

# What's in a Click?

The Simple Act of Clicking Can Facilitate Motivated Reasoning for Indulgent Choices

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## ABSTRACT

- Individuals make **less healthy choices** in a more technological environment.
- Actively **retrieving information through technology** changes what individuals recall, especially of unhealthy, tempting choices.

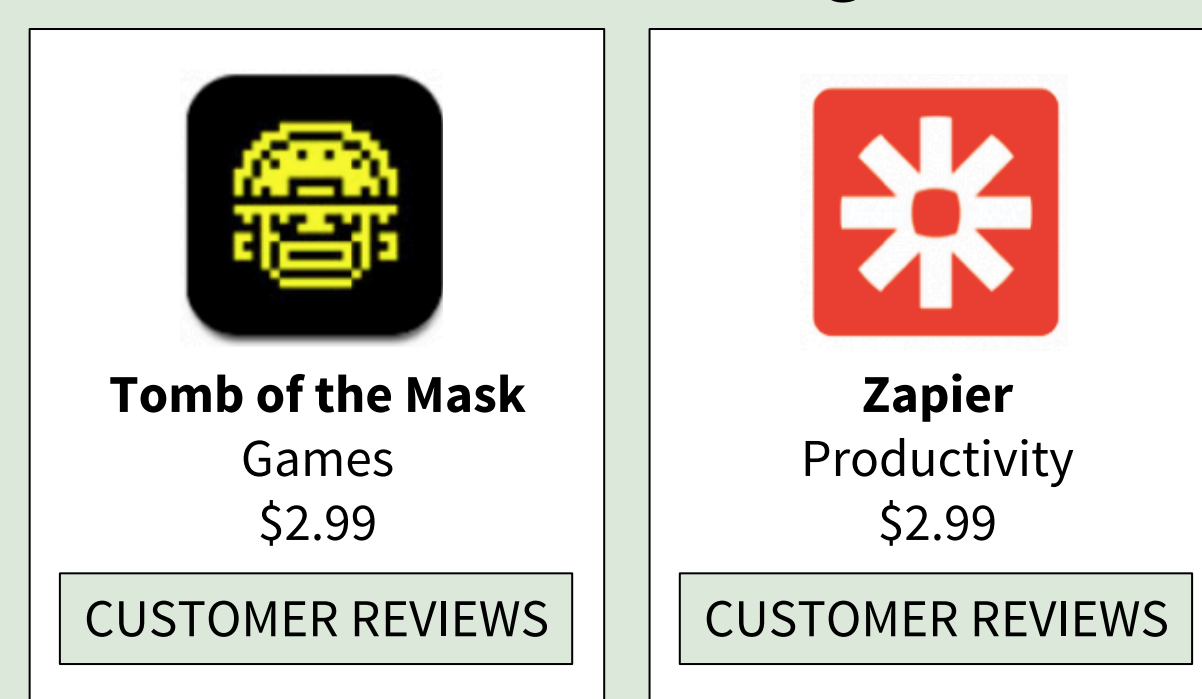
## METHODOLOGY

- Study 1 (unhealthy food choices):** Participants first rated six unhealthy food options from TGI Friday's. Then, they read 10 customer reviews of their top rated option through clicking vs. (not clicking) a button to retrieve the reviews. Finally, participants freely recalled the reviews they read.



<Six TGI Friday's options>

- Study 2 ("fun" vs. "work" mobile apps):** Participants read average ratings of eight mobile apps through clicking (vs. not clicking) a button and recalled ratings.



