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Decision Making Interview Report
Consumer Behavior
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Dr. Arya is a post-graduate student in medicine who lives in a girls' hostel in Pune, India. She described her experience while making 4 types of decisions as follows:

1. An easy and common decision: Dr. Arya cooks her breakfast and hence has to shop groceries almost every week to replenish her food stock. Dr. Arya buys groceries at least once a week from a nearby grocery store and finds it easy to do so.
2. A challenging and common decision: Buying dinner daily is challenging for Dr. Arya. She often finds it difficult to make dinner choices since she doesn't cook her dinner. She keeps switching between tiffin box services and restaurants.
3. An easy and unique decision: Dr. Arya once bought a hat while vacationing in Goa. It was an easy decision to make and she did not think much before buying the hat. She wanted to take home a souvenir from her vacation and was looking for something that made her look 'cool'
4. A challenging and unique decision: Dr. Arya has recently started running and she bought running shoes for the first time(as of now). She had a difficult time finding the right shoes in her size

From my conversation with Dr. Arya, I've gathered the following information and deduced insights on what factors influenced her decision-making process.

1. Problem recognition: Common decisions like buying groceries or buying dinner were based on problems that she was aware of, she expected the problem to arise and even expected the output most of the time. What differed for her with unique decisions was that the problem was unexpected and hence she did not know how the outcome would turn out to be.
The difference between easy decisions and difficult ones was that she had fewer expectations for easy problems than the difficult ones. She is flexible about her breakfast but needs a fulfilling dinner, also while window shopping she did not have anything particular in mind but while buying shoes she had a set of preferences.
2. Information search: While choosing where to buy her groceries, Dr. Arya does not rely on many sources of buying groceries instead she chooses the nearest available grocery store. For dinner, she prefers having a healthy, home-cooked, and fulfilling meal. Hence, she gathers information like food quality, pricing,

location about restaurants and tiffin box services from friends, online recommendations, and based on past experiences. While window-shopping in Goa, Dr. Arya neither gathered any information on what she wanted to buy nor about where she wanted to buy. It was more like an instantaneous decision driven by some factors. While choosing to buy the right shoes, she checked out the information on quality, price, options in different shoes both on online shopping websites and physical shoe stores.

Easy decisions did not require much information before choosing but relatively required a lot of information on alternatives for challenging decisions. There wasn't any specific difference between unique and common decisions in terms of information gathering.

3. Evaluation of Alternatives: Dr. Arya considered and compared between buying groceries by visiting a nearby store herself and ordering from online platforms that provide home delivery. She compared the pricing and availability of online stores versus offline stores and found online stores relatively expensive and confusing. While ordering dinner, she compared ordering food online from restaurants, physically visiting a restaurant, and ordering food from tiffin box services. She compared the pricing, reviews, food quality, and variety in the menu for food with regards to the alternatives and found that she'd rather order food from places that provide home-cooked meals as they are good in quality, taste, and cheaper in prices. While buying the hat in Goa, she glanced around the street hawkers and considered comparing them based on the items they had for sale, the overall look and quality of the products and quickly decided to buy the hat from the street hawker who had better quality items and had a sweet tone of talking. Buying the right shoes required a lot of research and consideration of online and offline alternatives based on shoe variety, pricing, sizes available and brands available. Since she could not find a shoe of her choice in her size online, she considered trying out offline stores.

We can infer that the common factors between all the decisions were basic standards of quality and pricing.

4. Choice: Dr. Arya chose to buy groceries from a nearby grocery store because of it being a cheaper option and she prefers buying groceries in person as she believes that the physical experience of looking for options gives her a better clarity on what to buy. Additionally, she believes that she can gauge the amount of the grocery she is buying better visually when she is physically present at the store than buying them online. She did consider that she could've alternatively received better quality groceries buying them online but the pros of buying offline outweighed the online option. While making dinner choices, she prefers ordering food from a tiffin box service, suggested by her friend, that provides home-cooked meals in cheaper prices than that of a restaurant. She knew that a

home-cooked meal is an inclusive set of a main dish, a side dish and a dessert and hence finds it fulfilling. She did consider the benefit of having dinner at the restaurants could be that the food is served hot and fresh and in a great ambience, yet it wasn't as important as having home-cooked meals for low prices. Dr. Arya chose to buy the hat without actually considering any other options, it was the first thing that caught her attention while glancing through the street vendors. What influenced her decision was that the seller was very charming and impressed her with his persuasive skills. She did not consider the opportunity cost while making this decision. Dr. Arya couldn't find the right size in the shoe that she liked online and hence she headed to the physical store. She was confused between two shoes where one of them was a good quality shoe and expensive whereas the other one was not as good but met her basic expectations and was relatively way cheaper. She chose the latter because of the stark difference in prices of the shoes. She did consider the possibility of having a better experience had she bought the expensive pair of shoe. Physically experiencing the look and feel of the product was an important factor that influenced easy choices whereas challenging choices were highly inclined towards products that satisfied basic expectations of the user and were relatively cheaper than the other alternatives.

5. Post-choice evaluation: Dr. Arya feels satisfied with the choices she made with buying groceries and found out that her purchase met her expectations. Given the same situation, she would still buy groceries by physically shopping at a store. She feels satisfied with her dinner choice too and given the same situation she would still make the same decision. With her hat purchase, she was very happy that it turned out to be really good and was relieved to have found a perfect souvenir. Given the same situation today, she isn't sure if she'll choose the hat again as it was a one time purchase for her. She felt relieved with the pair of shoe she chose and it met her expectations, yet she wonders if the alternative pair of shoe would've given her a better experience. Given the same situation today, she would like to try out the better quality and expensive shoe out of curiosity.

The post-evaluation for all her choices turned out to be satisfactory. Although a major difference between common and unique decision making was that given the same situations today, Dr. Arya would still make the same choices with common problems but would rather choose the alternative with unique problems.

Conclusion: Throughout all the stages of decision making, it is quite evident that the factors distinguishing the easy decisions from difficult ones were the amount of expectations the consumer had, the amount of information required for making a choice, and choosing a product based on physical experience versus a product

that satisfies basic needs at lower prices. These decisions were more distinguishable from each other while making a choice.

With respect to the difference between common and one-time choices is that when the user has made choices over and over they tend to stick to the choice that has proven successful over time but with one-time choice there's a curiosity factor to try out the alternative and no proof to back-up making the same decision again. This difference is quite evident at the post-choice evaluation stage.

Overall, this interview revealed that the consumer is most likely to make a choice that is cheaper, meets basic expectations, and is backed by experience and trustworthy sources. Another interesting thing I learned from this process is that the consumer's background also affects the decision making process. Since Arya is a doctor, she has less exposure to technology and prefers making a choice offline since that relates to the diagnosis of the patient in person providing better insights. Hence, personal bias is also an important factor while decision making.