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Variety-Seeking and Perceived Expertise

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People often infer expertise from the choice of unique, rare, or sophisticated options. But might mere variety-seeking also serve as a signal of expertise, and if so, how? Six studies show that the relationship between variety-seeking and perceived expertise is not unidirectional and depends on the perceiver's own level of expertise. Category experts perceive lower variety-seeking as indicative of discernment, which in turn increases perceived expertise in that category. Consequently, experts choose less variety to portray themselves as experts. In contrast, novices perceive high variety-seeking as indicative of category breadth knowledge, which in turn increases their perception of category expertise. Consequently, novices choose more variety to portray themselves as experts. The findings make novel theoretical contributions to research on variety-seeking, consumer expertise, and social perception, as well as practical contributions for marketers of product assortments and bundles.

Keywords Choice; Variety-seeking; Expertise; Social perception; Signaling

Attributions of expertise are central in self- and other-perception (Baumeister, 1982; Leary et al., 1994). People spontaneously infer others' domain expertise from appearance, behavior, and choice (Gershoff, Broniarczyk, & West, 2001; Price & Stone, 2004; Sniezek & Van Swol, 2001). Specifically, choice of unique, sophisticated, or nonconforming options may signal expertise (Bellezza, Gino, & Keinan, 2014; Rucker, Galinsky, & Dubois, 2012). But regardless of specific options' qualities, might mere variety-seeking also signal expertise? And, if so, does more or less variety-seeking signal greater expertise?

People rely on variety-seeking as an input to various social perceptions. They perceive more varied selections as indicating choosers' interestingness (Ratner & Kahn, 2002), nonconformity (Ariely & Levav, 2000), expressiveness (Kim & Drolet, 2003), and non-rigidness (Drolet, 2002). We suggest that people may also see variety-seeking as an indication of domain expertise, and that they may strategically use variety as a means of displaying expertise to others through their choices. We further propose that the relationship between variety-seeking and perceived domain expertise depends on the perceiver's own level of expertise in that domain.

Experts and novices differ in the content and structure of category knowledge they possess (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). Expertise represents a continuum, ranging from basic knowledge of what items constitute the category to a higher understanding of options, their nuanced interrelationships, and one's own tastes and preferences (Mitchell & Dacin, 1996; West, Brown, & Hoch, 1996).

Simply knowing what options exist in a category is perhaps the most basic level of expertise development and a prerequisite for further learning. At this low level of expertise, merely being familiar with the range of options available in the category is the most salient expertise dimension (Mitchell & Dacin, 1996). Because novices have a relatively poor understanding of the category's scope, they associate expertise with category breadth knowledge (Clarkson, Janiszewski, & Cinelli, 2013), because such knowledge represents the next stage in their own expertise development. Consequently, we argue that novices view category breadth

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knowledge as a key indicator of expertise. Variety-seeking may signal category breadth knowledge because choosing an option suggests one is familiar with it and values it. Thus, more diverse selections indicate familiarity with more options. Consequently, we argue that novices associate variety-seeking with greater domain expertise.

As domain expertise evolves, people develop a richer and more nuanced understanding of options and attributes in the category, and the rules governing the connections among them, beyond mere breadth (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Hutchinson, Eisenstein, & Alba, 2009). Compared with novices, experts value the ability to discern, judge quality, and express personal taste more than breadth knowledge per se (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). Discernment, both in terms of objective quality and subjective preference, is thus the primary marker of expertise for experts (Mitchell & Dacin, 1996). Because choosing little variety is often attributed to discernment (Calder & Burnkrant, 1977), we argue that experts perceive less variety as indicating greater expertise.

Of note, consumers may also perceive the internal cohesiveness of a selection as indicating expertise. However, we propose that regardless of cohesiveness, *mere variety* can serve as an independent expertise signal.

In sum, we propose that the relationship between variety-seeking and perceived expertise depends on perceivers' own expertise level (Figure 1). Novices perceive greater variety-seeking as indicating expertise, due to perceived category breadth knowledge. Accordingly, novices seek variety to signal expertise. Conversely, experts perceive lower variety-seeking as indicating expertise, due to perceived discernment. Accordingly, they seek less variety to signal expertise.

