

# The role of self-construal in decision making

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to explore the connection between self-construal and making choices. The existing research mainly used the research method of questionnaire survey, questionnaire data analysis form self-construction scale, self-construal scale for researchers to understand the relationship between individual perception and others. The concept and theory of self-construal are widely applied in various research fields, such as decision-making and pro-society. Self-decision theory was first proposed from the study of individual motivation. Through empirical analyses, self-control and moral decision-making factors, self-control and pro-social decision, personal needs and environmental needs were discussed. People's self-construal of different categories for self-decision is one of the important factors. By applying the concept and theory of self-construal to decision, self-construal is an important factor. Self-decision theory is a continuous interpretation theory. Self-decision of individual self-realization is a dynamic process, involving internal motivation, internalized external motivation and emotional integration of three parts. The different classifications will have different psychological impulses and psychological demands, thus affect the motivation of individual tendency, ultimately affecting people's decision making.

## 1 Introduction

Since Markus and Kitayama first put forward the concept of self-construal, scholars have begun to study self-construal from various perspectives of personality psychology, social psychology and cross-cultural psychology [1]. At present, self-construal is frequently employed in many indignation realms, such as organizational behavior, communication and communication. Individual internal characteristics such as cognition (cognition), emotion (emotion), and motivation (motivation) can be influenced and determined by self-construal. Related studies of self-construal have divided individuals into two categories: dependent self (interdependent self) and independent self. The Independent Self sees itself as part of the group, defines itself with the rest of the group, and focuses on the ability to distinguish oneself from other members of the group. For the independent individual, the self is part of the social relationship surrounded by them, because the relationship with others in the specific situation defines the characteristics of the self. For the independent self, others are not involved in the definition of self. Previous researchers pointed out that the main goal of the independent self is to emerge from the group, while the dependent self pays more attention to maintaining harmony with others. At the end of the last century and the beginning of this century, the concept and theory of self-construal were formally applied to the research of decision-making, marketing and consumer behavior, and became a hot research topic.

The research paper by Hazel and Shinobu explored the concepts of independent and interdependent self-

construals and their implications for various psychological processes [1]. The paper presents experimental findings that shed light on the nature and influence of these construal orientations. Independent construal refers to a cognitive orientation that emphasizes the self as a distinct and autonomous entity. It emphasizes individual agency, personal goals, and uniqueness. In this construal, individuals are seen as separate from others, and their thoughts, feelings, and actions are shaped by their internal attributes and personal preferences. Independent construal is commonly found in individualistic cultures that prioritize personal achievements, self-expression, and independence. On the other hand, interdependent construal refers to a cognitive orientation that emphasizes the self as interconnected with others and the surrounding social context. It emphasizes social harmony, relational goals, and interdependence. In this construal, individuals are seen as part of a larger social network, and their thoughts, feelings, and actions are influenced by their relationships, social norms, and obligations. Interdependent construal is commonly found in collectivistic cultures that prioritize group harmony, cooperation, and conformity.

The experiments conducted by Markus and Kitayama involved participants from diverse cultural backgrounds, allowing for a comparison of construal orientations across cultures [1]. The findings revealed distinct patterns associated with each construal orientation. Individuals with an independent construal showed a tendency to focus on individual attributes, engage in self-enhancement, and prioritize personal goals. They also displayed a greater preference for analytical

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thinking and a stronger sense of agency. In contrast, individuals with an interdependent construal showed a tendency to focus on relational aspects, engage in self-effacement, and prioritize social goals. They displayed a greater preference for holistic thinking and a stronger sense of connectedness with others. These findings highlight the role of cultural factors in shaping construal orientations and suggest that cultural norms and values influence how individuals perceive themselves and their social world. The implications of these findings extend to various psychological processes. Independent construal is associated with a focus on individual rights, self-esteem maintenance, and a preference for individual achievements. Interdependent construal, on the other hand, is associated with a focus on social obligations, harmony maintenance, and a preference for collective achievements. These different orientations have implications for cognition, emotion, motivation, and interpersonal dynamics.

The theory of good decision making was put forward by Ahmed and Omotude. Decision theory is a theory about principles and algorithms in mind people utilized when making decisions [2]. This theory also pointed out how people identify values, uncertain factors and other factors that can influence decision making. Decision making is an essential skill needed for leadership. Decision making happens frequently at all levels of projects. They also put forward a theory about decision making that people are more likely to memorize cases of bad decision making than good decision making. Their explanation of this theory is that people's tendency to experience painful emotion arousal of a consequence of a wrong decision can leave a strong impression and memory in people's mind. To avoid a bad outcome brought by a wrong decision, following the right procedure is required. Decision making is divided into a number of different types. A decision usually involves choosing from two or more options, within the measurement of which one would bring the most positive outcome as it has the highest probability of success or suitable in the situation. Conditional or contingent decisions mean that these are already made decisions based on certain conditions being met. The concept of self construal and theory can likely be applied to decision making. Self-construal is an important factor. The self-decision theory is a continuous construal theory. As a basic psychological impulse and psychological need, meaning seeking can affect the individual's motivational tendency and have a certain influence on the self-determination process of motivation, thus ultimately affecting people's decision making.

