, B. (2019). *Seeing Sludge: Towards a Dashboard to Help Organizations Recognize Impedance to End-User Decisions and Action*. <https://www.ssrn.com/abstract=3460734>

Sunstein, C. R. (2022). Sludge Audits. *Behavioural Public Policy*, 6(4), 654–673.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/bpp.2019.32>

Thaler, R. H. (2018). Nudge, not sludge. *Science*, 361(6401), 431–431. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aau9241>

Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2008). *Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness*. (Penguin).

[https://www.scirp.org/\(S\(lz5mqp453edsnp55rrgjt55\)\)/reference/referencespapers.aspx?referenceid=2105993](https://www.scirp.org/(S(lz5mqp453edsnp55rrgjt55))/reference/referencespapers.aspx?referenceid=2105993)

WHO. (2022). *Nudges to promote healthy eating in schools: Policy brief*.

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240051300>