

How Initial Preference Elicitations Influence Subsequent Decisions

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Introduction

When consumers are first asked about their preferences between two items (vs. not), how does this influence subsequent preference for a coupon for both items (the item they initially liked and the item they initially did not like)?

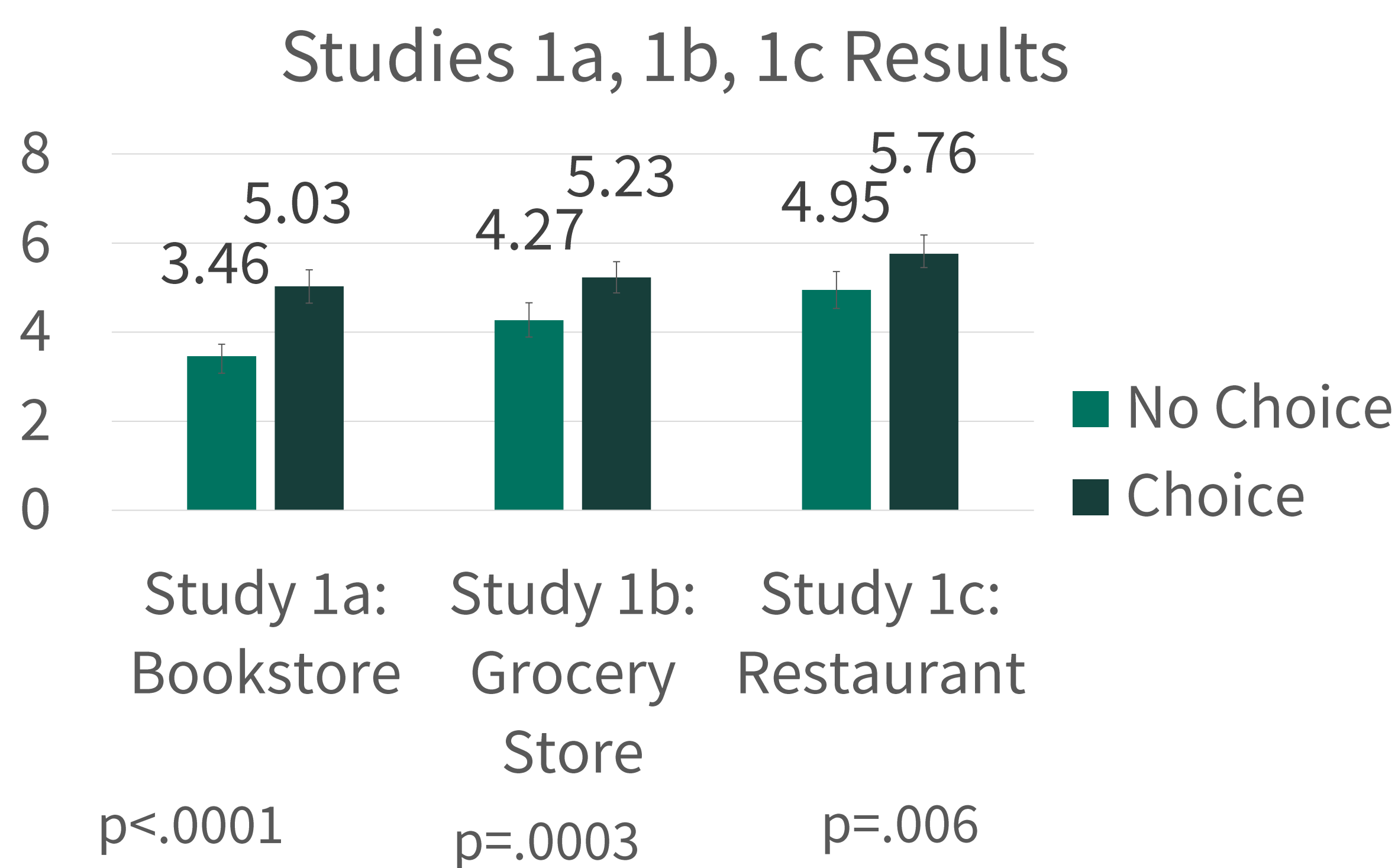
Studies 1a, 1b, and 1c

Consumers indicate higher willingness to use a coupon that features two items after first indicating their preferred item between the two.

