Can browser choice screens be effective?

Experimental analysis of the impact of their design, content and placement

A report by

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There are five key takeaways:

1. Well-designed browser choice screens can impact people's decisions: they help people choose a browser that they expect to remain with:

- **Choice screens move people away from pre-installed default browsers.** Just over half of the control group expect to change the default browser that had been selected for them — suggesting that the pre-installed default may not serve the needs or preferences of many people. On the other hand, 98% of the people who select a browser through a choice screen expect to remain with it.

- **Browser choice screens increase contestability.** Serving a choice screen leads to an increase in the share that selected independent browsers relative to the control group. People in the treatment groups were 13% less likely to expect to use a browser from one of the incumbents (Samsung, Chrome, and Edge) than the control.

2. The content and design of choice screens matter: several factors impact choice, including information, the number of browsers, and the order browsers are displayed:

- **Providing information on each browser impacts choice.** Adding information (moving from T1 to T2) decreases the percent of participants who chose one of the incumbents, from 73% to 70%. When more information is available there's also a small increase in those who choose an independent browser.

- **Providing key information and more browsers to choose from increases satisfaction.** Participants who receive higher levels of information are more likely to state that they are satisfied with the amount of information they receive, with those in T2 most satisfied (rising from 56% for T1 to 64%).

- **The order that browsers are presented strongly affects choice.** Browsers that are lower positioned (randomised in this experiment) are chosen significantly less frequently - this is a particularly strong effect on Android (where browsers were positioned vertically). Moving from being ranked first to being fourth decreases the likelihood of people choosing that browser by several percentage points. Chrome shows the largest fall (7 percentage points), but the lowest relative drop (11% fall). Pre-set browsers (Samsung and Edge) have a high absolute fall (6 percentage points) and the highest relative drop (38% fall). Firefox and Opera are less impacted.

Rather than describe the different types of choice screens, we simply showed people the three different choice screens (i.e. less information, more information, fewer browsers), in order to obtain a more accurate measurement of participants' preferences. Aggregated results across the entire sample are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: People's preferences regarding the placement and type of choice screen

Preferences	Share of people
When should the choice screen be presented?	
Choice screen at set-up	65%
Choice screen at first browser use	33%
Choice screen at other time	1%
No choice screen at all	2%
What type of choice screen should be presented?	
Choice screen with 12 browsers/low information	20%
Choice screen with 12 browsers/high information	44%
Choice screen with 5 browsers/high information	26%
Any type of choice screen	10%

Notes: This table presents people's preferences regarding when choice screens should be presented and what information they should contain. It is based on observations from all participants (control and all treatment conditions) i.e, 12,060.

First, we find that the vast majority of people want to be presented with a choice screen. For example, **97-98% of those allocated to either the control group or the treatment groups want to be shown a choice screen**.

Second, the **majority of people - across all conditions - want the choice screen to be presented during device set-up** as opposed to when the browser is used for the first time or at some other point. Moreover, those who were shown a choice screen (T1-4) were more likely to want the choice screen to be presented during device set-up (including those in T4, who