

Recommendation Modality Affects Choice: Auditory Recommendations are Followed More Than Visual Recommendations

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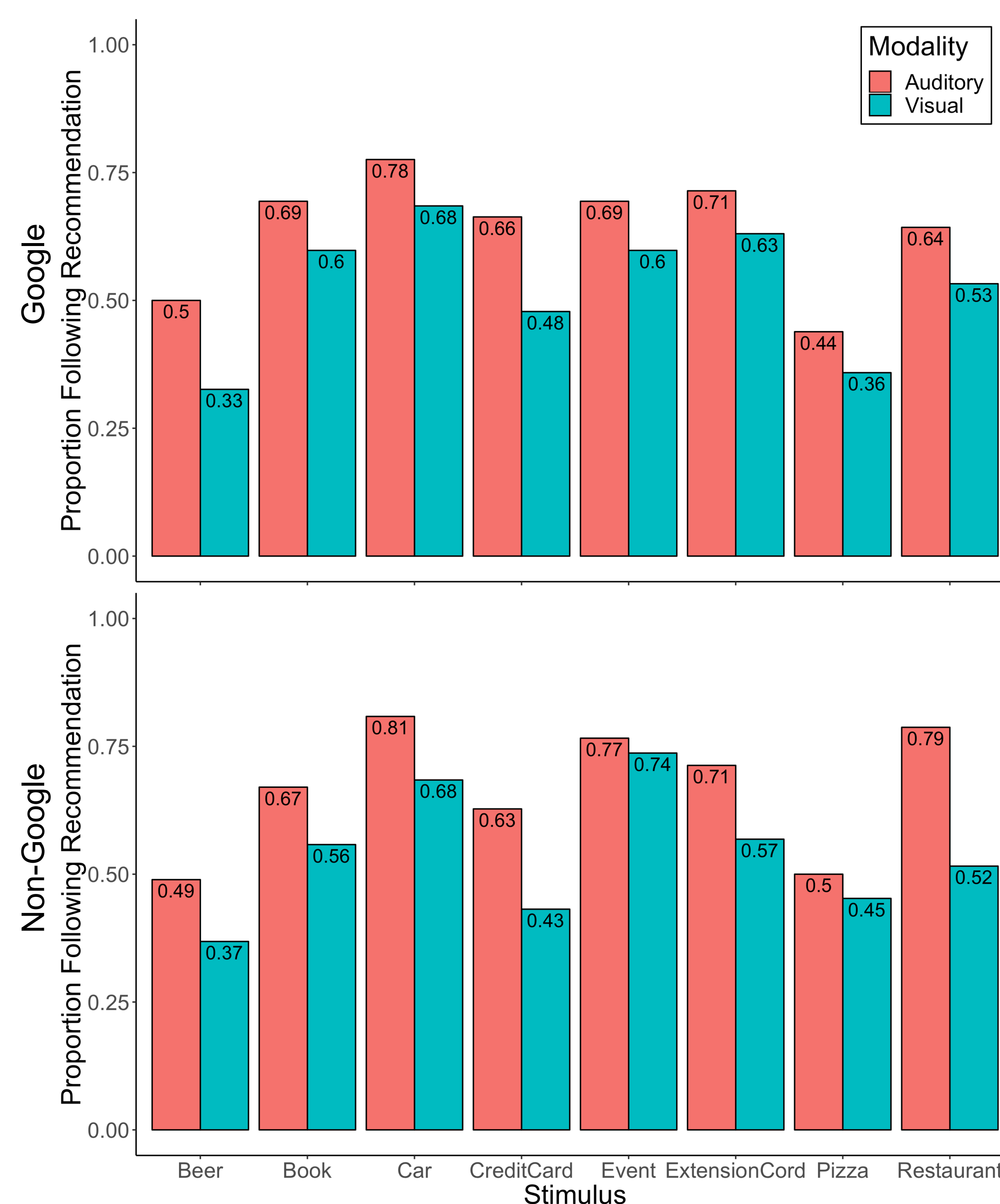
ABSTRACT

Voice interfaces are among the world's fastest-growing technology segments and have changed the ways in which consumers interact with technology and receive information.¹ Our research explores the effect of modality of information on behavior of the recipient of the information. We find that consumers are more likely to follow recommendations they hear (auditory) than recommendations they read (visual). Whereas prior literature has focused on how auditory mediums focus attention on the communicator^{2,3,4}, we find that the effect persists regardless of whether the auditory recommendation is spoken by a human voice or an automated voice.