Six studies test our propositions. Study 1 examines how experts and novices perceive another person's expertise based on mere variety-seeking. Study 1 also tests the mediating roles of category breadth knowledge, for novices, and perceived discernment, for experts. Studies 2 and 3 use realistic, consequential designs to examine if people apply the same logic they use in making attributions about others to the choices they make when they wish to display expertise. A Web Appendix reports three additional studies examining generalizability (Study WA1), boundary conditions (Study WA2), and downstream consequences (Study WA3).

Study 1: How Choice Variety Influences Perceived Expertise

We predicted that novices would perceive a variety-seeking individual as higher in category expertise than a person making a less varied selection. We expected novices' expertise perceptions to be mediated by perceived category breadth knowledge. In contrast, we predicted that experts would perceive a variety-seeking individual as lower in expertise than a person selecting less variety. We expected experts' perceptions to be mediated by perceived discernment.

Method

Participants (M_{age} = 37; 52% women) were 212 US Mturkers. Sample sizes, here and in subsequent studies, were similar to (or larger than) those used in prior work on signaling through variety (Kim & Drolet, 2003; Ratner & Kahn, 2002). Participants were randomly assigned to one of two between-subject conditions (variety-seeking: high vs. low). The other independent variable, participants' own expertise, was measured (see next).

First, participants completed four measures of objective expertise in gourmet chocolate, adapted from prior research (Clarkson et al., 2013, Study 1a; Mitchell & Dacin, 1996). They rated on 1–7 scales how many varieties of gourmet chocolate truffles they had tried, how often they had had gourmet

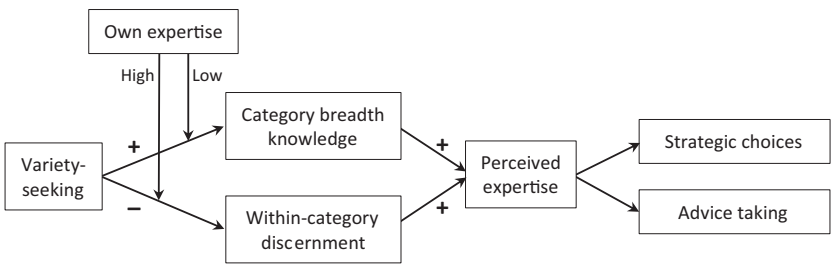

Figure 1. Conceptual summary of research propositions.

chocolate truffles, how frequently they ate gourmet chocolate truffles, and how often they bought gourmet chocolate truffles. We used these items to create an objective expertise index ($\alpha = .68$; scale reliability increased slightly, to $\alpha = .74$, when the first item was dropped, which had no effect on the remainder of the results). We report results using all four items, for consistency and because the first item appears central for assessing objective expertise (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Mitchell & Dacin, 1996).

All participants then read a short description of a hypothetical person who bought a box containing 16 individually selected gourmet chocolate truffles (Web Supplement A). In the high variety-seeking condition, we told participants that the target individual chose many different flavors. In the low variety-seeking condition, we told participants that the target individual chose only a few different flavors. We provided no additional information. Note that the total quantity bought, 16 truffles, was the same across conditions.

After reading the scenario, participants responded to the focal dependent variable and four potential mediators, presented at a random order.

As our focal dependent variable, participants rated the extent to which they thought the target individual was a gourmet chocolate connoisseur (1 = *Not at all likely*, 7 = *Very likely*).

Participants responded to four potential mediators. The first two items were our hypothesized mediators for novices and experts, respectively: namely, whether the target person seemed to have "extensive knowledge about many different types of chocolate truffles" (i.e., category breadth knowledge) and whether he appeared "discerning when it comes to chocolate truffles" (i.e., discernment). The next two items test two alternative mediators. The first pertains to perceived choice coherence, or whether the target person seemed to choose options that go well together. The second item pertained to perceived preference clarity, or the extent to which the target knows what truffles he personally prefers the most. All four mediators used the same scale (1 = *Not at all likely*, 7 = *Very likely*).

Finally, to test the robustness of the effect, we measured participants' individual variety-seeking tendency in the category, adapted from van Trijp & Steenkamp (1992). Scale items were averaged to an index ($\alpha = .84$).

Results

We predicted that participants' own expertise level would moderate the effect of variety-seeking on the target's perceived expertise. Supporting our prediction, a variety-seeking (high vs. low) × own-expertise (continuous, mean-centered) regression analysis revealed an interaction effect on perceived target expertise ($B = -.42$, 95% CI[−.65,−.18], $SE = .12$, $t[208] = -3.48$, $p < .001$), with no main effects (both t values < .22, p values > .8). See Figure 2.

