



Choice overload in consumer services: The mediating role of decision strategy complexity on subjective states and behavioral outcomes

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Abstract:

Purpose: The contemporary retail landscape is marked by a vast array of products and information, presenting consumers with an increasing number of choices. This phenomenon, known as choice overload, often overwhelms individuals and leads them to abandon their purchase, delay their decision, or opt for simpler choices. This study contributes to the literature on choice overload by focusing on two services (i.e. hotels and telecommunication plans) and exploring the mediating role of decision strategy complexity on subjective states and behavioral outcomes.

Methods: This study applies an experimental approach with a 2 (large vs small choice set) by 2 (hotels vs telecommunication programs) factorial design being developed and applied to a sample of 220 Belgians.

Results: Results show that the complexity of the strategy used by decision-makers may play a mediating role on the consequences that a choice set size may have in terms of psychological and behavioral responses.

Implications: Marketers should try to better understand which decision strategy best fits into their market target in order to fix the choice set accordingly. Moreover, they should also fix a choice architecture, such as a tournament-style choice architecture, that can enable choice set to remain large while reducing the effect of choice overload.

Keywords: choice overload, decision strategies, services, experiment-based approach, Belgium

JEL Classification: D7, D91, M31

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1 INTRODUCTION

Traditionally having more options from which to choose has been considered as an advantage for individuals in many disciplines. From an economical perspective, a broader choice set is expected to increase the likelihood for consumers to find the option that best suit their needs and desires, thus maximizing their utility (e.g., Jessup, Todd & Busemeyer, 2009). Psychological-based studies underlined that having more options can increase the consumer's sense of personal control (e.g., Taylor & Brown, 1988). From a marketing perspective, having more options somehow satisfies the needs of consumers who are seeking for autonomy and freedom of choice (Schwartz, 2004); hence,

expansive assortments have been portrayed as a competitive tool for suppliers to draw in more customers and to achieve a competitive advantage over their competitors that offer less variety (e.g., Brown, Read & Summers, 2003).

Despite this predominant and well-established view, researchers have also underlined the dark side of large choice sets. Iyengar and Lepper (2000) and Schwartz (2000, 2004) were among the pioneering authors to propose that an excess of options can lead to adverse outcomes, including negative emotions (Tung, Burns & Koenig, 2019), feelings of confusion and anxiety, lower satisfaction, difficulty of making a choice, choice deferral, choice regret (Wang et al., 2021; Turri & Watson, 2023). This phenomenon has been termed choice overload (Diehl & Poynor, 2007; Reutskaja et al., 2022), overchoice effect (Gourville & Soman, 2005), the



tyranny of choice (Schwartz, 2000) or consumer hyperchoice (Mick, Broniarczyk & Haidt, 2004).

Since Iyengar and Lepper' (2000) study, several studies have been carried out considering different settings and products, mostly in retail-based contexts and regarding fast moving consumer goods. More recently, researchers started to investigate the choice overload phenomenon in the context of services and tourism (e.g., Pan, Zhang & Law, 2013; Park & Jang, 2013, Yuksel & Thai, 2015, Thai & Yuksel, 2017; Sthapit, 2019). Most of those studies have focused on analyzing the antecedents and consequences of choice overload. A meta-analysis by Chernev, Böckenholt and Goodman (2015, p. 333) concluded that "despite the voluminous evidence in support of the paradoxical finding that providing individuals with more options can be detrimental to choice, the question of whether and when large assortments impede choice remains open". According to recent studies, there is a strong need to deepen the knowledge about choice overload, its antecedents and outcomes, and more effort should be devoted to analyzing the phenomenon in the service context where this topic has been just recently approached (e.g., Park & Jang, 2013; Chernev, Bockenholt & Goodman, 2015; Ketron, Spears & Dai, 2016; Mittal, 2016; Thai & Yuksel, 2017). In particular, further research is needed to assess the decision process leading to final choices giving relevant attention to factors/variables moderating the influence of choice overload on consumers' choices (Benoit & Miller, 2017). Chernev et al. (2015) call for studies aimed at investigating the impact of the decision maker's goals and strategies on choice overload as both factors have been found to influence the decision-making process (e.g., Decrop & Kozak, 2014 in the context of tourism). Arguing that that choice overload might vary across products (e.g., Korhonen et al., 2018), a number of authors have also recently called for further studies adopting a cross-sector approach (e.g., Sharma & Nair, 2017; Sthapit, 2018).