STUDY 1A: MAIN EFFECT

Design: 2 (modality: auditory vs. visual) x 2 (source: Google vs. non-Google). For a variety of product categories, participants ($N = 396$) chose among three options, one of which was the recommended option. In the auditory conditions, the recommendations were either from an automated (Google condition) or human (non-Google condition) voice.

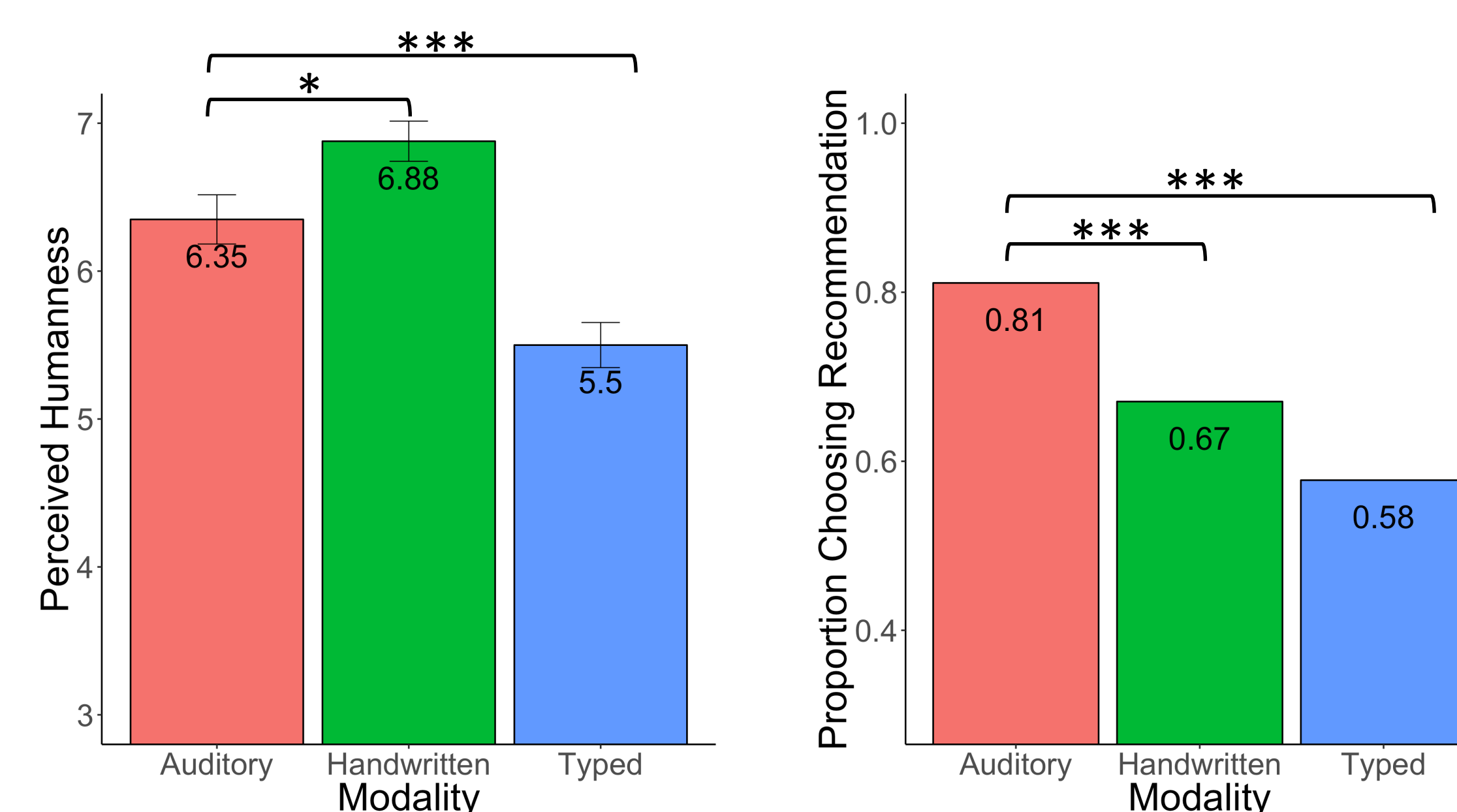
Results: Auditory recommendations were followed more, regardless of recommendation source ($b = 0.631$; $SE = 0.124$; $z = 5.070$; $p < .001$).



