

# Introduction to Decision Making in Online Social Networks Minitrack

Valeria Sadovykh  
PricewaterhouseCoopers and University of Auckland  
valeria.a.sadovykh@sg.pwc.com

David Sundaram  
University of Auckland  
d.sundaram@auckland.ac.nz

## Abstract

*We take decisions every moment of our lives. What do we eat? Which phone to buy? What book to read? Do we rent or buy? What retirement plan to choose? What should be our career? For every one of these decisions most of us turn to online social networks (OSN) to seek information, advice, and support. OSN have become widely popular as a source of data or reference for those seeking advice.*

## 1. Introduction

Using OSN can accelerate or decelerate the DM process for both individuals and communities through the accessing of data from multiple sources. Its ubiquitous nature allows the process to be widely distributed, democratised, deconstructed, and diversified, through sheer speed and scale of change. The rapid adoption of OSN across the spectrum of users raises many interesting questions about its dynamics. It is apparent that properly governed and designed OSN can play an important role in supporting different types of decision-making, as they provide their users with various forms of support, ranging from the instrumental to the emotional and informational.

## 2. Practical problems

The challenges that face users of OSN are information overload and a wide range of online information sources that can complicate decision-making and lead to delays. The potential risk emanates from the use of irrelevant or inaccurate information or from misunderstanding relevant information when making decisions.

## 3. Research problems

Over the years, the decision-making process has been explained through several models, among which

the rational and anarchical models have emerged as important representations of decision-making dynamics. The problem is that the most referenced decision-making theories, frameworks, models and concepts were developed in the early 20th century when the influence of online connection and collaboration could not be foreseen. Therefore, it is anachronistic to examine contemporary decision-making practice using more than six decades old models.

## 4. Purpose

Decision-making (DM) is a complex process and an integral part of every individual's life. The main purpose of this mini track is to explore and extend, as well as challenge, existing knowledge of OSN and DM. The papers presented in this mini-track cover the various areas of everyday decision making, as follows:

- (1) **The Power & Perspective of Mommy Bloggers:** this formative intervention study explores the feasibility of leveraging online 'mommy bloggers' as thought leaders and sources of influence in the promotion of HPV vaccine messages.
- (2) **Guiding the Herd: The Effect of Reference Groups in Crowdfunding Decision Making:** the study challenges the literature that postulates that funders make decisions by following the decisions of the crowd, and this herd behavior leads to less than optimal decisions.
- (3) **Decision Making Processes in Online Social Networks:** the paper compares and analyses the structure and sequence of decision making processes within health and financial online social networks.
- (4) **Making Decisions about Self-Disclosure in Online Social Networks:** the paper explores privacy calculus decision making processes for online social networks (OSN).