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Psychology Mental Models

The Recency Effect: How It Affects Our Reasoning, and Tips to Overcome the Bias



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Recency bias has a significant impact on how we make decisions and what pieces of information we pay attention to.

The recency effect is a term first coined by the psychologist [Hermann Ebbinghaus](#), who became famous for his work on the experimental study of memory. It's a cognitive bias that affects our decision-making process by causing us to recall more recent occurrences better than previous ones. It happens when people place too much emphasis on recent evidence, which can lead to mistakes in judgment and thinking.

It can cause people to overestimate the likelihood of particular occurrences occurring because their minds have "forgotten" about previous probabilities, but it can also cause them to underestimate hazards because they have forgotten about previous incidents that should have taught them lessons.

This blog article will look at how this significant cognitive bias influences our decisions, as well as some suggestions to minimise its impact.

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What is

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events might have seemed, you always have a one-in-two chance.

The primacy effect and the serial position effect, which holds that whatever information you learn about something initially must be the most essential information about it, are similar to the recency bias (the belief the earlier you hear about something, the more accurate it must be). All of these ideas have the potential to make you think irrationally.

Short-term memory (also known as active, or primary memory) is required for the recency effect to work. The ability to maintain a relatively small amount of memory in the mind for a short length of time is referred to as active or primary memory. This data is stored and kept active for future use, but it is not altered. Short-term memory is demonstrated by storing a phone number someone just repeated to you for long enough to dial it.

Both the capacity and the duration of short-term memory are restricted. Without regular maintenance or repetition, most knowledge in short-term memory only lasts 15 to 30 seconds. For a limited amount of time, around four pieces of knowledge can be stored in short-term memory.

It's important to take this into consideration when having new information pushed onto someone else who may not have had time yet to process it all before being bombarded again by an even newer set of data.

Delaying memory after hearing a list of items has a huge impact on the recency effect, which is perhaps unsurprising. This effect is often completely eliminated when there is a considerable interval between learning and recalling items.

In other words, the recency effect may emerge as a result of your ability to recall items that are still stored in your short-term memory. However, if you do not rehearse that material, it will swiftly go from memory.

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How does the recency effect affect our reasoning?

We all have a natural tendency to remember recent occurrences.

This can be a problem when making predictions because future, sometimes long-term, events are hard to predict. People today are more likely to drive than ever before, but if you look at statistics, you'll see that the number of accidents per mile driven! The reason for this is that people tend to remember the last few decades as being bad for driving safety but ignore how things used to be.

In order to avoid getting misled by recency bias, try not to rely on your own personal experience when making predictions. For example, if you think it is always going to rain on days that look like they will be rainy, then you'll miss out on many opportunities for beautiful weather and fun outdoor activities!

Don't rely solely on personal experience when making predictions. Instead, see if your beliefs can be validated by any concrete facts/evidence. Question the roots of where your beliefs are planted and find whether they have been founded on reality. This will help you avoid getting misled by recency bias.

Influences

There are a number of other elements that can influence the degree and likelihood of the recency effect. The following factors can influence the incidence of the recency effect:

Work Factors: This pertains to both the task at hand and how the data is processed. The recency effect is influenced by the length of the information delivered and how it is presented. For example, if you were given a very short list of words, you could find it easy to remember all of them, therefore removing the recency effect. On the other hand, a long list of terms would be much more likely to induce recency effects.

Processing: How you pay attention to and process information as it is presented has an impact on how it is remembered. The recency effect is

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There are many biases that can affect decision-making. One of the most common is recency bias.

Recency Bias can be seen in major sports competitions - for example, if you ask someone to rank the best five American football teams in order, they'll often put their favourite team at number one and then list other teams in descending order based on how recently they've played (so their team had just won last week). But this doesn't make any sense; all of these teams are equally good! The same thing happens with music charts which might be dominated by one or two songs because they were released recently.

