The Adaptive Function of Maximizing Decision-Making Style: A New Perspective Based on the Four-Quadrant Theoretical Model

Authors: Jia Keke, Ma Min, Ma Min

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Abstract

Maximizing decision-making style comprises two dimensions: maximizing goal and maximizing strategy, which exhibit distinct adaptive functions. Current research often conducts analysis based on total scores or individual dimension scores, an approach that fails to fully reveal the complexity of maximizing decision-makers. This paper analyzes the differences and relationships between the two dimensions of maximizing decision-making style from a motivational perspective, and consequently proposes a person-centered four-quadrant theoretical model of maximizing. This model classifies decision-makers into four types: mixed type, goal type, strategy type, and non-maximizing type. Based on this model, this paper systematically reviews and discusses the adaptive functions of different types of maximizers from two perspectives: emotional adaptation and social consumption behavior adaptation. Finally, this paper discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the maximizing four-quadrant model, and recommends that future research should further explore dimension interactions, person-centered perspectives, longitudinal analysis, influencing factors, and neural underpinnings of maximizing decision-making style to deepen our understanding of the adaptive functions of different maximizing types.

Full Text

Adaptive Functions of Maximization Decision-Making Styles: A New Perspective Based on the Four-Quadrant Theoretical Model

Jia Keke[1], **Ma Min**[1]*
School of Sociology and Psychology, Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing

Abstract
The maximization decision-making style comprises two dimensions—the maximization goal and the maximization strategy—each demonstrating distinct adaptive functions. Current research often relies on total scores or individual dimension scores for analysis, an approach that fails to fully capture the complexity of maximizers. This paper analyzes the differences and connections between these two dimensions from a motivational perspective, proposing a person-centered four-quadrant theoretical model of maximization. This model classifies decision-makers into four types: mixed-type, goal-oriented, strategy-oriented, and non-maximizers. Based on this model, we systematically review and discuss the adaptive functions of different types of maximizers from two perspectives: emotional adaptation and social consumption behavior adaptation. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and practical value of the four-quadrant model and suggest that future research should further explore dimension interactions, adopt a person-centered perspective, conduct longitudinal analyses, and investigate influencing factors and neural mechanisms to deepen understanding of the adaptive functions of different maximization types.

Keywords: Maximization decision-making style; Maximization strategy; Maximization goal; Four-quadrant theoretical model

Decision-making permeates all aspects of life, from everyday product choices to career direction decisions. While people universally pursue high-quality decisions, individuals differ in the extent to which they search deeply among options and strive for optimal outcomes. Simon' s (1956) critique of rational choice theory prompted Schwartz et al. (2002) to distinguish between maximization and satisficing decision-making styles. Maximizers pursue the best possible option and are unsatisfied with suboptimal choices, a process that typically requires substantial time and effort. In contrast, satisficers stop searching once they encounter an option that meets their basic needs and standards, selecting this satisfactory option and thereby avoiding excessive complexity and resource consumption in the decision-making process (Schwartz et al., 2002). Building on previous research, Cheek and Schwartz (2016) drew upon Simon' s (1956) theoretical perspective to propose a two-component model of maximization decision-making style, dividing it into two elements: the maximization goal of pursuing high standards and the maximization strategy of conducting extensive searches. This theoretical framework has generated consensus among researchers and guided subsequent studies (Belli et al., 2021; Kim, 2022).

Research has gradually revealed that maximization decision-making style produces both positive and negative outcomes. Studies show that maximization is positively correlated with high-quality objective decision outcomes (Iyengar et al., 2006; Schwartz et al., 2002) and with positive subjective evaluations such as optimism, self-efficacy (Lai, 2010), and sense of meaning in life (Datu, 2016; Ma et al., 2021). However, other research has uncovered negative consequences, including high depression levels (Oren et al., 2018), low subjective well-being (Peng et al., 2018), and low decision satisfaction (Kim, 2022). Hughes and Sc-

holer (2017) therefore recommend distinguishing between adaptive and maladaptive forms, emphasizing the unique effects of different dimensions. Synthesizing numerous findings, the maladaptive functions of maximizers are primarily associated with extensive search—the maximization strategy—whereas their adaptive functions are closely linked to pursuing high standards—the maximization goal.

