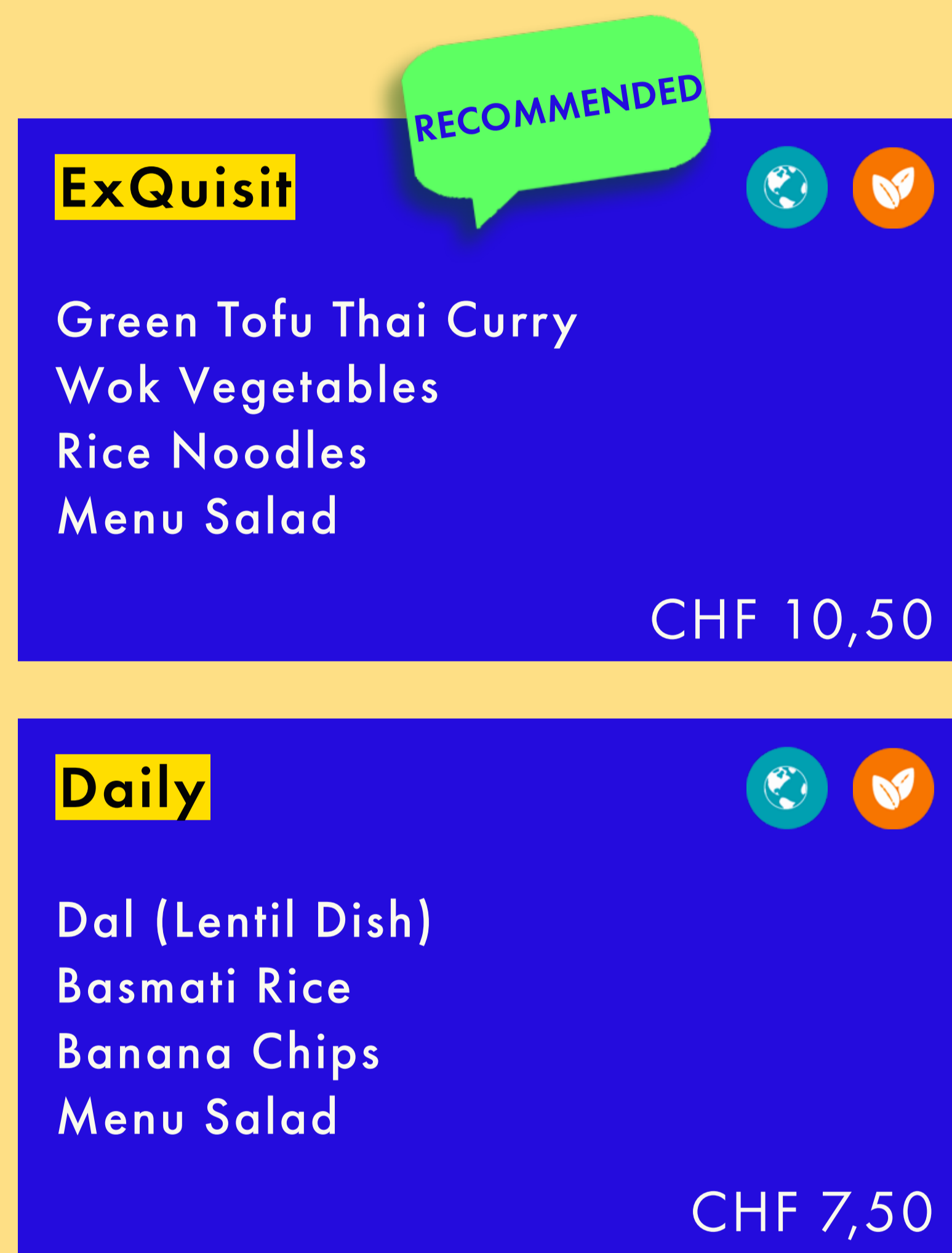


Online food choices: When does “recommended by” work?

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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 endorsements work in guiding consumers towards healthier and more sustainable dietary decisions.
- Our smartphone-based study explores how "recommended by" influences online food choices and how it interacts with factors like price, and position.



