The Effect of Personalized Content in Media Entertainment on Engagement with the Domain

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ABSTRACT

From Netflix to Spotify to TikTok, consumers' entertainment experiences increasingly revolve around personalized content. Does consuming personalized content in a specific entertainment domain influence the likelihood of consumers discussing that domain overall, beyond the specific content they engage with? Across eleven experiments, we investigate the impact of personalized content in the music and short-form video domains (i.e., content that feels tailored to one's tastes) on the intent to discuss domain-related topics. We find that the impact of consuming personalized content (vs. other types of content or no content) on discussion intent varies depending on the strength of an individual's identification with the domain. For weak identifiers, personalized content increases discussion intent, whereas for strong identifiers, it decreases intent. Process evidence highlights two underlying psychological forces: enhanced enjoyment of the domain and diminished confidence in domain knowledge. Personalized content increases discussion intent for weak identifiers—users whose intent is likely driven by high enjoyment. In contrast, personalized content decreases discussion intent for strong identifiers—users whose intent is likely driven by low confidence.

Keywords: Media and entertainment, Recommender systems, Content personalization

The media and entertainment industry has undergone a significant transformation. In the past, most media experiences exposed consumers to entertainment content designed for mass audiences, without considering an individual's specific preferences (Schafer et al. 1999). Television and radio programs were designed to appeal to large, general audiences without catering to individual tastes, and early online streaming platforms similarly catered to broad audiences by offering content that reflected general trends in user preferences (Schafer et al. 1999). However, recent years have witnessed a surge in the variety of available online content (Rodriguez 2021), reaching record levels for both professionally produced content (e.g., music, TV, film) and user-generated content (e.g., YouTube, TikTok, Instagram Reels). This increased variety, along with advancements in algorithmic recommender systems, now allows individuals to easily access personalized content tailored to their specific tastes. Entertainment experiences involving personalized content are highly engaging—for example, Spotify selects exactly the right music to play for the listener's mood while cooking dinner, and TikTok captivates users with a continuous stream of videos aligned with their interests. These experiences enhance satisfaction (Tam and Ho 2006; Liang, Lai, and Ku 2006), fueling even greater demand for personalized content. By 2023, 81% of viewers expected streaming services to deliver personalized experiences (Jain 2023).

Given that entertainment experiences increasingly involve personalized content, it is important to understand the downstream consequences of such consumption. Specifically, moving beyond prior research that has focused on how consumers respond to specific pieces of personalized content (Tam and Ho 2006; Liang, Lai, and Ku 2006), we explore whether the use of personalized content spills over to affect consumers' intent to discuss the broader entertainment domain (e.g., music or movies) beyond the specific pieces of content consumed.

These conversations may involve discussions about other related items in the same domain, such as talking about music in general. For example, does listening to songs from personalized playlists on Spotify lead to more or fewer conversations about other songs the consumer knows?

These entertainment-related conversations are both frequent and important. Movies, TV shows, and music naturally appear in everyday conversations, making them one of the most commonly discussed topics alongside family, friends, and work (Copeland 2024). These conversations play a crucial role in sustaining consumer interest in an entertainment domain (Belk 2013), fostering social connections through shared interests (Liebes and Katz 1990), and influencing others' entertainment choices (Godes and Mayzlin 2004). Therefore, it is important to understand how engagement in these conversations is influenced by the use of personalized content.

We develop a conceptual framework that examines how the use of personalized content within a domain influences individuals' willingness to discuss that domain. We propose that this effect varies based on the strength of their identification with the domain. For individuals with weak identification, personalized content can increase their intent to discuss. In contrast, for those with strong identification, it can diminish their intent to engage in such discussions. We suggest that the divergent effects are likely because personalized content may trigger two psychological factors: a high level of enjoyment experienced within the domain, which may encourage domain-related discussions, and a low level of confidence in one's knowledge of the domain, which may discourage discussions. For weak identifiers, the motivation to engage in discussion is likely based on considerations of whether the topic they discuss will be enjoyable enough to help them be perceived positively by others. As a result, high enjoyment within the domain may weigh more heavily for them, potentially boosting their intent to discuss that

domain. Conversely, strong identifiers' discussion intent is likely based on considerations of whether they will succeed in appearing knowledgeable and skilled within their identity domain. As a result, low confidence in knowledge may weigh more heavily for them, potentially reducing their willingness to engage in a discussion about that domain.

This research makes several important contributions. First, our study adds to the growing body of research on consumer responses to personalized content. Whereas prior studies have primarily investigated consumer responses to specific content—such as increased memory recall (Tam and Ho 2006), choices (Holtz et al. 2020), or satisfaction (Liang, Lai, and Ku 2006)—this research expands the scope of consumer behaviors by examining the spillover effects on consumers' intent to discuss the broader domain associated with the content. Given that personalized content is generally associated with positive consumer reactions (Liang, Lai, and Ku 2006; Holtz et al. 2020), one may assume that personalized content usage would spark conversations about the domain for everyone. However, our findings reveal that this effect may vary depending on the consumer's identification with the domain: personalized content can increase conversations among weak identifiers but may have the opposite effect among strong identifiers.

Second, our research advances the identity-based behavior literature by establishing a novel situational factor that affects consumer engagement in domains they strongly identify with. Previous research indicates that stronger identification with a domain generally leads to a higher level of engagement (i.e., chronic accessibility; Oyserman 2009; Reed et al. 2012). However, contextual factors can weaken the connection between identity and engagement, sometimes leading strong identifiers to engage less in identity-relevant activities. For example, Grewal et al. (2019) found that engaging in actions that fulfill the need for identity signaling—such as posting

about an identity-relevant product on social media—can paradoxically reduce subsequent interest in other related activities within the same identity domain. We introduce another factor that may reduce engagement in identity domains: experiences that undermine confidence in one's knowledge. Specifically, we demonstrate that, for those who strongly identify with a particular entertainment domain, algorithmically curated personalized content—a prevalent real-world stimulus—can diminish confidence in their knowledge of the domain and lessen participation in discussions about the domain. On the other hand, for those who weakly identify with the domain, we show that personalized content can increase participation in domain-related discussions by enhancing their enjoyment of the domain.

Our experiments focus on the use of personalized content in environments where content search is seen as overwhelming and impractical without assistance, such as streaming platforms offering seemingly unlimited options. In these contexts, personalized content is likely to reduce consumers' confidence in domain knowledge, which could dampen engagement. This contrasts with settings where content search is manageable and finite (e.g., books in a series, superhero movies), in which personalized content may not similarly impact consumers' confidence. Further, we focus specifically on personalized content generated by algorithmic recommender systems. These systems are widely used and trusted, with over 80% of content watched on Netflix discovered through its recommendation algorithm (Gomez-Uribe and Hunt 2015). Additionally, algorithmic recommendations are more accessible and cost-effective than human-based suggestions, with some systems now outperforming humans in predicting user preferences (Peukert, Sen, and Claussen 2023). Therefore, our research seeks to deepen the understanding of consumer reliance on technology-driven personalization in navigating vast content environments.