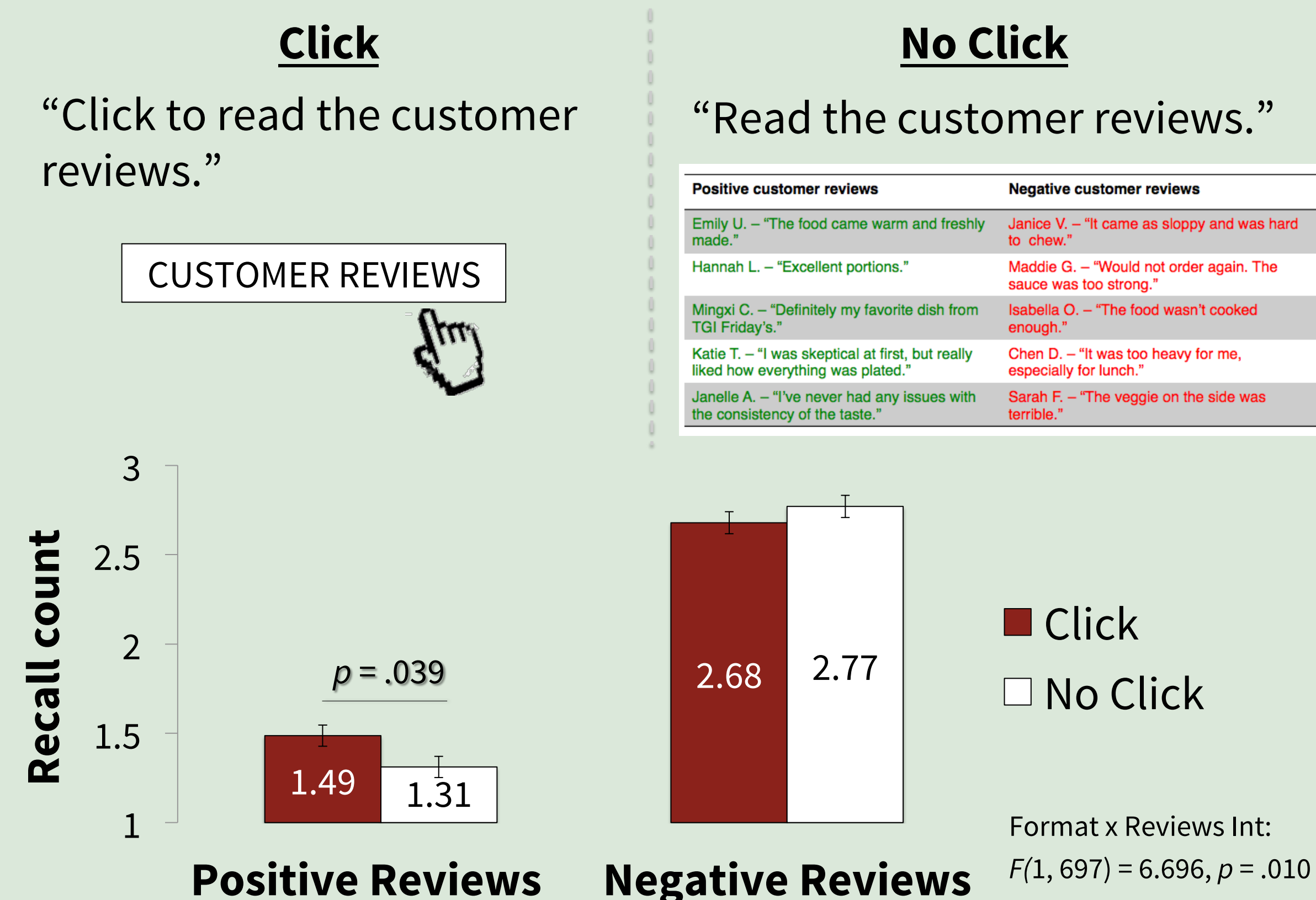
<Examples of "fun" vs. "work" apps>

- Study 3 ("fun" mobile apps):** Participants read average ratings of four fun but useless mobile apps through clicking (vs. not clicking).
- Study 4 (healthy vs. unhealthy food choices):** Participants read customer reviews of 10 snacks through scanning (vs. not scanning) QR codes.

## STUDY 1: TGI FRIDAY'S

Does clicking (vs. not clicking) to see information about unhealthy food choices influence what individuals recall?