This study was conducted to help fill this research gap by presenting and discussing the findings of an experiment aimed at investigating whether consumer responses to choice overload situations in two different types of services (i.e., telecommunication and hotel services) are influenced by the decision strategies on which individuals rely to make their choices. A 2 by 2 factorial design, considering the size of choice set (large vs. small) and the type of offerings (hotels vs. telecommunication programs), was created and implemented with a sample of 220 participants. The findings contribute to the development of theories related to choice overload by showing that the complexity of the strategy used by decision-makers may play a mediating role on the consequences that a choice set's size may have in terms of psychological and behavioral responses.

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. The perceptual and behavioral effects of choice overload

Since the last decade, many studies have highlighted the negative effects that consumers facing a choice overload situation can experience when making decisions (e.g., Schwartz, 2004; Kaplan & Reed, 2013). When facing a large number of choice options, consumers might be less motivated

and committed in making a decision (Scheibehenne, Greifeneder & Todd, 2010), they could experience preference uncertainty (Dhar, 1997), decide to not make the choice at all (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000), defer it (e.g., Iyengar & Lepper, 2000; Hills, Noguchi & Gibbert, 2013), regret their decision (Gourville & Soman, 2005; Chernev, 2003), reserve an already made decision (Chernev et al., 2015), and/or feel negative emotions (Botti & Iyengar 2006) such as fatigue (Lyu et al., 2021). However, having more choice also shows positive consequences such as increasing consumers' attention, interest, and appreciation (Lyu et al., 2021). For the purpose of this study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a,b: Consumers are expected to exhibit higher interest (H1a) and spend more time (H1b) when making a decision with a large choice set compared to a small choice set.

H2a,b: Consumers are predicted to experience greater choice demotivation (H2a) and decision regret (H2b) when selecting from a large choice set compared to a small choice set.

H3: Consumers are anticipated to be more inclined to postpone their decision when faced with a large choice set compared to a small choice set.

2.2. How decision strategies affect choices

A review of existing studies (Inbar, Botti & d Hanko, 2011) leads us to distinguish between three types of factors moderating choice overload: (1) contextual conditions in which the decision is made; (2) characteristics of choosers, and (3) characteristics of the choice set. As far as contextual moderators are concerned, we could refer to the time span by which the choice should be made (e.g., Haynes, 2009). Among chooser-related factors, we may list the existence of predefined preferences and/or of an ideal option within the choice set (Inbar et al., 2011), consumer expectations (Diehl & Poynor, 2010), personality traits and cultural norms (Iyengar, Wells & Shwartz, 2009; Hu et al., 2023), preference uncertainty, perceived decision task difficulty, decision goals and decision strategies (Chernev et al., 2015).

A decision strategy may be defined as "the sequence of mental and effector [actions on the decision environment] operations used to transform an initial state of knowledge into a final goal state of knowledge where the decision maker views the particular decision as solved" (Payne, Betteman & Johnson, 1993, p.9). Strong evidence exists for a significant relationship between decision goals and decision strategies. Depending on the decision goal, the decision maker assesses the costs and benefits of various strategies and chooses the strategy that offers the most favorable accuracy-effort trade-off. The consumer and tourist behavior literature presents decision strategies from different perspectives (for a review, see e.g., Decrop & Kozak 2009). A basic distinction, borrowed from economic theory is between maximizing (where consumers make choices to maximize a utility function, considering time, income, information, and technology constraints) and satisficing (where consumers make an acceptable choice instead of the optimal one, setting cutoff points on key attributes and keeping only alternatives that meet those cutoffs). In the broader cognitive approach, decision strategies include additive rules (equal weights or

