# How Much Data Is Too Much for Consumers?

Strike a balance by following these simple tips.

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In the age of infinite customization, too much choice can be a bad thing. Consumers appreciate multiple options, but they don’t want to design their own products and services from scratch. Companies lose sales when customers experience choice overload. To convince people to buy from your brand, you must walk a fine line between too little and too much data.

Accenture’s Pulse Check 2018 discovered that 91 percent of of consumers are more likely to buy from businesses that provide relevant offers and personalized recommendations. When it comes to sales, relevance makes the difference between a satisfied buyer and an overwhelmed prospect. People will flee from the pressure when forced to choose from a wall of irrelevant options, but when they can fine-tune recommendations that already make sense, they feel much more comfortable.

Strike a balance and provide your customers with exactly the right amount of data by following these simple tips:

## 1. Provide concierge services to do the grunt work.

Customers know what you do and what they want, but they don’t always know how to connect the dots. Make the process easier

by providing expert guidance to potential buyers. Reservations.com, for example, pairs hungry travelers with savvy advisors through its R-Club program. Customers can chat with real humans 24/7 on everything including where to go, where to stay, what to do and where to eat on their upcoming trips.

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Concierge services provide the ultimate level of customization for choice-flooded customers. If a Reservations.com customer wanted to go to Italy in the spring to try authentic Sicilian cooking, an R-Club advisor could help make that happen. A different customer who wanted a tropical vacation sometime in the next few weeks would get a similar treatment for a vaguer goal. Different customers want different levels of customization, and human-led services can make a major difference in quality and relevance.

## 2. Design a path, not a challenge.

For products with virtually limitless customization options, don't hit customers in the face with the full spread at the beginning. Instead, gradually lead them down a purchase path to make them feel like partners in the creative process.

Say you wanted to purchase some customized gear for your team. You'd go through an entire decision-making process step by step, starting with picking the actual product serving as team swag. Then, you'd choose the colors and artwork, which might be related to your traditional logo and branding or associated with a specific campaign or event. If the process became overwhelming, you could contact customer service to have a human walk you through the process. But imagine if you had to pick everything at once: product, color, design. Not only would the gear company's webpages take forever to load, but customers would bolt at the enormity of the catalog. By laying

out an easy-to-follow path, customers experience the benefits of options without suffering from the paradox of choice.

## 3. Consider the context closely.

Use data to guide customers in the right direction from the outset. If you sell clothing, for instance, keep the winter gear at the back of the site during the summer. You may lose a few sales to offseason buyers, but you will more than make up the difference by appealing to a wider audience interested in seasonally relevant clothing.

Amazon is well-known for its personalized recommendations. By reviewing what customers have purchased previously, as well as what they've searched and browsed, its algorithm is able to find items in the same vein. Amazon Web Services took this one step further by rolling out Amazon Personalize, a machine-learning service that shares with developers the same technology Amazon itself uses.

That includes personalized notifications. Amazon Personalize's goal is to make sure the right people get the right messages at the right time. "For example," Amazon explains on its site, "a retailer can use Amazon Personalize to select the most appropriate mobile-app notification to send based on a user's location, buying habits and discount amounts that have previously driven them to act rather than simply sending a generic promotion and hoping for the best."

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## 4. Don't define yourself through customization.

Your brand promises a specific kind of value. Don't make customers work hard to extract it. Give people what they want,

even if that means sacrificing potential profits in one area to deliver higher-quality options that better reflect your primary purpose.

Chik-fil-A is a good example of understanding your niche. While competitors like McDonald’s and Burger King started with hamburgers and shifted to include chicken options, the chicken-based chain hasn’t strayed from its main offering. Rather than simply differentiate itself on food, however, Chik-fil-A has centered on its customer service and strategic growth without spreading itself too thin.

Your customers want to choose, but they want you to do most of the heavy lifting. Give them a break by handling the bulk of the personalization work behind the scenes so you can provide a satisfying and seamless experience.

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