



RESEARCH NOTE

An examination of the general decision making style questionnaire in two UK samples

Decision making
style
questionnaire

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Abstract

Purpose – To examine the psychometric properties and construct validity of the general decision making style (GDMS) questionnaire in two UK samples.

Design/methodology/approach – The GDMS takes the form of a self-report questionnaire which identifies five decision making styles: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous. It was administered to samples of business studies undergraduates in two UK business schools. Analyses included scale reliabilities, test-re-test reliability, and both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses.

Findings – The instrument's internal and temporal consistencies were generally sound. Consistent with earlier studies, analyses undertaken on the two samples independently were generally supportive of a five factor model of decision making style. No relationships with gender or year of study were observed.

Research limitations/implications – Whilst generally supportive of the GDMS, results suggest that further validation work is required. This could include consideration of the relationships between the GDMS and other measures of cognitive/personality style.

Practical implications – The managerial implications of the strengths of and relationships between the different decision making styles observed are discussed.

Originality/value – The paper fulfils a stated requirement for further validation study of the GDMS instrument.

Keywords Decision making, Personality, Cognition

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Scott and Bruce (1995) building on work by Driver (1979) and Driver *et al.* (1990) described decision making style as “the learned, habitual response pattern exhibited by an individual when confronted with a decision situation” (p. 820). They were concerned less with the demands of the decision task and environment and more with individual differences in decision making behaviour, in doing so, they identified five decision making styles.

- (1) *Rational*: logical and structured approaches to decision making;
- (2) *Intuitive*: reliance upon hunches, feelings and impressions;



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- (3) *Dependent*: reliance upon the direction and support of others;
- (4) *Avoidant*: postponing or avoiding making decisions;
- (5) *Spontaneous*: impulsive and prone to making “snap” or “spur of the moment” decisions.

Scott and Bruce (1995) also noted a lack of psychometrically sound instruments for measuring decision making style as a barrier to work and understanding in this arena, and as a response they developed the general decision making style questionnaire (GDMS).

This study follows demands for further assessment of the GDMS (Loo, 2000; Scott and Bruce, 1995), presenting analysis of its factor structure using data from two samples of UK business studies undergraduates. Data on test-re-test reliability and relationships between decision making style and gender and year of study are also considered. Discussion from this turns to the implications of the decision making styles identified for management practice and the application of the GDMS.

Background

Whilst decision making has been the subject of long-standing conceptual concern, despite some theoretical work (Driver *et al.* 1990; Rowe and Mason, 1987), there has been little consideration of the impact of individual differences between decision makers approaches to or styles of decision making. Such decision styles are potentially related to underlying cognitive styles; the “characteristic self-consistencies in information processing that develop in congenial ways around underlying personality trends” (Messick, 1984, p. 61). In this sense, different interpretations of the same decision issue can be attributed to individual differences in processing capacity combined with factors such as personality and perception.

Models of cognitive style range from uni-factorial models (Allinson and Hayes, 1996) to multi-factorial models (Myers, 1962; Kolb, 1984; Riding, 1997). Many of these models encompass analytical/rational and holistic/intuitive traits. Mitroff (1983) and Hunt *et al.* (1989) argued that decision making style has both analytical and intuitive attributes. Conceptualizing decision making sees decision making style as characterizing an individual’s preferred mode of perceiving and responding to decision making behaviours (Harren, 1979). This links the conception of decision making styles, through cognitive style, back to more consistent and stable dimensions of personality, and the antecedents of such information processing models including Jung’s (1923) personality types.

The GDMS questionnaire purports to measure five decision making preferences. Scott and Bruce (1995) provide support for the instrument’s properties through item analysis and exploratory factor analyses (principal axes factoring with orthogonal (varimax) rotation). However, whilst the latter is appropriate for “the early stages of scale development” (Hurley *et al.*, 1997, p. 668) the method does possess some weaknesses in its ability to distinguish between competing factor structures (Fosterlee and Ho, 1999, p. 477), and it is not impossible to identify other potential structures for decision making style. Hence, for the analysis here, four alternate models for decision making style are suggested (Figure 1), the rationale for which can be clearly identified from the literature.