Design: Participants in these three studies (N = 625) were shown two different items (books, grocery items, or menu items) and either asked about their preference between the items or not. After this all participants were shown a coupon that included the same two items in a BOGO offer.

Main DV: How likely would you be to use this coupon?

Results: Consumers indicated a higher willingness to use the coupon when first making a choice of which item they preferred.



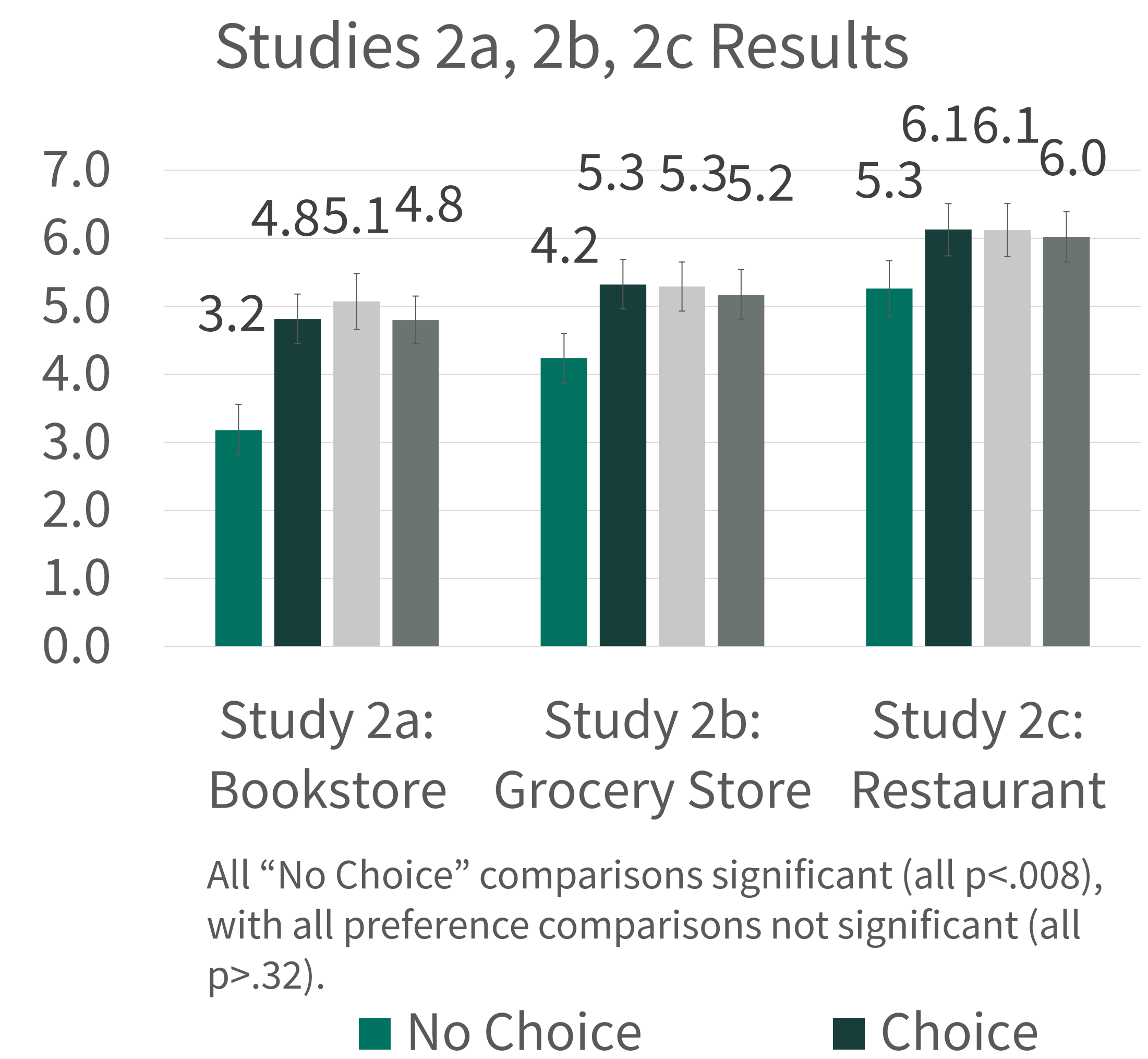
Studies 2a, 2b, and 2c

The effect persists even when preference is elicited with a variety of different measures.

