

### The impact of information policies and loyalty programs on consumer switching choices in retail energy markets

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# Consumer switch behaviour

- > Precondition for other forms of participation.
  - · Dynamic tariffs, smart EV charging, prosumers, ...
- > Leads to increase of green energy products (Bird et al., 2002; MacDonald & Eyre, 2018).
- > Main barrier: **search- and switching costs** (He & Reiner, 2017; Klemperer, 1987; Wilson, 2012).



### Main actors











# Prior study:

Results indicate that <u>retailers partly hinder the regulator's efforts</u> through retailers' retention actions.





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# This study:





# This study:

How do information transparency policies and loyalty programs jointly influence consumers' contract preferences?





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## Relevant literature



- Policies affect information complexity (Hortaçsu et al., 2017; Gärling et al., 2008).
- Correlational evidence on switching costs (Harold et al., 2020; He & Reiner, 2017).



<u>Residential consumers</u> Contractual decisions

- Preferences based on price, source and brand (Deller et al., 2021; Ndebele et al., 2019).
- Heterogeneous among segments (Tabi et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2016).

### Energy retailers Loyalty program

- Loyalty programs increase switching costs (Hellier et al., 2003, Ibáñez et al., 2006).
- Self selection effect



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## Relevant literature



segments (Tabi et al.,

2014; Yang et al., 2016).

Orrelational evidence on **switching costs** (Harold et al., 2020; He & Reiner, 2017).



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## Relevant literature



• Heterogeneous among segments (Tabi et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2016).



# Methods and experimental design

- > Online choice experiment among 400 EU respondents through Prolific
- > Three parts: Explanation, Discrete choice experiment, Survey questions.
- > Experimental between subject design:
  - · Standardization of energy bill
  - . Enrollment in loyalty program

	No Standardization	Standardization
No loyalty program	Control group	Treatment 1
Loyalty program	Treatment 2	Treatment 3



# Methods and experimental design

- > Online choice experiment among 400 EU respondents through Prolific
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Changes in <u>lay-out</u>, not content!

	No Standardization	Standardization
No loyalty program	Control group	Treatment 1
Loyalty program	Treatment 2	Treatment 3



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### Attributes discrete choice experiment





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### Example

Imagine your energy contract expires. Your current provider is Provider 1. Which contract would you choose?

#### **PROVIDER 1**

We are your current Provider 1. An overview of our retention offer based on your expected consumption of 3794 kWh electricity and 504  $m^3$  gas:

- European green electricity from mixed sources
- Green gas
- 0 months fixed energy tariffs

#### **PROVIDER 2**

We are large well-known Provider 2. An overview of our offer based on your expected consumption of 3794 kWh electricity and 504  $\rm m^3$  gas:

- European green electricity from mixed sources
- Green gas
- 6 months fixed energy tariffs

#### **PROVIDER 3**

We are a small new Provider 3. An overview of our offer based on your expected consumption of 3794 kWh electricity and 504  $m^3$  gas:

• Green national wind electricity

- Green gas
- 0 months fixed energy tariffs

Item	Costs
Electricity (Green mix)	
Usage costs	€ 0.2716 per kWh
Fixed payment	€ 0.3420 per day
Network costs	€ 0.8929 per day
Taxes	€ 0.3217 per kWh
Gas (Green)	
Usage costs	$\in$ 0.9578 per m <sup>3</sup>
Fixed payment	€ 0.3420 per day
Network costs	€ 0.5577 per day
Taxes	€0.7091 per m <sup>3</sup>

Item	Costs
Electricity (Green mix)	
Usage costs	€ 0.2988 per kWh
Fixed payment	€ 0.3762 per day
Network costs	€ 0.8929 per day
Taxes	€ 0.3217 per kWh
Gas (Green)	
Usage costs	€ 1.0536 per m <sup>3</sup>
Fixed payment	€ 0.3762 per day
Network costs	€ 0.5577 per day
Taxes	€ 0.7091 per m <sup>3</sup>

Item	Costs
Electricity (Green wind)	
Usage costs	€ 0.2852 per kWh
Fixed payment	€ 0.3591 per day
Network costs	€ 0.8929 per day
Taxes	€ 0.3217 per kWh
Gas (Green)	
Usage costs	€ 1.0057 per m <sup>3</sup>
Fixed payment	€ 0.3591 per day
Network costs	€ 0.5577 per day
Taxes	€ 0.7091 per m <sup>3</sup>

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# Experimental design

- > Standardization: layout of tariff construction is in annual costs and easy to compare across offers
- > Loyalty program: consumers are enrolled in loyalty program. Layout of tariff of current retailer includes "including loyalty discount"

	No Standardization	Standardization
No loyalty program	Control group	Treatment 1
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## Control group

Imagine your energy contract expires. Your current provider is Provider 1. Which contract would you choose?