- N = 700 U.S. female online participants
- 2 (Format: click vs. no click; between-subjects) x 2 (Reviews: positive vs. negative; within-subjects)

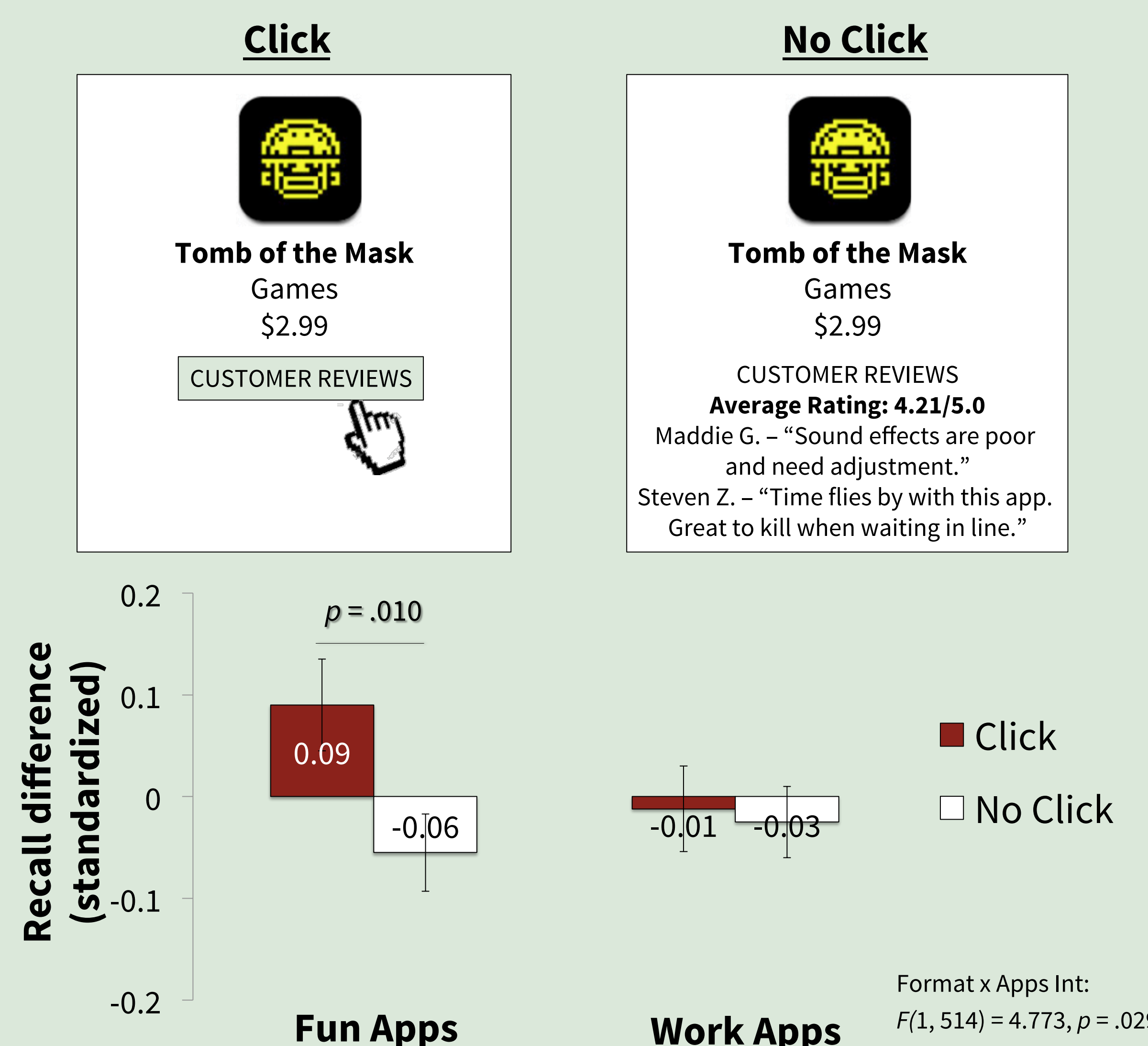


- Clicking (vs. not clicking) to read customer reviews increased the recall of positive reviews in support of the unhealthy food option.

## STUDY 2: "FUN" VS. "WORK" APPS

Does this biased recall occur only for tempting choices?