weighted adding), lexicographic, satisficing, elimination-by-aspects rules, majority of confirming dimensions, frequency of good and/or bad attributes, and the componential context model (Bettman, Luce & Payne, 2008). Consumers are inclined to use straightforward decision strategies or rules, whether due to habitual behavior in routine decisions or to streamline the decision-making process, especially when they aim to save time, energy, and/or money; examples of these types of decision strategies include brand loyalty strategy, brand familiarity, and price-related strategies (e.g., Park & Jang, 2013).

According to Scheibehenne et al. (2010), in experiments on choice overload, the strategies employed by participants have not been comprehensively evaluated and regulated. Additionally, studies investigating the moderating and mediating effects of choice heuristics (such as the satisficing heuristic, where consumers choose the first option that meets their standards, or the elimination-by-aspects strategy, which rapidly eliminates unattractive options) on choice overload have been somewhat overlooked. This underlies the need for further research aimed at running experiments encompassing measures of decision processes rather than focusing on the evaluations of choice outcomes (e.g., Inbar, Botti & Hanks, 2011).

Based on the aforementioned consideration, this study was conducted to examine the following hypotheses :

H4: Consumers are more inclined to utilize a simpler decision strategy when selecting from a large choice set compared to a small choice set.

H5: The complexity of consumers' decision strategies mediates the impact of choice set size on their subjective states and behavioral outcomes.

2.3. The moderating impact of chooser-related factors

A number of individual factors may impact the effects of CS size on subjective states and behavioral outcomes. According to Bettman (1979, p. 46), a decision goal refers to “a specific state whose attainment is related to achieving the desired end state”, with the desired end state being called the “goal object.” Based on Bettman et al. (1998), four metagoals can be considered when analyzing the choice processing, namely: maximizing decision accuracy (e.g., selecting the destination with the optimal balance of sunny weather and proximity), minimizing cognitive effort (by swiftly choosing a destination), minimizing the experience of negative emotions (e.g., avoiding destinations linked to painful memories), and enhancing the justification of the decision to relevant others (e.g., selecting a venue that delights the children). This study will focus on the goal to minimize cognitive effort only as it appears to be the most relevant as far as choice overload is concerned. Beyond decision goals, prior studies highlighted that two other chooser-related factors, i.e., consumer knowledge/expertise (e.g., Mogilner, Rudnick & Iyengar, 2008) and involvement (e.g., Wright, 1973; Malthora, 1984), can also exert a moderating effect on choice overload; hence, these hypotheses are suggested:

H6a: The goal to minimize cognitive effort moderates the relationship between choice set size and the complexity of consumers' decision strategy. A large choice set is likely to

lead to a simpler decision strategy, especially for people willing to minimize the effort they put in the decision-making process.

H6b: Experience moderates the relationship between choice set size and the complexity of consumers' decision strategy. A large choice set is likely to lead to a simpler decision strategy, especially for “novices” lacking experience with the service.

H6c: The level of involvement moderates the relationship between choice set size and the complexity of consumers' decision strategy. A large choice set is likely to lead to a simpler decision strategy, especially for less involved people.

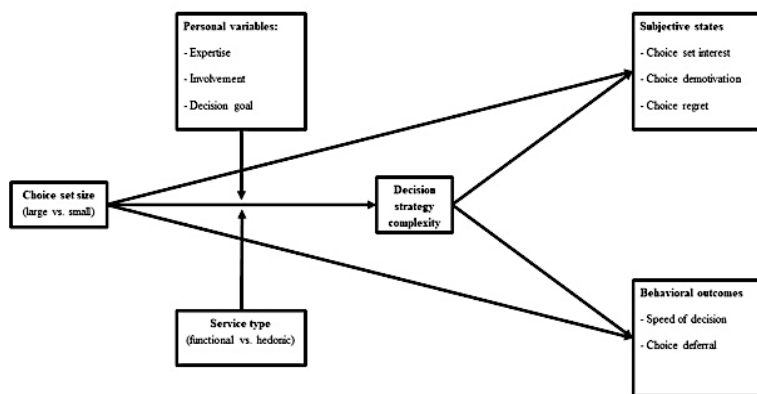
2.4. The moderating impact of the type of services

