

# Decision Making Styles: Maximizers Vs Satisficers

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**Abstract:** Every consumer has their own way of purchasing their products, and their decision making style varies from customer to customer. This research is based on analysis of online consumer purchase behaviour among different consumer archetypes. The study has revealed about the effect of decision making outcome of a consumer and their knowledge about the product i.e. satisfaction with the process and satisfaction with the choice. As suggested by several studies, it has become a common assumption that maximizers are less happy than satisficers and choose for the best choice while satisficers opts for good enough choices. A critics among maximizers and satisficers has also been drawn through literatures which suggested that maximizers may also be happy with somesituational dilemmas.The study will help online marketers to recognize the buying behaviour of their consumer and make them purchase accordingly through their past purchase behaviour.

**Keywords:** Maximizing, Satisficing, Archetypes, Social Comparison

## I. INTRODUCTION

In reality, decision makers are much like to be ‘Satisficers’ but it has been argued that there is not only existence of satisficers but people also struggle for being as maximizers. They intend to choose the best option [1]. However, there is no more work done based on satisficers andmaximizers character of an individual in the consumer decision making process. The present study focuses on decision making for the selection of consumer durables in online marketing. Thus, the consumer gets confused in selecting durables, like their choice is influenced by preferences, brand price, durability, features, and technology. Therefore, the different attributes of consumer durables lead to generation of a research area for maximizers and satisficers that how can they satisfy themselves in making their purchase decision within time constraints.

In this study, the research is based on differences between maximizers and satisficers for the evaluation of alternatives. Therefore, it can be considered as a good validity of the topic and considerable significance. The research participants are requested to purchase a consumer durable under a time

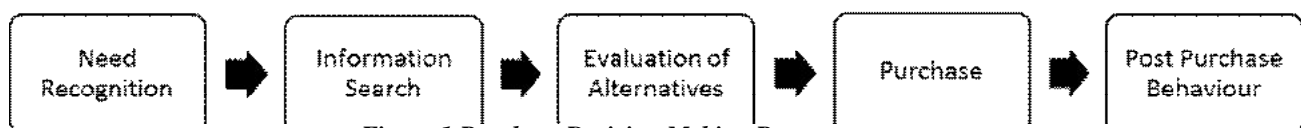
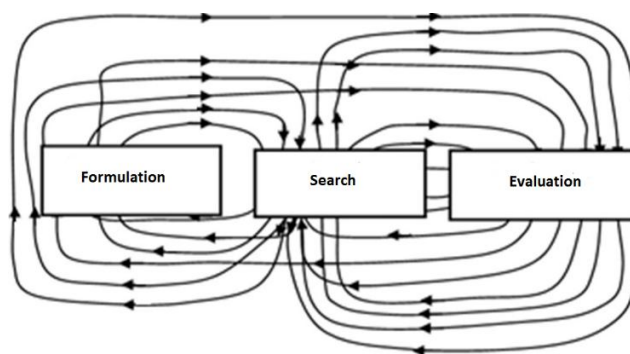


Figure 1 Purchase Decision Making Process

constraint. Searching information is analogous to the consumer decision. The search for information starts from consumer’s perception towards the market and implying their views in finding proper information about their requirements in the concerned market. The consumer search includes involvement of individual brand uncertainty, the amount of money spent in exploring the information. An online search for information is cost-effective. The complexity of decision making styles focuses to gather more and more information, experience and knowledge about product will help in decision making. Knowledge uncertainty reduces search alternatives while choice uncertainty increases search of alternatives[2]. A consumer has a greater uncertainty about the online purchase of the product. Due to uncertainty, the consumer chooses top brand for online purchasing without searching further information about other brands related to the product. This type of strategy is optimal among consumers.

**II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The decision making styles of the consumer has mainly focused on general activities deviating from normative theory. The decision making is now greatly influenced by the attention of the consumer[3]. A scale was developed by [4] to examine the influence of maximizers and satisficers. The scale contains items such as “when I watch TV, I channel surf, it is a common practice to scan several channels at a single time when we are watching a particular channel. This captures a lot of information for making a possible choice. It tells about the feat of maximizing who is less comfortable in their life, less happiness, and more depression. This type of decision is less constructive in nature and fully dependent on external sources of information. The decision making style is defined as a habitual pattern followed by individuals or a way to respond to a decision task. Scott and Bruce had suggested four decision making styles in behavioral research[5]. (i) Rational decision making style is a collection of search of information and evaluation of the available alternatives. (ii) Intuitive decision making style is based on relying feelings (iii) Dependent decision making style is based on advice and direction from others (iv) Avoidant decision making style is based on an attempt to avoid decision making. Though in the study, it has resulted in one more decision making styles namely spontaneous decision making style. It is based on making decision at random. Thus, maximizers have much effect of regret about their previous decisions. After studying the several reviews of the literature, it has been concluded that the online purchase decision of the consumer is influenced by the prior information of the particular product and style of the consumer to make decision. Since Internet provides access to a lot of information in a single click, related information of the product can also be accessed through several links on the same page