STUDY 1B: PERCEIVED HUMANNESS

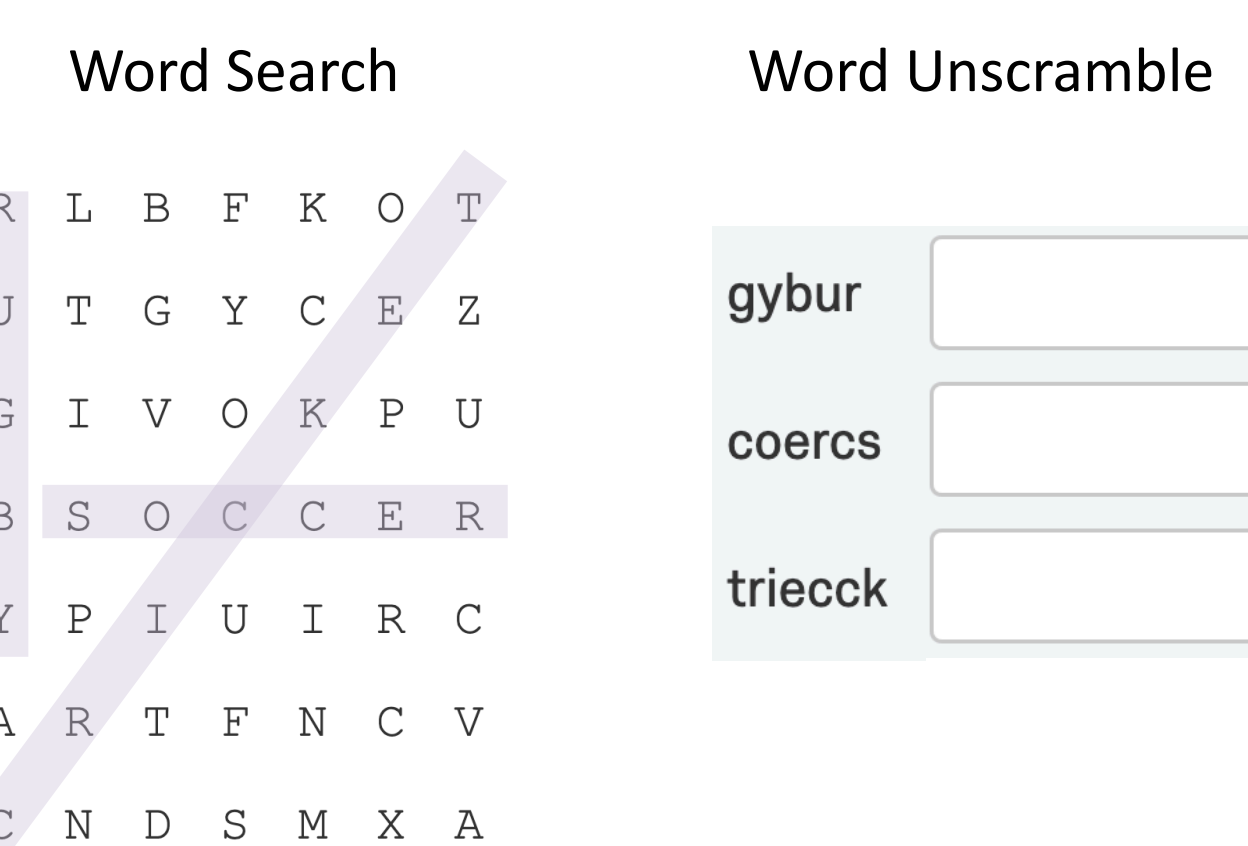
Design: 3 conditions (auditory vs. visual-handwritten vs. visual-typed). For a variety of product categories, participants ($N = 724$) chose among three options, one of which was the recommended option, and reported perceived humanness of the recommender.

Results: Auditory recommendations were followed more than handwritten recommendations ($b = 1.103$; $SE = 0.197$; $z = 5.607$; $p < .001$), even though auditory recommenders were perceived as less human than handwritten recommenders.

