

Does Choice Overload Exist in Wine Retail?

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Abstract

◦*Purpose: To ascertain whether evidence of the Choice Overload Effect can be observed in a wine retail environment.*

◦*Design/methodology/approach: A three-part study was created using the customer base of a retailer in the New York City suburbs. Step one was an online survey sent to a large sample of the retailer's database. Second was an observational study of 119 customers as they shopped in a wine store. Finally those 119 customers were interviewed post-transaction regarding their satisfaction with the store and the choices they encountered.*

◦*Findings: No evidence of Choice Overload was observed in any of the three facets of the study. The study participants self-reported wanting more choices, and nearly 80% of respondents in the survey either wanted more choice or were satisfied with the number of choices currently existing in the wine shops. Correlation between amount of choice and satisfaction with the wine ultimately chosen was insignificant despite a range of options in the study locations of between 1200 and 1800, a difference of 50% in the wines offering.*

◦*Practical implications: The retailer has a customer base of high-consumption customers who frequently shop for wine. Choice overload is mitigated by frequent tastings of wines that the staff selects rather than being distributor-driven. There are many long-term staff members that consumers can recognize and trust. Also the store layout is easy to understand, sorted from Country-Region-Price so that the large selection is quickly navigable.*

Key words: Choice overload, wine retail store, New York, Store layout

1. Introduction

Barry Schwartz says that the effects of expanded choice are the following: “*It means that decisions require more effort. It makes mistakes more likely. It makes the psychological consequences of mistakes more severe*” (Schwartz, 2004). Many wine shops carry multiple thousands of individual wine labels, and *Total Wine* in the US advertises that each of their 70+ stores offers 8000 wines. In that perspective, a wine shop can be a confusing environment for a customer, even for one who is engaged and knowledgeable about the world of wine. There is also a cacophony of signs, ratings, descriptions, colorful labels that all attempt to draw the consumers' eyes to that one special bottle. And of course each of those bottles is entirely different from one year to the next due to the vagaries of the harvest. Without generally having knowledge about the intrinsic knowledge of the wine, consumers need to rely on extrinsic cues (Lockshin et al., 2006). In many cases, even the obvious extrinsic markings aren't very helpful. And wine is an experience good, as the only way to ascertain the qualities of the bottle is to consume it (Dubois and Nauges, 2010).

In the meantime, retailers want happy customers. There are many actions that retailers use to help create unconscious happiness and satisfaction: music, color schemes, price framing, and even subliminal messaging (Areni & Kim, 1993). With a body of research from other disciplines that show customers are less satisfied when presented with too many options, can a wine shop that carries essentially thousands of the same product type (alcohol) tailor their selections to maximize satisfaction? There has to be a balance between carrying too few selections (having one red *Bordeaux* for example) and an overload that leads to customer dissonance (offering 87 different *petits chateaux*). Where do consumers want that balance to be, even if they aren't consciously making the distinction? With the explosion of selections available to the wine customer in the past two decades, are they more satisfied with their wine shopping experience?

However simply establishing the plethora of choices and information available to a wine consumer is not enough to definitively say that a choice overload situation exists in wine retail. Once a customer reaches a threshold of comfort with the beverage, wine does not have the same consumption and purchasing patterns as other consumer commodities like tomato sauce, toothpaste or televisions. Consumers generally enjoy and seek out new wines to experiences; new regions, grape varieties or producers. This exploratory behavior would imply a necessity for a selection greater than that of other consumer goods.

This study will attempt to address the question of whether the choice overload phenomenon exists in a wine retail environment. At first, a review of current literature on both choice overload and consumer behavior in a wine retail environment is conducted. The research design is then presented, mixing quantitative and qualitative interviews. Results and findings are developed and discussed in section 4 and 5. The final section attempts to elucidate implications for managers, lastly followed by thoughts for further research.

2. Literature review

2.1. Consumer choice overload

Choice overload was first described by Toffler in 1970: “[*Overchoice takes place when*] the advantages of diversity and individualization are canceled by the complexity of buyer's decision-making process”. The concept of choice overload is an accepted part of study of consumer behavior (Schwartz, 2004; Airely, 2008): when presented with too many options,

people have a difficult time cognitively processing all the possibilities, leading to them either walking away from the transaction, or being less satisfied about the transaction than they would have been with fewer options. Consumer research in many fields has provided that choice overload does exist and leads to lower satisfaction with purchases, or can even lead to no purchase being made at all (Dhar & Simonson, 2003).