*Figure 2. Multiple behavioural roles in decision making*

which will move to another page. The interrelated source of information influences decision making of

the consumer and finally style of decision making may be slightly changed with knowledge about the product[6].As we are familiar that the decision making styles were introduced by Simon in 1960.The study related to decision making styles was being made to explore the behaviour of maximizers and satisficers.

In Table 1, the research reaches a point where the consumer is dependent on their decision making style for maximizer and satisficers which is given by [7].

Decision Making Style	Knowledge of the Product	
	Low	High
Satisficer	Satisficer with low knowledge about the product	Satisficer with high knowledge about the product
Maximizer	Maximizer with low knowledge about the product	Maximizer with high knowledge about the product

**Table 1 Archetype of Online Consumers**

***Sequential Form of Behavioral Roles in online consumer purchase decision making***

The online consumer purchase process consists of a lot of steps. Most of the decision model consists of the following steps: [8][9].This model states that a consumer switches from one step to another in their purchase decision making (Figure 1).

The customer follows the traditional model of purchase decision making but there are a lot of variations in the decision making the process. It depends on the current situation of the consumer and the needs of the consumer. The iterations between the steps of consumer purchase decision making changes slightly with consumer to consumer. At last, it has been drawn that the complexity in decision making can be made simple through a consumer decision model. This research has used several decision making works of literature to draw a conclusion for developing it.

Based on the above steps involved in consumer purchase decision making, there is an existence of a set of behavioral roles. The behavioural roles have their own significance and serve as a linear structure in higher-level authority. The information search and evaluation of alternatives resemble a cognitive exploration (Fig. 1) of the decision making process[10]. The actions being taken by the consumer have been grouped into several phases of the decision making the process and the consumer tries to complete the cycle of purchase decision making i.e. Formulation, Search, and Evaluation. Each phase of the model is interconnected with the next phase and evaluation acts as a final decision maker for the online purchasing of the durables. The process starts with identification of objectives and deciding quality

standard of the product. The maximizer sets its standard according to its own benchmark. However, Satisficer has a desire to get such product which can meet their basic necessities and fulfill their requirement. The consultation with peer groups and family members can provide an estimate for the online purchase of the durables. Since consumer durables are used for a long time, the purchasing should be done in gathering reliable information. Meanwhile, Maximizers gather information on all of its attributes which can be suitable for them in every aspect of the product like physical appearance, brand, price, usability, durability, warranty, and final satisfaction. The next phase of consumer decision making starts with search. The information search is refined for sorting of alternatives based on the objectives set by the consumer. Alternatives can be refined on the criteria decided in the objective of the purchase by the consumer. Maximizers and satisficers have entirely different criteria for their online purchasing. The phase is in condition that their objectives have been defined; the searching of alternatives have also been done according to their predefined objectives. The consumer will now evaluate the sorted alternatives which will meet their satisfaction in online purchasing of the durables. The consumer decision making ends with these processes by the consumer.

### **III. CONSTRUCT DEVELOPMENT**

The construct is assumptions among maximizers and satisficers in respect of information search and their decision making. Maximizers follow the exhaustive search process for selecting the best choice and invest much time in finding alternative options. But, Satisficers find a suitable choice after evaluating the alternative options. Their choice is only meant for acceptable or satisfactory options.

**Information Search:**When the available options are in a small number, it is easy to evaluate the options. Satisficers and maximizers are motivated to browse among the alternative options. They would have a low motivation level in selecting the options. Maximizers would be continuously choosing for the best available options even when they have to work in time constraints. They have a habit of doing the same and choose as the best available alternative options. Unlike maximizers, satisficers should settle down with the first acceptable option but will not worry about the other possible alternative options.

**H1:Maximizers have high motivation to browse options than satisficers in an online consumer purchase decision**

**Perceived time constraint:**Since satisficers need satisfactory or good enough options and adjust themselves accordingly with time constraints. But maximizers will take a long time in evaluating the available options. However, the time constraint is significantly related to the no. of alternative options. Maximizers would feel hectic even if available assortment size is very small because they have to choose best in them otherwise maximizers will feel guilty after the decision.