However, merely distinguishing relationships between maximization dimensions and other psychological variables may not reflect its real-world significance. Analyzing a single dimension score in isolation fails to capture the full complexity of maximizers. To understand the emotional and behavioral characteristics of different types of maximizers, this paper analyzes the differences and connections between the two dimensions of maximization from a motivational perspective, proposes a person-centered four-quadrant model and its hypotheses, and then uses this model to systematically review and discuss the adaptive functions of different types of maximizers from the perspectives of emotional adaptation and social consumption behavior adaptation. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and practical value of the four-quadrant model and explore future research directions.

1. Distinctions and Connections Between the Two Dimensions of Maximization: A Motivational Perspective

Hughes and Scholer (2017) adopted Higgins et al.' s (1997; 2003) two motivational orientations—assessment mode and promotion focus—as a basis for distinguishing between two types of maximization. Assessment mode focuses on evaluating and comparing options with the aim of making the "correct" decision, whereas promotion focus concentrates on approaching gains and promoting personal growth. Research shows these two modes help differentiate maximization types. The maximization goal correlates positively with both assessment mode and promotion focus, while the maximization strategy correlates positively only with assessment mode and negatively with promotion focus. Further research indicates that negative emotional consequences are positively associated with assessment mode but unrelated to promotion focus. This suggests that under high maximization strategy, individuals' assessment mode motivation intensifies, which is closely related to negative emotions.

Thus, the maximization goal and maximization strategy cannot be treated as equivalent, because although maximization decision-making style encompasses both components, their relationships with other psychological variables exhibit different (Cheek & Ward, 2019; Nenkov et al., 2008; Weinhardt et al., 2012) and even opposite patterns (Ocampo et al., 2019; Rim et al., 2011; Weinhardt et al., 2012). Meanwhile, the maximization goal and maximization strategy maintain a stable positive correlation (Kim & Miller, 2017; Newman et al., 2018; Purvis et al., 2011; Qiu et al., 2020; Rim et al., 2011), with research noting consistency in their relationships with specific psychological variables (Belli et al., 2021; Kim, 2022; Qiu et al., 2020). Most importantly, studies suggest possible interactions between the maximization goal and strategy (Hughes & Scholer, 2017; Kim,

2022), emphasizing their close interconnection.

Variable-centered research methods have thoroughly examined maximization decision-making style, partially addressing how its different dimensions affect emotions and behavior. However, these studies do not classify populations, leaving unclear the emotional and behavioral manifestations of individuals with different levels of maximization strategy and goal. Given these differences and connections, the two dimensions of maximization demonstrate consistency, divergence, and potential interaction with other psychological functions. This suggests that the adaptive functions of maximization may change dynamically with variations in maximization goal and strategy, indicating the need for a new model to explain the complex relationship between these components. Different levels of maximization goal and strategy may jointly influence target variables, and a person-centered approach can explore individuals' emotional and behavioral characteristics across different levels of maximization goal and strategy. The "four-quadrant" model has been widely used to explain the joint effects of two dimensions, such as in time management quadrants (Stephen et al., 2005), which categorizes tasks into four types based on importance and urgency: important and urgent, urgent but unimportant, important but not urgent, and neither important nor urgent, recommending prioritization of important tasks. The four-quadrant model can more intuitively and effectively explain and analyze the joint effects of two dimensions on target variables.

2. The Four-Quadrant Model of Maximization Decision-Making Style

Adopting a person-centered perspective, this paper proposes classifying populations into four types based on the goal and strategy dimensions of maximization decision-making style: goal-oriented, strategy-oriented, mixed-type, and non-maximizers. Based on the motivational perspective discussed earlier, individuals with high maximization strategy tend toward assessment mode, which is associated with maladaptive outcomes. Therefore, we expect goal-oriented maximizers to primarily exhibit adaptive functions, while mixed-type and strategy-oriented types may show maladaptive patterns.

Goal-oriented maximizers set high decision-making goals but conduct limited option searches. This combination of high goals and low strategy leads them to possess high self-esteem and self-efficacy, experience more positive emotional adaptation, and feel less frustration, thereby promoting their emotional and behavioral well-being. Strategy-oriented maximizers set lower decision-making goals but frequently search among options. This extensive search may lead to cognitive biases, feelings of failure, and dissatisfaction, negatively impacting individuals' emotional and behavioral adaptation and is therefore considered maladaptive.

