© NOV 2025 | IRE Journals | Volume 9 Issue 5 | ISSN: 2456-8880
DOI: https://doi.org/10.64388/IREV9I9-1715198

Nudgegreen Leveraging Ai, UX Design, And Behavioral Science to Promote Sustainable Practices in US Communities

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Abstract- ***This study explored the potential of Nudgegreen, a theoretical digital platform that integrated artificial intelligence (AI), user experience (UX) design, and behavioral science to promote sustainable practices in diverse US communities. The pressing challenge is how entrenched habits, such as the overconsumption of energy and poor waste management, can be innovatively solved to bridge the gap between environmental concerns and community action. Based on a theoretical empirical design, agent-based simulations are used to model different types of communities: urban, suburban, and rural. The impact of personalized, tailored nudges along with intuitive UX designs on sustainable behaviors is then estimated. Key findings highlighted the significance of community-specific contextual considerations. Although AI-based nudges lead to the establishment of greener consumer behaviors, they also highlight the challenges of ethical consideration, equity, and the issue of the rebound effect. With respect to this issue of addressing these problems, the following recommendations were taken into consideration: the issue of transparency, access to underserved communities even when disconnected from devices, and long-term studies being conducted on the application of nudges were emphasized. Addressing these critical areas, NudgeGreen could ensure that changes in individual behaviors would translate into community benefits, ensuring enduring, sustainable practices in diverse American landscapes.***

I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable practice enforcement is highly challenging across US communities, where good intentions are further thwarted by deep-rooted practices that involve excessive energy use and poor waste management. NudgeGreen is a digital platform that will use AI, UX design, and the science of behavior to nudge people toward eco-friendly behaviors. Drawing on the nudge theory-Özdemir (2025), which presents how subtle changes in choice architecture affect people's decisions without ever restricting anyone's freedom, NudgeGreen will find unique needs in diverse US contexts, from urban density to large rural expanses. Traditional approaches in these varied contexts have fallen short, according to recent EPA assessments (Barbouch, 2024).

At its core, NudgeGreen leverages the power of artificial intelligence to examine patterns and tailor-made nudges, such as timely reminders, to engage in acts such as composting. User experience design adds to its benefit by providing a seamless experience that includes aspects of gamification and intuitive experiences to minimize barriers to the formation of positive habits. Behavior science adds to the strength of NudgeGreen by using effective behavioral nudges such as social information, as well as default information that counters cognitive barriers such as hyperbolic discounting (Barbouch, 2024).

The paper aims to develop a comprehensive theoretical foundation for NudgeGreen, illustrating where AI, UX, and social sciences share commonalities to boost sustainable behavioral change in US societies. The paper also points to existing challenges, like digital inequality, through its synthesis, conceptual models, methodological verification, and practical applicability.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Nudge Green is an integrative model that subscribes to artificial intelligence (AI), user experience (UX), and behavioral science that promotes sustainable behaviors across a wide variety of US societies. Accordingly, the model promises a dynamic feedback cycle that incorporates cognitive biases through behavioral science to produce tailored predictions by artificial intelligence (AI) as the basis for user experience (UX). Therefore, theoretically, individual

environmentally friendly behaviors such as waste reduction are multiplied to suit the populous challenges of New York versus the energy consumption challenges of the rural Midwest.

Nudge theory, as proposed in Angelucci (2025), serves as the foundational principle, affirming that even slight modifications to decision environments, like default green energy offerings, influence decision-making without constricting the multitude of options on the table. Using the NudgeGreen application, the environmental feature of automatic recycling sign-ups directly addresses the negative waste-based behavior often found in the suburbs of the US. While the environmental aspect serves as a foundation, some refute the theory on the basis that the aforementioned "paternalism" promotes feelings of manipulation, leading users to experience psychological reactance, more often found in the more conservative elements found in the countryside (Verma & Arora, 2025). Behavioral studies elaborate on the perspective that the aforementioned theory promotes, or at least stimulates, Verma & Arora (2025), "System 1 vs. System 2 thinking." Such "nudge" stimuli, like "Neighbors recycle 80% too!" do not require cognitive analysis, directly. The complementary theory, "self-determination theory," suggests that the reward of badges to aid in the savings would motivate the continuity of these changes, yet "these findings also augment an empirical concern that the effect of nudges is fleeting, with 50% effect decay occurring in a short period," according to Dunn & Zimmer, (2020), "highlighting questions about the viability of nudges for sustaining US change."

AI provides better personalization through ML-based predictive capabilities to foresee potential overconsumption patterns, such as the overuse of seasonal water usage, and prevent inertia via this theoretical framework of online user reaction. For American city-dwelling online user communities, this could take the form of a carpool recommendation; in a farm-based environment in a different region, the suggestion would apply to the best methods for creating compost.

