

# Shades of Rejections: The Effect of Rejection Frames on Commitment to Choice

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the prevalence of rejections in reality, relatively little research has examined the alternative frames of rejection. We suggest that compared with **soft rejections** (e.g., decide to look for other options) of encountered options, **hard rejections** (e.g., reject) lead to greater likelihood of choosing one of the remaining options. We test this idea in the online context using virtual shopping carts.

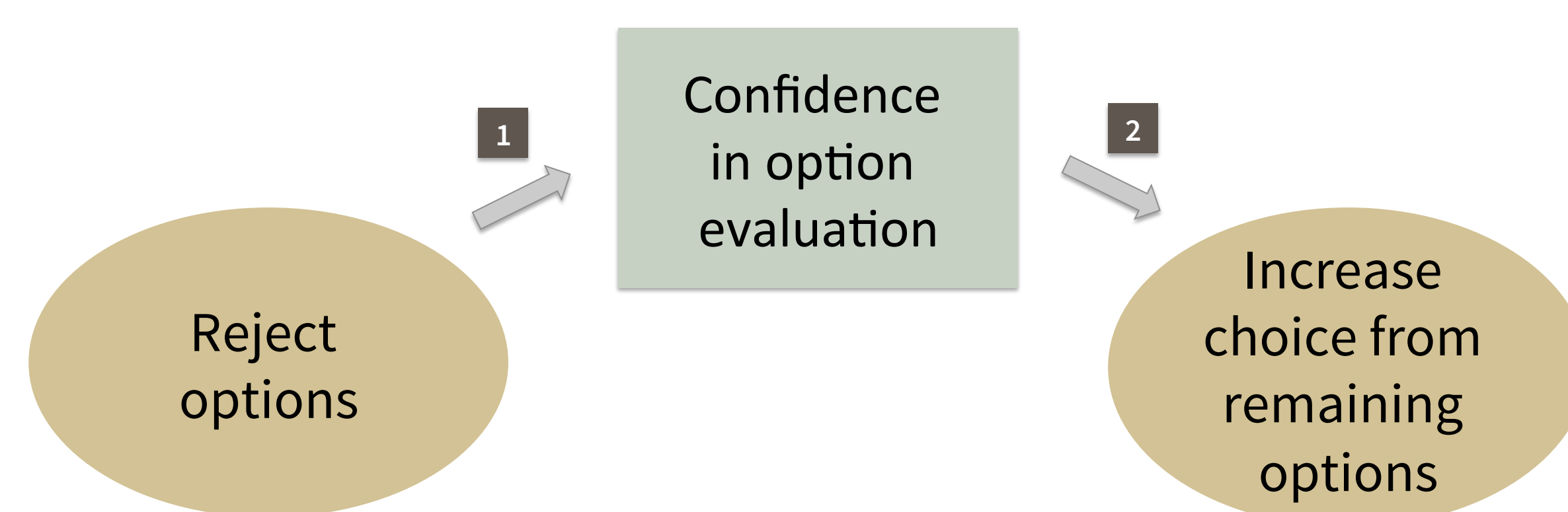
## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### Basic Preposition:

Individuals are more inclined to make a choice when they have **great confidence in their evaluation** (i.e., when it feels like they have identified the best option).

*Individuals avoid making a purchase when it feels like there is likely to be a better option in the future.*

### Research Model:



- 1 • Rejection (vs. choice) induces more deliberate processing Nagpal & Krishnamurthy 2008; Sokolova & Krishna 2016
- Deliberate reasoning improves decision confidence Scherer et al. 2015 and allows selection of a better response Kahneman 2011
- 2 • Confidence in purchase decision leads to greater commitment (e.g., less likely to switch) Häubl & Trifts 2000
- When the decision maker expects to find better alternatives by continuing to search, they are more likely to not make a choice Karni and Schwarz 1977