**H2:Maximizers takes more time than satisficers in making an online purchase decision.**

**Post-purchase decision:**Maximizer suffers from cognitive dissonance after post-purchase than satisficers. Maximizers worry much about the decision, what would happen if some other product would have been bought. Maximizers do not get complete and satisfying information about their purchase decision in high time constraints. When there is a possibility of changing the purchase decision, maximizers would change their decision with respect to satisficers.

**H3: Maximizers would likely reconsider their original purchase decisions than satisficers in a time constraint.**

#### **IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was analyzed among 226 respondents of Madhya Pradesh, India in which there are 118 males and 108 females. The respondents had made an online purchase of consumer durables in the last 3 years. Their behaviour was asked through a questionnaire which consists of questions related to assortment sample, time to browse and book the products and post-purchase decisions of the consumer. Since the choice of selecting durables varies through gender and assorting the product is different for males and females. They have their own perception of use and requirements. Among their specific gender, they were asked to assort their choice of a product within stipulated time. This will provide equal opportunity to them in selection of the durables.

The research is focused on the quick purchase decision making style of the consumer. The participants have asked about the time of purchase duration, their response was being analyzed for time spent searching for information about their desired product and finally the achievement of their satisfaction level after purchase decision. They have recorded their responses on a measuring scale designed through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on a five-point Likert Scale. The participants were asked to reconsider their responses. The time of searching for information and making purchasing decisions was recorded again. They were kept free to feel their decision making styles. The time constraint was measured with the statement “I felt considerable time pressure in making online purchase decision” in searching information; “I searched a lot of products and selected according to my favorite choice” and at last it was asked, “I was satisfied with the online purchase decided in time constraint”.

However, the respondents were given one more chance to record their responses so that they would feel different time pressure and idea to search for information through the internet. Their post-purchase behaviour would also change if their choice is changed in the selection of the product. As per their wish, they have given more time in browsing and selection of the product. The rest of the process was almost the same as their first process. The observation of respondents has recorded their opinion on 13 item scale developed by [4]. Their summed score is calculated for analysis of data.

#### **Role of Consumer Knowledge in Online Purchase Decision Making**

Knowledge is required to search for information about products in online purchasing. Several studies had been carried out by researchers. Knowledge is required for searching quality and relevant information about the product. It varies from customer to customer, and it also differentiates among customers to customers. Whatever knowledge a customer resembles, they try to gather more information through the internet. The knowledge of the consumer directs towards the types of standards of the product. It may be of two types: Absolute Standard and Relative Standard. Satisficers move towards absolute standard in comparison to relative best. However, Maximizers try to achieve relative standards among other consumers. The relative standard seems like the best choice of a consumer. It gives highest satisfaction level to the consumer [11]. The knowledge of the consumer makes it possible to decide about their possible best alternatives and ensures comparison of their choice with other consumers. Maximizers are interrelated with their surrounding consumers and society. It has left a question with us: Whether maximizers are paradoxical in social comparison.

## Do Maximizers emphasis relative standards and quality positions more than satisficers?

Since we are familiar from past literatures that maximizers try to get the “the best” who are independent in respect of other individuals. However, what criteria would be fixed to choose the best option; it is very critical to decide the best option by the maximizers. The maximizers choose the best choice but how can they know about their best choice. Finally, they also move back in comparing their choices with other individuals. This stands that maximizers emphasize on relative standards.

In an experiment design of quality standards versus relative position among maximizers:

*“Imagine that you want to purchase a washing machine on the occasion of the Diwali festival. The store is available straight to homethat would be fine for the customer. But, there is also a store in the mega market but they have a large variants of washing machines in the same price range as it was available with the earlier store. The store in mega market has a lot of choice for the purchase decision. The difference in both store is that the customer has to travel a short distance to reach the mega market. How likely would the customer travel to purchase a washing machine?”*

Maximizers are more motivated towards achieving objective quality than satisficers, so that they can get a better social status. Maximizers can move to the next store or say the mega market to look upon the availability of several choices and then decide about their purchase. They can only feel the best choice after analyzing quality in several attributes. Maximizer’s interest is explicit, much conscious and aware towards their social environment.

Adding further to this situation, when the purchase of the washing machine had to be done within a fixed period of time, maximizers may choose the inferior time bound situation in comparative to the satisficers, but they will again try to select the best choice or the product. Maximizers can surpass their opinion to get objective quality in exceptional cases. Thus, examining the choice of maximizers within a limited time can explicit the identity of the maximizers. Satisficers can lower their positional choices over time, they will try to get absolute choice standard to be good enough than other individuals.

