

Publication

A million reasons or just one? How coin flips impact the number of relevant reasons for decisions

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When individuals face difficult decisions, they may turn to random decision-making aids, such as coin flips, for support. Here, we show that flipping a coin before making a decision impacts the number of reasons that individuals consider when making consumer choices (Study 1), policy decisions (Study 2), personal decisions (Study 3) and breakup decisions (Studies 4a, 4b, 4c). In Studies 1 to 3, flipping a coin resulted in fewer reasons or a reduced increase in the number of reasons that were deemed important. In contrast, when looking at qualitatively different decisions such as breakup decisions (4a to 4c), where using a coin flip may be perceived as unacceptable, flipping a coin resulted in more reasons being taken into account. Across studies, we show that flipping a coin impacts decision-making processes. Taking breakup decisions aside, a coin flip may ease decision-making by decreasing the number of reasons taken into account.

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