Such a situation has been observed by Iyengar et al. (2000), who studied consumer behavior sampling jams in a supermarket setting. When presented with a selection of six different flavors of jam to sample, 30% of the consumers eventually bought a jam. On another day the authors set up a tasting of 24 varieties of the same producer's jam. Only 3% of sampling customers purchased jam, a 90% decrease in purchasing volume.

However, choice overload may depend on the item being bought. Gourville and Soman (2005) categorized items as either "alignable" or "non-alignable". Alignable good assortments are products in which the differences vary only in one respect (jeans that vary just in the waist measurements). Non-alignable goods vary among different dimensions and involve trade-offs by the consumer choosing among them. They found that having alternatives in alignable goods does not lead to an overchoice effect, but non-alignable goods will create that effect as consumers are forced to give up something that may be desirable in order to choose another attribute they want.

In an attempt to look at mitigating factors which might ease the onset of choice overload, Haynes (2009) varied assortment selections with time constraints given subjects in which to make a selection. He discovered that having more time in which to choose does in fact lessen the choice overload impact and allow subjects to feel more satisfied with their choices (Haynes 210). This could be adapted by retailers to remove some selection during the busier times (ie, Christmas) and allow harried shoppers to choose between fewer items.

In an interesting exploration of the subsets of choice overload, Polman (2011) separates choosing for oneself versus choosing for someone else, as in selecting a gift. Polman interviewed customers leaving two wine shops in the same city in New York. One of the wine shops was 400 square feet in size, representing a small-choice option and the other ten times as large, representing a large choice selection. When asked how satisfied they were with their purchase on a scale of 1-11, customers who were purchasing for themselves from the smaller store self-rated as more satisfied than the customers from the larger store. Contrarily, customers who were purchasing for another were happier with their transactions from the larger store than the smaller.

2.2. How do consumers choose from an assortment?

As an experience good, the qualities of a bottle of wine aren't known until after it is consumed. Therefore when presented with an unfamiliar bottle on a retail shelf, a customer relies on a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic cues to help make a decision (Lockshin et al., 2006). Lockshin et al created a discrete choice experiment to see which cues resonate most with customers. They found that unknown brands have a halo affect from being from a well-regarded region as well as having received a medal. Conversely more expensive wines had a negative sales correlation with the presence of a medal. They do not attempt to link medals with points from wine critics as it seems counterintuitive that higher priced wines sell better without high ratings. They also differentiate between high and low-involvement consumers. High involvement are more experienced, have more knowledge and are more confident with wine and are more likely to select an unknown brand than a low involvement consumer, who is more likely to shop on

price and the presence of medals.

Before they even begin to look at specific bottles, consumers form unconscious impressions on a store's selection (Amine & Cadenat, 2003). They identify three kinds of goods, with different consumer desires for choice: "delight products," "loyalty goods" and "utilitarian goods". They found that consumers' preference for greater selection is much larger in delight products than utilitarian goods, and moderately larger than loyalty products. As an example, between two supermarkets customers considered the one with a 7% greater selection in yogurt to be the stronger one, despite both stores having over 260 individual selections! On the contrary, one of the stores had 28% more brands of dish detergent and the subjects rated the store selections as equal. This has interesting implications for the wine business. In a wine shop, do the different categories of wine (Bordeaux, Tuscany, Australia, etc.) make up their own class of good or is the selection as a whole considered one category, in which consumers look for specific big brands as an anchoring mechanism to decide on the assortment quality?

Going deeper into the concept of how consumers unconsciously form opinions on store assortment, Morales et al. (2004) state that consumers' perception of variety and satisfaction are dependent upon how the assortment is organized, both internally by the consumer and externally by the retailer. Both retailers and consumers group their merchandise into categories, and only when there is a match between the two do customers perceive a good assortment. If a consumer is looking for "wine for dinner tonight" but the retailer has the categories "United States", "France," etc, there is not a match between structures. It then becomes important to know exactly how most customers look for wine in a store; by region, occasion, price or something else and attempt to tailor the store offerings in that way. Lastly, Lockshin and Kahrimanis (1998) describe store image as the "consumer's perception of a store's positioning". To maximize consumer satisfaction, retailers must carry the right amount of products and display them in the way their customers will best respond to.