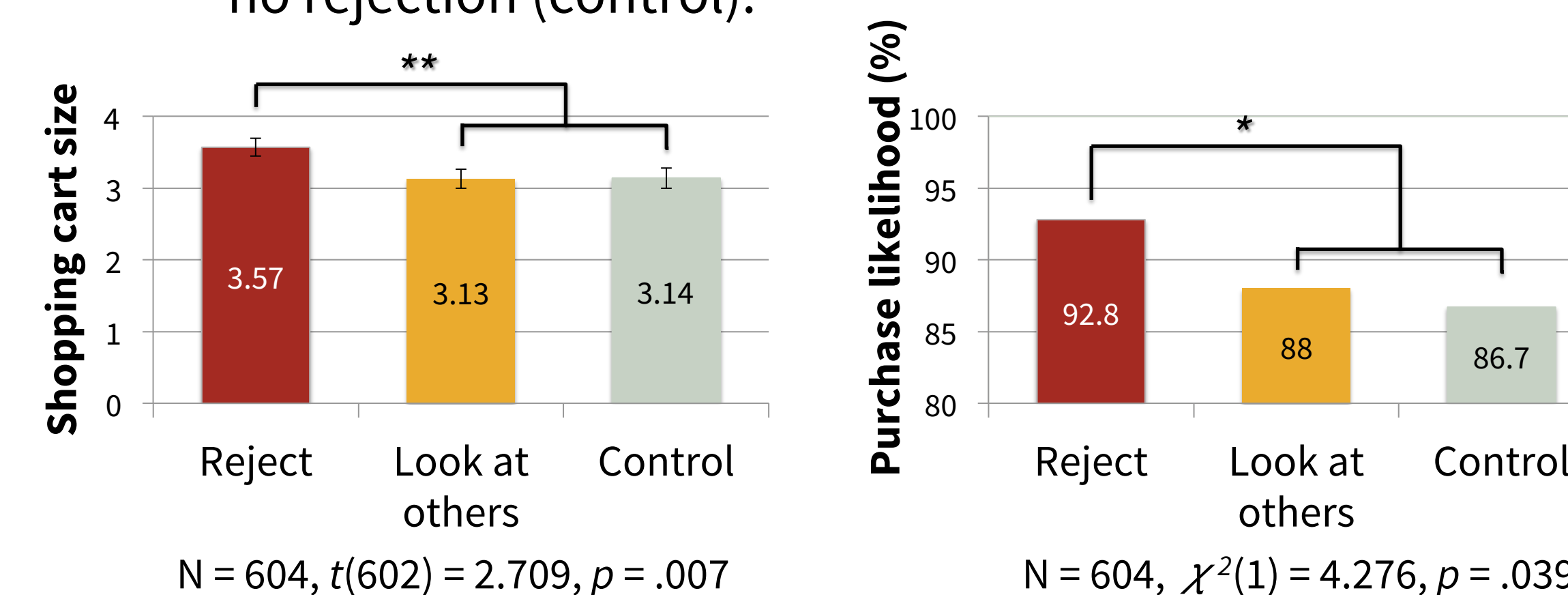
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## STUDY 1: THE REJECTION FRAME EFFECT

**Goal:** Test the directionality of the main effect  
**Design: 3 Rejection frames (reject vs. look at others vs. control)**  
Review 9 microwaves → Decide whether to buy from the cart