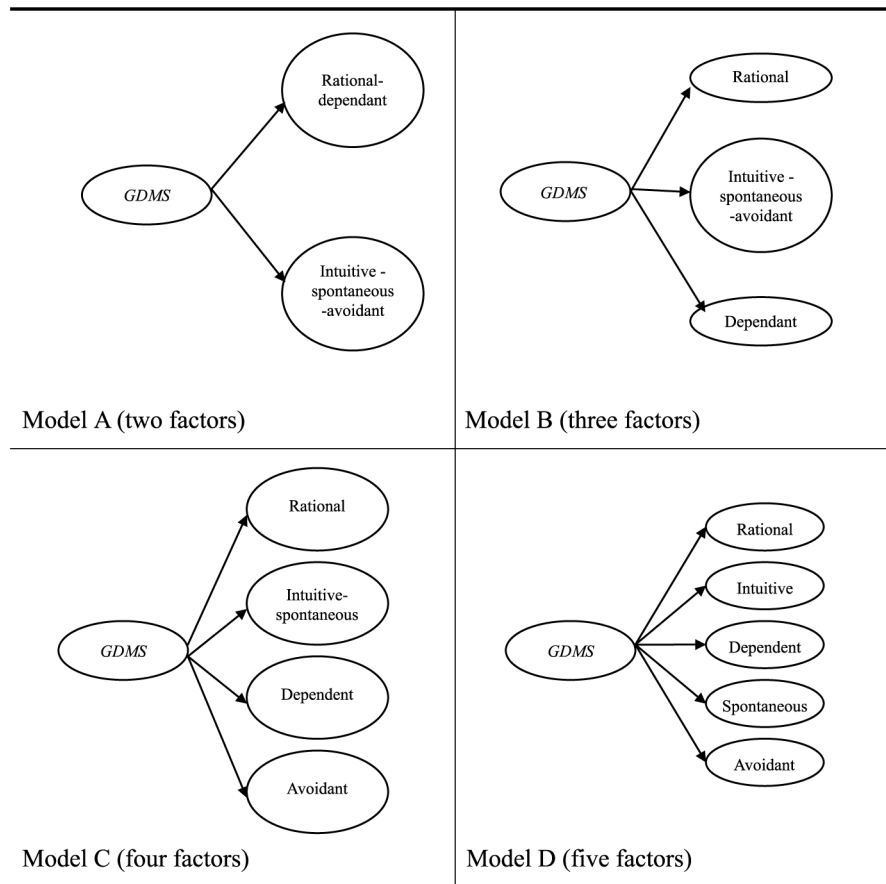


Figure 1.
The four competing
models of decision making
style (observed variables
and factor
inter-correlations not
shown)

Model A identifies two decision making styles, rational-dependant and intuitive-spontaneous-avoidant. This model follows the suggestion that decision making is indicative of a more fundamental dimension, an individual's underlying cognitive style (Behling *et al.*, 1980; Hunt *et al.*, 1989). The grouping of items into the two scales represents the distinction between analytical/rational and holistic/intuitive traits identified by many as a fundamental feature of cognitive style theory (see, for example, Allinson and Hayes, 1996; Riding, 1997; Riding and Rayner, 1998; Sadler-Smith, 1998, 1999). A rational style might reasonably include strong information search characteristics represented by dependent decision making, whilst intuition is likely to include both spontaneity, and avoidance depending on the level of control an individual feels they have over a problem or decision (Phillips *et al.*, 1984). In Model B, the dependent scale is separated from the rational, based upon Harren's (1979) research identifying three styles that serve as important sources of individual variation in career decision making, which is a key antecedent of Scott and Bruce's (1995) original model. This original model identifying four decision making styles is shown as Model C, and incorporates explicit recognition of avoidant decision making as a

separate style. Spontaneity is still retained as an aspect of intuition. Scott and Bruce's (1995) final model, incorporating five separate decision making styles, including the separate spontaneous scale that emerged through their research is shown in Model D. It could be argued that Scott and Bruce (1995) have overlooked the relationship between their theoretical model of decision making and other possible structures, which may be representative of underlying personality dimensions, identified by the models shown in Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis evaluating the goodness of fit of these competing models of decision making style is described below.