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Entertainment Consumption and Personalized Content

Early recommendation systems suggested items based on general popularity without personalizing them to individual preferences (Schafer et al. 1999). Today, personalized content has become increasingly prevalent. For example, YouTube employs deep neural networks to recommend videos tailored to each user's activity and other user-specific factors, such as device type or location (Covington, Adams, and Sargin 2016). This paper explores consumer response to personalized content, defined as content perceived to be specifically tailored to match an individual's preferences. Content is personalized if it is viewed as highly tailored to match an individual's taste (e.g., Spotify's personalized playlists), and content is not personalized if it is not viewed as tailored to match an individual's taste (e.g., playlists generated for a population subgroup).

Consumers perceive content to be personalized if it is actually personalized for them (i.e., aligns with their idiosyncratic tastes) and explicitly communicated as personalized for them through a message from the platform. If content is labeled as personalized for the user (e.g., messages like "selected just for you") but does not actually align with the user's tastes, it will not be perceived as personalized (Tam and Ho 2006). Conversely, even if content is truly personalized, if it is not explicitly communicated as personalized for the user, it will not be perceived as personalized. Indeed, an exploratory survey (Study C1 in Web Appendix C) indicates that personalization perceptions are highest when items are (vs. are not) actually personalized for the self and messages indicating such personalization are present (vs. absent).

Thus, our definition of personalized content relies on consumer perceptions regarding personalization (i.e., content that aligns with one's tastes and is communicated as personalized for the self), just as personalization occurs in real-world settings. For example, Spotify gives users a Discover Weekly playlist, described as "Your weekly mixtape of fresh music," that contains songs selected based on the user's music tastes. Similarly, Netflix suggests "Because you watched …" movie recommendations based on the user's watch history.

Our experiments investigate consumer response to personalized content (i.e., content that evokes a high perception of content personalization) compared to other types of content (i.e., content that evokes a low perception of content personalization) or no content. We manipulate content personalization perceptions in ways that reflect how they vary in the real world, such as a playlist generated for a specific user based on information about the user's taste or a playlist generated for a broad group of listeners. While it is important to understand when and why individuals perceive content as personalized (for readers interested in the potential antecedents of personalization perceptions, see Study C1 in Web Appendix C), this paper focuses on the downstream effects of such perceptions. Specifically, we investigate whether content perceived (vs. not perceived) as personalized influences individuals' willingness to engage in conversations about the broader domain associated with that content.

The next section examines how the use of personalized content shapes the desire to discuss domain-related topics. Note that, throughout the paper, the term "personalized content" refers to content perceived as personalized by the consumer.

Consuming Personalized Content Can Increase Domain Enjoyment But Decrease Confidence in Domain Knowledge

How does the use of personalized content influence the intent to discuss domain-related topics? To explore this question, we first discuss the psychological responses to personalized content, specifically enjoyment within the domain and confidence in knowledge of the domain. We then discuss how these factors affect individuals' willingness to participate in conversations about the broader domain.

Experiencing personalized content within a specific domain can increase an individual's perceived enjoyment of that domain. Personalized content, by definition, aligns highly with an individual's specific tastes (Tam and Ho 2006; Arora et al. 2008; Liang, Lai, and Ku 2006). Therefore, experiencing personalized content can lead to positive emotions during consumption, potentially resulting in greater overall enjoyment of the domain. For example, listening to personalized music playlists from Spotify can increase the level of enjoyment an individual experiences within the music domain. In contrast, when not experiencing personalized content, such as when consuming generic content or not consuming any content at all, individuals are unlikely to experience the same positive emotions, and therefore they will not experience enhanced enjoyment within the domain.

At the same time, experiencing personalized content can potentially decrease confidence in knowledge within the domain. Domain knowledge refers to a combination of a factual understanding of the domain and the ability to perform domain-related tasks (Alba and Hutchinson 1987). In media entertainment contexts, this knowledge can be defined as an understanding of enjoyable content and the ability to efficiently find such content. Research indicates that confidence in domain knowledge develops through active engagement and learning within that domain (Hoch and Deighton 1989). A primary method for enhancing this knowledge

involves browsing a library and exploring a variety of content (Clarkson et al. 2013). This process allows individuals to formulate and test hypotheses about what drives their enjoyment, thereby deepening their understanding and skills in the domain (Hoch and Deighton 1989).

However, receiving personalized content such as Spotify's personalized playlists could make users feel that they are relying on a recommender system that explores the library of over 100 million tracks on their behalf. Consequently, they may feel that they lack the ability to explore the vast amount of content as well as the opportunity to explore diverse content and broaden their knowledge (Hoch and Deighton 1989). For example, personalized content recommendations prevent users from encountering music they dislike, which might make them feel like they have lost opportunities to make judgments that refine their tastes. Such lack of judgment can reduce their confidence in recognizing what they find enjoyable or distasteful, further reinforcing the sense that their ability to explore and broaden their knowledge has been diminished. As a result, their confidence in their domain knowledge may decline (Hoch and Deighton 1989; Clarkson et al. 2013).

In summary, the use of personalized content can increase enjoyment of the domain but decrease confidence in domain knowledge. In contrast, when individuals use other types of content that are not perceived as personalized, they are less likely to feel dependent on the system to explore the content library. Consequently, they are less likely to perceive a loss of opportunities to explore diverse content and broaden their knowledge, and their confidence in knowledge will remain unaffected. In the next section, we discuss how these psychological factors arising from personalized content—high enjoyment and low confidence in knowledge—may affect the intent to engage with the broader domain associated with the content.

Effect of Domain Enjoyment and Confidence in Domain Knowledge on Discussion Intent

Conversations are often driven by the motive to shape the impressions others form of them (Berger 2014). Individuals use interpersonal communication to create desired impressions and avoid undesired ones (Berger 2014; Berger and Heath 2007). Notably, two psychological forces triggered by the use of personalized content—high enjoyment and low confidence in knowledge—may have opposing effects on the perceived value of domain-related discussions for impression management.

High Domain Enjoyment Can Increase Discussion Intent

One way impression management occurs is through self-enhancement (Berger 2014). The tendency to self-enhance, or the desire to be viewed favorably by others, is a fundamental human motivation (De Angelis et al. 2012; Berger 2014). People generally prefer to present themselves in a positive light and are more inclined to discuss topics that reflect well on them rather than those that reflect poorly (De Angelis et al. 2012; Berger 2014). Notably, engaging in discussions about enjoyable and entertaining subjects, such as humor (Bitterly and Schweitzer 2019) or intriguing products (Berger 2014), serves as an effective strategy for self-enhancement.