Many retailers will use signage such as "Best Seller" or "Manager's Pick" to spotlight individual items (Spasova, 2009). Store managers do this with the assumption that streamlining a customer's choice by guiding them to obvious items (presumably higher-profit centers for the retailer) helps both retailer and customer. Spasova (2009) points to studies that not only disprove this theory, but in fact results in the opposite: in stores with a large selection, the odds of a highlighted item matching one that the customer was already considering are quite small, so customers are forced to expand their efforts in picking an item, leading to an increase in the overload effect.

2.4. Choice overload in a wine store: hypotheses

From the review of the literature, conditions may lead to a choice overload effect in a wine retail environment. The following hypotheses can therefore be postulated:

H1: The greater number of wines available in a store, the lower the satisfaction of customers with their choices. The large selection of wines with mostly intrinsic cues will lead to customers feeling less satisfied with their eventual choices given an increase of options. Stores with greater selections should have lower overall satisfaction than stores with smaller offerings. An affirmation of H1 has yet to be studied in a wine retail environment and would have benefits for the wine industry given the rise of mega stores with multiple thousands of choices.

However, given the rather unique place of wine in the system of consumer goods, it can also be surmised that (H2) the more involved a consumer feels about wine, the higher the threshold to

reach choice overload.

Based on the importance and ubiquity of wine critics, ratings and medals in a wine environment, consumers seek information to help them sort through the myriad selections and choices and information that abounds. That leads to (H3): a customer that feels stronger satisfaction with a wine store will have a higher threshold before experiencing choice overload than a customer with a lower reported store satisfaction.

In conclusion, this paper will address the question of whether a choice overload effect exists in a wine retail environment. Additional questions to attempt to answer are where the delineation exists between sufficient levels of choice and the overload condition, and are there steps that a retailer can do to raise the threshold level before overload happens.

3. Research method

To ascertain the validity of the hypotheses regarding choice overload in a wine retail environment a combination of methods will be used. The survey took place in a regional chain of nine large wine and spirit stores in the New York City metropolitan area (New York, New Jersey and Connecticut). The nine stores have a similar “look and feel” to each other, and attract the same customer demographic. A main difference is in the stores’ physical size, ranging from 4000 sq.ft. to 12,000 sq.ft with most clustered around 10,000. Overall SKUs of wine sold in each store range from 1100 to 1900. The differences between stores allows for ease of testing the choice overload hypotheses.

3.1 Step 1: Quantitative questionnaire

At first, a survey was sent via email to the customer database of the retailer. The purpose of the survey was about measuring customer’s attitudes on how they browse and select wine in a wine shop: if they shop by country or by varietal; do they seek help from store personnel or prefer to browse on their own; and how many bottles do they usually purchase in one visit. The survey was randomly sent to 4000 names from the retailers email database. 806 responses were collected. These customers self-reported as being high-consumption wine drinkers: 57% shop for wine bi-weekly or more. 50% of respondents purchase four or more bottles of wine in each shopping trip.

Questions asked in this survey include: frequency of wine shopping in the store; number of bottles usually bought; attributes activated to buy a bottle of wine; time spent in the store; intention to buy specific wines before entering the store; reaction if an expected wine is not available in store; impact of wine tasting; feeling about the store; effect of too many choices; the extent some regions are perceived as 'too much' choice;

Compiling the responses will give a baseline on how customers perceive their behavior when in a wine retail environment. The second piece of the study is about observing customers inside a wine shop to see if observed behavior correlates with predicted behavior from customers’ own statements of beliefs, and follow up with a face to face interview of the customer.

3.2 Step 2: Observed behavior

In order to ascertain how customers actually behave while in a wine store, a direct observational approach was used. Three of the nine stores will be used for the observations, choosing one store each in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut in order to gather as wide

a range of customers as possible. Findings of this specific step are presented here, and only presented as a greater understanding about why 119 face to face interviews were conducted in step 3. Along with tracking their path through the store, customers' behavior was noted as well: how long is spent in each section; how many bottles are touched/looked at; what gets placed into the customer's cart/basket and whether and where the customer seeks out store staff.

A total of 119 customers were randomly selected upon entering the store, spread across three different locations in the same retail chain. These three locations are in three different states, and have sales volumes that differ by a factor of 4 from the highest to lowest locations. Completing observations across markets allows for greater diversity in consumers and gives a more complete picture of the “average” wine customer. And having a wide range of store volumes again allows for a more complete picture of the range of wine consumers.