Methodology

Sample

Two independent samples, each of 200 undergraduates at two different university business schools (chosen at random from a larger samples were included in this analysis) were employed. Participation in the research was voluntary. In completing the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt the GDMS statements applied to them. Respondents were asked to report their gender and year of study (first, second, or final year); characteristics in this regard for both samples are shown in Table I.

Separate samples allow us to make comparisons between the two data sets and maintain appropriate sample sizes. Two hundred is recommended by both Hair *et al.* (1998, p. 605) and Hoelter (1983, p. 340) as an appropriate sample size for confirmatory analytical procedures that employ the statistic χ^2 . With large sample sizes, this becomes too sensitive, with almost any difference detected and all measures of goodness of fit consequently indicating poor fit (Hair *et al.*, 1998).

Instrument

The GDMS instrument (Scott and Bruce, 1995) consists of 25 items, scored on a five-point Likert-type scale, with five items identified for each style:

- (1) avoidant (e.g. "I postpone decision making whenever possible");
- (2) dependent (e.g. "I use the advice of other people in making important decisions");
- (3) intuitive (e.g. "When making decisions, I rely upon my instincts");
- (4) rational (e.g. "I make decisions in a logical and systematic way"); and
- (5) spontaneous (e.g. "I generally make snap decisions").

Table I.
Respondent
characteristics (n = 200
for both samples)

	Sample one		Sample two	
	n	Per cent	n	Per cent
Gender				
Male	113	56.5	92	46.0
Female	87	43.5	108	54.0
Year of study				
First	—	—	41	20.5
Second	125	62.5	20	10.0
Final	75	37.5	139	69.5

Scott and Bruce (1995) report high levels of internal consistency, face validity and a factor structure (using exploratory analyses), which support the five hypothesized styles, and Loo (2000) shows further support for the instrument's validity.

Results

Descriptive statistics and item analysis

Means, standard deviations and internal reliabilities for the GDMS are shown in Table II. Data were analyzed using the SPSS. Internal reliabilities (Cronbach α) were in the range 0.67-0.87, and with the exception of the rational scale, are acceptable (Cronbach $\alpha > 0.7$, see Guilford, 1956). Tests of "alpha-if-item deleted" did not indicate that the reliability of any of the scales could be substantially improved by excluding any items. Item-total-correlations were generally acceptable ($r > 0.3$, Nunnally, 1978; Rust and Golombok, 1989), with the exception of one item on the spontaneous scale for Sample two. These results are broadly similar to those presented by Scott and Bruce (1995) for their undergraduate sample. Analysis of variance did not reveal any effects of gender or year of study on any of the five decision making styles with either sample.

Correlations between the five style scales are also included in Table II. In both samples, the rational scale is significantly negatively correlated with the intuitive, avoidant and spontaneous scales. Significant positive correlations are seen between the dependent and avoidant, and the intuitive and spontaneous scales in both samples, whilst avoidant and spontaneous decision making are significantly and positively correlated in sample two, but not in sample one.

Test-re-test reliability

Four weeks after the original data collection, the opportunity was also taken to assess the temporal stability of these scales (test-re-test reliability), with a limited sample from sample two (82 respondents). All five scales exhibited acceptable temporal stability (Table III; significant correlations and $p > 0.05$ for the paired sample t -tests). It should be noted that the shared variance between the two administrations rational scale was low (7.8 per cent) compared with the other scales (37.2-59.3 per cent shared variance).

	2	3	4	5	<i>M</i>	SD	α
<i>Sample one</i>							
Rational	-0.16**	0.13	-0.23**	-0.16*	3.61	0.54	0.67
Intuitive		0.11	0.07	0.49**	3.63	0.54	0.72
Dependent			0.17*	-0.09	3.54	0.65	0.72
Avoidant				0.09	2.69	0.87	0.87
Spontaneous					3.07	0.68	0.77
<i>Sample two</i>							
Rational	-0.16*	0.04	-0.24**	-0.26**	3.63	0.52	0.67
Intuitive		0.04	0.10	0.51**	3.37	0.64	0.76
Dependent			0.22**	0.05	3.42	0.74	0.81
Avoidant				0.25**	2.39	0.84	0.86
Spontaneous					2.70	0.64	0.77

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; $n=200$

Table II.
Scale inter-correlations,
means, standard
deviations, and
reliabilities

Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (using AMOS) employing maximum likelihood estimation, which allows for comparison of theoretically distinct competing factor structures (Hair *et al.*, 1998) of the type posited above (Figure 1), was employed. Separate analyses were conducted to compare the overall fit of the four models. In all four models the factors were allowed to correlate. Results indicate that Model D has the best fit to the data (Table IV), supporting Scott and Bruce’s exploratory factor analysis and the five factor model of decision making style. Change in χ^2 between successive models indicates the incremental improvement achieved by each model. The ratio of the value of χ^2 to the number of degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) may be taken as an indication of the goodness of fit, with ratios below 2.0 representing adequate fit (Byrne, 1989, p. 55); as observed for Model D in sample one. This criterion was not reached in sample two. Nevertheless, Model D still shows improvement over its alternatives. Also included in Table IV are a number of further measures of goodness of fit. The comparative fit index (CFI) takes into account the discrepancy, the degrees of freedom and a non-centrality parameter estimate. The value of the CFI may range from 0 to 1, with values close to unity indicating very good fit whilst values of less than 0.90 “can usually be improved substantially” (Bentler and Bonett, 1980, p. 600). In both samples, Model D offers the best fit according to CFI, approaching the salient value in sample one. Browne and Cudeck (1989) consider a value of 0.08 or less for the root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) indicates a reasonable error of approximation, with a

Table III.
Sample two – test-re-test
reliability

	Original		Re-test		Correlation	<i>t</i> -test	
	<i>M</i>	SD	<i>M</i>	SD		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Rational	3.58	0.49	3.62	0.50	0.28*	− 0.56	0.580
Intuitive	3.36	0.63	3.26	0.63	0.68**	1.87	0.066
Dependent	3.53	0.57	3.51	0.59	0.61**	0.43	0.667
Avoidant	2.38	0.75	2.46	0.78	0.77**	− 1.32	0.190
Spontaneous	2.75	0.67	2.74	0.73	0.66**	− 0.53	0.596

Note: ***p* < 0.01; **p* < 0.05; *n* = 82

Table IV.
Fit statistics for the four
models

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	$\Delta\chi^2$	CFI	RMSEA	AIC	BIC
<i>Sample one</i>								
Null model	1698.88	276	6.16					
Model A (two factors)	1219.35	251	4.86	479.53	0.45	0.13	1317.35	1487.08
Model B (three factors)	1127.34	249	4.53	92.01	0.50	0.12	1229.34	1406.00
Model C (four factors)	524.90	246	2.13	602.44	0.83	0.07	661.22	848.27
Model D (five factors)	436.41	242	1.80	88.49	0.88	0.06	569.87	770.77
<i>Sample two</i>								
Null model	2103.45	276	7.62					
Model A (two factors)	1332.87	251	5.31	770.58	0.48	0.13	1430.87	1602.03
Model B (three factors)	1278.64	249	5.14	54.23	0.50	0.13	1380.63	1558.78
Model C (four factors)	745.70	246	3.03	532.94	0.73	0.10	910.84	1099.47
Model D (five factors)	647.67	242	2.68	98.02	0.78	0.09	817.08	1016.67

value of about 0.05 or less indicating a close fit of the model in relation to the number of degrees of freedom. Neither sample achieves this, but again Model D offers the best approximation. The Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) take into account the degree of parsimony in models, and are used comparatively, with smaller values indicating better fitting, more parsimonious models (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996). Again, in both samples, Model D offers the best fit.

Exploratory factor analysis

As the confirmatory analysis supported the hypothesized five factor model, an exploratory factor analysis was completed to see if this complemented these findings (Gorsuch, 1997). A principal components analysis of items was therefore completed on each sample. In both, the scree plot suggested that five factors should be extracted (Kline, 1994, p. 75), accounting for 55.5 per cent of the variance in sample one and 58.7 per cent in sample two. Rotation to a simple structure using orthogonal (varimax) rotation resulted in the factor structures shown in Table V (salient loadings of 0.32 and over are shown in *italics*) (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996, p. 677). Results are again broadly supportive of the structure and hypothesised scales with items mostly loading significantly and individually onto factors that represent the five decision making styles. Only two items are problematic. In both samples, Item 8 (hypothesised as spontaneous) loads significantly onto the intuitive scale, and Item 11 loads both positively as part of its hypothesised rational scale as well as loading negatively on the spontaneous scale. It should be also noted that the order of loading is different with the spontaneous and dependent scales loading onto the third and fourth factors, respectively, in sample one and the fourth and third in sample two.

