

CATEGORICAL SEARCH FILTER FORMATS PRODUCE SMALLER SEARCH RANGES THAN CONTINUOUS ONES

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Introduction

- People use search filters on online platforms to narrow down the number of options to consider
- Filter format varies across platforms for the same attribute and within platforms for different attributes
- How does search filter format (categorical vs. continuous) affect search range?

Categorical filter format:

Filter by: selecting attribute values in pre-defined categories

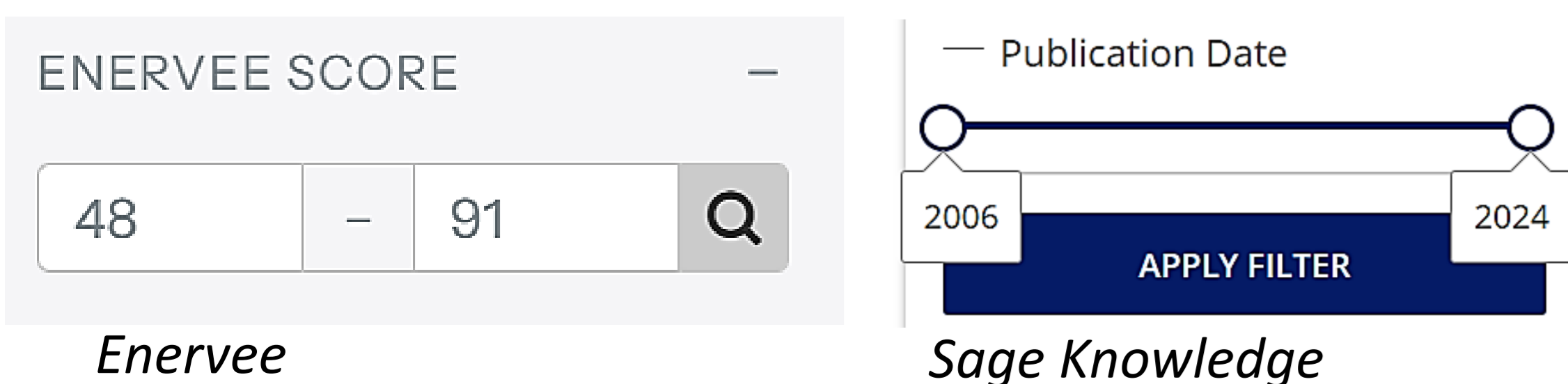
Examples of categorical search filters in the marketplace:



Continuous filter format:

Filter by: setting search range minimum and maximum on a continuous scale

Examples of continuous search filters in the marketplace:



Abstract

- Five preregistered studies (n=3155) show that categorical search filters produce smaller search ranges than continuous search filters. This happens because:
 - Categorical filters increase focus on inclusion of attribute values
 - Continuous filters increase focus on exclusion of attribute values

Method

All studies adopted mixed factorial design:

- Between-subjects manipulation of search filter format
- Within-subjects measure of search range (minimum and maximum)
- Manipulations study 1a

Categorical format

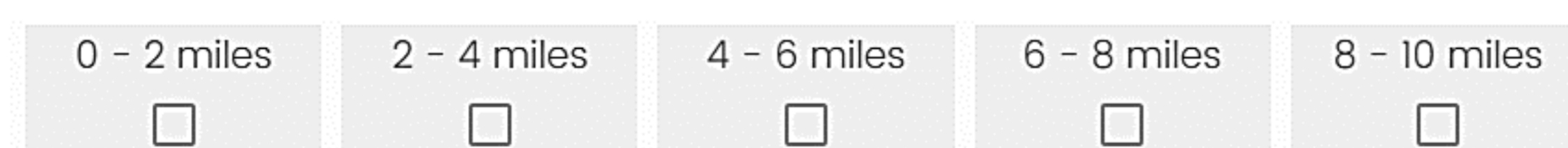


Continuous (text box) format



- Manipulations study 2b

Categorical format



Continuous (slider) format



Continuous inclusion (slider) format



Discussion

The **search filter format effect**:

generalizes across:

- attractive & unattractive attributes
 - continuous text boxes and sliders
- diminishes** for:

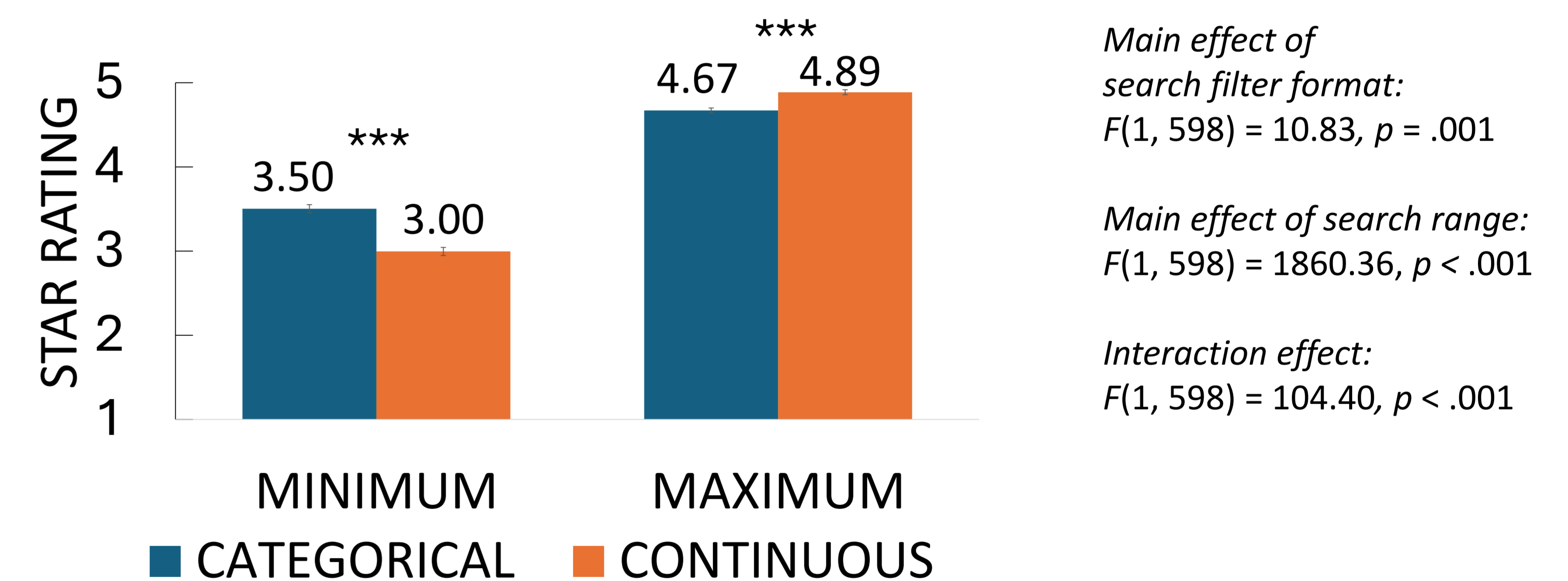
- categorical exclusion filters
- continuous inclusion filters

is **not driven** by:

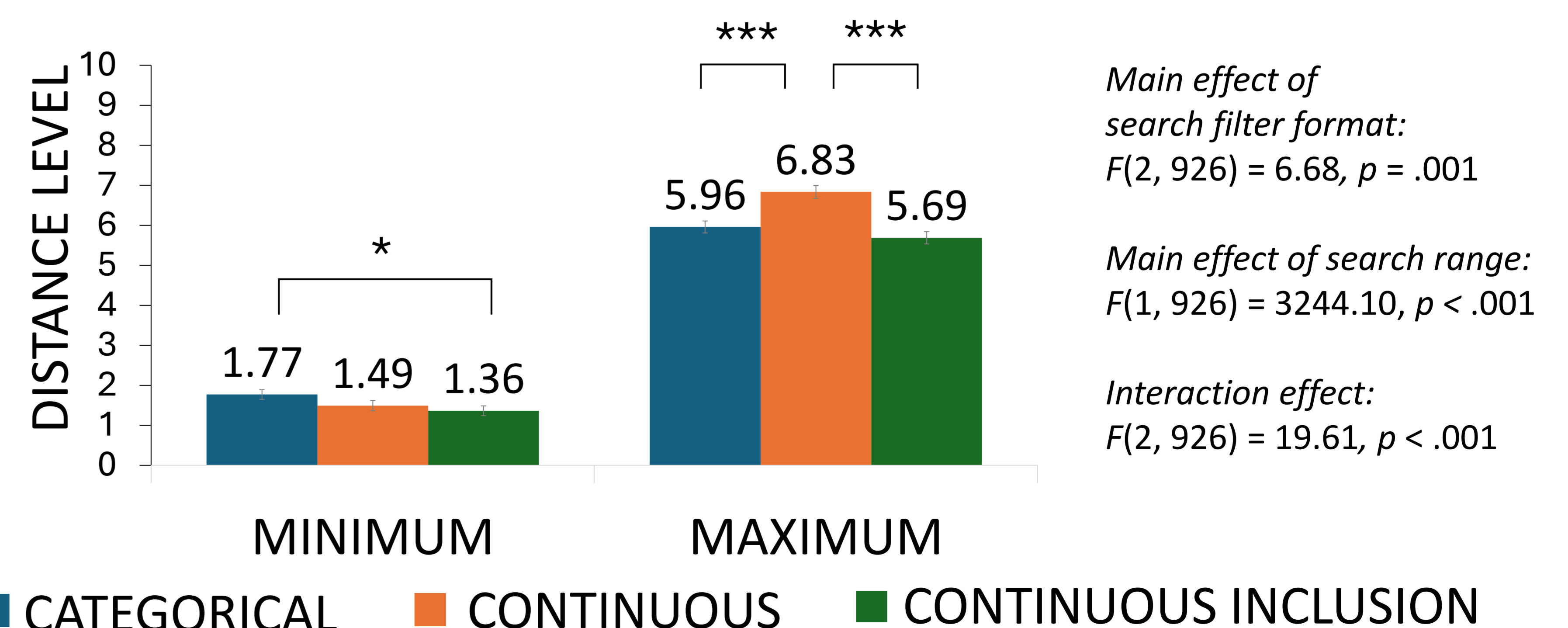
- attribute importance & filter typicality

Results

Study 1a: search range for hotel quality Categorical search filters produce smaller search ranges[°]



Study 2b: search range for distance to city center The effect is attenuated for continuous inclusion filters[°]



[°]Results from a mixed ANOVA with search filter format (B-S) and search range (W-S); *** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$