Design: Participants in these three studies (N = 1179) were shown two different items (books, grocery items, or menu items) and either stated which item they would choose, which one they preferred in a binary statement, or which one they preferred in a seven-point scale.

Main DV: How likely would you be to use this coupon?

Results: Consumers indicated a higher willingness to use the coupon when first asked about their preferences regardless of the preference question type.



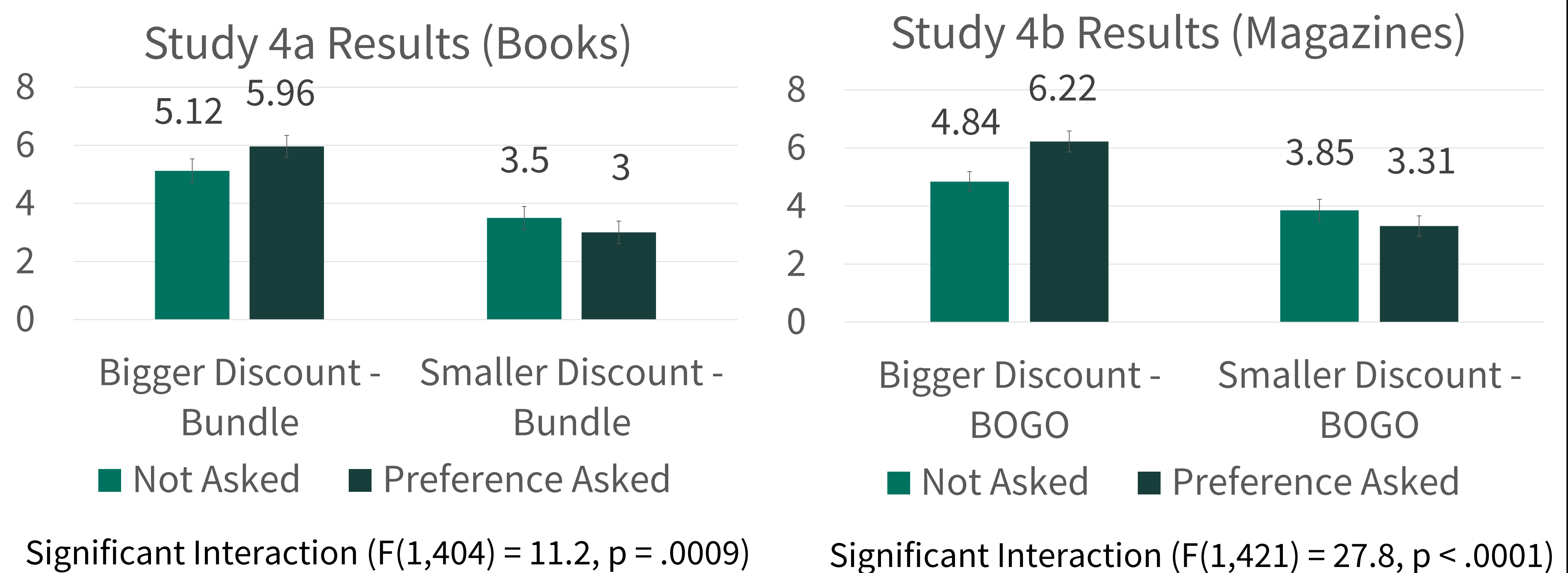
Studies 4a and 4b

Coupons that are priced higher than one of the original items attenuate and directionally reverse the effect we see.

Design: These studies (N = 833) were a 2(Choice vs. No Choice)x2(Bigger Discount vs. Smaller Discount) design. Those in the bigger discount condition were shown a deal that equated to 50% off the original price of the two items. The smaller discount condition were shown a deal that equated to 33% off the original price of the two items. All participants were then shown a bundled coupon for either Books (Study 4a) or a BOGO coupon for Magazines (Study 4b)

Measure: Order choice: Which task do you want to complete first?

Results: Consumers indicated a higher willingness to use a bigger discount coupon when first asked about their preferences but not when the coupon was a smaller discount.