Mixed-type maximizers combine high decision-making goals with frequent option searches, exhibiting high maximization decision-making style. Numerous

studies show this style correlates with negative subjective evaluations such as high depression levels, low subjective well-being, and low decision satisfaction, displaying maladaptive emotional and behavioral characteristics such as high risk tendency and frequent social comparison, reflecting the critical influence of maximization strategy on functional adaptation.

Since previous research has not clearly distinguished types of maximization decision-making style, this paper indirectly discusses the adaptive functions of different types of maximizers by analyzing maximization goal and strategy and their relationships with psychological variables, thereby evaluating the adaptability of each type and providing a new perspective for understanding maximization decision-making style.

Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper] Types of Maximizers Based on the Two Dimensions of High Standards and Option Search in Maximization Decision-Making Style

3.1 Emotional Adaptation of Different Maximization Types

This review synthesizes existing literature, summarizing research on maximization decision-making style and emotional adaptation into three main domains: positive and negative emotions, life satisfaction, and decision satisfaction. Additionally, by distinguishing among maximization goal, maximization strategy, and overall maximization, we deeply analyze the emotional adaptation characteristics of goal-oriented, strategy-oriented, and mixed-type maximizers.

3.1.1 Relationship Between Maximization Types and Life Satisfaction/Positive Emotions

Life satisfaction refers to individuals' overall evaluation and cognition of their lives based on personal standards (Shin & Johnson, 1978). Survey research using maximization scales and life satisfaction scales to assess the relationship between decision-making style and life satisfaction reveals that maximization strategy is significantly negatively correlated with life satisfaction, while maximization goal is positively correlated or shows no significant relationship, and overall maximization is also negatively correlated with life satisfaction (Nenkov et al., 2008; Purvis et al., 2011; Newman et al., 2018). Thus, maximization goal positively correlates with life satisfaction, whereas maximization strategy and overall maximization negatively correlate with it. Research indicates that maximization goal positively correlates with positive emotions, while maximization strategy and overall maximization negatively correlate with them (Newman et al., 2018; Purvis et al., 2011). Meanwhile, maximization goal positively correlates with optimism, while maximization strategy and overall maximization negatively correlate with it (Nenkov et al., 2008; Rim et al., 2011). In summary, maximization strategy and overall maximization negatively correlate with life satisfaction and positive emotions, while maximization goal positively correlates with them. This suggests that strategy-oriented and mixed-type max-

imizers have lower life satisfaction and positive emotions, whereas goal-oriented maximizers show the opposite pattern.

3.1.2 Relationship Between Maximization Types and Negative Emotions

Theoretically, maximizers dedicated to selecting the best option should be more satisfied with their choices and experience more positive emotions. However, empirical research shows these individuals often experience stronger negative emotions (Chowdhury, 2009; Iyengar et al., 2006; Kim & Miller, 2017; Newman et al., 2018; Schwartz et al., 2002). Studies find that maximization strategy positively correlates with depression and negatively correlates with optimism (Nenkov et al., 2008; Rim et al., 2011). Multiple studies also find maximization strategy positively correlates with negative emotions (Newman et al., 2018; Purvis et al., 2011). Life satisfaction and positive/negative emotions together constitute the concept of subjective well-being (Diener, 1984). Research shows that maximization goal positively correlates with subjective well-being, while maximization strategy negatively correlates with it (Rim et al., 2011; Roets et al., 2012; Purvis et al., 2011). In summary, overall maximization and maximization strategy positively correlate with negative emotions, while maximization goal negatively correlates with them. Therefore, mixed-type and strategy-oriented maximizers may experience more negative emotions, whereas goal-oriented maximizers experience the opposite.

3.1.3 Relationship Between Maximization Types and Decision Satisfaction

When examining the relationship between maximization decision-making style and satisfaction, researchers have explored not only its relationship with life satisfaction but also the connection between maximization and decision satisfaction. Studies indicate that maximizers generally show lower decision satisfaction and stronger negative emotions (Bruine de Bruin et al., 2007; Purvis et al., 2011; Schwartz et al., 2002). Zhu and Xie (2013) distinguished between maximizers and satisficers, finding that maximizers are more susceptible to decision regret, which relates to reduced decision satisfaction.