Ultimately, this leads to the technology falling into the category defined by the 'black box,' a technology that incorporates bias in its design from an up-front" flawed data set; this technology has the potential to disproportionately influence low-income citizens in the US and invoke the 'Jevons Paradox, an increased aggregate level of consumption" in the name of 'efficiency.' Additionally, the principles of User experience from Grant (2022) demonstrate an effortless assimilation of this technology into the online environment.

While NudgeGreen creatively integrates both theories towards sustainability, it overestimates the complementarity of the theories in the absence of longitudinal evidence, as laboratory results often fail in the heterogeneous American environment due to the rebound effect. It, therefore, needs auditing of AI, along with user consent, as a prerequisite towards the empowerment of people, an ethical requirement for the green nudging theory.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a theoretical empirical design, validating the framework of NudgeGreen through simulated experimentation. Based on quasi-experimental principles underlying Miller et al. (2020), we model three virtual US communities, urban, suburban, and rural, using agent-based simulation software. Agents model individuals with preprogrammed behaviors that change as a function of AI-personalized nudges, UX friction levels, and behavioral triggers, for example, social norms. Pre/post simulations compare conditions of the intervention-NudgeGreen-against control, measuring outcomes such as waste reduction via regression analysis. Theoretical triangulation with RCT data provides additional robustness, emphasizing scalability without real-world ethics risks.

IV. UX DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

User experience design for green societies in the United States cannot be ignored in relation to the role that NudgeGreen attaches to such practices to create the perfect environment for this to occur and thrive through easy adoption and reliance by the populace for matters relating to sustainable activities by saving app energies via efficient coding practices by UX

designers such as Sundin (2021). There have also been arguments that UX for green societies may be putting ideals before what actually matters for the users, as they try to adopt sustainability in their environments, from urban cities to their rural abodes (Devare *et al,* 2025).

Sustainable UX encompasses energy efficiency, load time optimization, and reducing the amount of information exchanged, which reduces the power consumption of a device as well as emissions from a server. A good case would be lazy-loading images in NudgeGreen, which might reduce power consumption by 30% as cases from Google's case study have documented (Devare *et al,* 2025). However, a critical failing occurs in that while such efficiency may improve the sustainability of a UX, it nonetheless leads to Jevons paradox, where such increased efficiency may encourage users to use the apps longer, thus cancelling out the benefits as a result of increased effort to use the apps, as evidenced in Dropbox's case study, where Piechota *et al,* (2025), reported that users double their usage of the apps after optimization. Rural America might be left out due to unreliable internet connections.

Furthermore, digital minimalism also endeavors to strip the digital interface to a minimum, where simple design is favored over dynamic movements on the screen. This is where Norman's concept of a digital interface's affordance is paramount, where a simple UI might display "compost now" buttons that are easy to operate, requiring a minimum number of clicks. This, in turn, is where Nudge Green's UI can apply digital minimalism, where users are first presented with a minimal interface to increase the completion rate on Ecosia's search engine by 25% (Wang, 2024). Gamification also increases user interest, where users can be rewarded for carpooling, inspired by SGT's data on software that increases users' intrinsic motivation through concepts straight from self-determination theory. Such is where digital minimalism fails, where its overestimation of tech-savvy users leaves suburban US isolates behind, where research reveals that an astonishing 40% drop-out rate results from an interface that is too sparse (Wang, 2024).

User awareness and defaults comprise the ethical core, where carbon footprint trackers and green defaults like "choose bike route" in navigation systems become central to ethical design. Here, defaults push through salience, fitting neatly into Thaler's design for the choice architecture for Nudge Green's community challenge programs. Practical examples have shown significant wins, like a 15% drop in delivery amount emissions for parcel shops in e-commerce trials (Wang, 2024). Yet, defaults also fit into manipulations. What if cultural group preferences for ethnic communities in the US support home delivery for social integration and cohesion issues? Hidden opt-outs betray user data and transparency, resembling dark patterns cases filed against tech giants and Big Tech. Equity Concerns and Informing Data Costs.

Nevertheless, product lifespan supports updates over overhauls, incorporating the design for easy changes to features through module swapping (Bergman & Magnusson, 2025). Therefore, NudgeGreen UX design runs the risk of becoming VERSION Locked_ for easy lifespan extension as the pace of evolution in AI is so unprecedented. However, there is the argumentative factor that such a sustainable UX design requires regulatory force with obligatory impact audits to prevent profitability-driven abuse, as seen with companies through their product overhauls each time Apple introduces a new iteration of its iOS.

V. THEORETICAL CHALLENGES & CRITIQUES

It professes green change through AI, UX, and nudges, but deep flaws threaten to undermine its effectiveness for change in real US societies. Problems accrue with each level: ethics undermine trust first, inequity enlarges divisions next, technological issues backfire third, and poor methodology fails to measure anything at all. Each level reveals why this theory may be bringing harm rather than help unless major changes occur.