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### T1: Standardization

Imagine your energy contract expires. Your current provider is Provider 1. Which contract would you choose?

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• European green electricity from mixed sources

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#### **PROVIDER 2**

We are large well-known Provider 2. An overview of our offer based on your expected consumption of 3794 kWh electricity and 504  $m^3$  gas:

- European green electricity from mixed sources
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#### PROVIDER 3

We are a small new Provider 3. An overview of our offer based on your expected consumption of 3794 kWh electricity and 504  $m^3$  gas:

- Green national wind electricity
- Green gas
- 0 months fixed energy tariffs

Item	Annual costs
Electricity (Green mix)	
Usage costs	€ 1,030.54
Fixed payment	€ 62.41
Network costs	€ 325.89
Taxes	€ 1,220.67
Total annual electricity	€ 2,639.51
Gas (Green)	
Usage costs	€ 482.69
Fixed payment	€ 62.41
Network costs	€ 203.56
Taxes	€ 357.53
Total annual gas	€ 1,106.00
Total annual costs	€ 3,745.51

Item	Annual costs
Electricity (Green mix)	
Usage costs	€ 1,133.59
Fixed payment	€ 68.65
Network costs	€ 325.89
Taxes	€ 1,220.67
Total annual electricity	€ 2,748.80
Gas (Green)	
Usage costs	€ 530.96
Fixed payment	€ 68.65
Network costs	€ 203.56
Taxes	€ 357.53
Total annual gas	€ 1,160.51
Total annual costs	€ 3,909.32
iotai annuai costs	0,000.02

Item	Annual costs
Electricity (Green wind)	
Usage costs	€ 1,082.06
Fixed payment	€ 65.53
Network costs	€ 325.89
Taxes	€ 1,220.67
Total annual electricity	€ 2,694.16
Gas (Green)	
Usage costs	€ 506.83
Fixed payment	€ 65.53
Network costs	€ 203.56
Taxes	€ 357.53
Total annual gas	€ 1,133.26
Total annual costs	€ 3,827.24

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## T2: Loyalty program

#### **PROVIDER 1**

We are your current Provider 1. An overview of our retention offer based on your expected consumption of 3794 kWh electricity and 504  $m^3$  gas:

European green electricity from mixed sourcesGreen gas

• 0 months fixed energy tariffs

#### **PROVIDER 2**

We are large well-known Provider 2. An overview of our offer based on your expected consumption of 3794 kWh electricity and 504  $\rm m^3$  gas:

- European green electricity from mixed sources
- Green gas
- 6 months fixed energy tariffs

#### **PROVIDER 3**

We are a small new Provider 3. An overview of our offer based on your expected consumption of 3794 kWh electricity and 504  $m^3$  gas:

- Green national wind electricity
- Green gas
- 0 months fixed energy tariffs

Item	Costs
Electricity (Green mix)	
Usage costs (incl. 6% loyalty discount)	€ 0.2716 per kWh
Fixed payment	€ 0.3420 per day
Network costs	€ 0.8929 per day
Taxes	€ 0.3217 per kWh
Gas (Green)	
Usage costs (incl. 6% loyalty discount)	$\in$ 0.9578 per m <sup>3</sup>
Fixed payment	€ 0.3420 per day
Network costs	€ 0.5577 per day
Taxes	€ 0.7091 per m <sup>3</sup>

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Electricity (Green wind)	
Usage costs	€ 0.2852 per kWh
Fixed payment	€ 0.3591 per day
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Network costs	€ 0.5577 per day
Taxes	€0.7091 per m <sup>3</sup>

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## T3: Standardization & Loyalty Program

Imagine your energy contract expires. Your current provider is Provider 1. Which contract would you choose?