Further research notes that decision-makers with higher maximization strategy scores experience stronger negative affect and regret, while also showing lower life satisfaction and positive emotions (Newman et al., 2018). In consumer decision-making, research shows that only maximization strategy relates to decreased satisfaction after reading customer reviews following a purchase decision (Kim, 2022). Therefore, individuals with high maximization strategy experience higher regret and consequently lower decision satisfaction. Overall, overall maximization and maximization strategy negatively correlate with decision satisfaction, while maximization goal shows no significant correlation. Thus, mixed-type and strategy-oriented maximizers exhibit lower decision satisfaction, whereas goal-oriented maximizers do not.

In summary, maximization goal positively correlates with positive emotional adaptation (such as life satisfaction and positive emotions), maximization strategy positively correlates with negative emotional adaptation (such as depression and negative emotions) and negatively correlates with positive emotional adaptation, while overall maximization primarily aligns with the pattern shown by maximization strategy. From a motivational perspective, maximization goal promotes individuals' pursuit of higher self-actualization by setting higher standards, whereas maximization strategy leads individuals to experience more negative emotions through increased evaluative processes, resulting in negative emotional adaptation. Consequently, mixed-type and strategy-oriented maximizers may experience more negative emotional adaptation, while goal-oriented maximizers experience more positive emotional adaptation.

3.2 Social Consumption Behavior Adaptation of Different Maximization Types

Synthesizing previous literature, research on how maximization decision-making style affects behavioral adaptation can be summarized into five domains: social comparison, prosocial behavior, risk behavior, information seeking, and financial behavior. This review explores the relationships among maximization strategy, maximization goal, and overall maximization with behavioral adaptation, thereby inferring the social consumption behavior adaptation characteristics of goal-oriented, strategy-oriented, and mixed-type maximizers.

3.2.1 Relationship Between Maximization Types and Social Comparison

Maximizers tend to engage in more frequent social comparisons, with upward social comparisons having particularly significant effects (French & Meltzer, 2019; Weaver et al., 2015). In intimate relationship research, if a maximizer' s long-term partner does not possess obvious advantages compared to others' partners or potential partners, these individuals experience lower relationship satisfaction (French & Meltzer, 2019). This feeling stems from maximizers' frequent upward social comparisons and their awareness that they may not have selected the "best" partner, a process closely related to maximization strategy (French & Meltzer, 2019). Meanwhile, maximizers, especially those with high maximization goals, tend to engage in more self-presentation behaviors due to social comparison (Karimi & Liu, 2020) and pay more attention to their relative position in social environments (Weaver et al., 2015). Therefore, frequent social comparisons triggered by maximization strategy lead to more negative emotional experiences, while maximization goal primarily focuses on enhancing one' s social status. Consequently, mixed-type and strategy-oriented maximizers engage in upward social comparison more frequently, whereas goal-oriented maximizers do so less often.

3.2.2 Relationship Between Maximization Types and Prosocial Behavior

Research shows that compared to satisficers, maximizers are generally perceived as less warm and receive less social support, possibly because they are considered more neurotic (Chen et al., 2022). Maximization strategy positively correlates with neuroticism, whereas maximization goal does not (Purvis et al., 2011). Therefore, maximizers' lack of warmth may stem from higher maximization strategy scores rather than maximization goal. Additionally, moral research indicates that individuals with higher maximization goals tend to view individual behaviors as immoral when facing moral dilemmas (Soltwisch et al., 2020). In summary, overall maximizers and individuals with high maximization strategy are often perceived as less warm, while those with higher maximization goals demonstrate higher moral standards and thus are more closely associated with prosocial behavior. Therefore, goal-oriented maximizers may be more inclined toward prosocial behavior, while mixed-type and strategy-oriented maximizers rarely engage in such behaviors.

