

Perceiving greater variance in public opinion on a platform with vested interest positively affects evaluation



positively affects evaluation

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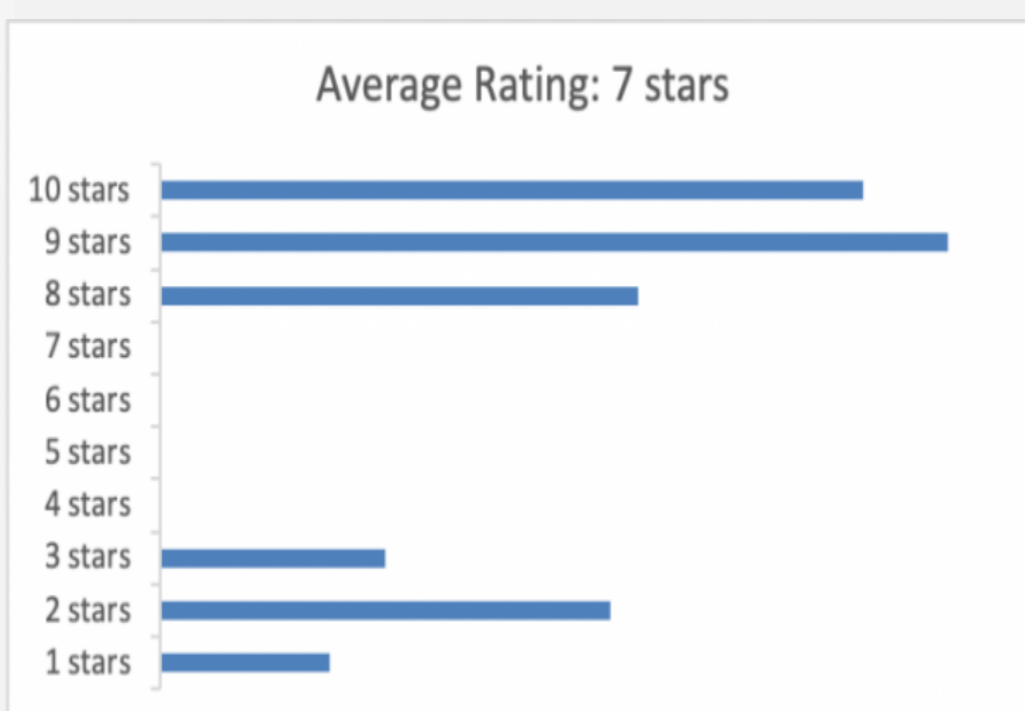
Summary

People often encounter public opinion about a subject (i.e., product, topic etc.) on different platforms. For example, a poll result could be published on either a **platform which is perceived to be neutral** (i.e., a third-party website) or a **platform which is perceived to have vested interests**. In the research, we ask the following two questions:

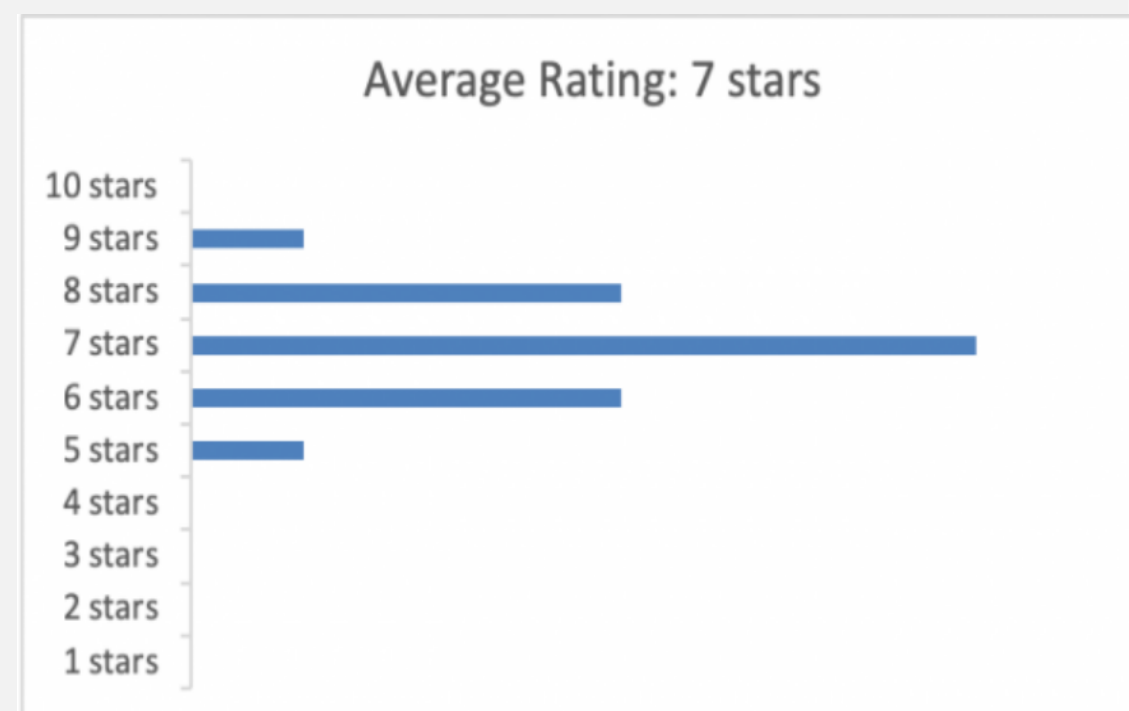
- Does the **type of platform** affect people's **expectation** of the distribution of public opinion on that platform?
- Does **encountering different than expected distribution** of public opinion have any downstream consequence?