Gourmet chocolate novices (i.e., those one SD below the mean expertise level) perceived the target as more of an expert in the high than in the low variety-seeking condition ($B = .64$, 95% CI[.14,1.15], $SE = .26$, $t[208] = 2.41$, $p = .013$). Experts (i.e., those one SD above the mean), however, perceived the target as more of an expert in the low than in the high variety-seeking condition ($B = -.62$, 95% CI [−1.13,−.12], $SE = .26$, $t[208] = -2.43$, $p = .016$).

Individual variety-seeking tendencies did not influence our results. Although a main effect suggests that variety-seeking participants generally perceived the target as higher on expertise ($B = .19$, 95% CI[.03,.34], $SE = .08$, $t[204] = 2.39$, $p = .018$), there was no three-way variety × own-expertise × variety-seeking interaction ($t[204] = .48$, $p = .64$) and no two-way interaction involving variety-seeking tendencies (both $t[204] < 1.59$, $p > .12$). Thus, the effect of perceivers' own expertise on the relationship between variety-seeking and perceived expertise was independent of perceivers' individual variety-seeking tendencies.

Next, we tested the mediators in a simultaneous moderated mediation model (Hayes 2017, model 8).

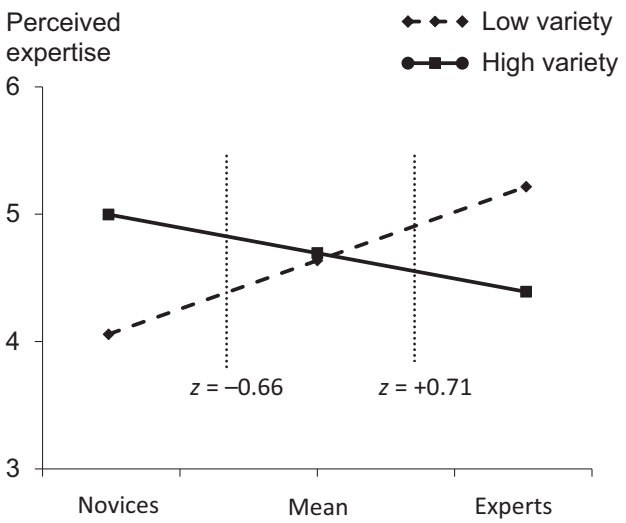

Figure 2. The effect of choice variety and perceiver's own expertise on perceived target expertise (Study 1). The vertical dotted lines indicate the boundaries of the Johnson–Neyman regions of significance ($p < .05$).

Consistent with our theorizing, only perceived category breadth knowledge (for novices) and discernment (for experts) emerged as significant mediators. Detailed results are included in Supplement A (Appendix S1).

First, there were variety × own-expertise interaction effects on the target person's perceived category breadth knowledge ($B = -.38$, 95% CI [−.66,−.10], $SE = .14$, $p = .008$) and discernment ($B = -.42$, 95% CI[−.70,−.13], $SE = .14$, $p = .004$). Second, we found significant moderated mediation through category breadth knowledge ($B = -.20$, 95% CI[−.37,−.03]), such that knowledge mediated the effect of variety-seeking for novices ($B = .35$, 95% CI[.03,.71]) but not experts ($B = -.25$, 95% CI [−.58,.09]). We also found significant moderated mediation through discernment ($B = -.05$, 95% CI [−.11,−.03]), such that discernment mediated the effect of variety for experts ($B = -.15$, 95% CI [−.33,−.02]) but not novices ($B = -.01$, 95% CI [−.10,.08]).

The variety × own-expertise interaction effects on perceived preference clarity ($B = -.15$, $SE = .15$, $p = .97$) and choice cohesiveness ($B = -.23$, $SE = .14$, $p = .10$) did not reach significance, nor did they mediate the effect ($B = -.02$, 95% CI[−.06,.02], and $B = -.10$, 95% CI[−.25, .03], respectively).

Discussion

Study 1 suggests the relationship between variety-seeking and perceived expertise depends on perceivers' own category expertise. Whereas novices perceived a variety-seeking target as more of an expert, experts perceived a non-variety-seeking target as more of an expert.

Further, Study 1 provides insight into the distinct processes underlying this relationship. Whereas novices perceive variety-seeking as indicating category breadth knowledge, which in-turn they interpret as expertise, experts perceive less variety-seeking as indicating discernment, which they interpret as expertise.