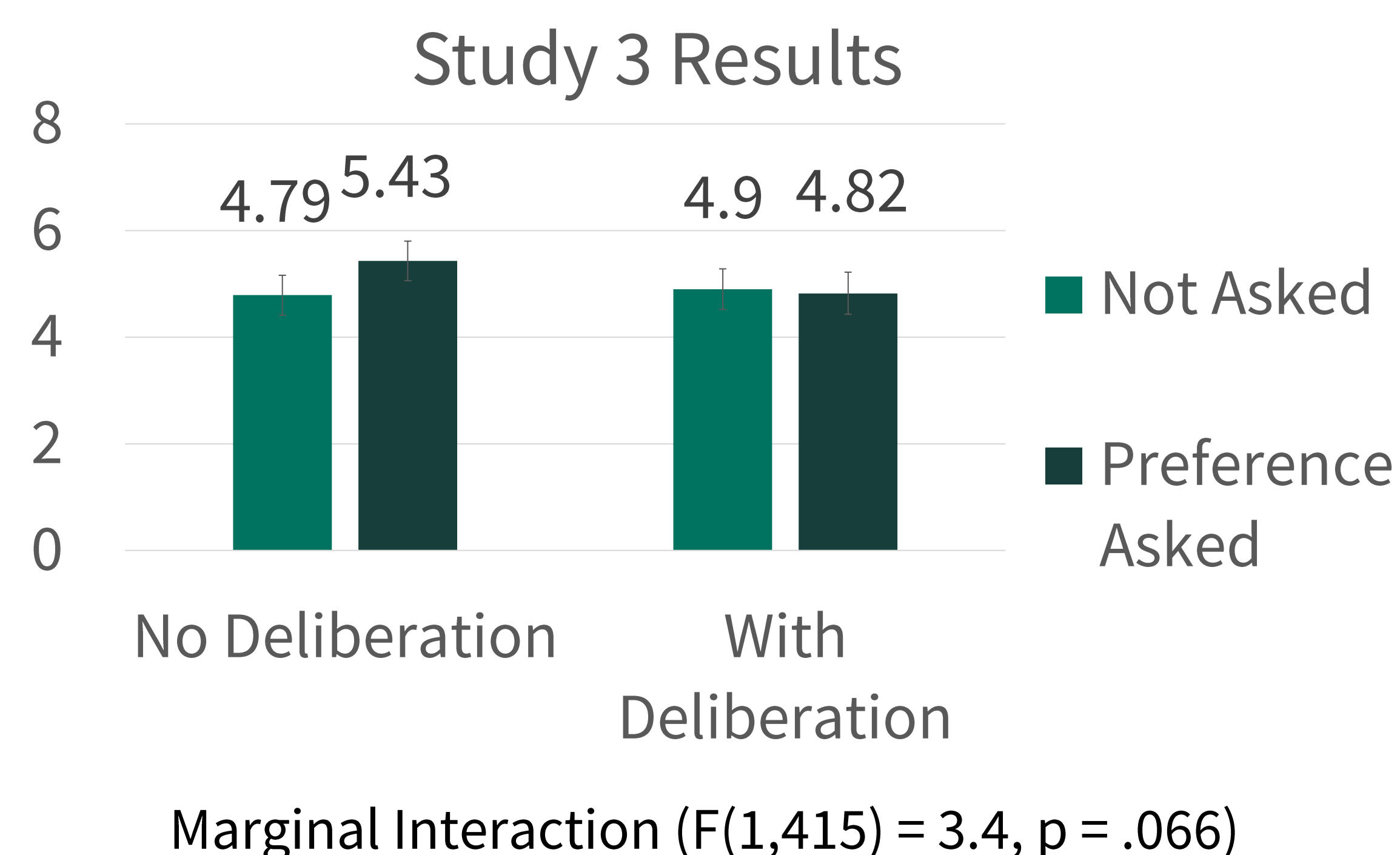
Study 3

When consumers deliberate over the items in more detail, the effect is attenuated.

Design: This study (N = 419) was a 2(Choice vs. No Choice)x2(Deliberation vs. No Deliberation) design. Those in the deliberation condition were asked to also list their likes and dislikes about the two items. All participants were then shown a bundled coupon for the two magazines.

Measure: How likely would you be to use this coupon?

Results: Consumers indicated a higher willingness to use the coupon when first asked about their preferences but not when they deliberate over their likes and dislikes of each item.



Conclusion

We find that initial preference elicitation between two items influence consumers to be more willing to use a coupon for those two items than if they didn't state their preference. This effect occurs even though the coupon inherently contains an item they have rejected. This effect is attenuated by deliberation over the positive and negatives of the products, and directionally reversed when the discount is smaller than 50% off the original price.