When individuals experience high levels of enjoyment in a specific domain, such as through the use of personalized content, they may find related topics within the same domain enjoyable and entertaining to discuss. For example, consumers who enjoy listening to a personalized music playlist on Spotify may be more likely to discuss music in general with others, viewing discussions about such enjoyable topics as a way to be perceived positively by

others. Therefore, high enjoyment experienced within a domain (induced by the use of personalized content) can increase discussions about other related topics in the same domain.

Low Confidence in Domain Knowledge Can Decrease Discussion Intent

While (simple) self-enhancement is a fundamental human motive, other factors also influence impression management. Beyond generally looking good, individuals sometimes seek to convey specific aspects of who they are by demonstrating their understanding and skills in certain domains (Berger 2014). Such identity-signaling motives shape consumer behavior in various ways. For example, some people avoid using automated bread-baking machines to better showcase their exceptional baking abilities (Leung, Paolacci, and Puntoni 2018). Beyond product usage, individuals are likely to share positive word-of-mouth (WOM) about their own experiences, which highlights their personal choices and abilities, but may avoid discussing others' experiences, which do not serve to demonstrate their abilities (De Angelis et al. 2012).

When individuals experience low confidence in their knowledge of a specific domain, such as through the use of personalized content, talking about the same domain can reveal their deficiencies and undermine their image as a knowledgeable person. Consequently, they may avoid talking about the domain to avoid being seen as lacking knowledge. Consistent with this notion, prior research has found that those who perceive themselves as less knowledgeable in a domain are less likely to engage in WOM for products in that domain (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003).

In summary, the use of personalized content may trigger two opposing forces: high enjoyment, which can increase discussion intent for domain-related topics, and diminished confidence in domain knowledge, which can decrease it. In the next section, we propose a

framework that determines when high enjoyment versus low confidence in knowledge has a stronger impact on domain discussion intent. We introduce the concept of self-domain identification and explore how individuals with strong versus weak identification with the domain may differ in their considerations when forming their domain discussion intent.

Moderating Role of Self-Domain Identification Strength

Identity is commonly defined as any category label with which the consumer self-associates (Reed et al. 2012). This category label represents what "kind" of person the consumer is, as well as the behaviors they engage in (Oyserman 2009). People are intrinsically motivated to engage with products or domains that are identity-relevant, that is, those that are able to represent who they are (Oyserman 2009; Reed et al. 2012). Media products, in particular, carry rich symbolic meanings that help consumers confirm and express who they are (Berger and Heath 2007; Belk 2013). Consequently, some individuals identify strongly with certain media domains, such as music (Berger and Heath 2007) or games (Leung et al. 2022), more than others do, and prefer engaging in activities related to those domains (Oyserman 2009; Reed et al. 2012). For example, prior research indicates that individuals who strongly identify with an entertainment domain (e.g., music) are often motivated to discuss topics related to their identities (Chung and Darke 2006; Berger 2014). However, we propose that this tendency may diminish with the growing use of personalized content. Specifically, we suggest that strong identifiers will have a decreased intention to discuss domain-related topics after using personalized content. In contrast, individuals who have weaker identification with the same domain may respond differently. After using personalized content, weak identifiers may have an increased intention to

discuss domain-related topics. This difference would arise because strong and weak identifiers prioritize different goals when evaluating the value of domain-related conversations.

For weak identifiers, the willingness to engage in discussion is likely based on a fundamental human desire for self-enhancement, or the desire to be perceived positively by others (Berger 2014; De Angelis et al. 2012). Their primary consideration is likely whether the topic they discuss will be enjoyable enough to present themselves favorably. When they use personalized content, the high enjoyment they experience within a domain may make them view conversations related to that domain as more enjoyable and thus more beneficial for self-enhancement. While diminished confidence in domain knowledge may lower the self-enhancement value of such conversations (due to concerns about being seen as lacking knowledge, which might obstruct their goal of being perceived positively), weak identifiers may still see the benefit of talking about a highly entertaining domain and being seen as likable or funny, even if they do not appear knowledgeable about the domain. Therefore, enhanced domain enjoyment would weigh more heavily for them than diminished confidence in domain knowledge, potentially boosting their intent to discuss that domain.

In contrast, strong identifiers' discussion intent is likely to be rooted in the desire for identity signaling, or the desire to portray a specific trait that signifies their identity (Berger 2014). Their primary consideration will be whether they can demonstrate desirable qualities that are not easily attainable by those less engaged in the domain—such as superior knowledge or skills (Leung, Paolacci, and Puntoni 2018). When these individuals feel less confident about their domain knowledge, domain-related conversations may not be viewed as an effective strategy for demonstrating their knowledgeability. Although they also value being seen positively by others (through demonstrating traits that are less core to their identity domain such as being likable or

funny), strong identifiers are likely to prioritize demonstrating knowledgeability in their identity domain. Prior research supports this view: strong identifiers are motivated to act in ways that demonstrate their identity, even if it means deviating from the majority (Berger and Heath 2007; Clarkson et al. 2020). Therefore, for strong identifiers, diminished confidence would weigh more heavily than enhanced enjoyment, potentially undermining their intent to discuss the domain.

In summary, the use of personalized content may create two opposing forces: enhanced enjoyment within the domain, which encourages discussion of domain-related topics, and decreased confidence in domain knowledge, which discourages it. The level of self-domain identification is likely to determine whether enjoyment or confidence in knowledge has a stronger influence on the intent to discuss. For weak identifiers—users whose discussion intent is primarily driven by domain enjoyment—personalized content can increase the discussion intent. In contrast, for strong identifiers—users whose discussion intent is primarily driven by confidence in domain knowledge—personalized content can decrease the intent. Recall that our definition of personalization refers to the consumer's perception of the content as being personalized for them—that is, content that aligns with the consumer's tastes and is also communicated as being personalized (as is the case for personalized entertainment products). Formally, we test the following hypotheses:

H1: The effect of consuming personalized content (vs. other types of content or no content) on the intent to discuss domain-related topics will be moderated by the strength of self-domain identification.

a) For strong identifiers, consuming personalized content (vs. other types of content or no content) will decrease their discussion intent.

b) For weak identifiers, consuming personalized content (vs. other types of content or no content) will increase their discussion intent.

H2: The effect in H1 is driven by weak and strong identifiers weighing two psychological forces differently when forming their discussion intent.

a) For both strong and weak identifiers, consuming personalized content (vs. other types of content or no content) will trigger two psychological forces: higher enjoyment within the domain and lower confidence of domain knowledge.

b) Strong identifiers are more influenced by low knowledge confidence than high enjoyment, which will result in an overall decrease in discussion intent.

c) Weak identifiers are more influenced by high enjoyment within the domain than low knowledge confidence, which will result in an overall increase in discussion intent.

