

Bigger Choices, Bigger Brands: How Assortment Size Shapes National Brand Preference in Grocery Retail

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Abstract

Consumers today face increasingly large assortments both in physical stores and online. At the same time, national brands (NBs) and private labels (PLs) continue to compete for market share. Despite extensive research on consumer judgment and decision-making in large versus small assortments, much less is known about how assortment size shapes consumers' brand-level choices. In particular, it remains unclear how assortment size influences the likelihood of selecting a PL versus a NB. Three online experimental studies demonstrate that consumers are more inclined to choose NBs over PLs in large(r) (vs. small) assortments. We show that this is because large(r) assortments increase cognitive load, which, in turn, enhances consumers' reliance on products' packaging in favor of choosing a NB over a PL. Additionally, prices appears less salient in large(r) assortments, reducing its influence on brand choice. Our findings have implications for academia, retailers, manufacturers and consumers.

Track: Retailing & Omni-Channel Management