Discussion

Decision making is a fundamental aspect of managerial behaviour and the notion of style is commensurate with individual difference paradigms in which there has been a resurgence of interest (see for example, Allinson and Hayes, 1996; Riding and Rayner, 1998; Sadler-Smith, 1998). Empirical elaboration of any individual difference theory is crucially dependent upon the availability of valid measures; the GDMS is potentially one such measure. Preceding exploratory analysis (Scott and Bruce, 1995), other confirmatory and exploratory analyses (Loo, 2000) and the confirmatory and exploratory analyses presented here suggest that a five factor structure is most appropriate.

The pattern of significant correlations observed indicate that higher rational scores are related with lower scores on the intuitive, avoidant and spontaneous scale, and that intuitive and spontaneous and dependent and avoidant scales are positively related. These findings might suggest support for other factor structures. However, Scott and Bruce (1995) and Loo (2000) also reported significant correlations between some scale scores, and interpreted this as indicating that whilst conceptually distinct, the decision making scales are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The implications of these relationships are considered below.

The results support the idea from Scott and Bruce's (1995) development of the GDMS instrument that individuals, in their decision making behaviour, exhibit vary the styles or approaches they adopt. This has implications for the theory that underlies work in this field, and may suggest the decision making style is in fact a "surface"

Table V.
Factor structure of the
GDMS

Item (Scale)	Sample one factors (scale)					Sample two factors (scale)				
	1 (A)	2 (I)	3 (S)	4 (D)	5 (R)	1 (A)	2 (I)	3 (D)	4 (S)	5 (R)
1. When I make decisions, I tend to rely on my intuition (I)	0.05	0.65	0.11	0.03	0.07	0.03	0.69	-0.05	0.31	-0.05
2. I rarely make important decisions without consulting other people (D)	0.04	0.09	-0.05	0.59	0.03	-0.06	-0.01	0.78	-0.07	-0.11
3. When I make a decision, it is more important for me to feel the decision is right than to have a rational reason for it (I)	0.07	0.58	0.10	-0.02	-0.07	0.11	0.62	0.02	-0.11	-0.11
4. I double-check my information sources to be sure I have the right facts before making decisions (R)	-0.13	0.00	-0.16	0.18	0.41	0.10	0.09	0.23	-0.30	0.34
5. I use the advice of other people in making my important decisions (D)	-0.10	0.00	0.04	0.67	0.10	-0.08	-0.05	0.73	0.11	0.00
6. I put off making decisions because thinking about them makes me uneasy (A)	0.78	-0.03	-0.05	0.15	-0.12	0.73	0.07	0.14	-0.02	-0.20
7. I make decisions in a logical and systematic way (R)	-0.23	-0.19	-0.16	0.11	0.47	-0.16	-0.30	0.05	-0.29	0.37
8. When making decisions I do what feels natural at the moment (S)	0.11	0.48	0.24	0.13	-0.07	0.13	0.62	-0.13	0.14	0.14
9. I generally make snap decisions (S)	0.05	0.26	0.75	0.07	-0.12	0.23	0.17	-0.07	0.64	0.10
10. I like to have someone steer me in the right direction when I am faced with important decisions (D)	0.31	0.04	-0.04	0.66	-0.06	0.31	0.00	0.48	0.00	-0.11
11. My decision making requires careful thought (R)	-0.05	0.03	-0.42	0.18	0.48	0.07	-0.12	-0.52	0.23	0.38
12. When making a decision, I trust my inner feelings and reactions (I)	0.03	0.71	0.14	-0.04	0.04	-0.03	0.68	-0.02	0.09	0.30
13. When making a decision, I consider various options in terms of a specified goal (R)	-0.05	-0.03	0.18	-0.08	0.91	-0.18	0.04	-0.06	0.04	0.93
14. I avoid making important decisions until the pressure is on (A)	0.74	0.14	0.04	0.08	-0.13	0.77	0.02	-0.06	0.17	0.04
15. I often make impulsive decisions (S)	0.09	0.27	0.78	-0.09	-0.04	0.23	0.18	0.08	0.69	-0.02
16. When making decisions, I rely upon my instincts (I)	-0.01	0.72	0.29	0.08	-0.12	-0.23	0.74	0.01	0.31	-0.09
17. I generally make decisions that feel right to me (I)	-0.00	0.65	0.04	0.07	-0.05	-0.13	0.66	0.14	0.06	0.05
18. I often need the assistance of other people when making important decisions (D)	0.24	0.02	-0.06	0.77	-0.07	0.31	0.04	0.79	-0.07	-0.07