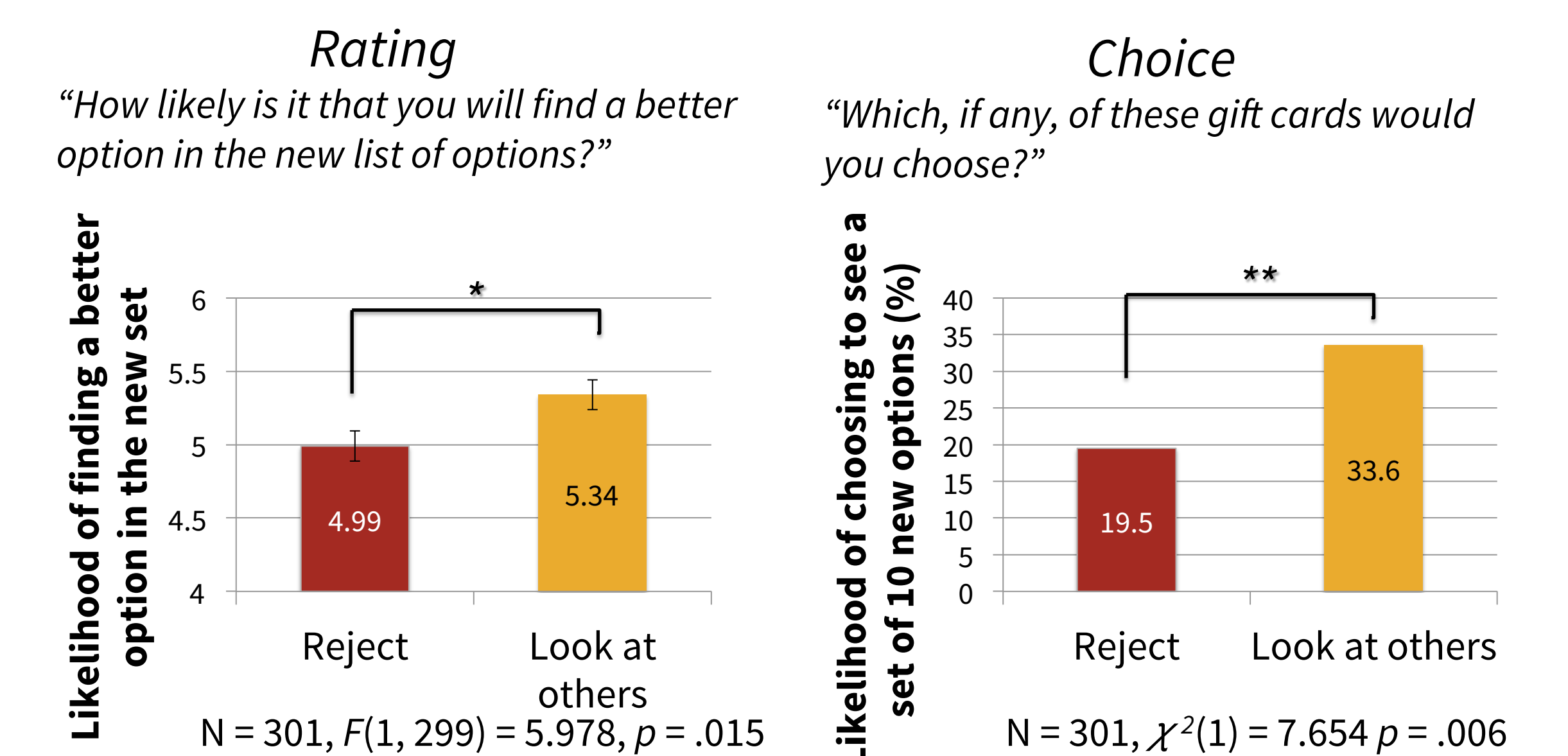
**Results:** "Hard" rejection led to (1) larger consideration sets and (2) greater purchase likelihood than "soft" rejection or no rejection (control).