#### **PROVIDER 1**

We are your current Provider 1. An overview of our retention offer based on your expected consumption of 3794 kWh electricity and 504 m<sup>3</sup> gas:

• European green electricity from mixed sources

Green gas

• 0 months fixed energy tariffs

Item	Annual costs
Electricity (Green mix)	
Usage costs (incl. 6% loyalty discount)	€ 1,030.54
Fixed payment	€ 62.41
Network costs	€ 325.89
Taxes	€ 1,220.67
Total annual electricity	€ 2,639.51
Gas (Green)	
Usage costs (incl. 6% loyalty discount)	€ 482.69
Fixed payment	€ 62.41
Network costs	€ 203.56
Taxes	€ 357.53
Total annual gas	€ 1,106.00
Total annual costs	€ 3,745.51

#### **PROVIDER 2**

We are large well-known Provider 2. An overview of our offer based on your expected consumption of 3794 kWh electricity and 504 m<sup>3</sup> gas:

- European green electricity from mixed sources
- Green gas
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Item	Annual costs
Electricity (Green mix)	
Usage costs	€ 1,133.59
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Taxes	€ 1,220.67
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Gas (Green)	
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Fixed payment	€ 68.65
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Taxes	€ 357.53
Total annual gas	€ 1,160.51
Total annual costs	€ 3,909.32

#### **PROVIDER 3**

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Usage costs	€ 506.83
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Network costs	€ 203.56
Taxes	€ 357.53
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# Methods

- > Design:
  - 10 sets of 3 options.
  - Sets created with Bayesian Defficient design using *idefix* package in R
  - Survey created in Qualtrics, distributed on Prolific.
    - Sample of 400 EU citizens, fluent English proficiency, 2 attention checks correct
    - Random assignment to treatment groups in qualtrics.





# Estimation

- > Multinomial logit model
  - Interaction with individual specific treatment group



$$\Pr(\text{Choice} = i \mid J) = \frac{\exp(\beta_1 \text{Familiar brand}_i + \dots + \beta_{28} \text{Treatment}_n \times \text{Duration 12 months}_i)}{\sum_{j=1}^m \exp(\beta_1 \text{Familiar brand}_j + \dots + \beta_{28} \text{Treatment}_m \times \text{Duration 12 months}_j)}$$



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	Control	Standardized	Loyalty	Stan/Loyal
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Current brand	$0.035 \\ (0.162)$	$0.458 \\ (0.235)$	$\begin{array}{c} 1.035^{***} \\ (0.218) \end{array}$	$0.935^{***}$ (0.217)
Familiar large brand	$0.234^{*}$ (0.092)	-0.212 (0.136)	$-0.619^{***}$ (0.127)	$egin{array}{c} -0.534^{***}\ (0.126) \end{array}$
Unfamiliar small brand	$-0.268^{*}$ (0.107)	-0.246 $(0.158)$	$-0.416^{**}$ (0.146)	$-0.390^{**}$ (0.146)
Price	$egin{array}{c} -0.011^{***} \ (0.001) \end{array}$	$egin{array}{c} -0.004^{**} \ (0.001) \end{array}$	-0.001 (0.001)	$-0.002^{*}$ (0.001)
Source green wind	$0.595^{***}$ $(0.069)$	$0.220^{*}$ (0.103)	$0.041 \\ (0.072)$	$0.182 \\ (0.094)$
Source mixed renew	$0.563^{***}$ $(0.062)$	$0.187^{*}$ (0.093)	$-0.135 \\ (0.085)$	$0.013 \\ (0.085)$
Source grey	$-1.158^{***}$ (0.105)	$egin{array}{c} -0.407^{**} \ (0.131) \end{array}$	$0.094 \\ (0.112)$	$-0.195 \\ (0.116)$
Duration 0 months	$0.635^{***}$ (0.070)	$0.183 \\ (0.104)$	$0.216^{*}$ (0.094)	$0.100 \\ (0.096)$
Duration 6 months	$0.338^{***}$ $(0.056)$	-0.071 (0.083)	-0.110 (0.077)	-0.108 (0.077)
Duration 12 months	$0.337^{***}$ $(0.070)$	-0.112 (0.104)	-0.105 (0.096)	$0.008 \\ (0.096)$
$\begin{array}{c} \text{Observations} \\ \text{Log Likelihood } (df = 28) \end{array}$	4000 - 3127.829			