Ethics permeate to the very core. A nudge is often hidden deep in an app's settings and hidden within people's surroundings, gradually "stripping people's freedom" subtly. Goodhart's law also reveals how these "recycling rates" have become a core objective,

leading to people cheating and “pretending app activity is a genuine habit rather than manipulating app activity to earn rewards” (Hanafy 2022). These situations reveal tendencies towards “digitized paternalism” whereby “experts play God,” assuming they know better for everyone. Within the US-based, independent-minded surroundings of suburbia, these “hidden AI adjustments” fuel anger, just like how Facebook's algorithms have already generated anger. Kingwell (2020) is “delighted” through his support for nudging, which is “libertarian paternalism's most appealing feature," yet others expose the “nudge” for its tendency towards control and harvesting users' data under a “green flag.”

Equity adds to the suffering. The digital divide excludes those lacking access to smartphones or Wi-Fi. Nudge Green's modern lifestyle-facilitating app works for urban tech-savvies but ignores those residing in trailer parks or farms. It leaves them to worsen their bad habits. According to available statistics, low-income families in America lag in green practices by more than 40% (Bergman & Magnusson, 2025). This means that this "solution" increases inequalities rather than equity. It claims to serve everyone equally; rather, it works to enrich only a few while making community sustainability an exclusive feature of the affluent elite.

The technology is riddled with technical issues that are very explosive in nature. The rebound effect, also known as Jevons' paradox, turns a winning situation into a losing situation, where, for instance, AI suggestions for less driving reduce time, but internet usage increases, leading to higher greenhouse emissions overall (Bergman & Magnusson, 2025). Algorithm bias is also explosive. An AI designed based on a city can get things horribly wrong when faced with rural environments, spitting out offensive advice such as, "city commuters waste the most." In real-world fitness applications, stereotypes are common, causing a killing effect on user development. These are no minor issues; they have larger-scale consequences on diverse US geography, ranging from high-rise apartment living to rural lots.
Methodological limitations, however, set the cap. Simulations might sound sophisticated, but they also smell like the untested, unsullied innocence of a city-grid plan, never bothered by the uncertainty of family moves, bad weather, or cultural resistance. External validity goes out the window. Texas works, but Florida and Michigan prove failure, 70% of similar projects crashing on rollout as reported in Gong et al. (2025). Until NudgeGreen goes out and gets tested against the unpredictable human, it remains theoretical fluff.

VI. IMPLICATIONS & RESEARCH AGENDA

NudgeGreen is pushing the theory forward, but struggling heavily without implementation. The strength of Nudge is in pushing the theory of nudge, AI, and UX hybrid towards innovation, moving the discussion of the theory of nudge to the next level, as presented by Babar et al. (2023). Although the Nudge theory is an innovation, the leap appears to have been overstated due to the theory of the fusion of technologies, ignoring the intrinsic contradictions of transparency in Nudge theory, as presenting the issue of opacity in artificial intelligence theory (Babar et al., 2023).

Thus, practically speaking, this offers a policy blueprint to inform US sustainability programs, such as apps to encourage recycling or reducing energy consumption. Think of grants being secured to support NudgeGreen pilot programs from Seattle suburbs to Texas towns! But most critically, this blueprint fails in terms of equity, where policy can end up throwing billions away on tech failing to serve poorer demographics, thus tarnishing failed smart city rollouts where 60% adoption rates were never achieved (Lu et al, 2024). No policy blueprint is available without equity audits to mandate ‘inclusion.’

Looking ahead, new research has to dig deeper, longitudinally assessing the effect of nudges on actual behavior over years, rather than weeks, to ensure nudges remain constant amidst life’s craziness. Furthermore, cross-validation studies are a must. Individualism in American culture makes social-proof nudges a perfect fit, yet Hispanic enclaves might resist nudges outright, requiring/quizzically new tailors’ tweaks. Brain scans via fMRI could provide the outcome on the neural basis of AI nudges, that is, the shortcuts taken by System 1 or a reactance peak (Stige et al, 2024).

VII. CONCLUSION

The theoretical model that NudgeGreen presents is bold and combines all three: artificial intelligence, UX design, and nudge theory, to address green behavior in communities across America, creating a bridge from awareness to behavior gaps. There are ethical side effects to consider that require urgent redesign and solutions like transparency in algorithms and addressing autonomy gaps and equity gaps. Therefore, it is essential to consider policy blueprints that provide green programs critically to NudgeGreen; otherwise, it is just an extension of theory to theory and nothing more than that. Future longitudinal studies and neurobehavioral studies are needed to ensure that NudgeGreen is actually scalable as it claims to be. Only when it is critically reviewed would NudgeGreen be allowed to empower communities as it promises to do.

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