

Menu recommendations: When do they work?

D. Catarci, L. Laasner Vogt, & E. Reijnen

Introduction

- The role of recommendations in online food selection is unclear, particularly when choices are limited as with university cafés' online menus.
- We seek to understand if and when such recommendations work in guiding consumers.
- Our smartphone-based study explores how "recommended" influences food choices and how it interacts with the factors price, and position.



ExQuisit

RECOMMENDED

Green Tofu Thai Curry
Wok Vegetables
Rice Noodles
Menu Salad

CHF 10,50

Daily

Dal (Lentil Dish)
Basmati Rice
Banana Chips
Menu Salad

CHF 7,50

Methodology

Participants: 512 students, 63% f (age: $M = 24.0$, $SD = 3.9$)

Task: choose between two menus

Design:

IV: recommendation (dal or curry)

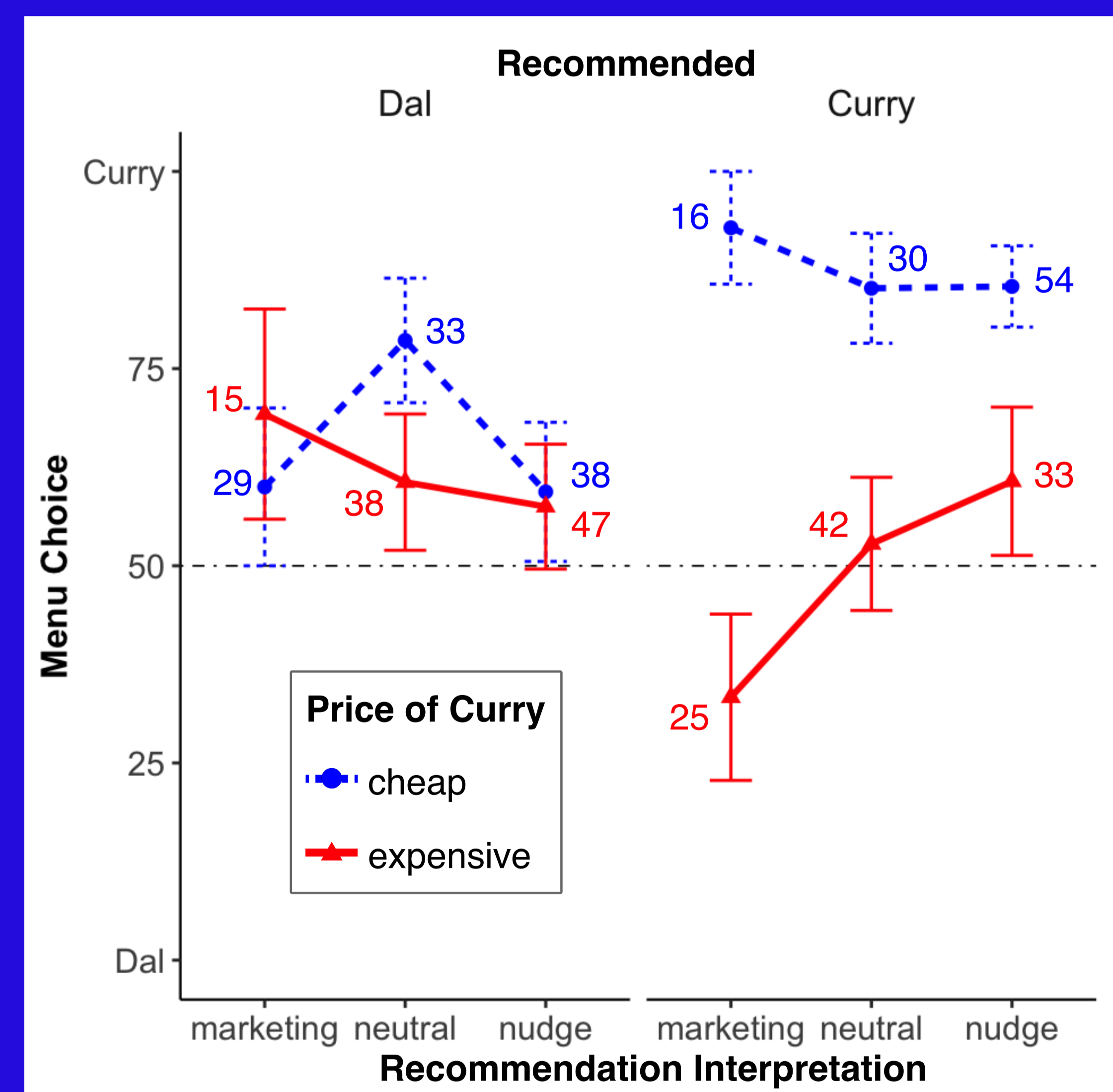
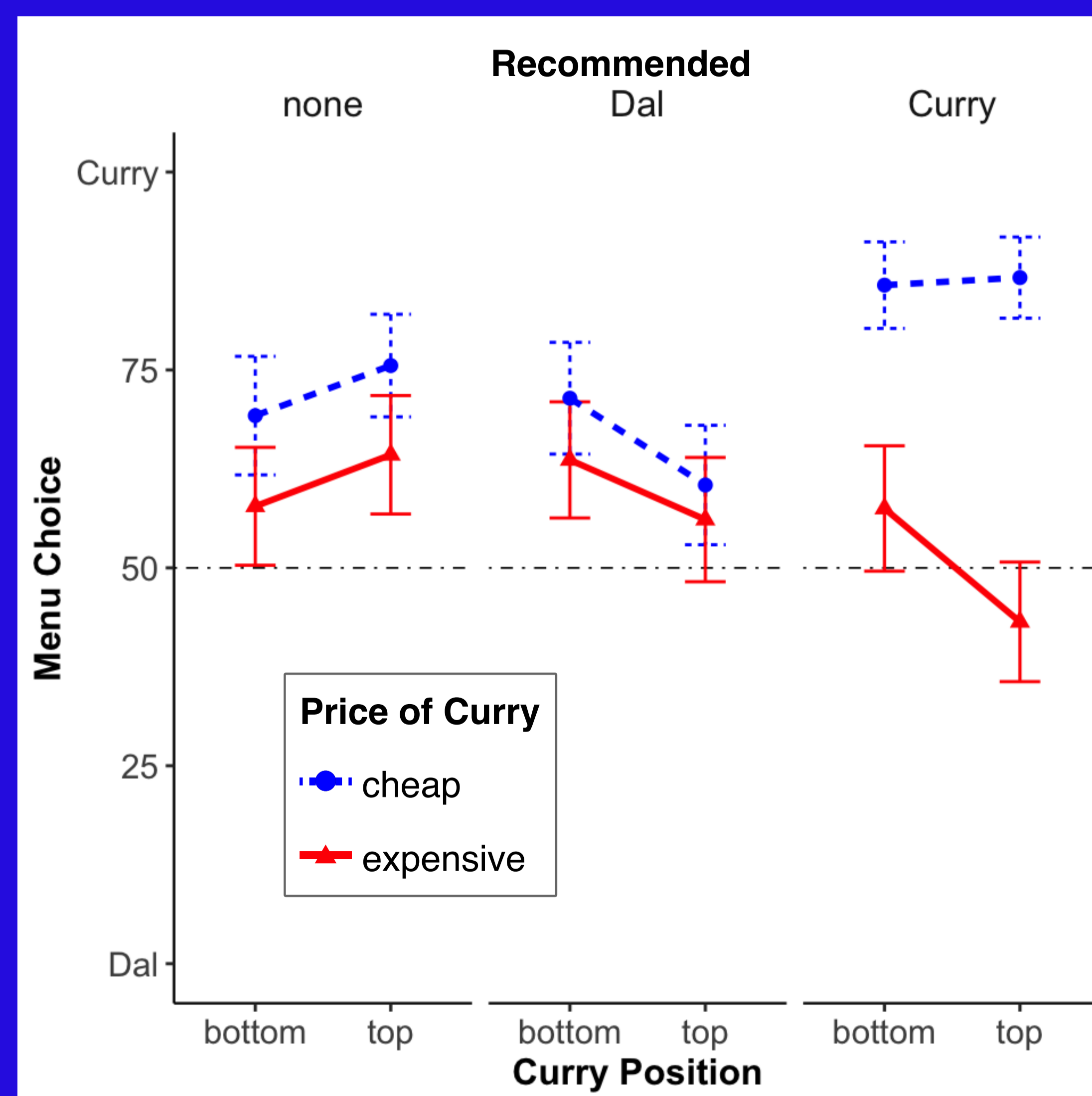
price (cheaper or more expensive)

position (top or bottom)

DV: menu choice (dal or curry), interpretation of the recommendation

Results

- Curry was more popular (66%).
- Recommendations only impacted choice when curry was recommended.
- Price moderated this effect; recommendations increased choice at a cheap price but reduced choice at an expensive price.
- Recommendations of cheap options were viewed as helpful nudges, expensive as marketing.



Conclusion

While recommendations can guide online menu choices toward healthier or more sustainable options, their effectiveness is greatly influenced by the price of the recommended item and individuals' pre-existing preferences. Additionally, the perceived intent behind these recommendations is seen through the lens of price, emphasizing the need for a nuanced approach when using recommendations as nudges for healthier and more sustainable food choices