Finally, among the choice set-related factors that can moderate the choice overload effect, we can consider, for example, whether items are organized and categorized, whether options are comparable (Inbar et al., 2011), whether a best option exists in the choice set (Inbar et al., 2011); other factors that might moderate the choice overload might be also the choice complexity and decision task difficulty (Chernev et al., 2015), the alignability of attributes (Gourville & Soman, 2005; Polyzos et al., 2024), and product type (e.g., Sela, Berger & Liu, 2009; Korhonen et al., 2018). Since the study conducted by Iyengar and Lepper (2000), several studies have been carried out considering different settings and products, such as chocolates (Chernev, 2003), pens (Shah & Wolford, 2007), or enrolling in pension plans (Iyengar, Huberman & Jiang, 2004), volunteering with a charitable organization (Caroll, White & Pahl, 2011), public services (Jilke, Van Ryzin & Van de Walle, 2015), education (Katz & Assor, 2007), insurance (Sreedharan & Saha, 2021), tourism (e.g., Park & Jang, 2013), agribusiness (Staples et al., 2022), restaurants (Park & Kang, 2022) and hotels (e.g. Guo & Li, 2022). Furthermore, Korhonen et al. (2018) showed that product type (hedonic versus utilitarian/functional) exerts an influence on information overload and choice quality. Despite this, the thrust of the literature on choice overload has primarily concentrated on the retail sector and specifically on fast moving consumer goods; the attention researchers have given to the analysis of the phenomenon in the service sector is definitely modest. Further, almost all the existing literature on choice overload is confined to studies focusing on a single product/service, although it has been shown that product type is a moderator of choice overload (Sela et al., 2009). This study aims to compare functional (i.e., telecommunication programs) and hedonic (i.e., hotels) services. Benoit and Miller (2017) suggest that hedonic products and services tend to be experienced holistically rather than analytically, which may mitigate the overload effect of largest assortments when compared to utilitarian products and services. This provides support to the idea that consumers tend to review larger assortments when their purchase motivation is hedonic rather than when their purchase motivation is utilitarian. Existing studies argue that consumers with hedonic purchase motivations perceive their product preferences as highly unique as these involve non-alignable alternatives, compared to consumers with utilitarian purchase motivations who rather see options as

undifferentiated with comparable attributes (Whitley, Trudel & Kurt, 2018). When faced with a larger choice set, individuals are inclined to exert additional effort in employing complex decision strategies, particularly for more differentiated products, rather than for basic undifferentiated services:

H7: The type of service moderates the relationship between choice set size and consumer decision strategies. Individuals presented with a large choice set are expected to be more inclined to employ a complex decision strategy for hedonic services (e.g., hotels) compared to functional services (e.g., telecommunication plans).

Figure 1. Conceptual model



3 METHODOLOGY

For this study, an experiment was arranged using a 2x2 factorial design. The experimental conditions included large choice set vs small choice set, and hotels vs telecommunication programs. Participants in the large choice set group were given 20 options to choose from, while those in the small choice set group had 5 options to choose from. Such choice set sizes are in line with ranges that have been used in the literature so far (Sharma & Nair, 2017). In addition, we compared two types of services, i.e. hedonic experiences (hotels) and utilitarian offerings (mobile telecommunication programs). For each type, alternatives were defined by five key attributes. Hotels were described in terms of brand, price, quality rating (star level), location, and customer reviews. Telecommunication plans were delineated by brand, price, the included amount of SMS, calling time, and Internet download data. Participants were initially presented with a scenario outlining a brief stay in Brussels/selecting a new telecommunication plan. They were then asked to choose from 5/20 alternatives described by five attributes in a table. Following this, respondents were instructed to (1) answer a series of 27 items regarding the strategies they would employ when making their choice on 5-point Likert scales, adapted from Decrop & Kozak (2009); (2) make a selection from the choice set (an invisible timer was used to measure decision time); (3) answer questions regarding their interest in the choice set ("I am not interested in any of the offered products"), demotivation towards their