## **2 Factors relevant to self-construal and decision-making**

The main idea of argument of this section is that an individual who has higher independent self-construal has higher preference on better options, and the effects of emotion on evaluations is more evident than an interdependent self-construal. In the study by Hong and Chang, the main population studied were consumers [3].

Types of self-construal, and what role people's self-construal plays on making decisions are assessed in their studies. When making decisions, consumers are either more concentrated on themselves or other people. It would be also related to whether consumers value feelings or rations more when deciding. Plus, the extent of how much consumers feel that they are more related to independent or interdependent self-construal can vary. As the researchers elaborated, consumers always justify the choices they made. The results show that mood index used in this study indicated that the self-construal manipulation did not affect consumers' feelings, so mood is explained as an alternative explanation by researchers. From the data collected in the following experiment and research, a further deduction that evaluations of values of the consequences of decision making will increase in the situation when consumers utilize a strategy based on feelings. Plus, through analysing results of the following experiments, it can be deduced that these effects are moderated by decision making focusing on whether the decision is made for oneself or for other people, also the necessity of justifications of choices made.

The major argument of this part is that consumers often make mutual consumption choices for themselves and others. The researchers suggested that interdependent people are more likely to make choices based on a balance of needs of themselves and others than independent ones. They also found out that the consideration of others' likings varies with group size. When group size is small people tend to take other's needs into considerations when making choices. In comparison, when the group is large, individuals tend to make decisions based on their own preferences. In the study by Wu et al., the way consumers make unilateral decisions for the sake of themselves and others, in situations where the decisions will be shared together by the group members, and its relationship with self-construal, were examined [4]. The samples of this study are adult consumers. Both male and female samples participated. One of the experiments investigated the effects of manipulation of other focus, while another experiment manipulated cognitive load. The results showed that interdependent consumers consistently make choices that balance self and others' preferences, regardless of group size. From all the studies that the researchers investigated, this paper can make a further deduction that if consumers wanted their own preference they would take into others' consideration. Having dinner with a few groups of people or interdependent individuals and giving the one who makes decision longer time to decide would be a more ideal choice to them, because interdependent individuals take other's preference considerations more than people of higher independent self-construal. Besides, in situations when there are only a couple or a few people present, everyone's thoughts about the option that they will share are more possible to be heard by the decision maker. In contrast, in cases when there is a large group of people making the same decision, the decision maker is more likely to choose the option best for themselves.

The main opinion of the study by Polman and Vohs is that making decisions for other people is more pleasant and less exhausting for independent choice makers, and less enjoyable and more demanding in the mind of interdependent decision makers [5]. This study investigated the relationship between feeling tired of making decisions for others and decision makers' self-construal. Three experiments are done to study the relationship between decision fatigue, choosing for others, and self-construal. The first experiment aimed to establish the basic effect that decisions made for the self, versus for others, resulting in more depletion. From the results collected by all the research, a further deduction that can be made that people with stronger independent self are more likely to enjoy the feeling of making choices for others than interdependent individuals, and also experience less fatigue or exhausted feelings than interdependent individuals when they are making decisions for the sake of others. By choosing options that will be consumed by others can leave an unpleasant feeling to people who focus more on interdependent self-construal.

The research paper demonstrates that gender moderates the effects of self-construal priming on fairness judgments, with males who possess a self-conception that is independent, showing a stronger preference for fairness compared to those who are conditioned to self-construct independently, while females do not exhibit a significant difference in fairness judgments based on self-construal priming. The research paper by Flinkenflogel et al. explored the role of gender in moderating the effects of self-construal priming on fairness considerations [6]. The study aims to investigate how priming individuals with a relationship that is either independent or interdependent self-construal influences their fairness judgments, and whether gender plays a role in this process. The research focused on a sample population consisting of 80 Dutch undergraduate students (40 males and 40 females) with a mean age of 20.2 years. Randomly assigned to either an independent self-construal priming condition or an interdependent self-construal priming condition were the participants. The study employed a priming manipulation task where participants were exposed to scenarios that focused on self-construction that was either independent or interdependent. Following the priming task, participants engaged in a fairness judgment task where they evaluated the fairness of different resource allocations. The findings of the study revealed that fairness considerations are influenced less by gender than by self-construal priming. Specifically, males primed with an independent self-construal exhibited a greater preference for fairness compared to males starting with an interdependent self-construction. In contrast, females did not show a significant difference in fairness judgments based on the type of self-construal priming. Based on these results, it can be concluded that gender plays a role in how individuals respond to self-construal priming when making fairness judgments. The findings contribute to researchers' understanding of the complex interaction between gender, self-construal, and fairness considerations.