FIGURE 1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

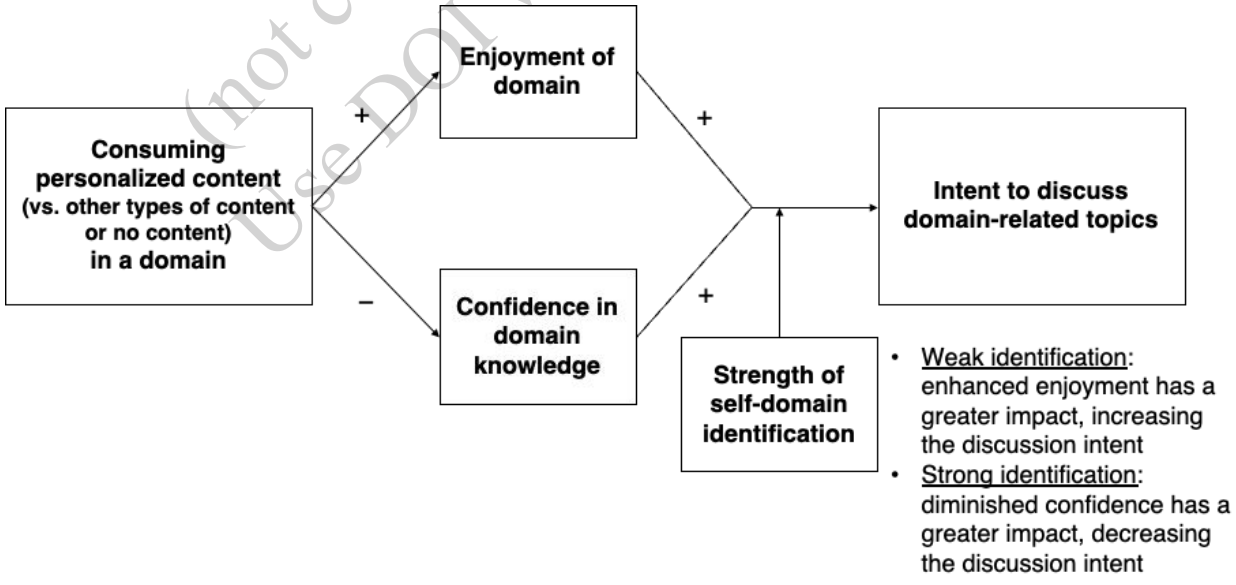


TABLE 1.
OVERVIEW OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5A	Study 5B
Method	Online Panel Experiment (pre-registered)	Online Panel Experiment	Online Panel Experiment (pre-registered)	Online Panel Experiment (pre-registered)	Online Panel Experiment (pre-registered)	Online Panel Experiment (pre-registered)
Sample[1]	N = 234 Prolific panelists aged between 18 and 45 years that use Spotify	N = 227 Mturk panelists aged between 18 and 45 years that use Spotify	N = 324 Connect panelists representative of the U.S. population	N = 186 Connect panelists representative of the U.S. population	N = 192 Connect panelists representative of the U.S. population	N = 193 Connect panelists representative of the U.S. population
Study Design	2 (content type: Personalized or Control) × Identification Strength (continuous)	2 (content type: Personalized or Control) × 2 (measured music listening frequency: more-frequent or less-frequent)	3 (content type: Personalized Content, Control Content, or No Content) × Identification Strength (continuous)	2 (priming-type: Personalized Content or Control) × Identification Strength (continuous)	2 (priming type: High Enjoyment or Low Enjoyment) × Identification Strength (continuous)	2 (priming type: High Confidence or Low Confidence) × Identification Strength (continuous)
Stimuli	Music clips sourced from Spotify	Music clips sourced from Spotify	Short-form video clips	Writing prompt	Writing prompt	Writing prompt
Dependent variables	Intent to discuss music-related items	Intent to post news about favorite musician on social media	Confidence in video knowledge; Conversational intent for video-related topics	Enjoyment of music; Confidence in music knowledge	Intent to discuss music-related topics	Intent to discuss music-related topics
Hypotheses tested	H1a, H1b	H1a, H1b	H1a, H1b, H2a	H2a	H2b, H2c	H2b, H2c
Findings	- For weak identifiers, the use of personalized (vs. control) content increases their music discussion intent. - For strong identifiers, the use of personalized (vs. control) content decreases their music discussion intent.	- For weak identifiers, the use of personalized (vs. control) content has no impact on their posting intent. - For strong identifiers, the use of personalized (vs. control) content decreases their posting intent.	- For both strong and weak identifiers, the use of personalized content (vs. control content or no content) decreases knowledge confidence. - For weak identifiers, the use of personalized content (vs. control content or no content) increases their conversational intent. - For strong identifiers, the use of personalized content (vs. control content or no content) decreases their conversational intent.	- For both strong and weak identifiers, priming the use of personalized content (vs. control content) increases music enjoyment and decreases music knowledge confidence.	- Priming high enjoyment (vs. low enjoyment) within the music domain increases their music discussion intent, especially among weak (vs. strong) identifiers.	- Priming low confidence (vs. high confidence) in music knowledge decreases their music discussion intent, for both strong and weak identifiers.
Unique study contributions	Examines the IV-to-DV link and its interaction with identification strength, while controlling for specific content.	Examines the IV-to-DV link and its interaction with identification strength	Examines the IV-to-DV link and its interaction with identification strength; Examines the IV-to-mediator link.	Examines the IV-to-mediator link.	Examines the mediator-to-DV link and its interaction with identification strength	Examines the mediator-to-DV link and its interaction with identification strength

[1] see Web Appendix A for any exclusion criteria applied

OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

We present eleven studies—six in the main manuscript and five in the Web Appendix—that collectively support our framework regarding the impact of personalized content on the intent to discuss the broader entertainment domain. First, we test our foundational assumption that strong and weak identifiers differ in their considerations of enjoyment versus confidence after using personalized content in a Pilot Study. Subsequently, we investigate how consuming personalized content in a particular domain impacts the intent to discuss that domain. We compare discussion intentions after participants have engaged with either personalized content (i.e., content that evokes high perceptions of personalization) or other types of content (i.e., content that evokes low perceptions). As a manipulation check, we collect participants' perceptions of content personalization. Additionally, as a secondary check of our manipulation, we collect participants' ratings of satisfaction with the content to verify that personalized content aligns more closely with their tastes than other types of content. Detailed analyses of satisfaction ratings are reported in Web Appendix A (Supplementary Analyses).