Study 2: Seeking Variety to Convey Expertise

If experts (vs. novices) associate low (vs. high) variety with greater category expertise, then this should also lead them to strategically incorporate correspondingly lower versus higher levels of variety in their own selections when they are motivated to display expertise through choice. Study 2 tests this hypothesis in a realistic field setting.

Method

Participants ($N = 209$; $M_{age} = 23$; 41% women) were undergraduates who participated for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two between-subject conditions (showcase-expertise vs. control). The other independent variable, participants' objective expertise, was measured at the onset using the same index as in Study 1 ($\alpha = .72$).

Participants read that their college had purchased chocolate truffles, to be sold at a public auction whose proceeds would be donated to a local charity (Web Supplement B). Each participant was asked to help by individually assembling a gift bag containing exactly 12 chocolate truffles.

In the showcase-expertise condition, we told participants that gift bags reflecting expertise raise more money at auctions, so they should assemble a gift bag reflecting expertise. Participants in the control condition were instead asked to assemble the most attractive gift bag possible to help raise more money for the charity. Thus, participants in both conditions were equally instructed to choose an assortment that would be favorably evaluated. The only difference was whether the explicit evaluation criterion was expertise or general appeal.

Participants received 20 large bowls, each filled with a different type of truffle. We refilled the bowls between sessions to ensure equal distribution and none was in short supply. Each participant received a small bag and filled it with 12 truffles of his/her choice.

To measure choice variety, we calculated a Herfindahl index for each participant. The Herfindahl index (Tirole, 1989) is the sum of the squares of the different options' shares, representing the degree of option diversity versus concentration in the participant's selection. A lower Herfindahl index represents greater variety-seeking, regardless of the quantity selected: it ranges from $1/n$ (where n is the number of options) when variety is greatest, to 1 when the selection contains no variety. The Herfindahl index is thus a sensitive measure of variety-seeking and is used frequently in variety-seeking research (Dhar, Hoch, & Kumar, 2001; Redden, Haws, & Chen, 2017; Simonson & Winer, 1992).

After assembling their gift bags, participants rated the extent to which they wanted to show their expertise in chocolate while assembling the gift bag, show potential buyers that they knew a lot about chocolate, show that they had experience with chocolate, and show that they were chocolate

connoisseurs (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Very much*). We averaged these items into an index (α = .91) and used it as a manipulation check. Finally, to test for robustness, we measured participants' individual variety-seeking tendency using the same scale from Study 1 (α = .78). All gift bags were subsequently donated to a local charity.

Results

Manipulation check. A (showcase-expertise vs. control) × (own-expertise, mean-centered) regression analysis on the desire to showcase expertise revealed the predicted main effect of condition (B = 1.42, SE = .22, t[205] = 6.53, p < .0001, 95% CI [.99,1.85]), with no interaction (t[205] = −.28, p = .78).

Variety-seeking. A similar regression analysis on the Herfindahl index revealed the predicted interaction (B = .02, SE = .006, t[205] = 3.14, p = .002, 95% CI[.007,.032]), with no main effects (both t values < .7, p values > .5). See Figure 3.

Supporting our predictions, chocolate novices (i.e., one *SD* below the mean) made *more* varied selections in the showcase-expertise than in the control condition (B = −.03, SE = .01, t[205] = −2.05, p = .041, 95% CI[−.05,−.001]). Conversely, chocolate experts (i.e., one *SD* above the mean) made *less* varied selections in the showcase-expertise condition (B = .03, SE = .01, t[205] = 2.42, p = .017, 95% CI [.006,.055]).

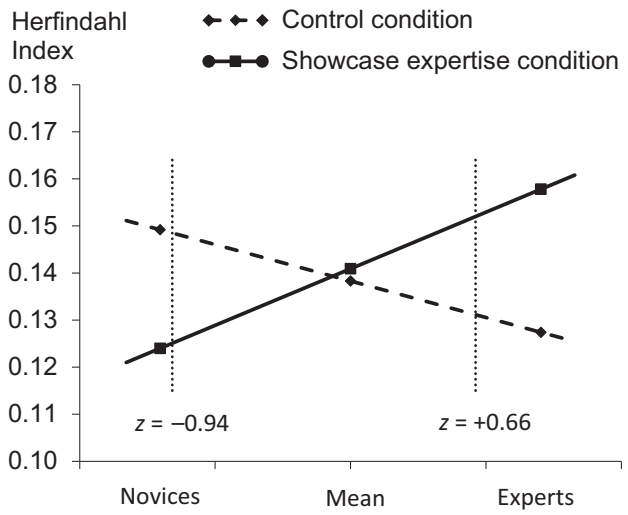

Figure 3. The effect of expertise showcasing instructions and own-expertise on variety-seeking (Study 2). *Note.* lower values on the Herfindahl index represent greater variety. The vertical dotted lines indicate the boundaries of the Johnson–Neyman regions of significance (p < .05).

