Watch, listen, and learn: Using multimedia instructions in choice experiments

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In this paper we compare two discrete choice experiments, where the information regarding the attributes and their levels are presented using either a narrated animation or text. The narrated animation provides exactly the same information about the good and the valuation task as the text presentation. The dual channel theory of human information processing suggest that using multimedia information, i.e. information that exploits both the auditor and visual channels, can reduce the risk of cognitive overload. This might be useful especially in online choice experiments regarding environmental goods, where extensive information regarding the good as well as the choice experiment method has to be provided to the respondents. Cognitive overload might manifest itself as respondents skipping this information, leading to more noise in the data. The few studies that have used multimedia information in choice experiments have indicated that this can reduce choice error, and in general help individuals make more accurate and consistent choices. However, there is still a scarcity in the literature regarding presentation effects in choice experiment.

The data in this study is based on a survey including two choice experiments, one focusing on the value of different rural landscapes in Denmark, and the other on water quality improvements in Danish coastal areas. Responses have been obtained from almost 3000 respondents. The results suggest that multimedia instructions lead to reduced choice errors, but also seem to affect preferences for the good being valued, at least in one of our two case studies. By looking at the demographics of respondents dropping out prior to the narrated animation, we investigate why multimedia instructions apparently are capable of changing respondents' preferences. Furthermore, we compare the amounts of protest responses, stated difficulty of choice and Willingness-To-Pay between the two presentation modes.

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