

Effort Heuristic

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In psychology, an effort heuristic is a rule of thumb in which the value of an object is assigned based on the amount of perceived effort that went into producing the object. An example of this would be the comparison of \$100 earned, and \$100 found. If someone finds \$100 they might go spend it on a whim, but if that \$100 is part of their paycheck, they are not going to waste it.

Another way that effort heuristic can be considered is the amount of effort a person will put into an action depending on the goal. If the goal is of little importance, the amount of effort a person is willing to put into it is going to be lower.

The effort heuristic can also affect the perceived quality rating and financial value of objects. Kruger et al. found that people who were told that a poem required 18 hours to write rated it as higher quality and gave it a higher appraised value than did people who were told that it took only 4 hours to write. They found a similar effect in the valuation of paintings. In a third study, the researchers asked students to rate the quality of medieval armor that was shown in pictures and accompanied by a description that included manufacturing time. For the pieces of armor that were shown in clear pictures, there was only a small difference in ratings between those pieces that had long versus short manufacturing times, but when the pictures were blurry, the students gave substantially higher quality ratings to pieces of armor when the manufacturing time was long. Other students gave lower ratings to the same pieces of armor when the description listed only a short manufacturing time. The manipulation of blurry pictures suggested that people are prone to rely on perceived effort to value objects when other criteria is not readily available.