Individual variety-seeking tendencies did not influence our results. An alternative (showcase-expertise vs. control) × (own-expertise) × (variety-seeking) regression analysis on the Herfindahl index revealed only the condition × own-expertise interaction (B = .02, SE = .006, t[201] = 3.16, p = .002, 95% CI[.008,.033]). No other main or interaction effects were significant (all t values [201] < 1.47, p values > .14). The effect of participants' own expertise on variety-seeking, when asked to showcase expertise, was independent of their individual variety-seeking tendencies.

Ancillary analysis. Our main premise is that novices and experts perceive *mere variety* as more versus less indicative of expertise, respectively. One may wonder, however, whether novices' and experts' choices also differed in terms of assortment cohesiveness. Given the inherent subjectivity of such judgments for chocolate truffles, we asked two independent judges, blind to the hypothesis and experimental condition, to rate the extent to which participants' gift bags appeared cohesive and logical (r = .75, combined to an index). Inter-judge agreement was low (r = .13, p = .06), possibly owing to the subjectivity of such judgments, so we analyzed each judge separately.

To examine whether cohesiveness perceptions differed for experts and novices, we used the same (condition) × (own-expertise) regression analysis, controlling for variety itself (i.e., the number of different flavors chosen; results were identical when using Herfindahl index and when not controlling for variety at all). The analysis revealed no significant main or interaction effects of condition or expertise on perceived cohesiveness, for either judge (all t values [204] < 1.28, p values > .2). Furthermore, controlling for cohesiveness ratings had no effect on the focal (condition) × (own-expertise) interaction effect on variety-seeking, for either judge (both t values [204] > 2.63, p values < .009).

Discussion

Using a consequential design with real products, Study 2 suggests that motivating participants to display expertise, holding constant anticipated evaluation, increased variety-seeking for novices but decreased it for experts.

Interestingly, experts appear to be more variety-seeking than novices at the baseline, evidenced by the slope in the control condition. This may reflect their increased familiarity with more options within the category. Compared with this baseline, however, motivating participants to display expertise

leads experts to choose *less* variety while leading novices to choose *more* variety.

Our findings cast doubt on the possibility that novices chose more variety because they were less certain of their preferences. Such an alternative account would predict a main effect of own-expertise on variety-seeking, which we did not observe (here or in other studies). Thus, novices' behavior is unlikely due to lower preference certainty.

The findings also cast further doubt on the possibility that choice cohesiveness was driving the effects. Although cohesiveness may certainly vary in some contexts, this does not appear to play a role in our results. Consistent with Study 1, *mere variety* (or lack thereof) appears to be an independent expertise signal.

Replication and Generalization: Choosing for a Maven (Study WA1)

We conceptually replicated Study 2 using a scenario where participants chose chocolate truffles for a friend whose opinion they valued (Study WA1, Web Appendix S1). We manipulated participants' motivation to display expertise by framing the recipient as either a fine chocolate connoisseur or a non-connoisseur. Consistent with Study 2, we found that choosing for a connoisseur (compared with a non-connoisseur) increased variety-seeking for novices but decreased variety-seeking for experts. People often choose assortments for recipients with different levels of connoisseurship in the focal category, so replicating our findings using this manipulation bolsters the findings' ecological validity.

Study 3: Mere Variety-Seeking in the Absence of Product Knowledge

One may wonder whether Study 2 reflects familiarity differences with the choice options. If experts believe they know which options other experts would consider to be best, then motivating them to display expertise could lead them to choose only those specific options, resulting in decreased variety-seeking. Study 3 tests this possibility using an incentive-compatible design: we asked people to choose an assortment of craft beers and manipulated their expertise showcasing motivation, but we used fictitious brands for which participants had no prior knowledge.

