

When does customization increase satisfaction? The risk of self-expressive choices

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### **Abstract**

Customization is increasingly used to improve the match between product attributes and individuals' preferences and has been shown to improve identity expression. Previous literature also shows that consumers' need for self-expression is finite, therefore, it can be satiated. In this paper we argue that customizing a product can differently affect both identity-expression and satisfaction, according to the level of identity-expression associated with the choice made. When the product to be customized is the outcome of a more self-expressive choice (e.g., a premium product), the self-expression might be already saturated, reducing the appeal of the customization and of the satisfaction with the product. On the contrary, when the product to be customized is less-expressive (e.g., a basic product), the self-expression is not yet saturated, enhancing the appeal of the customization and increasing product satisfaction. We test our predictions in a pilot study and three experiments.

**Keywords:** *Customization; Self-expression ; Identity*

**Track:** Innovation Management & New Product Development