choice ("I made a decision because it was necessary"), feelings of choice regret ("If I could, I would have refrained from making a decision"), and willingness to postpone the decision ("If I could, I would have delayed my decision"); (4) respond to questions about their experience and involvement; (5) provide feedback on four items aimed at measuring their goal to minimize cognitive effort in decision-making (adapted from Luce & Payne, 1998); and (6) provide socio-demographic information. Respondents were recruited through mailing and social networks including Facebook and were requested to complete the questionnaire online (before the Covid crisis) using Qualtrics. Overall, 220 valid responses from Belgian consumers were collected. The final sample included 49% males and 51% females, 58% of people younger than 45 and 42% older, and with 11% graduated from primary school, 41% from secondary school, 25% from college and 23% from university. We conducted a range of uni- and multivariate analyses using SPSS 16.0, which included principal component analysis, ANOVA, and regression analyses. Additionally, we utilized Preacher and Hayes' procedure to examine the mediating effect of decision strategies as depicted in Figure 1.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Preliminary analyses

First, we carried out a series of factor analyses in order to structure the scales that were used for measuring decision strategies and decision goals. For decision strategies, the initial list of 27 items resulted in 5 factors according to the scree plot's elbow (explained variance = 0.502) following PCA with Varimax rotation. We only considered the first factor for this study, measuring the complexity of decision strategy and including 7 items, as described in Table 1.

Table 1. Reliability analysis for the decision strategy and the decision goal scales.

Decision strategy complexity	Goal of minimizing cognitive efforts
$\alpha=0.806$	$\alpha=0.898$
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will look at all relevant products until I find what I want • I will carefully compare all products before making a choice • I will choose a product that shows an acceptable level for all features presented • I will choose a product for which a "poor" feature can be compensated by a "good" feature • I will examine all features of a product before considering the next alternative • I will combine a series of features in order to make the best possible decision • I will choose the product that completely fulfills my needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I made the choice that was the easiest to make • I wanted to make a decision that did not make me think too much • I made the decision that took me the least time • I made a choice that was not too complicated

Reliability analysis indicates that this scale has a high Cronbach's alpha of 0.806, which is good. The resulting factor scores were used as an input for further analyses. Second, two reliability analyses were carried out respectively on the four items used to measure the decision goal to minimize cognitive effort and on the three items used to

measure involvement. The resulting scales show a very good reliability as proved by Cronbach's alphas of 0.898 and 0.799 respectively (Table 1). The factor scores were used as an input for further analyses.

4.2. The impact of choice set size on subjective states and outcome variables (H1-H3)

Considering subjective states, the ANOVA results reveal that participants exhibited a greater level of interest when faced with a large choice set compared to a small one ($F(1, 218)=22.999$; $p=.000$), thus confirming H1a. However, those in the large choice set condition expressed higher levels of choice demotivation ($F(1, 218)=10.135$; $p=.002$) and decision regret ($F(1, 218)=16.629$; $p=.000$). These results confirm H2a, H2b.

In terms of behavioral outcomes, the analysis indicates that respondents naturally require more time to make a decision when presented with a large choice set ($F(1, 218)=13.921$; $p=.000$), confirming H1b. Similarly, they are more inclined to postpone their decision ($F(1, 218)=19.443$; $p=.000$), aligning with H3.