## STUDY 3: EXPECTATION ABOUT FUTURE OPTIONS

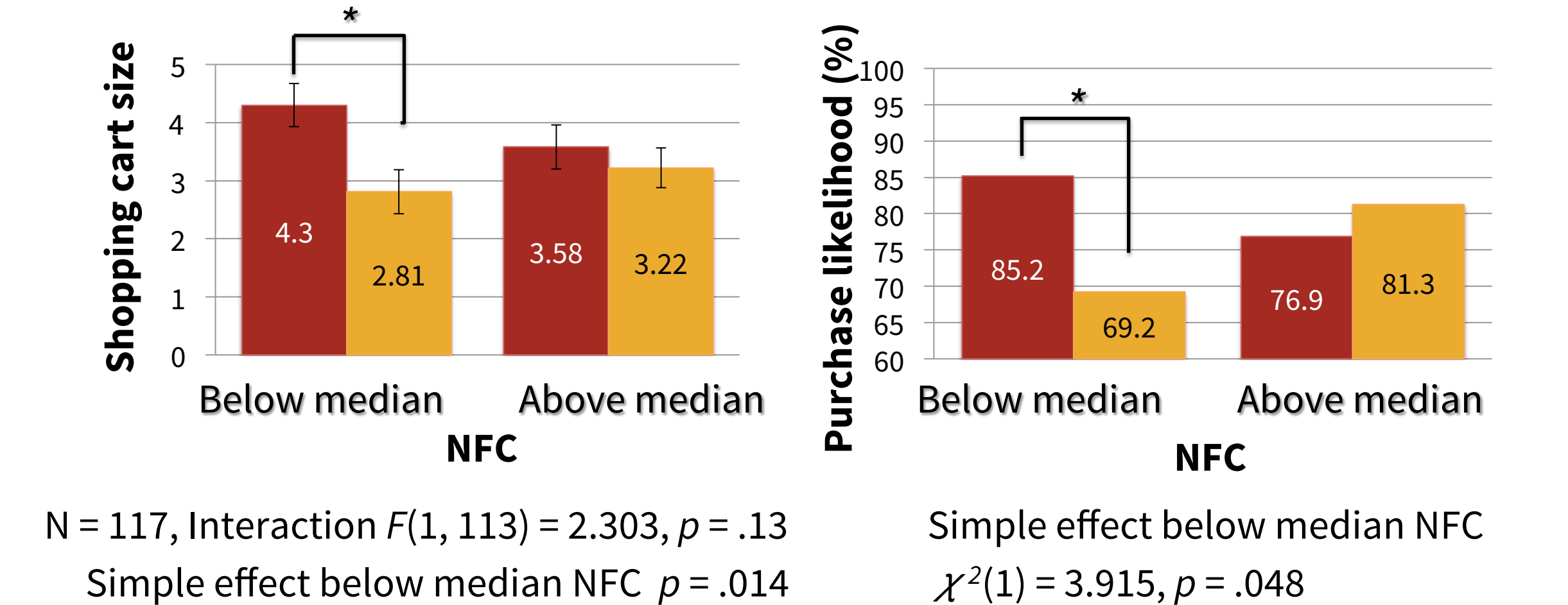
**Goal:** Capture another evidence of greater evaluation confidence  
**Design: 2 Rejection frames (reject vs. look at others)**  
**x 2 Expectations DV (rating vs. choice)**  
Review 10 gift cards → Indicate expectations about a new set

**Results:** "Hard" rejection led to lower expectations about future options, both in the rating and the choice measures.



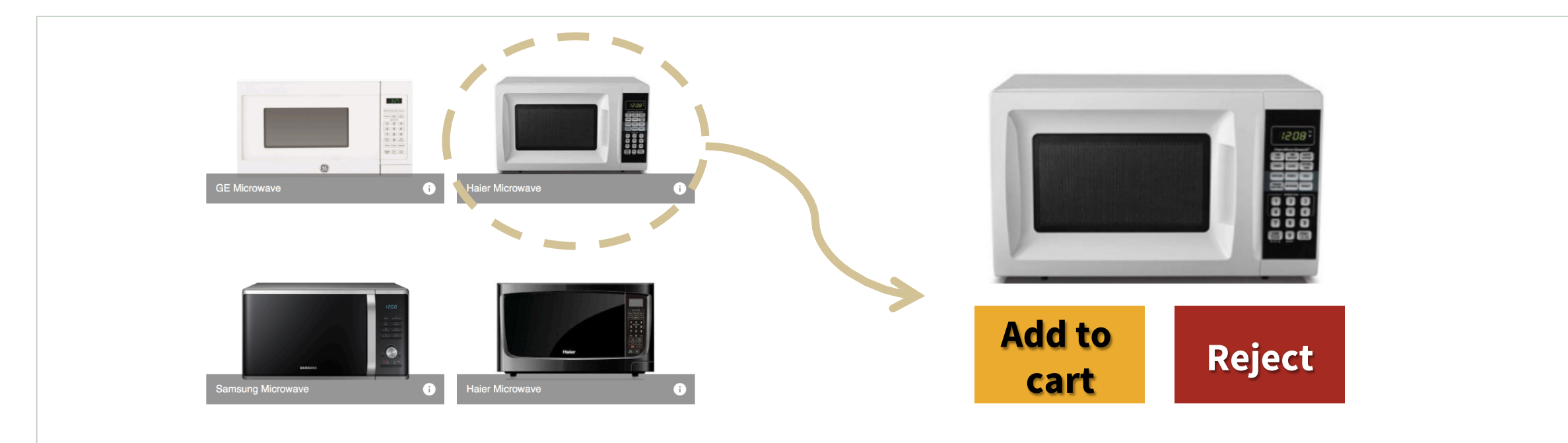
## STUDY 4: MODERATION BY NEED FOR CLOSURE