3.3. Step 3: Follow-up interview

After the observed customer has completed their transaction, they were interviewed outside the store regarding their satisfaction with the purchase. Questions included:

- 1) Did you know in advance which wines you were going to buy? If yes, did you only purchase those wines?
- 2) On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the wine you purchased (not the store itself)
- 3) On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the store overall (not the wine you just purchased)
- 4) I see that you just purchased a (insert type of wine observed being purchased). If you had to guess, how many wines of this type did you have to choose from?
- 5) On a scale of 1-10, please rate your wine knowledge.

Question 4 was developed as the proxy to varying choices within the store itself. Are customers more satisfied when they perceive fewer choices than there in fact are; or inversely are they less satisfied if they feel like they have more choices than in actuality?

4. Results

4.1. Self-reported behavior of SL's clients

From a descriptive perspective, we would note that about a quarter of the respondents shop for wine monthly, 35% of them would do it a couple of time a month and 20% weekly or more. People shopping on a weekly basis are more likely to buy only one bottle of wine whereas people shopping on a monthly basis would buy more than 4 bottles of wine. The most cited criteria customers based their buying choice on is the grape variety (36% of the respondents said they mainly select wine according to grape varieties) and more than 85% of the respondents state that they have time to browse and explore during their shopping trip. In that perspective, 60% said they spend more than 10 minutes for their shopping trip. For most of the respondents (Table 1), the shopping trip seems to be a pleasant trip, with 65% stating that they would browse until I see something interesting.

Table 1: Which best describes you when you enter a wine shop?

| | # | % |
|---|-----|------|
| I know exactly what I want to purchase and only look for that wine(s) | 78 | 9.7 |
| I have a rough idea of what I want and browse until I see something interesting | 528 | 65.7 |
| I have a rough idea of what I want and ask for help finding something interesting | 142 | 17.7 |

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| I have no idea what I want to buy and browse until I see something interesting | 43 | 5.3 |
| I have no idea of what I want to buy and ask for help finding something interesting | 13 | 1.6 |
| Total | 804 | 100 |

An analysis of consumers' self-reported behavior does not show evidence of a choice overload effect. 83% of respondents reported being happy with the number of selections in the wine store (Table 2), as compared with 14% who wanted greater selection and only 3% preferring a more limited selection range.

Table 2: Which statement best represents your feelings about Stew Leonard's Wines store?

| | # | % |
|--|-----|-----|
| I wish they had more selections in wine | 103 | 14 |
| I am happy with the number of wines they carry | 622 | 83 |
| I would prefer fewer options | 8 | 1 |
| They have too many choices of wines | 15 | 2 |
| Total | 748 | 100 |

Furthermore, when asked to rate the level of agreement with the statement "Do you believe that having too many choices of wine in a store makes it more difficult for you to select the wine you want?", 70% chose *totally disagree* where only 5% selected *totally agree*. Even when looking solely at those respondents who agreed (Table 3) with the statement about having too many choices leading to more difficulty in choosing, the majority of those people still were satisfied with the selection levels in the store.

Table 3: Feelings about Stew Leonard's wines

| <i>Thinking about the entire store, which statement best represents your feelings about Stew Leonard's Wines?</i> | Agree with statement 'I believe that having too many choices of wine in a store makes it more difficult for me to select the wine I want' | Overall |
|---|---|---------|
| Wish they had more selections in wine | 8% | 14% |
| Am happy with the number of wines they carry | 71% | 83% |
| Would prefer fewer options | 8% | 1% |
| They have too many choices of wines | 12% | 2% |

This satisfaction with the overall choice level in the store even extended to those who were usually rushed for time while shopping (Table 4).

Table 4: Feelings about Stew Leonard's wines when rushed for time or not

| <i>Thinking about the entire store, which statement best represents your feelings about Stew Leonard's Wines?</i> | When you do your wine shopping are you usually rushed for time or do you have time to browse and explore? | | Overall |
|---|---|----------------|---------|
| | Rushed for time | Able to browse | |
| Wish they had more selections in wine | 20% | 13% | 14% |
| Am happy with the number of wines they carry | 74% | 85% | 83% |
| Would prefer fewer options | 3% | 1% | 1% |
| They have too many choices of wines | 4% | 2% | 2% |

In the meantime, it seems that wine involvement does not have an impact on respondents' feelings about the stores from a number of selections' perspective (Table 5).