### **3 Self-construal and ethical decision-making**

The research paper study demonstrates that individuals who have an independent self-conception are more likely to make ethical decisions based on personal values, while those with an interdependent self-construal consider the impact of their decisions on others and the broader social context, emphasizing the importance of integrating self-construal and social roles in understanding ethical decision-making and leadership. The research paper by Hoyt and Price explored the relationship between ethical decision-making and leadership by integrating social role and self-construal perspectives [7]. The study aims to understand how individuals' self-construal and social roles influence their ethical decision-making processes. The research focuses on a diverse population of individuals in leadership positions, including managers, supervisors, and executives. To gather comprehensive data, the study uses a mixed-methods approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative phase involves in-depth interviews with the participants to gain insights into their experiences, perspectives, and decision-making processes. The interviews explore how individuals' self-construal and social roles shape their ethical decision-making behaviors. The findings of this research indicate that individuals with an independent self-construal are more likely to make ethical decisions based on personal values and principles, while those with an interdependent self-construal tend to consider the impact of their decisions on others and the broader social context. The study also reveals that individuals in leadership roles are more likely to prioritize ethical considerations, as their actions have a significant impact on others. Overall, this research highlights the importance of considering both self-construal and social roles in understanding ethical decision-making and leadership. The integration of these perspectives provides a more comprehensive understanding of how individuals navigate ethical dilemmas in leadership positions. These findings have implications for organizations and leadership development programs, emphasizing the need to foster ethical decision-making skills and promote a balanced consideration of personal and social values in leadership roles.

This paper shows that self-explanation, temporal explanation, and moral identification significantly influence the ethical decisions of entrepreneurs, emphasizing the need to consider these factors when promoting ethical behavior of entrepreneurs. The study by Qian et al. explored the influence of situational factors on ethical decision-making in the context of entrepreneurship [8]. The study focuses on three key psychological constructs: self-construal, temporal-construal, and moral identity. The research aims to understand how these factors interact and shape ethical decision-making processes among entrepreneurs. The population of interest includes individuals engaged in entrepreneurial activities across various industries and backgrounds. To investigate this topic, the authors

employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques. In-depth interviews were a part of the qualitative phase with entrepreneurs to gain insights into their experiences and perspectives on ethical decision-making. These interviews provided rich and detailed information about the participants' thought processes and decision-making strategies. The quantitative phase utilized a survey-based method to assess the relationships between the focal constructs (self-construal, temporal-construal, and moral identity) and ethical decision-making. The survey was administered to a diverse sample of entrepreneurs, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the research variables. The study's findings suggest that self-construal, temporal-construal, and moral identity significantly influence ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship. Specifically, entrepreneurs with an interdependent self-construal tend to prioritize the collective interests of others, while those with an independent self-construal prioritize their personal values and goals. Moreover, individuals with a future-focused temporal-construal are more inclined to take into account long-term consequences of their actions, leading to ethically responsible decision-making. Additionally, moral identity plays a crucial role in guiding ethical decision-making, as individuals who strongly identify with moral values are more likely to make ethical choices in entrepreneurial contexts. In short, this research sheds light on the complex interplay between situational factors and ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship. The findings emphasize the importance of considering self-construal, temporal-construal, and moral identity in understanding and promoting ethical behavior among entrepreneurs.

Previous research focused on when and by whom the power is voluntarily waived. The experimental approach was to simulate an online team competition. The experiment was divided into two parts [9]. In the first part, the participants completed a leadership questionnaire to measure their self-construal and leadership performance. In the second part, participants were assigned to a team and were asked to complete a task. Upon completion of the task, participants were asked to evaluate their leadership performance and to decide how much power and authority they want to keep for themselves, rather than giving up to others. The experimental results show that self-construal and leadership performance have significant effects on active abandonment of power. Specifically, leaders are more likely to give up power when their self-construal is interdependent, and they are less willing to give up power when their leadership performance is better. These results suggest that self-construal and leadership performance are important factors that influence leaders to voluntarily abandon power. This article is important for people's understanding of leaders' voluntary abandonment behavior and design of organizational management strategies. Perceived leadership performance, interdependent self-understanding, and the ability to delay blame converge when deciding how much power should be abandoned. The current study highlights that leadership change is not only important

for team efficiency and effectiveness, but that when leadership change is needed, it is important to know how best to convey that the power transition is for the benefit of all.