**Goal:** Locate when the framing effect would most affect decision  
**Design: 2 Rejection frames + Report NFC**  
**Results:** The rejection frame is more influential for low NFC individuals (i.e., who need an extra push to make a choice).

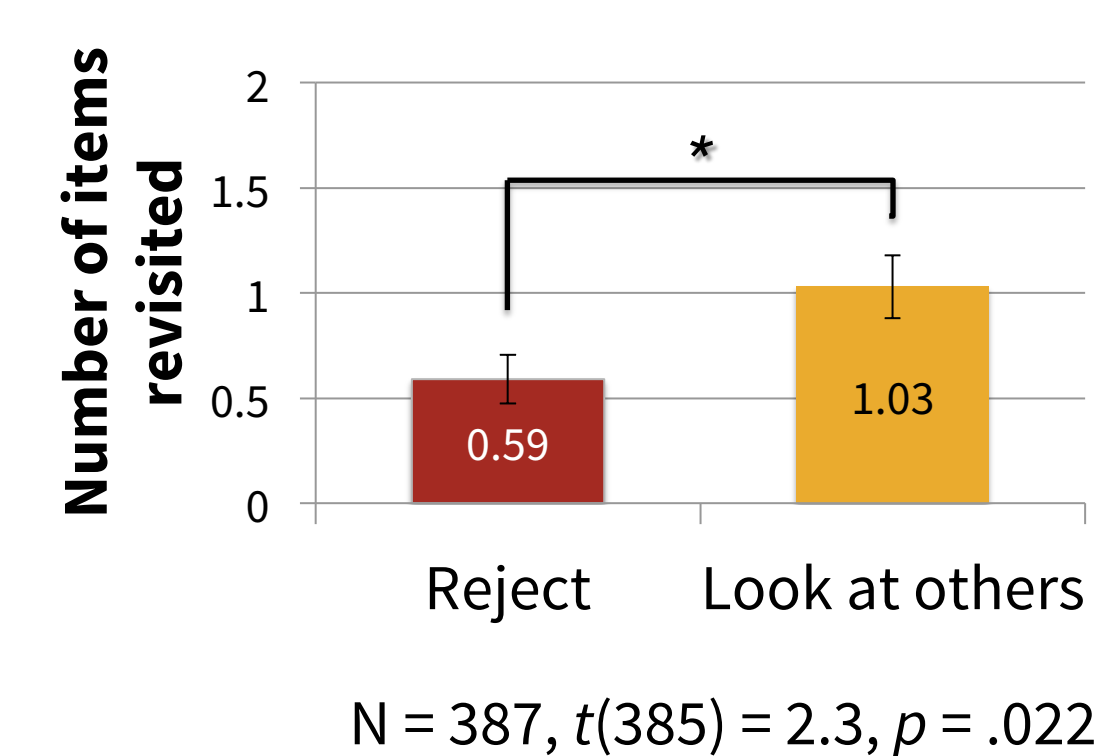


## STUDY 2: RECONSIDERATION OF PAST OPTIONS

**Goal:** Test the mechanism that rejection leads to greater confidence  
**Design: 2 Rejection frames (reject vs. look at others)**  
Participants could revisit previous items at any time;  
Review 9 microwaves → Decide whether to buy from the cart



**Results:** "Hard" (vs. "soft") rejection of options led to fewer revisits due to greater confidence in the evaluation.



## DISCUSSION

We examined how option evaluation mode can influence commitment to choice. **Hard (vs. soft) rejection led to (1) larger consideration sets, (2) fewer revisits to past options, (3) less expectation about future options, and subsequently (4) greater purchase likelihood from the consideration set.** Future research should further explore the psychological processes and consequences of alternative frames of rejection.