Table 5: Feelings about Stew Leonard's wines by level of wine involvement

| <i>Thinking about the entire store, which statement best represents your feelings about Stew Leonard's Wines?</i> | Wine involvement | | | Overall |
|---|------------------|--------|------|---------|
| | Low | Medium | High | |
| Wish they had more selections in wine | 13 | 12 | 15 | 14% |
| Am happy with the number of wines they carry | 83.5 | 85 | 82 | 83% |
| Would prefer fewer options | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.0 | 1% |
| They have too many choices of wines | 2.1 | 1.4 | 2.4 | 2% |

4.2. Face to face interviews with 100 customers

Results from the live interviews confirmed the on-line survey result (Table 6): no discernable evidence of choice overload emerged.

Table 6: Satisfaction (out of 10) with wine purchase

| Location of the store | # of respondents | Average satisfaction wine purchase | # of Wines available in each store |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Farmingdale | 44 | 9.2 | 1849 |
| Paramus | 50 | 9.0 | 1196 |
| Newington | 25 | 9.2 | 1626 |
| Total | 119 | 9.2 | |

Out of the 119 interviews, only three respondents rated the satisfaction with their wine choice less than seven on a scale of 1 to 10. We could have assume that the average satisfaction in the Paramus store to be higher compared to the two other stores (with a higher number of wines available), but we have observed the opposite. This also extended to satisfaction with the wine store in general (Table 7).

Table 7: Satisfaction (out of 10) with the stores

| Location of the store | # of respondents | Average satisfaction wine purchase | # of Wines available in each store |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Farmingdale | 44 | 9.5 | 1849 |
| Paramus | 50 | 8.9 | 1196 |
| Newington | 25 | 9.2 | 1626 |
| Total | 119 | 9.2 | |

In fact, the location with the greatest number of wines had the highest overall store satisfaction and tied for the most wine satisfaction.

When looking at total time spent to select wine, it was discovered that there was an inverse correlation between overall choices and time spent shopping for wines (excluding situation / time of tasting wine when a wine tasting was available):

- Farmingdale: 4 minutes
- Paramus: 6 minutes
- Newington: 7 minutes

4.3. Hypotheses outcome

- H1: The greater number of wines available in a store, the lower the satisfaction of customers with their choices. As described in tables 2, 3, 4 and 6, a greater number of wines available in store leads to a greater satisfaction, and so, hypothesis is not supported.
- H2: The more involved a consumer feels about wine, the higher the threshold to reach choice overload. As discussed from table 5, wine involvement does not impact on satisfaction for a lower or greater number of wines available in the store. Therefore, the hypothesis 2 is not confirmed.
- H3: A customer that feels stronger satisfaction with a wine store will have a higher threshold before experiencing choice overload than a customer with a lower reported store satisfaction. As shown in table 7, the greater the number of wines available in the store, the greater the average satisfaction of wine purchases. Therefore, the hypothesis 3 can't be supported.

With the three hypotheses not proved it is apparent that choice overload does not exist for the customer base of this wine retailer. The following section will discuss questions raised by these findings and possible explanations.

5. Discussion

We are left with an absence of choice overload in this regional chain of wine stores despite a body of research showing that the dilemma exists in many different environments. One possible explanation is that the customer base of this retailer is substantially different from the average wine consumer. The data from the survey shows them to be high consumption, highly-engaged wine consumers. The interviews show a high level of satisfaction with the store in general separated from the purchased wines. And customer demographic data shared by store management shows that the majority of customers pass at least three other wines stores to shop at this specific retailer, reinforcing the idea of loyalty and comfort with the store. That innate trust and confidence could be a mitigating factor in preventing choice overload, as shown by Macintosh and Lockshin (2007). As already discussed by Benke et al. (2012), higher levels of comfort with a store seem to indicate a lowering or even elimination of the choice overload effect.