(continued)

Item (Scale)	Sample one factors (scale)					Sample two factors (scale)				
	1 (A)	2 (I)	3 (S)	4 (D)	5 (R)	1 (A)	2 (I)	3 (D)	4 (S)	5 (R)
19. I postpone decision making whenever possible (A)	0.86	0.00	0.02	0.08	-0.12	0.84	-0.05	0.05	0.03	-0.12
20. I often make decisions on the spur of the moment (S)	0.13	0.28	0.78	-0.07	-0.03	0.24	0.15	0.14	0.72	-0.05
21. I often put off making important decisions (A)	0.88	-0.02	-0.02	0.07	-0.05	0.82	0.11	0.08	-0.01	-0.06
22. If I have the support of others, it is easier for me to make (D) important decisions.	0.00	0.04	-0.05	0.68	-0.05	0.07	0.02	0.75	0.03	0.09
23. I generally make important decisions at the last minute (A)	0.76	0.14	0.22	-0.01	0.15	0.78	0.05	-0.01	0.19	0.02
24. I make quick decisions (S)	-0.09	0.12	0.67	-0.06	0.16	-0.21	0.12	0.04	0.77	0.08
25. I usually have a rational basis for making decisions (R)	-0.04	-0.03	0.16	-0.05	0.97	-0.16	0.05	-0.12	0.02	0.92
Notes: R = rational; I = intuitive; D = dependent; S = spontaneous; A = avoidant										

Table V.

manifestation of more stable underlying dimensions, which individuals are able to adapt or change. Curry (1983) suggests a model of style which conceptualizes individual differences as layers of an onion, with each construct related to style being characterized as a concentric layer of "skin" in the onion. The closer to the centre of the onion, the more fundamental and stable aspects of individual difference are. Curry places personality and cognitive style at the centre of this model, whilst the layers further out (which are potentially more malleable) included cognitive strategies, and learning styles, strategies and preferences. It is possible that decision making style may be conceptualized as one of the outer layers of this onion model; a surface manifestation of more deep seated personality constructs.

Whilst the five factor model gains the strongest support, the results obtained do suggest that some development of the instrument and its scales may be required to further enhance its properties. Instances of low Cronbach α s (Table II), item-total correlations, test-re-test correlations (Table III) and exploratory factor analyses (Table V) suggest that some scales may need further refinement. Also, despite the support for the five factor model afforded by the confirmatory analysis, the goodness of fit measures and the sample two analysis suggests that further assessment of the instrument's structure might be required. This must be considered with care, however, as there is no theoretical basis for further constructs (factors) within the GDMS structure.

The limitations of this study should also be noted. Self-report questionnaires of this type rely on respondents making accurate judgments about themselves and therefore have the potential for bias and distortion. Significantly, this includes social desirability bias, whereby respondents tend to claim traits that place them in a favourable light and deny those that do not. However, whilst this was not considered here, Loo's (2000) research provides evidence that the GDMS is unlikely to be prone to social desirability bias. It should also be recognized that four weeks is a short period for assessment of test-re-test validity. This may be particularly significant given the low correlations observed in this respect. Testing over longer periods would be advised.

