

## Making Decisions Based on Feelings - How Dangerous It Could Be

Editorial

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Feelings and emotions are very important for human survival in the natural and social environment. There is no doubt that they can be useful to humans. It is this trait that sets people apart from machines, which have also learned to "think" and make certain decisions. However, the question arises, do feelings can have detrimental effects on the process of information processing and decision-making? This article focuses primarily on the role of feelings in decision-making.

### The Difference Between Feelings And Emotions

Since there is a direct connection between feelings and emotions, it is impossible to consider the role of feelings in decision-making if the role of emotions is not taken into account beforehand. However, the problem is that in everyday life, and even in science, there is no clear distinction between feelings and emotions. Regarding the influence of emotions, Nobel laureate Herbert Simon wrote - "Hence, in order to have anything like a complete theory of human rationality, we have to understand what role emotion plays in it" [1]. Simon revolutionized decision theory when he introduced the concept of bounded rationality, which involved refining existing normative models of rational choice in order to account for cognitive and situational constraints. He was aware that his theory would not be complete until emotion was considered. Thus, Simon foreshadowed the importance that contemporary science has given to emotions in decision research [2].

As mentioned earlier, the difference between feelings and emotions is often not completely obvious. However, as both of these notions are phenomena that may influence decision-making, it is necessary to distinguish and define them as clearly as possible. According to [3], scientists do not always agree on what constitutes an "emotion". Emotions can be expressed through bodily reactions, such as when someone's heart beats faster when he/she feels excited, and through expressive movements, such as facial expressions and sounds. In addition, emotions can impact behaviors, such as yelling at someone in a state of anger. Scientists often include bodily reactions, expressive movements, and behaviors in

definitions of "emotion." Feelings, according to [3], represent the way someone experiences emotions. People experience feelings internally, in their minds.

In order to create an even clearer distinction between feelings and emotions, it is necessary to go a step further. In this regard, it is necessary to make an additional distinction when it comes to the concept of feeling and what it can represent. The term feeling is a verbal noun of the verb feel, etymologically derived from the Middle English verb *felen*, meaning "to perceive by touch, by palpation" [4]. Thus, feeling in that early period was associated with what we now call sensation. In that case, since the sensation is formed first (for example pain), emotions can be formed later in relation to that sensation. However, the term feelings is now rarely, or more precisely, very rarely used in that sense. After some time, it came to the point that this concept is considered more generally, in a way that does not refer to the human senses (that is, to some sensory organ that produces a certain feeling). Thus, the feeling produced by certain information should no longer be viewed as a phenomenon that precedes the formation of emotions, but actually the opposite, which will be discussed in more detail below.

### Classification Of Feelings

However, additional confusion in the distinction between the meanings of the terms feelings and emotions is introduced by the descriptors of these terms. For example, people describe emotions based on subjective experiences using hundreds of semantic terms. In connection with that, based on an analysis of 2,185 emotionally evocative short videos with richly varying situational content, by using PCA in [5] has been discovered 27 varieties of emotionally experienced states, such as anger, confusion, fear, etc. The problem is, despite the scientific effort in the direction of delimiting the notions of feelings and emotions, in everyday practice, people use the same descriptors for both notions. In that way, we have steel "feeling of anger", "feeling of confusion", or "feeling of fear".

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One of the solutions to this situation can be found in the viewpoint of German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Namely, many psychologists, however, still follow Kant in equating feelings to states of pleasantness and unpleasantness, known in psychology as affect. In this way, after receiving certain information, emotions first arise, which are then transformed into two types of feelings, pleasant and unpleasant.

If we adhere to the previously described distinctions, we can say at this point that we already have a tool for distinguishing feelings from emotions. However, before a new solution for distinguishing feelings and emotions is proposed below, it is important to point out the following. In psychology, the term feeling usually refers to the conscious subjective experience of emotions [6]. So, from this definition, it also follows that the feeling is a consequence of emotions, that is, that it arises after the experienced emotion.

However, in order to make an additional distinction between feelings and emotions, a classification of feelings in relation to the decision-making process will be performed here. In this regard, we can distinguish between excitatory feelings, inhibitory feelings and neutral feelings. Excitatory feelings are those feelings that motivate us to an activity, in terms of initiating, maintaining or increasing the level of activity. Some typical excitatory feelings are feelings of anger, joy, etc. For example, if a person is annoyed by the actions of another person, they may experience feelings of anger, which can be transformed into a decision to take action against that other person. Inhibitory feelings are those feelings that distract us from taking some action. Some typical inhibitory feelings are feelings of fear, helplessness, etc. For example, if a bare-handed man finds himself in the jungle in front of a lion, a feeling of fear will normally appear, which will transform into an inhibitory activity such as withdrawal (instead of an attack, which would be the result of some excitatory feeling). Neutral feelings are those feelings that produce neither excitation nor inhibition. Examples of neutral feelings are lethargic, indifferent feelings and the like. For example, if we see a beautiful painting in a museum, there will be no excitatory feeling that would motivate us to buy it (because it is impossible), there will be no inhibitory feeling that would lead us to leave the museum, but there will exist a neutral feeling that will not produce any concrete activity at that moment.

