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Strategic decision-moment: Beer game comparison between two colombian universities[☆]



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ABSTRACT

Purpose: To compare the results obtained in decision-moment of two groups of students, based on the beer game, one from a private university and one from a public one. The decision-moment is explained by deliberate and emergent strategies.

Design: A strategy workshop focused on decision-moment, based on a virtual application of the beer game in which participants were expected to generate deliberate strategies. After its conclusion, a survey determined how they would face the generation of emergent strategies. The results were then compared through Kruskal-Wallis' nonparametric test.

Findings: We identified significant differences in the perception of workshop participants about decision-moment, in regards to rationality. There was no evidence of statistically significant differences in the remaining thirteen variables.

Research limitations: This research looks at the perceptions of agents that were subject to a workshop-based situation. Although it provides valuable information for the understanding of this phenomenon, it is necessary to approach the actual context in the future.

Contribution: To consolidate the results obtained previously in order to understand decision-moment behaviour, based on deliberate and emergent strategies.

1. Introduction

The emergence of strategy as an area of study, supported by North American schools, has promoted the development of the field of organisational studies. Several researchers and academics have contributed to the construction of this area, which is considered a field in itself (Sanabria, Saavedra, & Smida, 2014). Its purpose has been to explain how organisations survive and endure in their

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environments (Dijksterhuis, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, 1999; Vélez & Garzón, 2005).

Among those interested in the development of the field of strategy is Professor Mintzberg (1972, 1985 & 1987) whose work describes strategy as a training process, based on deliberate and emergent strategies. The first ones are intended plans that were executed in the way it was originally considered, and the second are strategies that are not planned, but made up to create a final outcome (Mintzberg, 1978, 1987; Mintzberg & Jorgensen, 1987; Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).

This conception is came up with from the pretension Mintzberg had to overcome the understanding of strategy as a group of precepts that had to be followed in a certain way (Mintzberg, 1972). He intended to broaden the concept of strategy, beyond the conception of plans, and transform it into “a pattern in a flow of important decisions (...) and decisions as commitments for action” (Mintzberg, 1972, p. 90).

The idea of a cyclical relationship between deliberate and emergent strategies arises from their own concepts (Montoya, 2010; Montoya & Montoya, 2013). These authors explain that the evolution of the agent is based on recycled learning. That is, having a deliberate strategy that can be useful in situations that lead to an emergent strategy, which is then executed by a decision maker, who operates as an autonomous agent looking to remain viable in their local environment.

Hernández (2015) and Hernández, Montoya, and Montoya (2017) base their conceptions about the moment of the decision on their reflections on the strategy formation process, and the cyclical relationship between deliberate and emergent strategies. These authors affirm that the decision moment takes place in the middle of the cycle between the two types of strategies. It originates in a truncating event that deconstructs the deliberate strategy and that forces the agent to look for a new (emergent) strategy that allows him to keep making decisions within a particular system (Hernández, 2015; Hernández, Montoya, & Montoya, 2015, 2017).

This problem is studied under the premise of an abandonment in the development of the concept decision-moment (Smida, 2006). It is also studied under the premise that the decision moment is a transcendental component in the decision-making process that must be considered as a decision in itself.

It is not easy to find literature contributions on the moment of the decision (Hernández, Montoya, & Montoya, 2016). Some of them evidence the process based on brain observations (Meck, Doyère, & Gruart, 2012; Tzovara et al., 2012), information processing (Greenstein, 2015; Paul, Saunders, & Haseman, 2005), a mental clock (Klapproth, 2011), social factors in consecutive decisions (Abele, Bless, & Ehrhart, 2004), relation of the amount of the donations with the time of reflection of the decision (Mrkva, 2017) and the preference to obtain a delayed reward from a delayed decision in the face of risk situations (Luckman, Donkin, & Newell, 2017).

A modeling of the decision-moment (Smida, 2006), the organisational culture with elements of “non-rationality” within the decision-making process (Saavedra, 2006), or the approach of desirable futures with variable reward to answer the question of “when do we want to arrive?” (Sanabria, 2003, p. 81) can be found in the field of management. The synchronisation of internal and external temporalities in response to what strategic management is (Hernández, 2006) and the unchanging Taylorist vision of changes in temporality in an organisation (Mera, 2015), have also been important contributions gathered from this field.

Hernández et al. (2017) enter the discussion and use a workshop based on the game of beer, reported in (Senge, 1995), to support their theoretical conception of the decision-moment from the perspective of deliberate and emergent strategies. They do this in order to generate a more controlled environment that allows them to appreciate the formation of decisions, where participants can generate plans (deliberate strategies), and can be affected by sudden events where such plans would need to evolve for the situation and demonstrate the generation of emergent strategies. In their work, they capture the perception of the participants through a survey where they are questioned about how they generate plans, link with those plans, their sensations around an abrupt termination, and the elements they take into account when they generate an emergent strategy.

Specifically, the previous conception arises from the decision-moment model based on the deliberate and emergent strategies developed by Hernández (2015) and Hernández, and Montoya and Montoya (2017). In it, they affirm that a decision moment originates when a deliberate strategy is deconstructed by a truncating event, in which the agent initiates a grieving process on the plan (deliberate strategy) (Hernández et al., 2015).

This mourning process is made up of the following psychological stages: denial, anger, negotiation, depression and acceptance (Kübler-Ross, 1993). This presumption is based on the conception that mourning responds to the rupture of some link between the agent and appreciable aspects such as life and loved ones (Bowlby, 1993). Although Freud (1917) cited in Zaragoza (2007), goes further stating that the link may be associated with more indeterminate conceptions such as homeland, freedom and ideals (Zaragoza, 2007); this is where the agent's link with the deliberate strategy is, and it corresponds to an elaboration and disposition of resources effort that generates a significant link.

After accepting that his deliberate strategy is truncated, the agent enters a decision space where he must synchronise the situation with possible solutions to generate emergent strategies that allow him to remain viable in the system by making decisions (Hernández et al., 2017). Contextualising this perspective of analysis of the moment of the decision from the adaptive decision-making (Marewski, Bröder, & Glöckner, 2018) (See Fig. 1).

This document aims to generate a contrast of the results of the workshop carried out by Hernández et al. (2017) at the National University of Colombia (Public University), in front of a new workshop held at the Esumer University Institution (Private University), in order to assess if there are differences in the perceptions of the participants in the workshop and identify particularities in the results, and be able to generate consolidation of the theoretical contributions with practical and perceptual evidence about the behaviour of the moment of the decision from the process of strategy formation (deliberate and emergent strategies).

In the following section, we cover the methodology, which is then divided into two parts: The first is based on the beer game workshop (Hernández, 2015; Hernández et al., 2017) and the second on comprehending a Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric test to compare the two samples. We then present the results of the methodological application, then we formulate our conclusions, and, finally, we present the references that support this research.

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