

The Types of Decision Making

Summary: The types of decision making are both scientific and personal types of approaches. The scientific approach requires time and mental effort.

The two scientific types are the additive strategy and the elimination by aspects approach.

Additive Strategy

First you list the attributes or features that influence your decision. You must first know what you want. Then you rate the desirability of each attribute or feature. You list each feature according to how important it is to you. For example if you are shopping for a car. You list what car features you want, such as an automatic or a stick shift. Do you want a CD player, or have an ipod adaptor already in it. Is a car navigation system a must have for you. You might demand everything be power operated. For this example you are choosing between two cars.

For each attribute or feature you give it a numeric ranking. You could do a 1 to 10 scale. Or you could do a -3 to $+3$. A -3 is the lowest and most unattractive option. You assign a number to each feature for both cars. If your car must have a CD player and it doesn't then you give it a -3 . The car with the highest number wins.

Elimination By Aspects

This type of decision making is done through the process of elimination. You don't evaluate all possible features. You decide in advance what it must have. It is sort of like a do or die approach. If your car must have a CD player, then you throw all car options that do not have a CD player no matter what other great features the car has. The car may be extremely cheap and in superb condition with great low mileage. This is a kind of all or nothing method of making decisions. It has the specific feature you want or it doesn't. If it doesn't have the specific feature you want you throw it out.

These two methods have advantages and disadvantages. Psychologists say if your decision involves relatively few options or features then you will go with the additive strategy. This is because you have the time to think it through and evaluate everything. It gives you great peace of mind because you thought about and analyzed every aspect of your decision.

It takes time and mental effort to consider every detail and rank it. When time is of the essence or the mental effort is not worth it elimination by aspects is the way to go. It is faster and you consider what is most important and not every little minute detail.

Recognition Heuristic

This is the personal method. This is a psychological principle that says you make your decisions based on what you are familiar with. If you are faced with two alternatives and you recognize one and are unfamiliar with the other you will choose the one that you are familiar with.

This method of decision-making has some serious flaws. You do not learn new ways of doing things. Your paradigms do not change. The option that you are not familiar with may actually be a better choice with better opportunities but you don't consider it because you do not know anything about it. You are not open to learning what it is about.

Many people talk about the idea of thinking "outside the box." This kind of decision-making does not encourage thinking "outside the box". It does not help you see the world in a different way. You stay confined in your current mindset.

Other Factors That Effect Decision Making

Biases

Psychologists say that you may not always be as bright and rational in making decisions as you could be. Biases affect your decisions. Biases become mental limitations.

Emotions

There is no question that people make decisions based on emotions. Gut feeling is another method you may use. Many go on gut feeling when they have to make an immediate decision.

Conclusion: The additive strategy and elimination by aspects are very much scientific types of decision making. These require mental effort and you are likely to come to decision that you can live with. Recognition heuristic is a more a gut feeling type of decision making and it doesn't help you so much to achieve breakthroughs.

About The Author

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