4.3. How decision strategies affect choices

In the comparison of decision strategies, participants in the large choice set condition were found to employ complex decision strategies less frequently than those in the small choice set condition ($F(1, 218) = 19.056$, $p = .000$), supporting H4. Examining the association between decision strategies, subjective states, and behavioral outcomes (see Table 2), findings reveal that the utilization of complex strategies is positively correlated with interest in the choice set, as it is associated as well with demotivation, feelings of regret, and choice deferral.

Table 2. Correlations between decision strategy and outcome variables.

	Complexity of decision strategy
Choice set interest	0.215 ($p=0.001$)
Choice demotivation	0.182 ($p=0.007$)
Choice regret	0.271 ($p=0.000$)
Speed of decision	0.113 ($p=0.093$)
Choice deferral	0.144 ($p=0.033$)

A mediation analysis as suggested by Preacher and Hayes (2008) was further conducted to test whether the complexity of decision strategies was able to explain the above effects. Using Hayes' PROCESS procedure on SPSS, significant partial mediation effects are found for choice interest and choice regret whereas no mediation at all exists for the three other output variables (i.e., choice (de)motivation, decision speed, and choice deferral). More specifically, choice interest is both explained by the direct effect of the choice set size ($\beta=0,633$) and by the indirect use of a complex decision strategy ($\beta=0,164$) in the decision-making process. In the same way, choice regret is both a direct function of the choice set size ($\beta=0,556$) and an indirect function of decision strategy complexity ($\beta=0,288$). The complexity of the decision strategy thus appears to play some role in choice overload settings.

4.4. Moderating influence of service type and personal variables

It took significantly more time (70 vs. 54 seconds on average) for people to choose a hotel than a telecom program ($F=3.841$, $p=0.051$) suggesting that consumers of hotels could use complex strategies to a larger extent than users of telecom programs. However, this difference does not appear to be significant ($F(1, 218)=2.455$, $p=.119$). Moreover, following Hayes' PROCESS procedure on SPSS, Service type does not appear to be a significant moderator on the relationship between choice set condition and the complexity of decision strategies ($F(2, 219)=0.026$, $p=.872$), which contradicts H7.

In contrast, the results indicate that consumers' level of involvement and decision goals play a significant moderating role among personal variables, supporting H6a and H6c. On the one hand, strongly involved consumers tend to use complex DS to a larger extent than weakly involved people, especially when the choice set is small ($F(2, 219)=4.084$; $p=.044$). On the other hand, consumers look to minimize their cognitive efforts to a larger extent in overload situations. Such a decision goal moderates the relationship between CS condition and the decision strategy. Individuals in the extended choice set condition tend to utilize complex decision strategies to a lesser extent, particularly when their objective is to minimize cognitive efforts ($F(2, 219)=14.673$, $p=.000$). Finally, as far as expertise is concerned, we see that the complexity of decision strategy is higher for expert consumers than for "novices" ($F(1, 218)=4.671$, $p=0.032$); however, this variable does not seem to influence how choice set size impacts the utilization of complex strategies ($F(2, 219)=3.031$, $p=.083$). This is in opposition with H6b.

Considering socio-demographics, education level positively influences the complexity of the decision strategies used and moderates the effect of CS size on DS. Higher educated people tend to use complex DS to a larger extent than lower educated consumers, especially when the choice set decreases.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Our research indicates that a large choice set increases consumers' interest in making a decision. However, it also leads to higher levels of choice demotivation and regret. Additionally, individuals selecting from larger choice sets tend to employ complex decision strategies to a lesser extent. This is because such complex strategies are positively associated with interest in making a choice, but also with choice demotivation, regret, and deferral. Furthermore, the complexity of decision strategy appears to partially mediate the effect of the size of choice set on choice interest and choice regret. Finally, our results do not provide evidence about the fact that service type (hedonic vs utilitarian) might affect the extent to which the choice overload situation can influence consumer choices (Benoit & Miller, 2017; Korhonen et al., 2018). These conclusions are useful for both researchers and practitioners.

