

Decision Making in Online Social Networks

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Online Social Communities and Networks (OSN) have become widely popular as a source of data or reference for those seeking advice. With accelerated speed there are more and more websites tapping into the ‘wisdom of crowds’ as a source of information that influences our everyday decision-making. The internet has revolutionized the way individuals obtain the information they need to make decisions.

Using OSN can accelerate or decelerate the DM process for both individuals and communities through the accessing of data from multiple sources. While ample independent research exists on OSN and DM, there is a lack of research into how online technology affects the making of decisions that have an impact on our lives. How do we use OSN in our most important everyday decision-making? The synergy of these themes provides a unique research perspective from which to take a fresh look at both DM research and the actual process of DM as it is affected using OSN.

The main purpose of this mini track is to explore and extend, as well as challenge, existing knowledge of OSN and DM. We hope to understand and ascertain whether OSN can support and empower users in their decision-making process and particular phases (1) identify and conceptualize new phases (if any) in the decision-making process that is integral to OSN conversations (2) explore the structure and sequence of decision-making phases arising out of the

use of OSN (3) identify biases, strengths and weaknesses of the human psyche that could be attenuated and/or enhanced through appropriate design of OSN for decision-making and (4) seek practical guidelines for the design of OSN that support blended decision-making processes that leverages the wisdom of crowds.

This mini track has been running for more than 4 years and continues to attract interesting and futuristic papers. This year we had a number of submissions with a diverse range of topics. The three selected papers investigate key issues that exist in the research area.

The first paper, *What Makes Consumer Perception of Online Review Helpfulness: Synthesizing the Past to Guide Future Research* touches on a growing body of academic research that has investigated the helpfulness of online customer reviews (OCRs). It aims to facilitate a better understanding on the contributors to OCR helpfulness by synthesizing past studies on the topic. As well as discover the prevalence of OCRs and a necessity to understand its appraisal mechanism. In particular, an interdisciplinary and systematic literature review of this paper uncovered 41 high quality academic papers that centered on OCR helpfulness. Based on the content analysis, the authors have extracted and consolidated the contributing factors and categorized them into three categories of review characteristics, product

characteristics and reviewer characteristics. For each OCR helpfulness contributor, the authors have outlined their description, operationalization and correspondent findings. The research findings can serve as guidelines for the OCR platforms to refine their appraisal mechanism of OCR helpfulness, and prioritize reviews that are more helpful to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of consumers' decision-making.

The second paper, *Tell me the Truth: Separating Fact from Fiction in Social Media Following Extreme Events*. This paper explores the important topic of truth vs. fiction in social media. The authors claim that with increased reliance on social media to spread important information during extreme events, users' reported inability to distinguish fact from fiction is a growing concern. The experiment that authors run (N=398) tests whether feedback training improves performance in identifying true and false social media content during extreme events. The results showed that feedback training did not increase social media content classification performance for either natural disasters or soft-target terror events. Individuals' performance for correctly identifying false content was negatively related to political conservatism and was positively related to a measure of cognitive reflection.

The third paper, *The Role of Social Media Normative Interventions and Environmental Awareness in Intentions to Change Pro-Environmental Behaviors: Insights for Decision Making Research in Online Social Networks*. The research explores social media interventions to stimulate the adoption of pro-environmental behaviors. The topic of increasing interest in both IS research and environmental studies. The authors opine that we still know little about the factors explaining the effectiveness of such interventions and how

they influence decision-making in online social networks. The authors bring together insights from both social science and IS research streams. The study intention is to change towards pro-environmental behaviors as a result of exposure to normative social media content and the level of environmental awareness. The authors conducted an online experiment to explore intentions to change behaviors regarding the consumption of meat. The findings show that while individual environmental awareness is positively associated with intentions to change meat consumption, exposure to social norms in social media content is not significant in predicting intentions to change meat consumption. The research findings suggest the importance of environmental awareness in decision-making towards sustainable behaviors.