Studies 1 and 2 test our hypotheses regarding how the use of personalized content and self-domain identification strength interact to shape conversations (the independent variable → dependent variable link). These hypotheses are examined in an ecologically valid context, using a real personalized playlist from Spotify, one of the largest music streaming platforms in the world. In addition, Study 1 uses a yoked matched-pairs design to control for specific content while manipulating whether the content is perceived as personalized or not. We then explore the underlying process. Study 3 sheds light on the role of domain knowledge confidence as a mediating mechanism. Studies 4 and 5 further explore the underlying process, using an

experimental-causal-chain design approach (Spencer, Zanna, and Fong 2005). Study 4 shows that the use of personalized (vs. control) content increases enjoyment but decreases knowledge confidence (the independent variable → mediator link). Study 5 (including sub-studies 5A and 5B) manipulates domain enjoyment and knowledge confidence separately and documents how each influences the discussion intent (the mediator → dependent variable links and their interaction with identification strength).

Across all studies, we aim for at least 100 participants per manipulated condition to provide sufficient power to detect small-sized effects. Our sample sizes are larger than those reported in comparable research (Grewal et al. 2019; Chen and Berger 2014). Participants who failed the pre-registered attention checks in the survey (e.g., "It's important that you pay attention to this study. Please select the point in the middle (four)) were excluded. Detailed information on data collection, including specific attention-check questions, is provided in Web Appendix A.

PILOT STUDY: STRONG AND WEAK IDENTIFIERS DIFFER IN THEIR FOCUS

Our conceptual model rests on the assumption that strong and weak identifiers differ in their focus after consuming personalized content. Specifically, the use of personalized content may lead to changes in both enjoyment within a domain and confidence in domain knowledge. We propose that strong and weak identifiers process these factors differently. Weak identifiers are likely to focus more deeply on the level of their enjoyment rather than the level of confidence in their knowledge, whereas strong identifiers are likely to focus on confidence over enjoyment. To test this, we asked participants from Connect (N = 194; M_{age} = 38.96; 50.0% female; Pre-registration: https://aspredicted.org/79rh-3phr.pdf) to write about when they received

personalized recommendations on movie streaming platforms. Aftewards, participants completed a four-item scale that measured which of two factors, if any, stood out most to them after using personalized recommendations: the enjoyment of watching movies (-3), their confidence in movie knowledge (+3), or neither/both equally (0). Participants then rated the strength of their identification with the movie domain (e.g., "Being passionate about watching movies makes my life feel meaningful."; see Web Appendix for the full scale). As expected, stronger (vs. weaker) identification predicted a significantly greater tendency to prioritize confidence in movie knowledge over enjoyment of watching movies (B = 0.29, SE = 0.08, $p < .001$), supporting our assumption that strong and weak identifiers differ in their considerations after personalized content consumption. In the next study, we explore how these differences influence the intentions to discuss domain-related topics.

STUDY 1: SPOTIFY PLAYLIST AND MUSIC-RELATED DISCUSSIONS

Our conceptual model suggests that consumption experiences involving personalized content (vs. other types of content) will increase the subsequent discussion of domain-related topics among weak identifiers but decrease it among strong identifiers (H1). Participants were exposed to either personalized content (that evoked high perceptions of personalization) or control content (that evoked low perceptions of personalization), and subsequently indicated their intent to discuss domain-related topics. Importantly, our manipulation used real personalized playlists from Spotify, one of the largest music streaming platforms in the world. Every week, Spotify provides users with a new Discover Weekly playlist, described as "Your weekly mixtape of fresh music." It is a personalized curation of new songs based on the user's

listening history. Listeners can explore new songs by listening to their own Discover Weekly playlist, or even explore Discover Weekly playlists created for other listeners (e.g., by "following" Discover Weekly playlists of their friends or other listeners).

Our experimental design mirrored this real-world scenario. Participants in this yoked design experiment listened to songs from either their own Discover Weekly playlist (personalized content) or another matched participant's playlist (control content). Afterwards, they reported their intent to discuss music-related topics. We predicted that, for weak identifiers, personalized (vs. control) content would increase discussion intent (H1a). Conversely, for strong identifiers, personalized (vs. control) content was expected to decrease such intent (H1b).

Method

The study used a 2 (content type: Personalized or Control) × Continuous (strength of identification) design. Following the pre-registered procedure[2], we recruited active users of Spotify (i.e., those who use the service at least once a week) aged between 18 and 45 years[3] through Prolific and obtained two hundred and thirty six participants. After performing the pre-registered data cleaning, two hundred and thirty four participants (M_{age} = 29.95; 63.0% female) were retained for analysis (see Web Appendix A for details).

Participants listened to songs from either their own Discover Weekly playlist (Personalized condition) or another participant's Discover Weekly playlist (Control condition). Importantly, we controlled for specific items consumed using a yoked design: each participant in

[2] Pre-registration can be found at: https://aspredicted.org/P1Q_9DR. Any changes in variable naming conventions or deviations from the planned analysis are detailed in Web Appendix A.

[3] The age restriction was placed to enable cost-effective recruitment of active Spotify users, given that the majority of Spotify's users were under the age of 45 (Priori Data 2025).

the Control condition was yoked with another participant in the Personalized condition and received the playlist curated for the corresponding yoked participant (i.e., the playlist that was tailored to the yoked other). This allowed us to rule out potential differences arising from differences in specific songs.

To execute the yoked design, we ran the study in two parts. In Part 1 survey (titled "Studies on media consumption, Part 1"), participants submitted Discover Weekly playlists from their Spotify account and indicated their music preferences. We then randomly assigned participants to one of the two between-subject conditions, Personalized or Control condition. The next day, participants were invited to a Part 2 survey (titled "Studies on media consumption, Part 2"). Participants listened to a playlist personalized for the self (Personalized condition) or the yoked other (Control condition) and indicated their willingness to discuss music-related topics. Participants were not made aware that they were yoked to another participant or that they were assigned to either one of the two conditions. We describe each part in detail below (See Web Appendix A for more information about the study procedure).

Part 1. In Part 1, we collected participants' music identification strength ratings using items adapted from White and Dahl (2007; see Web Appendix A). We also obtained measures of participants' baseline music preferences (see Web Appendix A). Participants also submitted a Discover Weekly playlist from their Spotify accounts. We then yoked participants, matching them based on similarities in music preferences, such that participants in the Personalized condition would receive songs selected for a participant in the Control condition who had the most similar music taste to the self. This approach ensured that both conditions provided songs of at least moderately high quality (see Web Appendix A for details). Within each dyad, one participant was randomly assigned to the personalized condition, and the other participant was

assigned to the Control condition. Despite the similarity in music tastes, perceptions of personalization should be higher in the Personalized condition where the music is specifically tailored for the individual. This difference was confirmed using a manipulation check.

Part 2. Participants were invited back for Part 2 of the study and were told that they would be listening to a series of music clips to simulate the experience of new music in everyday music consumption. In the Personalized condition, participants were informed that they would be listening to a playlist curated specifically for themselves (see Web Appendix A for instructions) and listened to eight 40-second clips from their own Discover Weekly playlist. In the Control condition, participants were informed that they would be listening to a playlist created for another participant (see Web Appendix A for instructions) and listened to songs chosen for the participant they were yoked with.