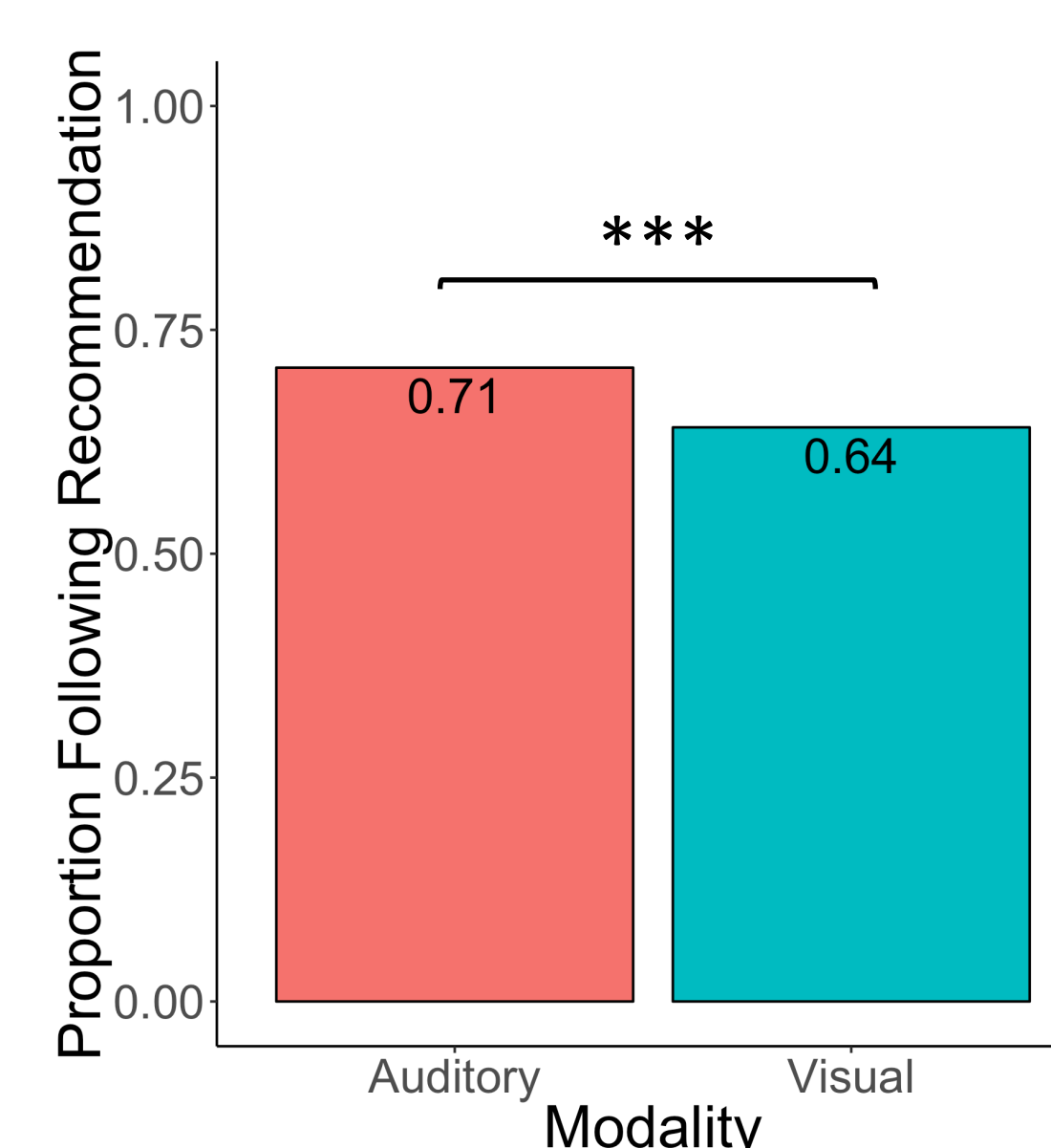


STUDY 2: CONSEQUENTIAL CHOICES

Design: 2 (modality: auditory (automated) vs. visual) x 2 (consensus: individual opinion vs. majority opinion). For a variety of topics, participants ($N = 778$) chose between two word games, one of which was recommended, and completed their chosen game.