Regarding the formed classification of feelings into excitatory, inhibitory and neutral, it is important to make two important remarks. First, whether an emotion will cause an excitatory, inhibitory or neutral feeling in a certain person depends on the person himself. Therefore, individual feelings should not be generalized

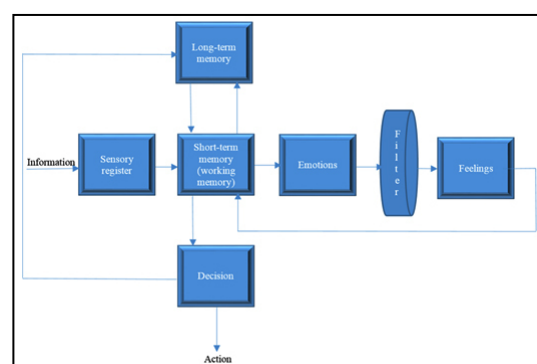
explicitly as excitatory, inhibitory, or neutral, because for one person a certain feeling may be excitatory, and for another inhibitory (which largely depends on the adopted patterns of behavior). Second, it should be borne in mind that feelings have a temporal dimension, which means that if at one point a feeling was neutral and did not cause an activity, at another time the same emotion may cause an excitatory or inhibitory feeling. For example, after a while, the mentioned painting from the museum may cause an excitatory feeling that will encourage this person to go to other museums to enjoy equally beautiful paintings (or encourage him/her to take up painting on his own).

## A Decision-Making Model That Includes The Feeling Factor

In order to understand the decision-making process that takes into account the factor of feelings, a new decision-making model will be presented below. This decision-making model is primarily related to the processing of abstract information, ie. that information that is viewed not only as a physical stimulus, but as complex, meaningful information. Examples of such information are that information that is communicated through speech, which is transmitted in writing (through books), etc. Unlike other information processing and decision-making models, such as models of Broadbent, Wickens, Atkinson and Shiffrin, Mazur, and other researchers, this model, as mentioned earlier, considers feelings as a factor influencing decision-making. Below it will be described by using this model, shown in Figure 1, how feelings influence the decision-making process.

So, the external stimulus here is information, with its semantic, semiotic and syntactic components. It can be presented in a video, audio, or tactile format. A person receives this information with the help of the senses, ie the sensory register. It is further processed in short-term memory and can be stored in long-term memory. After processing in the working memory and comparing it with the stored information, certain emotions may appear, which are related to that information. Such emotions now pass through a filter consisting of the consciousness of the individual. Here, feelings are formed and being classified as pleasant or unpleasant. These feelings can also take on an excitatory, inhibitory, or neutral character. Processing in the filter takes some time, which can vary on an individual level. The formed feeling in the working memory then further solidifies for such information and can be subject to further processing. After processing, the information with the associated feeling can be stored in long-term memory. However, as a result of the processing of information and the

**Figure 1. Decision-making model incorporating feelings in the information processing process.**



associated feeling in the working memory, a certain decision is made. This decision may represent a person's attitude towards a particular event from the environment. Based on such an attitude, the person makes a decision on what action to take in relation to the information received.

The information that feelings are associated with is better stored in long-term memory. Remembering such information lasts shorter than information that is not accompanied by feelings. For this reason, abstract information that initiates neutral feelings is often harder to remember. In addition, decisions made on the basis of certain feelings have a greater motivational character. They influence a person to persevere in his decision.

## Consequences Of The Influence Of Feelings On Decision Making

Previously have been mentioned some of the useful functions that feelings can have on remembering information and perseverance in making a decision. But, unfortunately, feelings can have negative consequences on decision-making, sometimes with a fatal outcome. The problem arises when a person does not have enough information to make decisions, or even has incorrect information.

One of the most common examples of such information is information that is placed in the media (radio, television, newspapers, internet, social networks). If such a medium places incorrect information, and such information causes a strong feeling, the person may take the wrong position and make the wrong decision, in which he can persevere. No less a problem is the denial of relevant information. If a person does not have enough relevant information available, especially information that could cause strong feelings or even nullify feelings related to other information received, it is almost certain that such a person cannot make the right decision.

Unfortunately, when they have a certain interest, the media often place inaccurate or partially accurate information, trying to make such information a certain feeling in people. Such media know that this is the fastest and easiest way for individuals to make decisions that are in their interests. States that care about the truth should create additional mechanisms and institutions that would seriously deal with this problem, if they want to form a truly democratic society.

An additional problem is the denial of information, or censor-

ship. In times of crisis, even in countries that are considered democratic, regulations and laws are passed that deny certain media the right to communicate information. In this way, the population of such countries remains deprived of potentially true and relevant information, without the right and opportunity to make the right decision.

## Conclusion

In this article, the classification of feelings into excitatory, inhibitory and neutral is presented. This classification is given primarily from the aspect of the decision-making process. Although it is not excluded that this classification can be used for other purposes, it primarily serves to explain the importance of feelings in the process of information processing. This classification seems to have certain advantages over the classification of feelings into pleasant and unpleasant, because it proactively takes into account the role of feelings in the decision-making process.

A number of studies in the previous period have tried to point out the importance of emotions in the decision-making process. However, this is probably the first study that aimed to point out the importance of including feelings as a separate entity in the decision-making process. In order to explain this process, a new decision-making model has been formed, which takes into account feelings as a necessary factor for the information processing process, and which has an impact on the outcome of decision-making. There is no known model of decision-making or information processing that has previously taken this factor into consideration. Based on this model, it directly follows that inaccurate information, especially information that induces certain strong feelings, as well as censorship of information, is a direct obstacle to making quality decisions. In the future, it is necessary to pay special attention to this issue in order to ensure that people achieve the right to objective information and the truth.

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