Though in some cases of variations in choice attributes, there are some products whose quality is visible and can be measured in comparison with its other variants. Their quality can be judged through common knowledge, compared on several grounds, and then decided about its purchase. The difference among maximizer and Satisficer are also identifiable. The satisficers are not focused in social comparison, their desired choice should also not vary due to its attribute visibility.

When maximizers have to choose among the product quality and social position, they will drop the relative quality of the product but will focus on social status to say about the product as “Best choice” in comparison to the satisficers choice. The maximizer’s choice is independent in nature. In summary, it can be said that when maximizer have a high standing quality relative to the satisficers absolute quality; therefore maximizers extend towards relative standard in public visibility while they extend towards absolute standard in their private capacity.

## The paradox of Maximizers VS Satisficers in Social Comparison

Several studies had been carried regarding the behaviour of Maximizers and Satisficers. Most of the studies tell that Maximizers are unhappy in comparison to satisficers[4],[12], [11], [10], [8]. These studies focus on one-dimensional behaviour of maximizers i.e. to get the best alternatives of choice. But

the 13 item scale used by Schwartz et al (2002) deviates from the originality of unidirectional in identifying only the optimal alternatives which can ensure the best choice. The scale developed by the [4] are based on watching TV (entertainment), listening music in a car (entertainment), finding better job opportunities (Satisfaction), Shopping gift item (friendship), hard time in finding cloth ( Desire), picking best videos (Struggle), doing work with highest living standard ( Lifestyle), No option for second best (Attitude), Imagination of all possible choices (Decision). The scale is intermingled with several attributes that are not only proposing about searching best alternatives, but it is multidimensional. If this 13 item scale is used for factor loading to check their consistency. What would happen is to be seen that the items are not related to a single factor, then how can we use it in factor loading for checking the internal consistency of the 13 item scale [4].

Recently a study has been done by [13] which has suggested the measurement of alternative choices among Maximizers and Satisficers. A new scale has been developed to measure the maximizing tendency scale contrary to the 13 item scale developed by [4]. It includes the same 13 item scale named as maximization scale (MS), Maximizing Tendency Scale (MTS), 3 items have been taken from maximization scale and next six items are added self which resembles their concise meaning of maximizers. After that some new items were introduced to develop the maximizing tendency scale. New elements were life satisfaction, indecisiveness, avoidance, neuroticism, and regret. Along with this, the final scale comprises of a lot of factors which shows the behaviour of the maximizers and their contrary satisficers. The author has now added five situational dilemmas to the participants. Their choice was meant for maximizers, neutral and satisficers. The neutral response has been omitted from the study. And now, [13] Diab have developed a new measurement scale for measuring the happiness of maximizers and satisficers. This theory has added one more item namely behaviour reports comprising of selecting best option in their life. And finally, the scale has been developed by Diab [13]. The study has resulted in amazing output and also in contradiction with the result obtained from Schwartz [4] [1]. Maximizers are also happy as satisficers and they are not indecisive, neurotic and avoidant. The new form of theory-based scale has been developed a new decision making scale through this study. It has been drawn from the study about how decision making styles can affect satisfaction to the consumer's choice.

## V. CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This research can impart a great contribution to the corporates and MNCs in doing business through online marketing. Maximizers act as segmentation for the organization which focuses on consumer satisfaction and their outcomes. In case Maximizers buy the product online in a short time, and unfortunately they are not satisfied with their purchase decision. The maximizers will try to exchange the product very quickly. It turns into a risk for the company closing sales. It gives a message for the company and their salesperson to identify their consumer as a maximizer or Satisficer; they would act accordingly to close their sales. The salesperson should be careful towards their prospective customers.

Online marketing service providers save the browsing history of their customers and provide advertisements related to similar products in their social networking sites. The feature of artificial intelligence helps in analyzing the behaviour of the consumers and their desired preferences. Once the online marketer judges their customer as a Satisficer, they will only display a few products of reliable brands and most purchased items. However, the online marketer judges their customer as a maximizer,

they need to display a variety of products and a lot of information for comparison with other products. Several search links might be required for maximizer in their selection of the products. The target audience can easily be identified with their past purchase behaviour and the way of searching desired products.

Further research can be carried with other demographic and psychographic factors with the consumer archetypes of the decision making process. Literacy, culture, age, gender may act as a variable in comparing the behaviour of maximizers and satisficers. In conclusion, it can be stated as the present research can impart contribution to both consumer decision making theories along with managerial theories.

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