During the listening task, participants indicated whether they were familiar with each song (Yes or No) and their evaluation of each song on a 9-point scale (1 = Dislike extremely, 5 = Neither like nor dislike, 9 = Like extremely). The music clips were generally new to participants (number of familiar clips: $M = 2.22$ out of 8 clips, SD = 2.15).[4]

After the music listening task and a filler task, in a purportedly unrelated study, participants indicated their willingness to discuss items related to the music domain and items unrelated to the music domain. We assessed these discussion intentions in three contexts and averaged these scores to form our measure of intent to discuss music-related items (which was our main dependent variable—DV) and music-unrelated items. Specifically, as DV1, participants imagined being invited to an exclusive party and indicated the extent to which they would enjoy

[4] The Personalized condition featured more familiar clips ($M = 2.67$, SD = 2.23) than the Control condition ($M = 1.78$, SD = 1.98; $t(116) = 4.61$, $p < .001$). We found similar results even after controlling for the number of familiar songs.

talking about different types of items at the party (1 = Not enjoyable at all, 9 = Extremely enjoyable). They provided ratings for four items; two were music-related (e.g., music albums you have listened), and the other two were music-unrelated (e.g., paintings you have seen). As DV2, participants imagined having a conversation with close people (i.e., friends, colleagues, or neighbors) and indicated how much they would enjoy talking about different items with them (1 = Not enjoyable at all, 9 = Extremely enjoyable). They provided ratings for ten items: among them, three were music-related (e.g., a music mixtape you listened to), and seven were music-unrelated (e.g., a beer you purchased). As DV3, participants indicated their intention to share their reactions to three pairs of items: one in the pair was a music-related item (e.g., "a video you watched about a genre of music"; 1 = Not likely at all, 9 = Extremely likely), and the other was a music-unrelated item (e.g., "a video you watched about a genre of movie"; 1 = Not likely at all, 9 = Extremely likely). To form a measure of the intent to discuss music, we first computed the average discussion intent scores for the music-related items within each dependent variable. These three scores were then averaged to form a composite measure of music discussion (α = 0.84)[5]. Separate analyses for each dependent variable, examining both music-related and music-unrelated discussion intents, are included in Web Appendix A.

Lastly, participants completed the manipulation check, indicating the extent to which the playlist they listened to in the study was perceived as personalized to them ("It felt like the songs were uniquely chosen for me," "It felt like the songs were curated based on my personal music taste"; 1 = Not at all, 9 = Very much).

Results

[5] We thank the review team for this valuable suggestion.

Manipulation check. To check if our manipulation altered the perceived level of personalization in the consumed content as intended, we ran a linear mixed regression on content personalization perception as a function of content type (Personalized = 1, Control = 0), identification strength (standardized scores[6]), and their interaction, entering dyads as a random effect to account for the paired nature of the data. Results revealed a significantly positive coefficient for content type (B = 2.31, SE = 0.28, $p < .001$), indicating that the Personalized condition led to a significantly higher perception of receiving personalized content ($M = 5.93$, SE = 0.18) than the Control condition ($M = 3.56$, SE = 0.22) as intended. This effect was robust across both levels of identification strength (a nonsignificant content type × identification strength interaction). This confirms a successful manipulation of personalization perception.

As a secondary manipulation check, we examined whether the conditions differed in participants' satisfaction with the content, as measured by the average evaluation scores across all songs. The Personalized condition resulted in significantly higher evaluation scores compared to the Control condition, confirming that the Personalized (vs. Control) condition featured music that aligned more closely with participants' tastes (see Web Appendix A for details).

Intent to discuss music-related items. We conducted a linear mixed regression on the intent to discuss music-related items with others as a function of content type (Personalized = 1, Control = 0), identification strength (standardized), and their interaction, entering dyads as a random effect. Consistent with H1, we found a significantly negative coefficient for the interaction (B = -0.58, SE = 0.18, $p = .001$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$). To identify the range of identification strength scores for which the effect of content type was significant ($p < .05$), we conducted a

[6] Identification strength was standardized in the analyses for all studies. The figures are reported using the original scale for ease of interpretation.

floodlight analysis using the Johnson-Neyman technique (Spiller et al. 2013). As expected, the Personalized (vs. Control) condition significantly decreased the intent to discuss music-related items for values of identification strength above 5.45 (B_{JN} = -0.46, SE = 0.23). This result supports H1a. This effect was reversed among weak identifiers: the Personalized (vs. Control) condition significantly increased the willingness to discuss music-related items for values of identification strength below 3.51 (B_{JN} = 0.42, SE = 0.21). This finding supports H1b.

We also examined the simple slopes at each level of content type. In the Control condition, discussion intentions increased as identification strength increased (B = 1.20, SE = 0.13, $p < .01$). This aligns with previous research that has linked stronger self-identification with a domain to a greater tendency to discuss domain-related topics (Chung and Darke 2006; Oyserman 2009; Reed et al. 2012). Importantly, in the Personalized condition, such increase in discussion intentions as a function of music identification strength was not as strong, with a slope flatter than that of the Control condition (B = 0.62, SE = 0.12, $p < .01$). That is, while strong (vs. weaker) self-domain identification typically promotes discussion of domain-related items (Chung and Darke 2006; Oyserman 2009; Reed et al. 2012), the use of personalized content appears to weaken this connection.

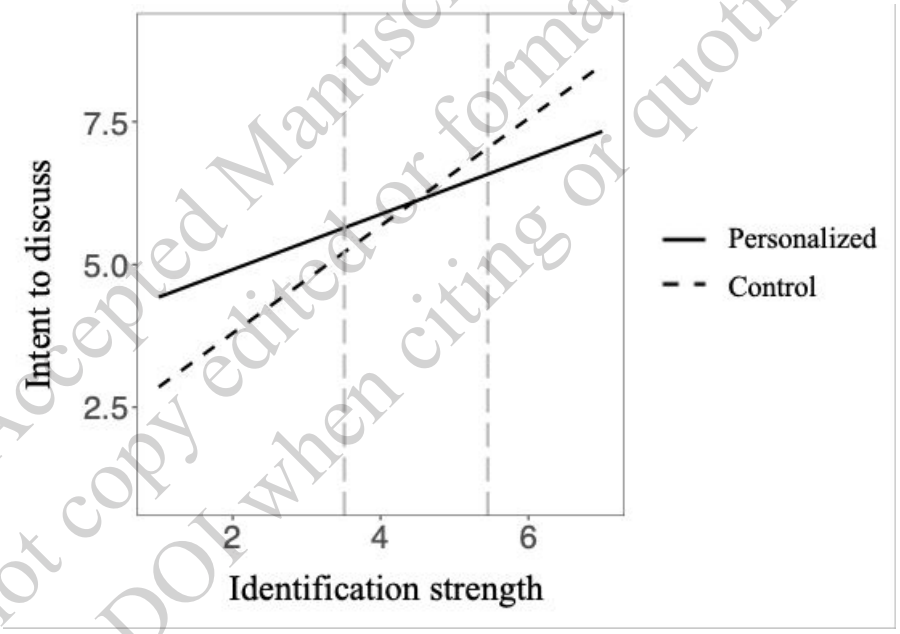
Discussion

This study provides evidence for the hypothesized interaction between content type and identification strength. We tested our prediction in an ecologically valid context, using real personalized playlists from Spotify, while controlling for the specific songs presented. We found evidence supporting our hypothesis that identification strength moderates the influence of

personalized (vs. control) content on the intent to discuss the domain in which personalized content was received. Specifically, listening to songs from the personalized (vs. control) playlist increased weak identifiers' intent to discuss music-related items, such as a music album they listened to, but decreased strong identifiers' intent.