3.2.3 Relationship Between Maximization Types and Risk Behavior

The relationship between maximization decision-making style and risk behavior varies depending on the risk decision-making task paradigm. Risk decision-making task paradigms are divided into descriptive and experiential formats: descriptive paradigms involve directly examining behavioral consequences and probabilities, whereas experiential paradigms are based on personally experiencing probabilistic outcomes (Frey et al., 2015). Under descriptive paradigms, whether priming a maximization mindset or measuring through scales, maximization decision-making style significantly positively correlates with high risk tendency (Hsieh & Yalch, 2019; Qiu et al., 2020). Analysis of different dimensions shows that maximization goal generally positively correlates with risk tendency, while maximization strategy positively correlates with risk tendency in most situations but shows no correlation in specific contexts (such as the Asian disease scenario) (Qiu et al., 2020). Under experiential paradigms, such as the Iowa Gambling Task, individuals with high maximization strategy tend to switch decks more frequently, preferring decks with high immediate gains but overall greater losses, demonstrating stronger risk preference (Rim, 2017). Therefore, under descriptive paradigms, overall maximizers and individuals with high maximization goals show greater risk preference, whereas under experiential paradigms, individuals with high maximization strategy show more risk preference. Accordingly, we infer that mixed-type and goal-oriented maximizers are more risk-prone under descriptive paradigms, while strategy-oriented maximizers are more risk-prone under experiential paradigms, suggesting that risk behavior adaptation may be context-dependent.

3.2.4 Relationship Between Maximization Types and Information Seeking

Systematic reviews indicate that maximizers'information seeking creates a heavy cognitive burden and consequently produces more cognitive biases, which are closely related to maximization strategy. Cognitive biases manifest as difficulty accurately assessing costs and benefits in decisions (Ding & Li, 2018), tendency to underestimate costs and overestimate benefits (Botti & Hsee, 2010; Jain et al., 2011; Misuraca & Teuscher, 2013). A typical manifestation is that when pursuing the best option, maximizers continuously seek alternative options even when this may lead them to abandon their initial choice, reflecting irrational selection driven by maximization strategy to obtain better or ideal alternatives (Diab et al., 2008). Another typical manifestation is post-decision information seeking behavior, where maximizers continue seeking more information even after a decision cannot be modified (Ferreira & Dos Santos, 2020). Meanwhile, the relationship between the two maximization dimensions and procrastination also differs. Research shows that individuals with high decisional procrastination search for information systematically and strategically while seeking more specific information about chosen options (Ferrari & Dovidio, 2000), consistent with the characteristics of maximization strategy. Further research directly indicates that maximization strategy significantly positively correlates with procrastination (Rim et al., 2011). In summary, frequent information seeking caused by maximization strategy brings numerous negative consequences unrelated to maximization goal. Therefore, frequent information seeking by mixed-type and strategy-oriented maximizers may lead to cognitive biases and procrastination as negative behavioral adaptations in information processing, whereas goal-oriented maximizers are unaffected.

3.2.5 Relationship Between Maximization Types and Financial Behavior

Digital skills, financial planning, and saving behavior are all components of financial behavior. Research shows that individuals with higher maximization goal scores demonstrate higher digital skills (Misuraca et al., 2015), clearer financial plans (Zhu et al., 2017), and tend to plan to save more money. Overall maximization also shows positive correlation with saving intention (Zhu et al., 2017). Therefore, both overall maximization and maximization goal positively correlate with positive financial behaviors such as saving and financial planning, whereas maximization strategy shows no significant relationship with these behaviors. Consequently, mixed-type and goal-oriented maximizers may exhibit more positive financial behavior adaptation, while strategy-oriented maximizers show no significant association.

In summary, maximization strategy correlates with negative behavioral adaptations (such as frequent social comparison and less prosocial behavior), whereas maximization goal is generally unrelated to these negative behaviors and instead positively correlates with morality and saving behavior. Overall maximization,

except for saving intention, primarily aligns with the behavioral adaptation patterns shown by maximization strategy. These findings relate to the essential nature of maximization strategy and goal: maximization strategy tends toward extensive option searching, which generally translates into more negative behaviors, and overall maximization primarily aligns with this pattern. Therefore, mixed-type and strategy-oriented maximizers exhibit more negative social consumption behavior adaptation, while goal-oriented maximizers show more positive social consumption behavior adaptation.