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01



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	Control	Standardized	Loyalty	Stan/Loyal
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Current brand	0.035	0.458	1.035***	0.935***
	(0.162)	(0.235)	(0.218)	(0.217)
Terre 11'	0.09.4*	0.010	0 010***	0 59 4***
Familiar large brand	$0.234^{*}$	-0.212	$-0.619^{+++}$	$-0.534^{+++}$
	(0.092)	(0.130)	(0.127)	(0.126)
Unfamiliar small brand	$-0.268^{*}$	-0.246	$-0.416^{**}$	$-0.390^{**}$
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	· /	. , ,		. , ,
Price	$-0.011^{***}$	$-0.004^{**}$	-0.001	$-0.002^{*}$
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Common and and	0 505***	0.990*	0.041	0 1 9 9
Source green wind	(0.060)	$(0.220^{\circ})$	(0.041)	(0.182)
	(0.009)	(0.103)	(0.072)	(0.094)
Source mixed renew	0.563***	$0.187^{*}$	-0.135	0.013
	(0.062)	(0.093)	(0.085)	(0.085)
	( )	· · · ·	× ,	· · ·
Source grey	$-1.158^{***}$	$-0.407^{**}$	0.094	-0.195
	(0.105)	(0.131)	(0.112)	(0.116)
Duration 0 months	$0.635^{***}$	0.183	$0.216^{*}$	0.100
	(0.070)	(0.104)	(0.094)	(0.096)
Duration 6 months	0.338***	-0.071	-0.110	-0.108
	(0.056)	(0.083)	(0.077)	(0.077)
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Duration 12 months	$0.337^{***}$	-0.112	-0.105	0.008
	(0.070)	(0.104)	(0.096)	(0.096)
Observations	4000			
Log Likelihood (df = $28$ )	-3127.829			



Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01



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Duration 12 months	$0.337^{***}$ (0.070)	-0.112 (0.104)	-0.105 (0.096)	0.008 (0.096)
$\frac{1}{1}$ Observations Log Likelihood (df = 28)	4000 - 3127.829			
Note:		*.	p<0.1; **p<0.	05; ***p<0.01



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Duration 6 months	$0.338^{***}$ $(0.056)$	-0.071 (0.083)	-0.110 (0.077)	-0.108 (0.077)
Duration 12 months	$\begin{array}{c} 0.337^{***} \ (0.070) \end{array}$	-0.112 (0.104)	-0.105 (0.096)	$0.008 \\ (0.096)$
Observations Log Likelihood $(df = 28)$	4000 - 3127.829			
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.0	05; ***p<0.01



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Note:		*	<sup>c</sup> p<0.1; **p<0.	05; ***p<0.01



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	(0.092)	(0.136)	(0.127)	(0.126)
Unfamiliar small brand	$-0.268^{*}$	-0.246	$-0.416^{**}$	$-0.390^{**}$
	(0.107)	(0.158)	(0.146)	(0.146)
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Source mixed renew	$0.563^{***}$	$0.187^{*}$	-0.135	0.013
	(0.062)	(0.093)	(0.085)	(0.085)
Source grey	$-1.158^{***}$	$-0.407^{**}$	0.094	-0.195
	(0.105)	(0.131)	(0.112)	(0.116)
Duration 0 months	0.635***	0.183	$0.216^{*}$	0.100
	(0.070)	(0.104)	(0.094)	(0.096)
Duration 6 months	$0.338^{***}$	-0.071	-0.110	-0.108
	(0.056)	(0.083)	(0.077)	(0.077)
Duration 12 months	$0.337^{***}$	-0.112	-0.105	0.008
	(0.070)	(0.104)	(0.096)	(0.096)
Observations	4000			
Log Likelihood (df = $28$ )	-3127.829			
Note:		*r	o<0.1; **p<0.0	05; ***p<0.01





# Conclusions

- > How do information transparency policies and loyalty programs affect consumers' contract preferences?
  - Higher price elasticity and preferences for renewable sources with standardization treatment.
  - Higher preferences for current brand with loyalty treatment.
  - Effects of standardization treatment diminish when combined with loyalty treatment.
- > Possible explanations:
  - Higher switch costs through loyalty programs.
  - Limited attention: bounded rationality (Simon, 1959) and rational inattention (Sallee, 2014)



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