FIGURE 2

INTENT TO DISCUSS MUSIC-RELATED ITEMS AS A FUNCTION OF CONTENT TYPE AND IDENTIFICATION STRENGTH



NOTE.– This figure shows predicted lines based on model estimates. Gray long dashed lines are fixed at Johnson–Neyman points (significant differences below 3.51 and above 5.45). The Personalized (vs. Control) condition produced a significantly lower discussion intent for values of identification strength greater than 5.45 and a significantly higher discussion intent for values of identification strength less than 3.51.

Additionally, follow-up analyses showed that these effects on discussion intent emerged only for music-related items but not for music-unrelated items (see Web Appendix A). This

suggests that the effect of content type on discussion intent is domain-specific and is unlikely to be driven by generalized affect processes or generalized self-efficacy processes.

One might question whether the observed difference in discussion intent is driven by the personalized condition as we proposed, or by other factors associated with the control condition. Specifically, the songs featured in the control condition (i.e., another participant's Discover Weekly playlist) were unrelated to the self in any way, which may have influenced participants' discussion intent. To address this, in the next study, we aim to replicate the effect with a new operationalization of the control condition, where the content participants receive is also somewhat related to the self. This will help clarify the source of the effect.

STUDY 2: SPOTIFY PLAYLIST AND SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING

Study 2 tests the robustness of the findings (H1) from the previous experiment by implementing three key adjustments to the experimental design. The first adjustment involves modifying the control condition to reflect a different realistic scenario that still leads to a low level of perceived personalization. Specifically, participants in the control condition were informed that they would listen to—and actually listened to—songs popular within their own demographic group (e.g., males aged 18-29), rather than songs selected for another participant. Although these playlists were tailored to the participant's demographic group, making them somewhat related to the self, they would not generate high perceptions of personalization because they were not tailored specifically to the individual's tastes. In contrast, the personalized condition featured participants' own Discover Weekly playlists, as in Study 1, which would generate high perceptions of personalization.

Second, we tested the moderating role of music identification strength using a more easily observable proxy, namely music listening frequency. The two variables were confirmed to be highly correlated with one another in a separate pre-test (see Study C2 in Web Appendix C).

Third, we tested the proposed effects using a different operationalization of the willingness to discuss the music domain. Specifically, we obtained participants' intention to post about their favorite musician on their social media account.

Method

The study had a 2 (content type: Personalized or Control) × 2 (measured music listening frequency: more-frequent or less-frequent) design. We recruited active Spotify users of ages 18 to 44 from the Cloudresearch panel of MTurk and obtained two hundred and twenty nine participants. After removing two participants who failed the attention checks, two hundred and twenty seven participants (M_{age} = 28.96; 52.9% female) were retained for analysis (see Web Appendix A for details).

The study was conducted using three surveys: a screener survey, Part 1 survey, and Part 2 survey. In the screener survey, we recruited participants who reported using Spotify and assessed how often they used the music streaming service. Because the scale was coarse (containing only three levels: Once a week, once a day, or several times a day), we coded those who used the music service several times a day as more-frequent listeners (63%) and those who used the music service less than several times a day as less-frequent listeners (37%). The rest of the procedure was similar to Study 1. Participants submitted their Discover Weekly playlists in the Part 1 survey and were invited to complete the Part 2 survey.

In the Part 2, participants were presented with the same cover story as in the previous experiment—that the researchers were studying happiness from exploring new music in daily life and that they would listen to a series of music clips to simulate the experience of new music in everyday music consumption. Participants in the Personalized condition were informed that they would be listening to a playlist exclusively curated for them and subsequently listened to eight songs selected based on their music listening history (Discover Weekly playlist on one's own Spotify account)—the same manipulation used in Study 1. Participants in the Control condition were informed that they would be listening to a playlist containing songs popular among Spotify users who shared the focal user's self-reported gender and age bucket (i.e., males aged 18-29, males aged 30-44, females aged 18-29, or females aged 30-44). They then listened to eight songs that were popular among Spotify listeners in their gender and age bucket at the time the survey was administered (see Web Appendix A for more information).

During the listening task, as in Study 1, participants indicated familiarity with each clip (Yes or No) and their evaluation of each song (1 = Dislike extremely, 5 = Neither like nor dislike, 9 = Like extremely). The music clips were generally new to participants (the average number of familiar clips was 1.96 out of 8 clips in aggregate and did not vary across conditions).

After the listening task and a filler task, participants responded to the main dependent variable by indicating how likely they would be to share news about their favorite music artist on social media (1 = Not at all, 9 = Very much). Participants also completed two additional exploratory measures about their desire to make choices in related domains (details on these measures are available in Web Appendix A). Lastly, as in Study 1, participants completed the manipulation check, indicating the extent to which the playlist they listened to in the study was perceived as personalized for them.

Results

Manipulation check. To check whether our manipulation altered perceptions of personalization in the consumed content as intended, we ran a 2 (content type) × 2 (music listening frequency) ANOVA on satisfaction. Results revealed that the Personalized condition produced greater perceptions of receiving personalized content relative to the Control condition ($M_{\text{Personalized}}$ = 6.80 versus M_{Control} = 3.40; $F(1, 223) = 71.52$, $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = .24$), confirming a successful manipulation. The main effect of listening frequency ($F(1, 223) = 3.80$, $p = .052$; $\eta_p^2 = .02$) and the two-way interaction ($F(1, 223) = 3.05$, $p = .082$; $\eta_p^2 = .01$) were not significant.

As a secondary manipulation check, we also examined participants' satisfaction with consumed content. The Personalized (vs. Control) condition led to significantly higher satisfaction, confirming that the Personalized (vs. Control) condition featured music that aligned more closely with participants' tastes (see Web Appendix A for details).