Recency bias is often caused by the **availability heuristic** (for more on this, check out [this Knowledge article on memory bias](#)), where people make judgments about how common an event is based on its availability in their mind. This means if you think of a few examples of something that happened recently then it seems like there are more recent events than there actually are - which makes it seem like the most recent event is more important than it actually was.

1. A potential tip to overcome recency bias is to not place too much emphasis on your current mood when you're making a decision. This is because emotions can greatly impact the decisions you make and the beliefs you secure yourself in. Knowing this, it's important to keep your mood in mind when you settle on certain beliefs. However, in doing so, let yourself become more informed about your state of mind and your willingness to commit to potentially more favourable narratives (for more on this, check out [this Knowledge article on the formation of stories](#)) to make a more balanced judgement.
2. Another way to prevent recency bias is to assess whether or not something is useful before deciding if it's true. Not every single piece of information we're given about a situation tends to be useful for

developing a critical thinking skill. This involves equal causation and causality.

3. A final tip for overcoming the recency effect is to people who are more likely to forget what they learned. So, it's important to understand the context of the situation. However, it's also important to consider one perspective and another. This can provide invaluable information that can help you make more informed decisions.

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Learning I

The recency effect, as you might expect, can play a crucial part in the learning process. When acquiring new knowledge, you are more likely to recall the first things you study as well as the last things you study. This implies you're more likely to forget what you learnt in the middle when you're tested on the content.

There are, however, ways to tailor your study sessions to take advantage of these memory events. Recognize that the period at the start and the period at the conclusion are your optimum learning moments as you plan your study time.

Follow these steps to get started:

1. To take advantage of the primacy effect, start with the most crucial information. This could entail going over crucial terms or learning something new.
2. Use your study time in the middle to go over old stuff you've already learned. Although this is effectively downtime, it can be beneficial for evaluation.
3. Review what you've already learnt in the last portion of your study session. This could include practising crucial terminology or reviewing recently learned content.

This will aid in the retention of freshly learnt material and reduce the likelihood of forgetting what you learned in the middle of your study session.

The recency effect can also be used by teachers to manage their teaching time ie. the initial section of a class should be devoted to critical information. This involves avoiding basic administrative responsibilities like taking attendance and icebreakers during meet-and-greets.

A small pause in the conversation can make us better adhere to. I think the focus should be on the present moment.

Although the recent sessions were great, there are things you can do to make them even more effective. Break sessions into short segments and focus on the moments of your audience's attention.

Finally, if you want to make a good impression, you deliver the most important parts of your message in everyday talks, try to keep it simple. In fact, even job interviews, according to the recency effect, are best when you start with a brief introduction of yourself and then move on to the questions.

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Conclusion

The recency bias is a cognitive bias that affects our decision making process by causing us to recall more recent occurrences better than previous ones. This bias can be dangerous because it clouds our judgement and causes us to make decisions based on emotions rather than practicality. However, with a little bit of knowledge and some self-awareness, we can work to minimize the impact of this cognitive distortion. In this post, we've outlined some ways to beat the recency bias and make more informed decisions.

These points include:

1. Not placing too much weight on recent decisions,
2. Assessing whether recent events are truly representative,
3. and to not rely exclusively on recent information.

Have you tried any of these?

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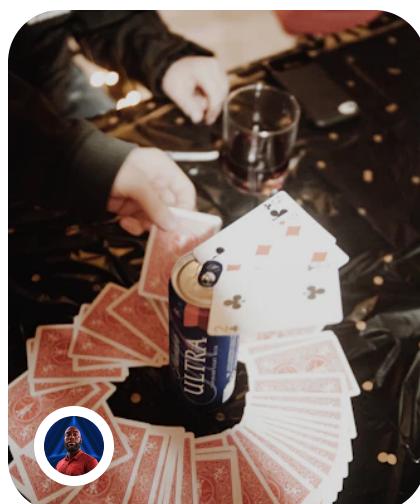
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