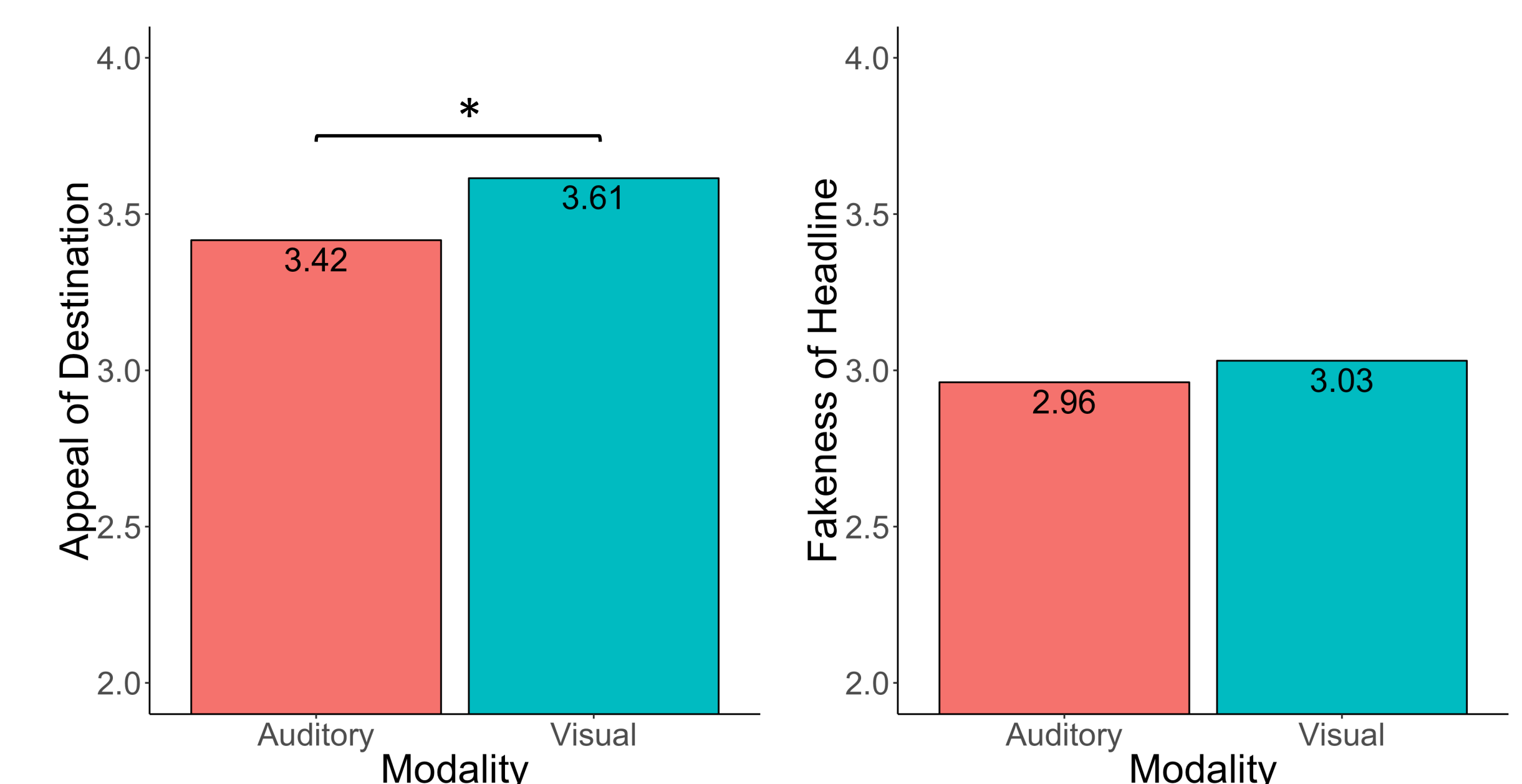
Results: Auditory recommendations were followed more than handwritten recommendations ($b = 0.382$; $SE = 0.073$; $z = 5.256$; $p < .001$). There was no significant interaction effect of consensus x modality.



STUDY 3: IMPLICIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Design: 2 (modality: auditory vs. visual) Participants ($N = 592$) were exposed to news headlines about negative events at various locations. Participants reported how appealing each location was as a travel destination and their belief in the headline.

Results: Destinations were less appealing in the auditory condition than the visual ($b = 0.189$; $SE = 0.086$; $t = 2.19$; $p = .029$). There was no significant difference in belief in the headline.



DISCUSSION

Consumers are more likely to follow auditory recommendations than visual recommendations, even when auditory recommendations are automated. The evidence suggests that there may be a difference in the effectiveness of modalities that goes beyond the degree to which the modalities are reflective of the communicator. Technology can create different physical experiences despite identical information, which leads to different psychological and behavioral consequences.

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