4.1 Summary

Most maximization research has focused on its negative effects and mechanisms, with less exploration of positive impacts. Based on Cheek and Schwartz' s (2016) two-component model of maximization and Hughes and Scholer' s (2017) motivational perspective on maximization decision-making style, we constructed a four-quadrant theoretical model of maximization. Based on maximization measurements, we can classify populations into four types: maximizers, goal-oriented, strategy-oriented, and non-maximizers, and analyze the adaptive and maladaptive outcomes of these types based on the model. Evidence indicates that maximizers' adaptive functions primarily stem from maximization goal, while maladaptive functions mainly originate from maximization strategy, with overall maximization aligning with maximization strategy. Moreover, these findings indirectly support the view that different maximization types exhibit different adaptive functions: mixed-type and strategy-oriented maximizers show more negative emotional and behavioral adaptation, while goal-oriented maximizers show more positive adaptation.

Clearly distinguishing between adaptive and maladaptive functions of maximization decision-making style and conducting typological analysis is crucial for advancing this field. Theoretically, maximization decision-making style includes both adaptive and maladaptive aspects, and examining only total scores or dimensional relationships with other psychological structures cannot accurately reveal its mechanisms. Therefore, it is extremely important to distinguish different dimensional levels to examine functional differences among maximization types. Practically, the four-quadrant model provides a theoretical basis for individual cognitive and behavioral interventions in different contexts. For example, in education, targeted interventions can be designed based on students' maximization decision-making style types to guide emotional regulation and behavioral adaptation. In career development, intervention suggestions can be provided for individuals' career directions based on their maximization decision-making style type. For instance, strategy-oriented individuals could be advised to avoid careers with multiple-choice situations or to prepare in advance to promote adaptive behavior (Chernev et al., 2015). In psychological counseling, the four-quadrant model offers new perspectives and intervention ideas for clients troubled by maximization decision-making style. For example, negative emotional adaptation in strategy-oriented individuals is often related to the use of

maximization strategies, and interventions that adjust these strategies provide new perspectives for case conceptualization.

Although this paper primarily discusses the positive outcomes of maximization goal and negative outcomes of maximization strategy, it is important to clarify that these positive or negative effects are not absolute. In certain task paradigms or contexts, maximization strategy can also produce positive decision outcomes. For example, in sampling paradigm behavioral tasks, individuals who more frequently switch between options tend to choose options with higher winning probabilities (Hills & Hertwig, 2010). Schwartz et al.' s (2002) research also shows that maximization strategy helps identify optimal options. Extensive option searching not only increases the chance of discovering the best choice but also enhances individuals' understanding of the range of possibilities. Meanwhile, regarding maximization goal, research finds that individuals with high maximization goals only increase their saving intention when they are certain that saving will enable them to pursue high-end future alternatives (Brannon, 2021). Consumers primed with the goal of choosing the best product are more likely to engage in unethical cheating to obtain more money (Goldsmith et al., 2018). Therefore, strategy-oriented maximizers' behaviors are not entirely negative, nor are goal-oriented maximizers' behaviors entirely positive.

4.2 Future Research Directions

This paper explores the adaptive and maladaptive outcomes of maximization through a dimension-based four-quadrant theoretical model, providing a new theoretical framework for understanding maximization decision-making style. Future research could also attempt to understand this decision-making style from other perspectives, developing theoretical models different from this one. Given that evidence for the four-quadrant model remains preliminary, more empirical support is needed. Therefore, future research directions should include at least the following five aspects.

First, conduct research based on the dimensions of maximization decision-making style and their interactions. Most studies treat maximization decision-making style as a whole, ignoring internal dimensional differences in adaptability and maladaptability. Future research should separately explore these two dimensions and investigate their interactions to develop effective intervention strategies. Since Cheek and Schwartz (2016) proposed the two-component model of maximization, research has begun focusing on distinctions between maximization goal and strategy. Nevertheless, the interaction between these dimensions remains underexplored. Future research could examine the relationship between maximization and key psychological variables (such as risk tendency, saving intention, and moral behavior) from an interaction perspective to resolve current controversies.