Method

Participants (M_{age} = 33; 54% female) were 134 US Mturkers, randomly assigned to one of two between-subject conditions (Evaluation-Criterion: expertise vs. average). As in previous studies, we measured participants' domain expertise.

We told participants that they would be helping a company to design a gift basket composed of craft beer (Web Supplement C). Participants created the gift basket by choosing any number of items from 10 available brands. To rule out the possibility that any effects were due to knowledge differences, we used fictitious beer names (validated in a pretest, Web Supplement C).

We directly manipulated participants' motivation to display expertise through choice. In the expertise criterion condition, we asked participants to assemble a basket that would be especially appealing to beer connoisseurs, and told them that a panel of beer experts would evaluate all the baskets submitted by participants on apparent expertise. To make this task incentive-compatible, we also told participants that they would receive a $25 bonus if their basket received the highest expertise rating. Thus, participants were directly incentivized to choose in a manner that would lead others to perceive their choice as reflecting expertise.

In the average criterion (i.e., control) condition, we asked participants to assemble a gift basket that would be appealing to average people. We told them that they would receive a $25 bonus if a panel of consumers evaluated their basket as the most appealing. Thus, participants in both conditions were incentivized to choose an assortment that would be favorably evaluated by others. The only difference was whether the evaluation criterion was expertise or general appeal.

We then showed participants the list of pretested fictitious beer brands (Web Supplement C). We asked participants to indicate the number of bottles of each brand they would put in the gift basket. We told participants they could pick more than one bottle from the same brewery, if they wished, and that they could select any total number of bottles. Participants selected 12.9 units on average, which was unaffected by own-expertise or condition (all p values > .60). To measure variety-seeking, we calculated a Herfindahl index for each participant.

Subsequently, participants rated on a 7-point scale how important it was for them to display expertise, which served as a manipulation check, and how difficult it was to choose. Finally, participants rated their own beer expertise and the extent

to which they considered themselves a beer connoisseur (r = .85; averaged to an index; Whereas the previous studies used established measures of objective expertise (Clarkson et al., 2013), the current study uses subjective measures of expertise, also adapted from Clarkson et al. (2013). Although our theory focuses on actual domain expertise, prior research indicates that these objective and subjective measures of domain expertise tend to be strongly positively correlated (e.g., Clarkson et al., 2013; Mitchell & Dacin, 1996). The results of Study 3 replicate our previous findings, suggesting that self-rated expertise measures can, at least in some cases, be a valid proxy for objective expertise. On average, people who rate themselves as experts are likely to have higher objective expertise than people who rate themselves as novices.). These ratings were unaffected by condition (F(1,132) = 1.01, p = .32).

Results

Manipulation check. An (evaluation-criterion) × (own-expertise, mean-centered) regression analysis on participants' ratings of their motivation to appear as experts revealed the predicted main effect of evaluation-criterion (B = .75, SE = .29, t [130] = 2.61, p = .01), with no interaction (t [130] = .52, p > .6).

Variety-seeking. A similar regression analysis on the Herfindahl index revealed the predicted interaction (B = .056, 95% CI[.02,.09], SE = .0166, t [130] = 3.39, p < .001), with no main effects (both p values > .40). Results were identical when controlling for the number of units selected (B = .05, SE = .0165, p = .003). See Figure 4.

Supporting our predictions, expecting to be evaluated based on expertise increased variety-seeking among novices (i.e., one SD below the mean), compared with control (B = −.10, 95% CI[−.18,−.02], SE = .040, t[130] = 2.54, p = .012). Among beer experts (i.e., one SD above the mean), however, expecting to be evaluated based on expertise decreased variety-seeking, compared with control (B = .09, 95% CI[.01,.17], SE = .040, t[130] = 2.27, p = .025).

There were no effects of own-expertise or experimental condition on choice difficulty (all t values [130] < .50, p values > .61).

Discussion

Study 3 incentivized participants to display expertise through choice, and found that this increased variety-seeking for novices but decreased variety-seeking for experts. Using fictitious brands provides strong evidence that participants used *mere variety* — regardless of choice cohesiveness — to signal expertise. It also rules out alternative explanations based on familiarity differences between experts and novices.