Further research

Additional research is required to support the further refinement, validation and confirmation of the instrument, adding to that provided here, and hopefully overcoming the limitations noted. This could also include consideration of the relationships between the GDMS and measures of cognitive/personality style such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. Other research questions could, for example, include, how malleable and/or situation specific is an individual's style, how does decision making style and the demands of particular tasks interact, can individuals develop decision making strategies to overcome any weaknesses in their preferred and habitual style? These questions are predicated on the idea that (following Curry, 1983) decision making is an adaptable "surface" manifestation of underlying dimensions. The implications of different patterns of decision making for individual and organizational effectiveness are also likely to be worth for further study. As is consideration of the extent to which contingency and environmental factors affect individuals' use and application of the decision making styles considered here.

Implications for practice

The findings have a number of managerial implications. The two dimensions in the scale with highest means are rational and intuitive (Table II). Neither of which

represents the “right” way of making a decision; they are alternative ways of approaching a problem. In fact, individuals should ideally balance rational and intuitive decision making. Too much of one approach may well be debilitating. Unfortunately, the evidence from this research is that these are negatively correlated, meaning that individuals who express a stronger perspective for one scale show a lower score for the other. A rational approach incorporates search for data and information to support decision making, yet could become problematic if the analysis itself becomes more important than the ultimate decision. Intuition allows us to operate quickly and in uncertainty, but could result in decisions that cannot be explained to others, or are based on flawed reasoning.

The dependent scale has the next highest mean. Scott and Bruce’s (1995) see dependent decision making negatively, with individuals being unable to act without others confirmation of their conclusions. However, from the item in the questionnaire, it appears that dependent decision makers might also be characterized as keen to involve others in their decision making, and there are clear advantages in doing so. The impact of dependency will therefore be determined by the nature of an individual’s dependency.

Less strongly represented in the sample, the avoidant and spontaneous approaches styles are more overtly negative, and are best considered in their impact on and relationship with other styles. Consistent avoidant decision making is highly likely to create difficulties. However, the negative relationship observed here between rational and avoidant styles is in line with other views (Phillips *et al.*, 1984; Loo, 2000) that rational decision makers would typically rather deal with rather than avoid the problems or decisions they face. This suggests that if we can encourage and maintain a rational approach this could potentially militate against avoidance and ensure a focus on problem resolution.

The negative relationship observed between rational and spontaneous styles potentially indicates that rational decision making is not something that can be done quickly, and it is perhaps an inevitability that rational approaches will take time and are less appropriate (or more challenging) when under time pressure. The converse is seen in the positive relationship between intuitive and spontaneous styles, indicating that intuitive decision makers are biased to spontaneity, and therefore more likely to respond in time-limited situations. The danger with this is that they may be more prone to “rushing in” than rational decision makers who are more prone to “thinking it through” and explicitly considering alternatives. This again supports the need for a balanced decision making style.

One implication of the decision making styles not yet properly considered is the impact that factors other than our preferences for one approach over another has on our decision making. The impact of time has already been identified, and other factors equally could influence the choice of approach. For example, tasks with which we are familiar are ones where we are more likely to be guided by our intuition, whilst unfamiliar tasks are more likely to receive a rational response, where we employ analysis to support a new decision choice. Likewise the importance of a decision, or the extent to which we feel emotionally involved in it may influence our choice. Strong emotional involvement might make us more likely to go with “gut feelings” (intuition) whilst decisions involving significant financial expenditure are unlikely to take place without some rational analysis (it is hoped).

The above discussion raises questions of how can individuals overcome weaknesses or biases in decision making styles and develop effective decision making. An important step in this process would be for individuals to be aware of their own preferred decision making styles. Completion of the GDMS would enable this. Once aware of their preferences and the strengths and weaknesses of their approaches, individuals can then seek to develop those areas where they are weaker and/or work with others who exhibit styles that are complementary to their own.

Summary and conclusion

This paper has described research adding to the validity of a model of and instrument assessing five distinct decision making styles: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant and spontaneous. Whilst some issues for further development of the GDMS have been identified above, it should be commended as a comparatively compact instrument it lends itself to large-scale organizational research. This conceptualization of decision making style also has a number of implications for practice foremost amongst which is the need to develop and maintain appropriate and balanced approaches to decision making, something in which the GDMS has a potentially important role to play.

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