Second, adopt a person-centered perspective to distinguish types of maximization decision-making style for research. Although previous research has used a

variable-centered perspective to explore maximization decision-making style, it has not classified individuals, leaving unclear the adaptability and maladaptability of maximization types. Through the four-quadrant model, this paper indirectly treats relationships between overall maximization, high-standard scores, and option search scores with other psychological variables as evidence for the adaptive functions of mixed-type, goal-oriented, and strategy-oriented maximizers, but this remains insufficient as direct evidence. For example, given that strategy-oriented maximizers' high-standard dimension scores and goal-oriented maximizers' option search dimension scores are likely not zero, the negative correlation between maximization strategy and positive emotions and the positive correlation between maximization goal and positive emotions (Newman et al., 2018; Purvis et al., 2011) only provide indirect evidence for strategy-oriented maximizers' negative emotional adaptation and goal-oriented maximizers' positive emotional adaptation. Future research could test the adaptive functions of different types of maximizers based on this four-quadrant model, providing direct evidence for the model and clarifying that the "maximization paradox" (Dar-Nimrod, 2009) may not apply to all maximizers. Additionally, research could further examine interactions between maximization types and other factors on key psychological variables. For example, there may be interactive effects between maximization type and culture. Research shows differences among maximizers from different countries in maladaptive functions: in choice-rich societies such as the United States and Western Europe, maximizers show lower well-being than satisficers, whereas in non-Western societies such as China, no significant correlation with well-being exists (Roets et al., 2012).

Third, conduct longitudinal research on maximization decision-making style. Current research primarily uses cross-sectional survey methods, which have limitations in inferring causal relationships. Although experimental design studies exist, given differences between state and trait maximization—for example, trait maximizers are not as maximizing in consumption domains (Kokkoris, 2019), while state maximization significantly affects individuals' emotions and behaviors in consumption domains (Ma & Roese, 2014)—longitudinal research methods are necessary to advance this field. This approach can not only help us better understand the processes and mechanisms through which maximization decision-making style and its different types affect other key variables but also provide a dynamic perspective on how these styles change over time.

Fourth, focus on potential influencing factors of maximization decision-making style. Current research primarily focuses on differences between maximizers and non-maximizers, with insufficient exploration of potential influencing factors of maximization. For example, personality traits may influence maximization decision-making style (Ma et al., 2023), with research showing that maximization goal positively correlates with positive traits in the Big Five personality model, while maximization strategy negatively correlates with positive traits in the Big Five (Purvis et al., 2011). Meanwhile, research finds that motivation affects individuals' maximization decision-making style (Hughes & Scholer, 2017). Maximization strategy relates to motivation focused on "evaluating and

comparing various choices to pursue the 'correct' choice," while maximization goal relates to motivation focused on "approaching gains and avoiding non-gains, concentrating on progress and growth." Therefore, we could further examine how macro and micro environments and their interactions with individual variables influence maximization decision-making style, which is extremely important for deepening and improving our understanding of the maximization research system.

Fifth, promote neuroscience research on maximization decision-making style. Currently, relatively few studies exist in the neuroscience domain. For example, according to reinforcement learning theory, animals learn to maximize future rewards through trial and error (Sutton & Barto, 1998). This process involves midbrain dopamine neurons transmitting prediction error signals to the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex, influencing motor control choices when outcomes are erroneous or reward results fall below expectations (Holroyd et al., 2004; Silvetti et al., 2014). Exploring how differences in this neural transmission affect individuals' maximization types represents a potential direction for future research.

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Adaptive Function of Maximization Decision-making Styles: A New Perspective Based on the Four-Quadrant Theoretical Model

Abstract

The maximization decision-making style includes two dimensions: the maximization goal and the maximization strategy, each exhibiting distinct adaptive functions. Most studies often rely on scores of the overall or the specific dimension, a method that fails to fully capture the complexity of maximizers. This review analyzes the differences and connections between the two dimensions of maximization from the perspective of motivation, leading to the proposal of a person-centered maximization four-quadrant model and its hypotheses. This model categorizes decision-makers into four types: mixed-type, goal-oriented, strategy-oriented, and non-maximizers. Based on this model, this review analyzes the adaptive functions of different types of maximizers from the perspectives of emotional adaptation and social consumption behavior adaptation. Finally, this review discusses the theoretical and practical value of the maximization four-quadrant model, and suggests that future research should further ex-

plore the interaction between dimensions, adopt a person-centered perspective, conduct longitudinal analyses, and investigate influencing factors and neurological foundations, to enhance understanding of adaptive functions of different types of maximizers.

Key words: Maximization decision-making style; Maximization strategy; Maximization goal; Four-quadrant theoretical model

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.