Stimuli Example

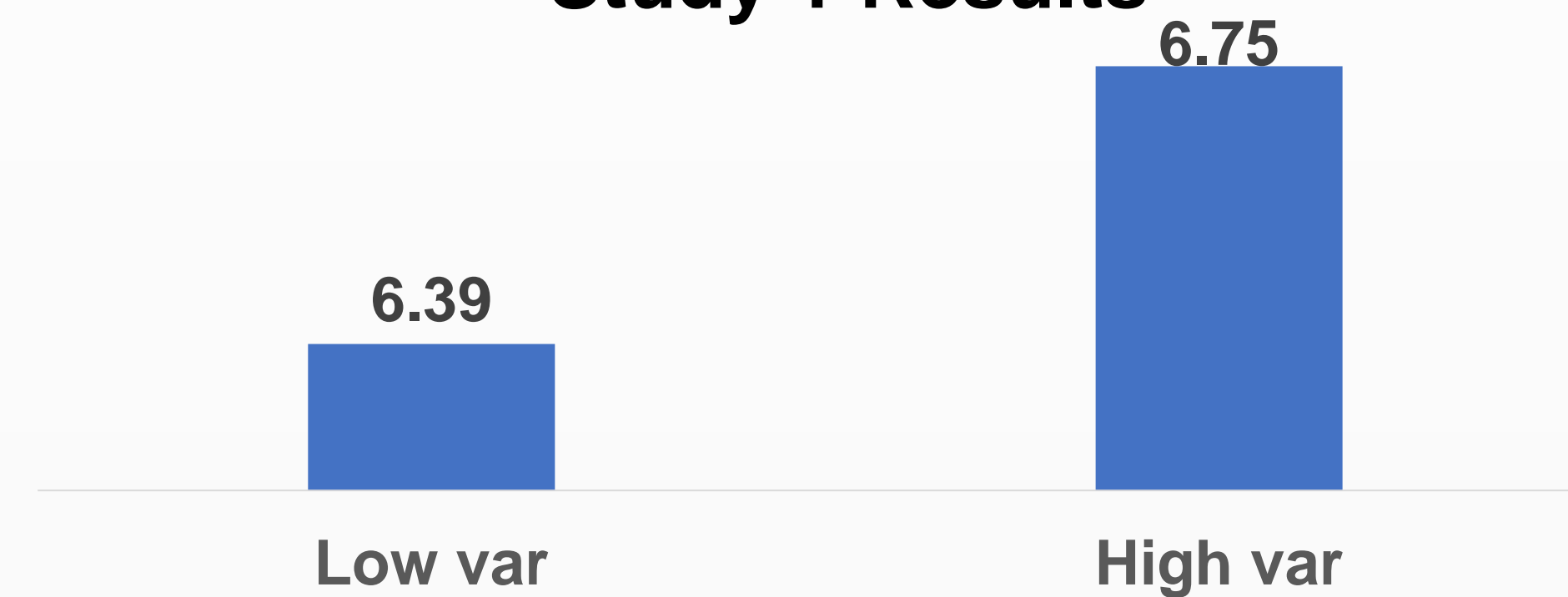
High Variance



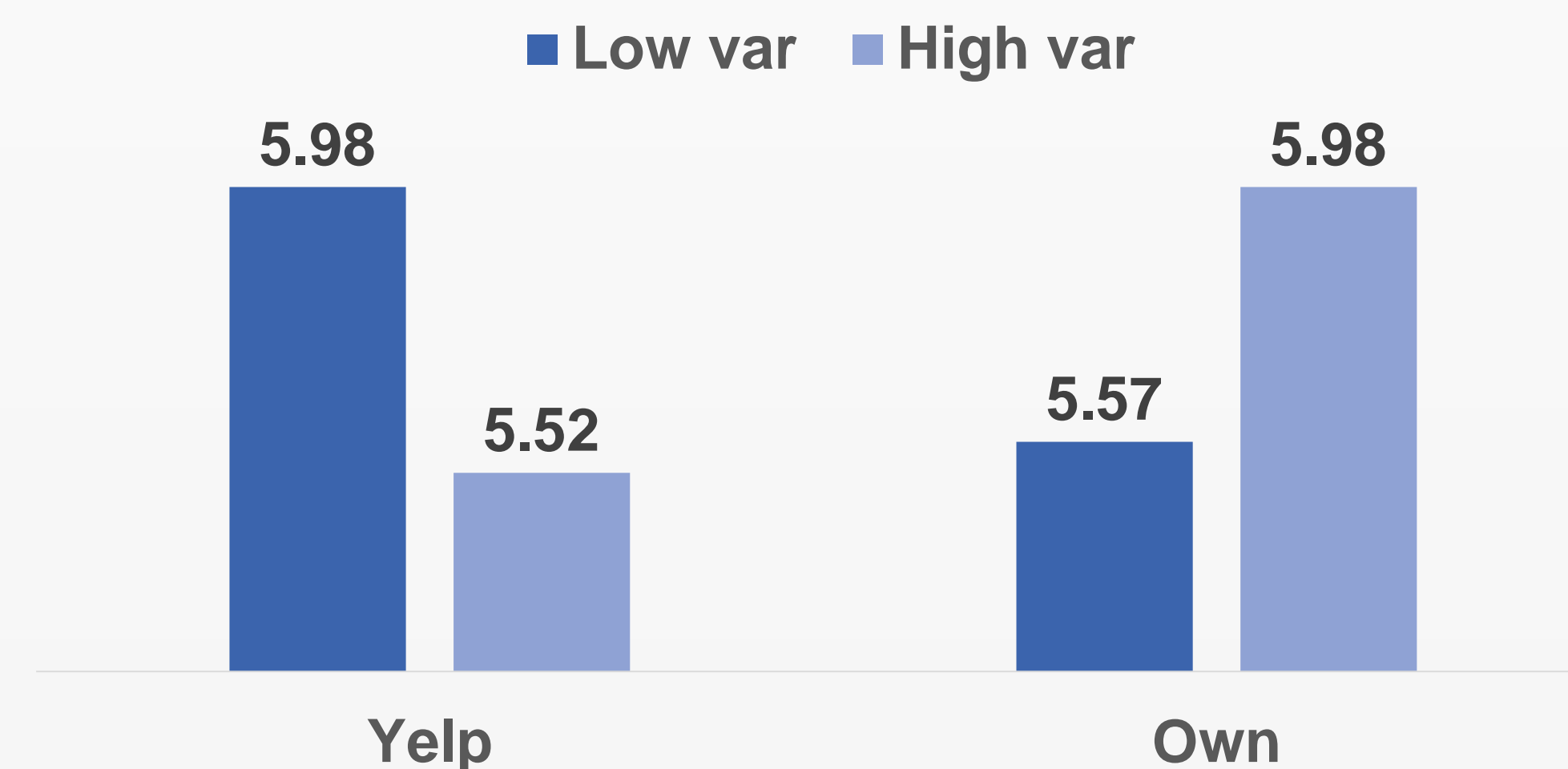
Low Variance



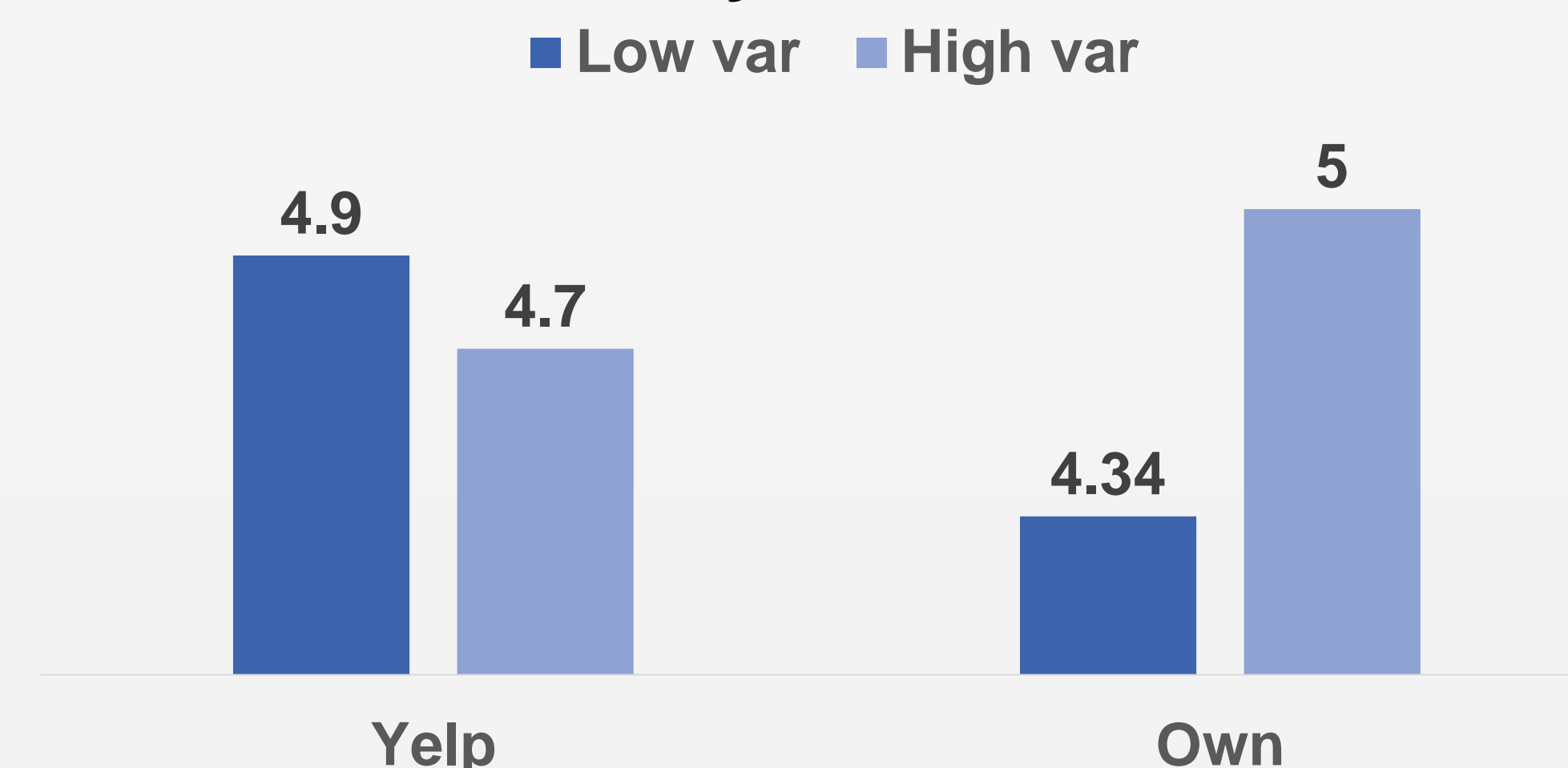
Study 1 Results



Study 2 Results



Study 3 Results



Study 1

We showed participants **online ratings for 8 hotels** and asked them if they expected the ratings to appear on the hotels' **own websites or on Tripadvisor.com**

Four of the ratings had high variance and four had low variance. **Lower score** indicated that participants **expected the ratings to appear on the hotels' own websites**

Study 2

We showed participants **two restaurants, rated 6 stars and 7 stars** (out of 10) and asked them which restaurant they are more likely to visit.

Design: 2(high vs low variance) X 2(source: own website/ Yelp.com), between subjects

Higher scores indicated greater preference for the 7 star rated restaurant.

Study 3

We showed participants ratings for a restaurant and measured their **likelihood of visiting** the restaurant

Design: 2(high vs low variance) X 2(source: own website/ Yelp.com), between subjects

Discussion

Results suggest that people **expect public opinion on websites with vested interests to have low variance**. A possibility is that when they encounter high variance on such platforms, it **positively disconfirms their expectations**. Going forward, we aim to replicate these results in another domain. We also aim to further investigate the role of trust in this phenomenon.