An intriguing possibility remains: is it possible that wine is a unique category of consumer good for which choice overload does not exist? Despite a large body of work showing choice overload exists, there is not unanimity in the literature. A meta-analysis of the current research on choice overload (Scheibehenne, 2010) does not find evidence of it; in fact they conclude "the overall effect size in the meta-analysis was virtually zero". They further postulate that "more choice is better with regard to consumption quantity and if decision makers had well-defined preferences prior to choice". This sounds rather like the high-consumption, engaged customer base of the retailer in this study. High consumption equates to more familiarity to the product category which leads to greater confidence in selecting from a larger set. Unlike the research on non-alignable goods (Gourville and Dilip, 2005), wine is bought regularly. Computers, televisions, ceiling fans etc. are low-frequency purchases, and consumers never get comfortable with the choices in a category. Wine comes with a comfort level, particularly when there is perceived to be "no bad option".

An anecdotal similarity is observed at a farmers' market where a table might contain two dozen varieties of heirloom tomatoes. Instead of becoming paralyzed with the options and walking

away, people grab a little of many kinds in order to taste many different kinds and discovering preferences on their own. This is possible with wine and tomatoes but not in high-value items like cars and computers where the financial implications of a bad choice are starker.

Being a high-frequency, comparatively low-value good means that the risk of making a bad selection is minimal; a person can always make a new choice in a few days when they return to the wine shop. Loyalty to a specific store breeds comfort with the choice selection; if this store offers it then it must be a good selection. Finally with the use of categories, the selections are bracketed into smaller more manageable chunks making the selection process easier. This retailer not only sorts wine into regions and sub-regions (ie, Italy->Tuscany->Chianti) but those sub-sections are organized roughly by price point. Using these brackets allows for a section of 300 wines to quickly be navigated into just those wines that the consumer wishes to select from without having to browse all 300 offerings.

Further research needs to be done to confirm or disprove conclusively whether choice overload does in fact exist, and if it does exist is wine as a consumer good immune to it. Replicating this study at a different retail chain can see if this present study is invalid due to an aberrational customer base compared to the “average” wine retail chain.

Another avenue for exploration is in the shopping habits of wine consumers in general. Like the voracious tomato eaters at the farmers’ market, how adventurous are average wine consumers in seeking out new wines and experimenting with them? If it can be shown that a wine shopper desires more choices than a jam shopper or someone looking for a television this would explain the lack of choice overload observed in this study. A last question that can be studied in a wine retail environment concerns price levels. If it can be postulated that wine constitutes an intrinsic good where the cost of a poor decision is minimal (wine is cheaper than a flat screen TV for instance); mitigating choice overload due to the low barrier of selection. But what about for fine wines (say \$50 per bottle and above) where now there is some pain involved in choosing poorly? Is there a measurable choice overload affect in this category of wine compared to the more everyday selections of wines generally observed?

5. Conclusion

This paper deigned to look at the choice overload effect; where consumers feel less satisfied when forced to choose from among too many options; or even postpone deciding entirely. A large body of research has confirmed this effect exists across a wide range of goods and categories. However it had never been studied in the environment of wine sales. Hypothesizing that wine occupies a unique category of intrinsic cue goods, this paper set out to measure the choice overload effect in a wine retail environment.

A three-part study was designed: first a survey was sent to 4000 wine drinkers asking about their habits while wine shopping, and secondly 119 customers were observed as they shopped in three separate wine stores and thirdly they were interviewed after their transaction was complete. The goal from the three segments of the study was to measure the existence of the choice overload effect using satisfaction ratings for the customers’ ultimate selections of wine as well as they overall satisfaction level of the wine store in general.

Self-reported behavior in the survey showed no evidence of choice overload. These findings were replicated in the interviews, where people explained being extremely satisfied with their wine purchase, irrespective of number of bottles purchased, time spent in store, wine knowledge level or any other factor. Therefore in this study the choice overload effect did not

exist.

Careful review of existing literature regarding choice overload points the way to some steps that retailers can take to mitigate the effect. Sorting the selections into easily recognizable categories allows for easier purchasing and greater satisfaction (Mogilner et al., 2008). Creating overall customer comfort with the specific store creates loyalty and satisfaction: this can be accomplished by having a well-trained, long-tenured staff (Macintosh & Lockshin, 2007) and a clean, easy shopping environment (Morales et al., 2004).

The retail chain in which this study was taken is known for actually doing all these mitigating factors. They have been named “Retailer of the Year” by multiple wine trade publications and have been included on Fortune Magazine’s Top 100 Companies to Work for 10 years in a row. The long-tenured staff, well organized floor layout and national reputation all serve to put customers at ease (both consciously and un-consciously) allowing for a lessening of the choice overload (or in this case, the elimination of it).

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