- N = 597 U.S. online participants
- 2 (Format: click vs. no click; between-subjects) x 2 (Apps: fun vs. work; within-subjects)

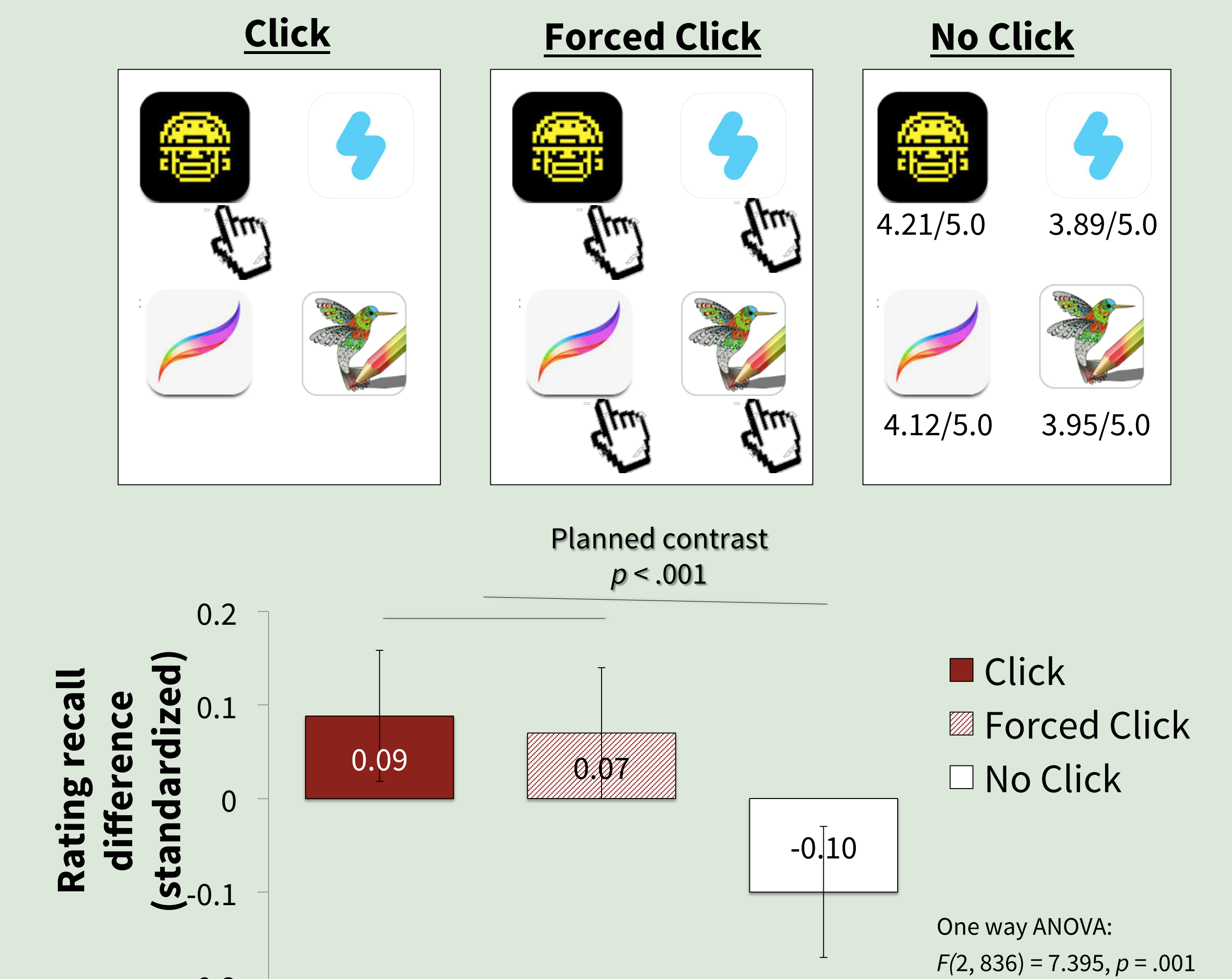


- Clicking (vs. not clicking) to see average ratings led to a boost in positive recall of "fun" apps.
- This biased recall did not occur for "work" apps.

## STUDY 3: FREE VS. FORCED CLICK

Is this effect driven by having the option to click or the physical act of clicking?