Methodology

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

Task: choose between two menus

Design:

IV: recommendation (recommended or not recommended)

price (cheaper or more expensive)

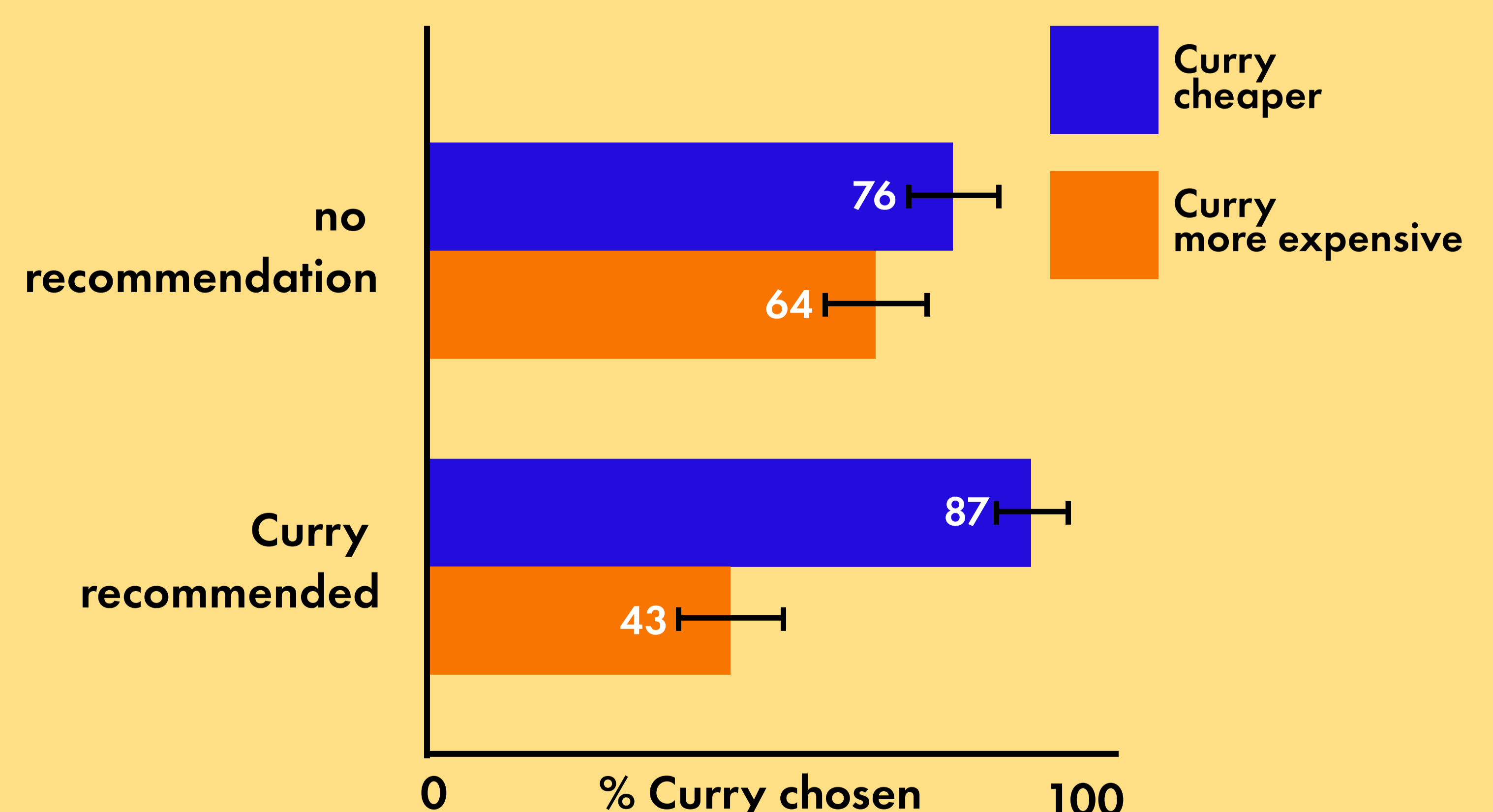
position (top or bottom)

DV: menu choice (dal or curry)

Results

- The choice primarily hinged on the menu (the Curry was selected by 66% of participants) and on the price (the cheaper menu was selected by 59% of participants).
- A differential effect of recommendation was observed only when the more popular Curry menu was presented at the top (see Figure 1).
- Specifically, when the Curry was the expensive option, its recommendation negatively influenced its selection (43% chose it), but this wasn't the case when Curry was the cheap option (87% chose it).

Figure 1:



Conclusion

Our research shows the complex impact of recommendations on online food choices. Though we expected recommendations to promote healthier and sustainable choices, they mainly affect popular menus, influenced also by price and positioning. Higher pricing of popular items with recommendations can discourage selection. This underscores that simple recommendation strategies have limitations and a more nuanced approach considering menu popularity and pricing is needed for effective guidance.