DAT 520 Final Project Process Reflection

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Throughout the course, with the guidance of our three milestone assignments, I have been able to develop a decision tree that I believe provides a quality analysis for the research question “should a homeowner choose to hire a professional or do it themselves when undertaking a bathroom renovation?” In Milestone One, I found an interesting data set and formulated this research question. In Milestone Two, I created a basic decision tree that incorporated decision analysis techniques and topics from the course. In Milestone Three, I made some major revisions to my decision tree and I came up with ways to test the parameters and evaluate its results. After some further tweaking to the decision tree this week, it is now in a good position for the final analytical report. On top of the decision tree itself, I will be able to use some of what I wrote in the milestones, such as my data appraisal and model evaluation, but I still have a lot of work left to cover all of the criteria that needs to be included in the final report.

The first section that I will need to focus on this week is Techniques. This section should include steps that I took to prepare and manipulate the data, model optimization, and ethical/legal considerations. I do not expect that it will be too difficult to write about these techniques, but I will need to ensure that I reference scholarly sources in this section. Using appropriate sources that add to the quality and legitimacy of the report is what can separate good from great analysis. Since I did not do much to touch on these concepts in the milestone assignments, I will have to start from scratch and find relevant quotes and ideas that can improve the Techniques section of my final report.

The next section that will be focus of the upcoming week is the Limitations portion of the analysis. My work in the milestones mostly covered things that my model did well, so I will have to flip the switch and critique the model in the limitations section. In Milestone Two, I included a section of areas where the model could be improved, which will likely be the basis of the limitations that I write about. In the revisions that I made for Milestone Three and over the past week, I handled many of the areas that I initially labeled as limitations, but there will still be some areas that have not been addressed, and others that have arisen while continuing to build the model. The limitation section is important because no model can be the end-all be-all in a decision analysis situation. Pointing out limitations expresses to the reader that there is still uncertainty that needs to be taken into account. Additionally, this section sets the stage for further analysis on the topic, which is a critical element of academic work.

The final challenge that I envision for the final project will be compacting everything I want to say into only eight pages. According to the rubric, if all the sections were completed in full, the final report would be 15-20 pages. However, a report of that length would contain too much noise and the most important points would be lost. For this reason, I will need to attempt to cover each section in the most clear and concise way that I possibly can. When writing the report, I must remember the idea that “less is more.” If I keep this in mind, I can let the model speak for itself in many ways, and I can only include things that add to the audience’s comprehension of my analysis. Between the current position of my decision tree, the work that I can pull from prior milestones and the sections that I know I need to focus on this week, I should be able to produce a quality decision analysis report that meets the guidelines and requirements of our final project.