From a theoretical perspective, this study helps answer the recent calls for further research to deepen our understanding about the decision process and related decision strategies/heuristics that consumers put into action to

mitigate choice overload (Benoit & Miller, 2017). This research supports the idea that decision strategies may play a significant role in the phenomenon of choice overload. It suggests that individuals tend to employ simpler strategies when faced with a wide array of choices. Conversely, they are more inclined to put in greater effort and use complex strategies when presented with a limited selection of alternatives. Furthermore, our findings show that the goal to minimize cognitive effort and the level of involvement moderate the effect of CS size on DS. As far as socio-demographics are concerned, individuals characterized by a higher level of education use complex DS to a larger extent than less educated consumers, especially when the choice set decreases.

From a managerial point of view, our results suggest that marketers should try to better understand which decision strategy best fits their target market and customize their choice set accordingly. Further, marketers should attempt to benefit from the advantages (i.e., choice interest) and to avoid the disadvantages (i.e., choice regret, deferral, etc.) of large choice sets. Therefore, it is recommended to implement effective choice architectures, such as a tournament-style approach, in order to maintain a large choice set while mitigating the impact of choice overload. This involves organizing options into subgroups, with final selections made from each subgroup to arrive at a decision (Besedeš et al., 2015). Specifically, hotel and telecom managers should consider reducing the size of their offerings and assisting consumers in making final decisions when faced with numerous options. For instance, utilizing filtering technologies can be beneficial (Turri & Watson, 2022). This is particularly crucial in online contexts where consumers can easily feel overwhelmed by the abundance of choices available. Hence, for example, hotel marketers should not offer too many room arrangements/prices to their prospect customers visiting their own booking engine. In fact, this could drive these customers either to book the same accommodation in a different distribution channel (e.g., over an online travel agency) that does not overwhelm customers with a high number of offerings, or to switch to a totally different accommodation. By the way, alternative strategies need to be found for all those circumstances in which marketers would prefer to keep on providing their (actual and/or prospect) customers with a potential wide product/service portfolio. For example, one option could be to sequence the offerings presented (thus reducing the perceived size of the assortment without reducing the objective one), and/or to provide their websites with recommendation agents and price comparison tools so that consumers are helped to set up their own preferences and trade-offs (thus helping them to avoid experiencing a choice overload situation) (Yun & Duff, 2017; Nagar, 2016). In this vein, hotel managers could prevent choice overload by outfitting their official websites with filtering tools (price, arrangement, etc) that allow customers to reduce the number of options to review/evaluate.

While this study contributes to addressing a gap in the service literature concerning choice overload and offers implications for practitioners, there are still limitations that should be acknowledged. First, data were collected in one single country (i.e., Belgium) and consider just two different types of services. These circumstances render our findings hardly

generalizable to consumers of different nationalities/culture and for other service types. Additional studies could adopt a cross-cultural (Reutskaja et al., 2022) and cross-sectorial approach (widening the variety of service types) in an attempt to further validate and generalize our findings. Third, similarly to other existing works (Tang, Hsieh & Chiu, 2017), this study did not replicate real-world store environments or reflect genuine purchase behaviors. Even if they were motivated to participate to our study, consumers could have experienced a certain level of “time pressure” when asked to take part in the experiment when compared to a real decision-making situation (a context wherein they would have probably more time to make their decisions). Future research could run experiments in real-buying contexts. This study also fails to recognize that regret has two distinct, even if interrelated, components (affective and cognitive), each of which describing distinct consequences of regret (Buchanan et al., 2016). Finally, the mediating effect of decision strategy was only partially validated and a limited array of variables/factors able to moderate the influence of CS and DS was tested. Future studies should be carried out to explore other potential mediators that have been found to exert an influence over this relationship, including emotions, accountability, and personality traits (Tang et al., 2017); in relation to the latter point, for instance, Hu et al. (2022) demonstrate that individuals with high anxiety traits are more prone to delaying choices when confronted with a larger choice set in contrast to individuals with low anxiety.

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