

# Who are Maximizers, Really?

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## Abstract

Recently, Cheek & Schwartz (2016) proposed a model of maximizing tendency that defines a maximizer as someone with both a maximizing goal (i.e., high standards) *and* maximizing strategy (i.e., high search). Across two studies, we tested the implied interaction of standards and search. Using archival data, Study 1 found no support for the proposed interaction effects across 16 outcome variables. To resolve questions regarding the alternative search measure from Study 1, we developed a new measure of alternative search to include in the interaction effect. Initial results from the second study likewise fail to uncover the proposed interactions.

## Introduction

### Maximizing Tendency

- Maximizing Tendency is a decision style described as the refusal to satisfice on decisions, and a need to meet a high standard (Diab et al., 2008).
- Research debating the nature of maximizing has become centered around the construct of Alternative Search.
  - One model defines a maximizer as someone who exhibits both high standards and high search (Cheek & Schwartz, 2016).
  - Another model defines a maximizer solely as an individual with high standards (Dalal et al., 2015).
- Both theoretical arguments derive support from the work of Herbert Simon (1955, 1956). However, thus far the maximizing strategy-maximizing goal model have not been empirically tested.
- Study 1 was an initial test of the two proposed models of Maximizing Tendency using archival data.
- Study 2 was a follow up test of the proposed model using a revised measure of Alternative Search that was designed using domain sampling techniques.

## Strategy-Goal Model

### Theoretical Proposition:

- Maximizing tendency encompasses a decision goal (i.e., High Standards) and a decision strategy (i.e., Alternative Search).
- Maximizing means being high on both.

### Hypothesis:

- High standards will interact with alternative search to predict decision outcomes, such that those who are high on both will exhibit maximizing behaviors.

## Study 1

### Procedure

- University students (N = 81).
- Self-reported maximizing tendency (MTS), alternative search (MS-AS), and outcomes (Table 1).

### Results and Discussion

- There was no significant interaction effect found between High Standards and Alternative Search for any of the outcomes
- No initial support for the proposed interactive relation.
- Some concerns over the measure of alternative search.
- Study 2:
  - develops a new measure of alternative search.
  - Provides initial test of the interactions with the new measure.

Table: Outcomes and expected relations

| Outcome Variable   | Expected Relation        |
|--|--------------------------|
| STUDY 1  |                          |
| Time in search   | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Count of information searched                                    | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Proportion of information searched                               | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Number of options for which at least one dimension was searched  | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Number of dimensions for which at least one options was searched | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Searching all of one dimension                                   | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Searching all of one option                                      | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Search variability   | Maximizers < Satisficers |
| Number of times shifted across dimensions and options            | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Employing a strategic search                                     | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Asking to see more options                                       | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Switching from an initial decision                               | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Total time to make a decision                                    | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Indecisiveness   | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| STUDY 2  |                          |
| Indecisiveness   | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Rational decision making   | Maximizers > Satisficers |
| Intuitive decision making  | Maximizers < Satisficers |
| Need for cognition   | Maximizers > Satisficers |

## Study 2: Scale Development

### Item Development and Refinement

- Construct definition: “Alternative Search is the tendency to search for alternative options to form a decision set, *and/or* to collect information about the options in the decision set.”
- Eight individuals wrote an initial 32 items.
- Subject Matter Experts (N = 14, Mean Age = 37.71 years; SD = 9.29 years) were asked rate match of 32 items to construct definition.
- Items with a mean rating of 4 or less were removed from the scale.
- Twenty items remained for further evaluations.

### Item Analysis

- An EFA (N=253) was conducted on the 20 remaining items:
  - 2 Items were removed for dual factor loading
  - 1 Item was removed because it was specific to the school domain “I collect information about classes before I register”
  - Additional items were removed in order of lowest factor loading to make scale length manageable for future studies
- Final scale was 13 items with alpha .90

## Study 2: Test of Proposition

### Procedure

- University students (N = 253, Mean Age = 19.04 years; SD = 2.36 years)
- Participants self-reported maximizing tendency (MTS), the new alternative search measure, and outcomes (Table 1).

### Results and Discussion

- Like study 1, there were no significant interactions between High Standards and Alternative Search for the outcomes as would be expected according to the strategy-goal model of maximizing.

## General Discussion

- Two models of maximizing tendency have been proposed:
  - Model 1: High standards model
  - Model 2: Strategy-Goal model
- Whereas past research has found support for Model 1, no empirical evidence has directly tested Model 2.
- Initial empirical evidence does not seem to support Model 2.
- Across two studies, utilizing different measures of alternative search, and with different behavioral and self-report outcomes, the proposed interaction from Model 2 was not supported.
- Based on these initial research findings, the high standards model seems to explain maximizing tendency best.
- Limitations & Future Directions:**
  - Replication and cross-validation of alternative search scale is needed.
  - Future research should explore more behavioral outcomes with the new alternative search measure.