

Choose as many as you wish: Consumer satisfaction and purchase rate increase when choice from large assortments is “flexible” as opposed to “constrained”

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## **Abstract**

Five studies across a range of domains show that consumers who can choose as many alternatives as they wish (“flexible choice”), report more positive affective states and purchase more than those who have to choose a pre-defined quantity of products (“constrained” choice). The benefits of choice “flexibility” are stronger in large than small assortments, and are replicated in field and laboratory settings: when people chose cookies after a meal in a restaurant, possible dating partners on a simulated dating website, energy bars from descriptions, and soaps for personal use. The findings have theoretical implications for advancing choice-overload research, as well as practical implications for retailers and assortment designers. Counter to traditional recommendations that satisfaction and purchases improve by “offering less,” our studies show that offering more can still lead to satisfied consumers, as long as consumers are free to choose as much or as little as they wish.

**Keywords:** *assortment size; flexible choice; consumer satisfaction*

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour