



The Power of GenAI Nudges: How Generative AI Shapes Consumer Empowerment and Goal Desirability

Richarde et al. (2025)

Context

Generative AI is increasingly guiding consumer decisions through personalised recommendations that range from broad suggestions to specific, actionable options. Yet how these varying response styles influence consumers' sense of empowerment and motivation remains underexplored. This study investigates whether narrow (specific) versus broad (general) GenAI responses function as nudges that shape goal desirability and consumer empowerment, using three mixed-method studies across general consumption, travel planning and online retail (AI virtual assistant) contexts.

Key Insights

Narrow GenAI responses increase empowerment

- Consumers who got specific (personalised, actionable, detailed) AI suggestions reported way higher empowerment (feeling confident, informed & autonomous) than those getting general suggestions
- Effect held across contexts incl. an AI virtual assistant & prior AI experience didn't moderate the effect

Goal desirability is the driving mechanism

- Narrow responses made goals feel more desirable, which in turn increased empowerment
- This challenges Construal Level Theory, which predicts that broad framing should drive desirability (the "why") while concrete framing drives feasibility (the "how") → specific GenAI output boosted both here
- Specific AI guidance reduced psychological distance, making goals feel more attractive and achievable

Downstream behavioural effects

- Narrow GenAI nudges led to higher satisfaction, repurchase intention, and advocacy (NPS) scores
- These effects were fully mediated through goal desirability and empowerment
- Consumers largely remained unaware of how AI response style was shaping their preferences

FORGOOD lens (author's note)

- Consumers felt more autonomous (R – Respect)
 - Yet didn't recognise they were being nudged (O – Openness)
- Perceived empowerment may mask reduced actual autonomy
- Consumers might act on shaped preferences rather than their own unbiased goals (G – Goals)
 - If narrow nudges disproportionately influence less AI literate consumers (paper limitation, not tested), the effect may disadvantage certain customer segments (F – Fairness)

Implications

- How might the specificity of AI-generated recommendations in customer interactions be subtly shaping their preferences without their awareness?
- Where does your organisation draw the line between helpful personalisation and persuasive nudging? What oversight mechanisms ensure customers maintain genuine autonomy?
- Which customer segments are most vulnerable to AI-generated recommendations, and how do you monitor whether the effect is equitable across different levels of digital literacy?