#### **4 Self-construal and prosocial decision-making**

This study extends the existing literature to follow theoretically a consistent, goal-based logic and explore self-interpretation as a regulatory factor, switching from one sequential mode of environmental decision making to another [10]. In the first experiment, the authors explored the influence of self-construal on consumer environmental decisions by questionnaire. In the second experiment, the authors explore the influence of self-construal on consumer environmental decisions by means of laboratory experiments. In the third experiment, the authors explored the influence of self-construal on consumer environmental decisions through a combination of questionnaire survey and laboratory experiments. The experimental results show that self-construal has a significant impact on subsequent environmental decisions. Specifically, when consumers' self-construal is independent, they are more prone to "licensing effect", that is, previous environmental consumer behavior led them to deplete subsequent environmental behavior, and when consumers' self-construal is interdependent, they are more prone to "consistency effects", that is, previous environmental consumer behavior lead them to make commitment to environmentally friendly goals. These results suggest that self-construal is an important factor influencing consumer environmental decisions. This article is important for people's understanding of consumer environmental behavior and for designing environmental marketing strategies. The self-consistency effect occurred in consumers with accessible interdependent self-construal, but the licensing effect was more pronounced in consumers with accessible independent self-construal. Moreover, if consumers notice a high trend in environmental behavior of others in the first decision, the consistency effect of interdependence will be stronger and the independent licensing effect will be weaker. Together, these results reveal the downstream consequences of consumers choosing environmentally friendly products and have an impact on the marketing and regulation of such products.

Previous studies investigated the inconclusive results of studies on guilt and ethical consumption and explained the reasons for the inconsistency [11]. To better understand the effects of guilt on moral consumption in the Chinese Confucian context and to explore the role of culturally related individual-level interdependent self-construal as regulatory variables. Consumers in a second-tier city in China conducted an anonymous survey. The experimental method is a questionnaire, and the results show that the effect of moral consumption is modulated by intrinsic moral motivation. Specifically, when consumers' self-construal is interdependent, they are likely to compensate guilt

through intrinsic moral motivation. These results suggest that self-construal is an important factor influencing the moral consumption behavior of consumers. This article is important for people's understanding of consumer ethical consumption behavior and the design of ethical marketing strategies. The self-construal of interdependence may help to conceptualize the influence of individual relationships and the high prominence of social order defined by the Confucian ceremonial virtues (i.e., "Li"). Guilt appeals in Confucian culture may be more effective in stimulating moral responses, enabling consumers to fulfil their role-based obligations in texts of local relationships and communities.

## 5 Conclusion

In conclusion, from all the quantitative and qualitative data previous research reviewed in this paper, researchers can find clearly that there is an explicit relationship between types of self-construal and preference of decision making. Previous findings revealed that people who are more related to stronger interdependent construal showed a tendency to have more and clearer memories on outcomes of making a wrong decision than deciding something correctly, because they are more sensitive to negative consequences resulted by bad decisions than positive results brought by good decisions made. In comparison, people who are dominated by stronger independent self-construal are more likely to remember cases of making good decisions, as they are more likely to have stronger impressions of happy feelings brought by a successfully done task or an ideal result that was realized than bad outcomes of incorrect decisions.

One potential disadvantage of the reviewed articles is that the sample size of the previous studies may be limited. This can restrict the generalizability of the findings and raise doubts about the samples' representativeness. The broader population may not be accurately reflected by a small sample size, leading to potential biases and reduced external validity. Another drawback of quoting articles is the possibility of biased selection. Researchers may selectively choose studies that support their own hypotheses or perspectives, leading to a biased representation of the literature. This can undermine the objectivity and impartiality of the quoted information and limit the overall validity of the argument or analysis presented. It is important to critically evaluate the sources and consider the potential for biased selection when relying on quoted articles.

One research direction in cross-cultural contrast in psychology is to investigate the impact of cultural norms and socialization practices on parenting styles and their effects on child development. This research can explore differences in parenting styles across cultures, such as authoritarian, authoritative, or permissive, and their influence on children's cognitive, emotional, and social development, providing valuable insights into the role of culture in shaping parenting practices and their outcomes. Another research direction is cultural values and cognitive processes. This research direction examines

the influence of cultural values on cognitive processes, such as attention, memory, and decision-making. It investigates how cultural values shape individuals' cognitive styles and information processing strategies. The study may employ experimental methods, such as cognitive tasks and behavioral observations, to compare cognitive processes between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. The findings will aid in gaining a better understanding of the impact of culture on cognitive functioning.

## Authors contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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