

A GRADIENT, NOT A BINARY: A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR DECISION-MAKING

When it comes to making decisions, people have long separated the human brain into emotional and logical. But there is more to the puzzle than that.

According to traditional dual-process theory, human decision-making consists of two competing sides: the emotional, impulsive side and the logical, deliberate side. People tend to primarily utilize their emotions to make a decision, and only occasionally use their logical side to override these impulses.

However, Vinod Venkatraman takes a more nuanced and comprehensive approach with a new model developed in partnership with Ipsos. Based on latest research, he argues there are multiple processes that launch simultaneously when faced with a decision, and a number of factors, including context, memory and emotions, have an influence on the eventual process and resulting outcome.

Take someone waiting in line at the store. She sees a chocolate bar in the aisle and decides to buy it. Under the dual-systems theory, this is an impulsive decision stemming from her emotional side. She didn't put any thought into it; she simply followed her gut. However, Venkatraman's framework shows the range of processes and factors that may have actually gone into this decision. Perhaps she had always planned to buy the candy. Or she considered all the stimuli in front of her including other candy, its impact on the long-term goal of staying on a diet, and emotions such as the joy of eating a candy and nostalgia from past experiences. After weighing these options carefully, she decides to buy the candy. This wasn't an impulse but rather a deliberate decision.

Just as decision-making is adaptive and dynamic, managers seeking to influence consumers must be adaptive and dynamic in their methods of persuasion.

MAJOR TAKEAWAYS:

- Decision-making is more complex than the traditional theory of emotional versus logical; it exists as a gradient rather than a binary.
- Factors such as context, goals and motivations, and memory have a significant influence and must be considered when trying to affect or evaluate consumer decisions..
- Emotions are present throughout the decision-making process rather than just the beginning.
- Applied research on decision-making should utilize a variety of methods to fully capture the different processes and factors at play.

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW:

- Marketing professionals
- Policymakers
- Human behavior researchers
- Managers

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<https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3607481>