- N = 903 U.S. online participants
- 3 (Format: click vs. forced click vs. no click; between-subjects)

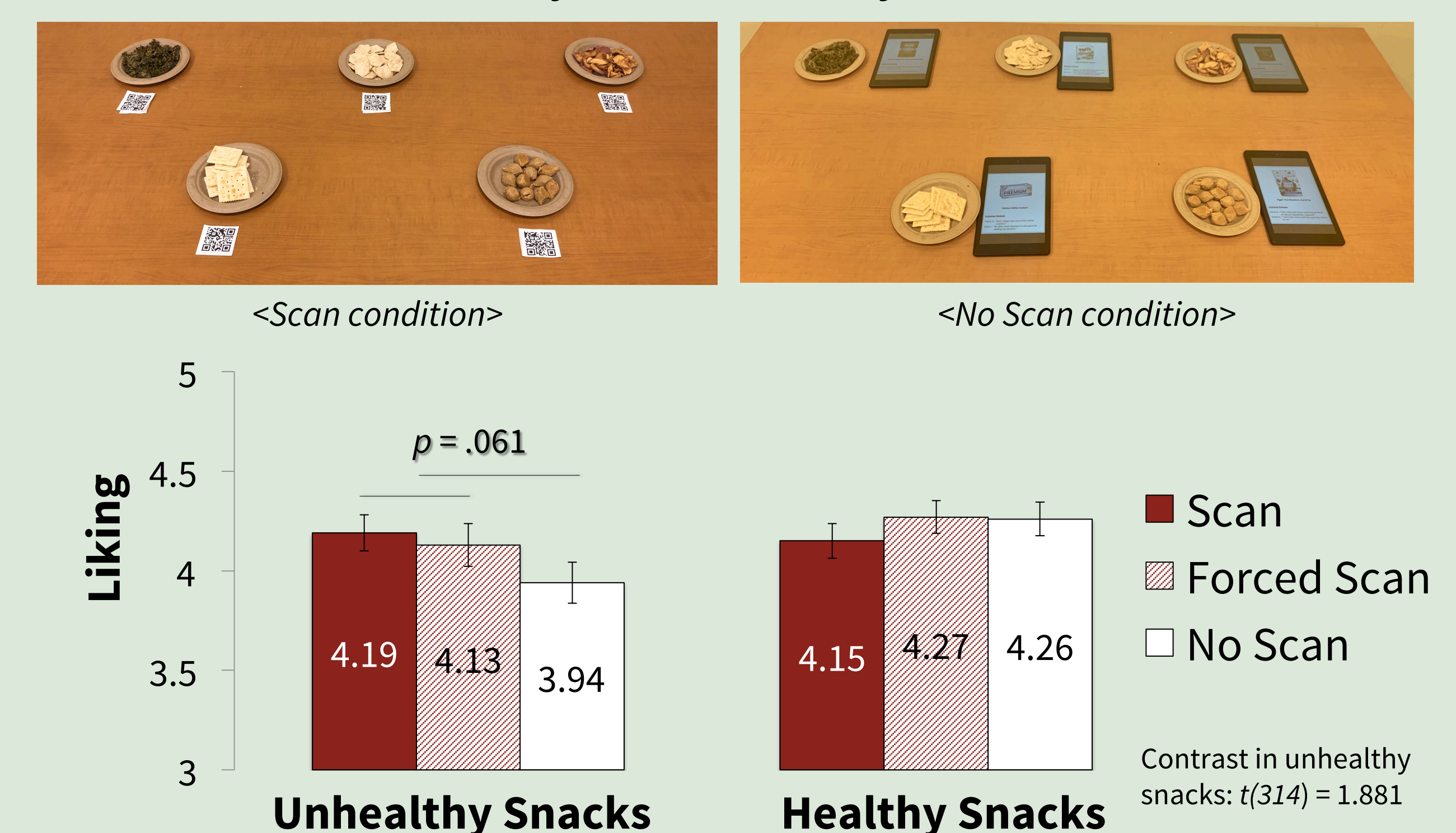


- Clicking—whether by free will or forced—led to an increase in positive recall of "fun" apps.

## STUDY 4: QR CODE SCAN (IN-LAB)

Can the clicking effect be extended to scanning?

- N = 317 Stanford undergraduates
- 2 (Format: scan vs. forced scan vs. no scan; between-subjects) x 2 (Snacks: healthy vs. unhealthy; within-subjects)



- Scanning QR codes to retrieve reviews also led to biased recall and greater liking toward unhealthy food options.

## DISCUSSION

- Individuals have greater biased recall for **indulgent choices** when they actively retrieve (vs. do not retrieve) information through technology.