

# Too many choices? New study says more is usually better

January 19 2010

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Are we overloaded and paralyzed by too many choices, or is it good to have so many options? A new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research* says the jury is still out on so-called "choice overload."

Authors Benjamin Scheibehenne (University of Basel, Switzerland), Rainer Greifeneder (University of Mannheim, Germany), and Peter M. Todd (Indiana University, Bloomington) conducted a meta-analysis of 50 published and unpublished experiments that investigated [choice](#) overload. They found that consumers generally respond positively to having many choices.

"A number of studies in the past found strong instances of choice overload based on experiments in laboratories and in the field. While these results attracted a lot of attention in academia as well as in the media, a number of experiments found no [empirical evidence](#) for choice overload and sometimes even found that more choices instead facilitate choice and increase satisfaction," the authors write.

Across the 50 experiments, which depict the choices of 5,036 individual participants, the authors found that the overall effect of choice overload was virtually zero. "This suggests that adverse consequences do not necessarily follow from increases in the number of options," the authors write. "In fact, contrary to the notion of choice overload, these results suggest that having many options to choose from will, on average, not lead to a decrease in satisfaction or motivation to make a choice."

When it comes to [food consumption](#), for example, the authors believe their meta-analysis shows that a "more-is-better" effect occurs, especially when individuals have clear prior preferences.

A number of experiments in the past did find that choice overload exists, but the authors found that it was difficult to replicate those conditions.

"Based on our meta-analysis data, we could not identify sufficient conditions or specific circumstances that explain when and why an increase in assortment size can be expected to reliably decrease satisfaction, preference strength, or the [motivation](#) to choose," the authors write.

**More information:** Benjamin Scheibehenne, Rainer Greifeneder, and Peter M. Todd. "Can There Ever Be Too Many Options? A Meta-Analytic Review of Choice Overload." *Journal of Consumer Research*: August 2010.

Provided by University of Chicago

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