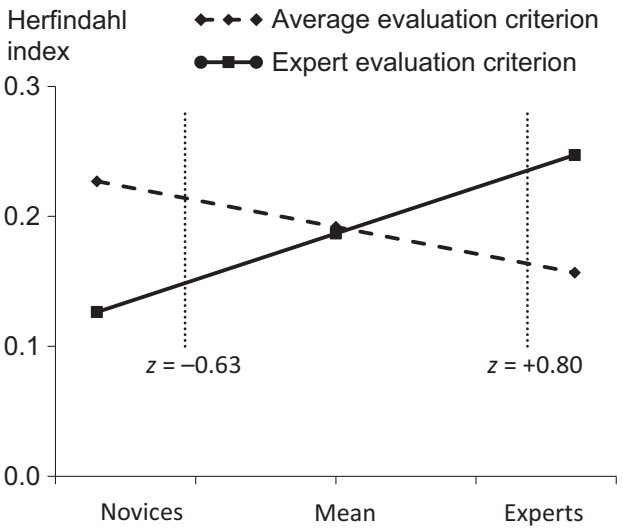

Figure 4. The effect of own-expertise and evaluation criterion on variety-seeking (Study 3). *Note*. lower values on the Herfindahl index represent greater variety. The vertical dotted lines indicate the boundaries of the Johnson–Neyman regions of significance at the p < .05 level.

General Discussion

People often choose distinctive, rare, or sophisticated options to signal expertise. The current research suggests that mere variety-seeking may also serve to signal expertise. Furthermore, the relationship between variety and perceived expertise is not unidirectional but moderated by perceivers' own expertise.

In addition to its contributions to literatures on social-perception and expertise signaling, our research also extends variety-seeking research by discovering a novel driver of variety-seeking. Unlike most prior findings in this stream, we show that self-presentation concerns may lead consumers to seek more *or* less variety, depending on their category expertise.

Boundary Conditions

Novices may not perceive variety-seeking as indicative of expertise in the extreme scenario

where a decision maker indiscriminately selects all of the options in the category. Although, technically, such a strategy maximizes variety, it is likely to be perceived as more heuristic and less indicative of expertise, compared with more deliberative variety-seeking. Study WA2 (Appendix S1) supports this boundary condition.

Our findings may not apply to strictly utilitarian domains, in which objective quality and price are the primary evaluation criteria and variety-seeking plays a lesser role (Ratner, Kahn, & Kahneman, 1999), or to specific domains where diversification is considered objectively superior (e.g., investment) or a social norm (Steffel & Le Boeuf, 2014).

Lastly, experts may not necessarily perceive consistency as indicating expertise when choice is repeated over time. Our effects may also change when items are subcategorized within a superordinate product category (Mogilner, Rudnick, & Iyengar, 2008).

Implications for Future Research

One important consequence of perceived expertise is advice-seeking. Study WA3 (Appendix S1) examines how variety-seeking and own-expertise influence advice-taking.

Our findings suggest that varied assortments may be more popular in entry-level products, lower priced tiers, and options targeted at novices. Less varied assortments may be more popular in high-end tiers positioned for "pros." Similarly, experts may perceive brands or stores offering limited arrays of products or services as higher in expertise or knowhow, whereas the opposite may be true for novices. Future research may examine whether and when variety influences store perceptions (Berger, Draganska, & Simonson, 2007) and perceptions of abundance within a category (Etkin & Sela, 2016).

Extending beyond variety, future research may examine whether our findings generalize to a "less is more" (experts) versus "more is better" (novices) heuristic. An expert craftsman, for example, may prefer a more specialized collection of power tools, whereas an amateur home-improver may prefer a versatile tool. Similarly, experts may prefer to buy products at a more specialized store, or seek advice from others with narrower but deeper expertise, whereas novices may favor less specialized outlets and advice from others with broader, but potentially shallower, expertise.

Such tentative hypotheses imply that, in addition to variety-seeking across options, experts and novices may have divergent perceptions of, and preferences for, the variety of attributes *within* options. Future research may examine whether, and under what conditions, such perceptions diverge and, potentially, drive preferences for different products, outlets, and sources of advice.

Author Contributions

A. Sela designed, collected, and analyzed the data for Study 1 and Study WA2. L. Hadar designed, collected, and analyzed the data for Study 2 and Study WA3. S. Morgan designed, collected, and analyzed the data for Study 3 and Study WA1 under the supervision of A. Sela. A. Sela drafted the manuscript and all authors provided critical revisions and approved the final version of the manuscript for submission.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

Appendix S1. "Variety-Seeking and Perceived Expertise": Additional Studies and Supplemental Materials