Intent to post music-related content. A 2 × 2 ANOVA on the intention to post about one's favorite musician on social media revealed a main effect of music listening frequency ($M_{\text{more-frequent}}$ = 5.54 versus $M_{\text{less-frequent}}$ = 4.94; $F(1, 223) = 6.89$, $p = .009$; $\eta_p^2 = .03$), indicating that those who listen to music more frequently (i.e., those who strongly identify with music) have a higher baseline posting intent compared to those who listen to music less frequently (i.e., those who weakly identify with music). There was no main effect of content type ($F(1, 223) = 0.70$, $p = .404$; $\eta_p^2 < .01$). Importantly, as expected, we found a significant interaction between content type and music listening frequency ($F(1, 223) = 3.90$, $p = .049$; $\eta_p^2 = .02$). Among more-frequent music listeners, the use of personalized (vs. control) content decreased the intention to post about

one's favorite musician on social media ($M_{Personalized}$ = 5.09 versus $M_{Control}$ = 5.99; $t(223) = 2.16$, $p = .032$). This finding supports H1a. There was no significant impact of the Personalized (vs. Control) content on the posting intent among less-frequent listeners ($M_{Personalized}$ = 5.16 versus $M_{Control}$ = 4.71; $t(223) = 0.84$, $p = .404$). This result fails to support H1b, although the means were in line with our prediction.

Comparing the means the other way, posting intentions increased with higher levels of listening frequency in the Control condition ($M_{less\text{-}frequent}$ = 4.71 versus $M_{more\text{-}frequent}$ = 5.99; $t(223) = 2.62$, $p = .009$). This aligns with previous research that has linked stronger self-identification with a domain to a greater tendency to discuss domain-related topics (Chung and Darke 2006; Oyserman 2009; Reed et al. 2012). This effect did not arise in the Personalized condition ($M_{less\text{-}frequent}$ = 5.16 versus $M_{more\text{-}frequent}$ = 5.09; $t(223) = 0.16$, $p = .874$). This finding suggests that the use of personalized content weakens the connection between identification strength and domain discussion intent.

Discussion

We tested the hypothesized interaction effect (H1) by introducing a new control condition, where the content was somewhat related to the self—specifically, songs selected based on the participant's demographic group. Our findings support the hypothesized moderating role of self-domain identification strength in shaping the effect of personalized content use on the intent to discuss domain-related topics. Replicating Study 1, the use of personalized (vs. control) content significantly decreased the intent to discuss the overall domain among strong identifiers,

aligning with our hypothesis. However, unlike in Study 1, weak identifiers did not show a significant increase in discussion intent, though the means trended in the predicted direction.

One possible explanation for these inconsistencies is that strong and weak identifiers weigh lower confidence and higher domain enjoyment differently. The hypothesized negative effect among strong identifiers was observed in both Studies 1 and 2, suggesting that these individuals prioritize their confidence over enjoyment. In contrast, the hypothesized positive effect among weak identifiers was less consistent, indicating that they may assess their confidence and enjoyment more evenly. While domain enjoyment can sometimes override the negative impact of low confidence (as seen in Study 1), in other cases, these opposing forces may counterbalance each other, resulting in a null effect (as observed in this study). Studies 5A and 5B further investigate these differential weighting processes.

Overall, Studies 1 and 2 collectively support the idea that the effect of personalized content use on individuals' intent to discuss domain-related topics depends on the strength of their identification with the domain (H1). In Study S1 (detailed in Web Appendix B), we establish the robustness of the hypothesized interaction effect (H1) by manipulating content type through a different approach. We created high personalization perceptions in one condition by providing both personalized music and a message stating that the music was tailored specifically for the user (as in previous studies, Personalized Content). In contrast, we reduced personalization perceptions in two other conditions by either removing the message indicating personalization (Personalization Message Removal) or reducing the degree of music personalization (Music Personalization Reduction), but not both. As expected, the Personalized Content condition (vs. the two other conditions) significantly increased discussion intent among weak identifiers and significantly decreased it among strong identifiers.

STUDY 3: SHORT-FORM VIDEOS AND VIDEO-RELATED DISCUSSIONS

In Study 3, we pursued three main goals. First, we sought to shed light on the underlying psychological process (H2), particularly on participants' confidence in their domain knowledge. Our conceptual framework suggests that the use of personalized content reduces confidence in domain knowledge, which in turn negatively impacts the intent to discuss domain-related topics especially among strong identifiers. If this is true, the use of personalized content (vs. other types of content) should lead to a reduction in knowledge confidence. To investigate this, we measured participants' confidence in their knowledge.

Second, we sought to replicate the effect on the intent to discuss domain-related topics. To investigate this, we included a measure of this intent. Importantly, we also aimed to determine whether any differences in discussion intent are driven by the Personalized Content condition or by the Control Content condition. To achieve this, we included an additional control group where participants did not consume any content (No Content condition). If the differences are indeed driven by the Personalized Content condition, this condition should lead to a lower discussion intent among strong identifiers and a higher intent among weak identifiers, compared to the Control Content and No Content conditions.

Third, we tested whether our findings could be replicated beyond the music domain by exploring the domain of short-form videos—brief video clips typically lasting under 30 seconds. These videos are an increasingly popular form of entertainment on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. We examined our conceptualization within this rapidly growing domain.

Method

The study used a 3 (content type: Personalized Content, Control Content, or No Content) × Continuous (strength of identification) design. Following the pre-registered procedure[7], we requested a U.S.-census matched sample through Connect and obtained three hundred and forty eight participants. After performing the pre-registered data cleaning, three hundred and twenty four participants (M_{age} = 45.40; 52% female) were retained for analysis (see Web Appendix A).

Participants were informed that the study aimed to explore people's interest in video consumption. In the Personalized Content condition, participants began by watching eight 10-second video clips and selecting the three they enjoyed the most. After indicating their video preferences, they were shown six 30-second video clips. These clips were chosen based on their indicated preferences. During this phase, videos were auto-played without requiring any feedback such as "like" or "dislike," mimicking real-world short-form video experiences. After all videos were played, participants indicated their satisfaction with those videos (e.g., "Overall, how satisfied were you with the selection of videos you've watched?"; 1 = not satisfied at all, 9 = extremely satisfied). In the Control Content condition, participants also began by indicating their video preferences through the same set of eight 10-second video clips. They were then shown six 30-second video clips. However, unlike the Personalized Content condition, these clips were identical for all individuals, regardless of their indicated preferences. As in the Personalized Content condition, these videos were auto-played without requiring any feedback, and

[7] Pre-registration can be found at: https://aspredicted.org/dcxb-5252.pdf. While the preregistration specified the experimental design and planned analyses, it did not specify the exact measures for each variable. Any discrepancies in the variable naming conventions are explained in Web Appendix A.

participants indicated their satisfaction with those videos afterward. In the No Content condition, participants neither indicated their video preferences nor received any video clips.

Afterwards, participants completed a scale measuring their confidence in their knowledge of video clips. This scale assessed their perceived understanding of enjoyable video clips on the internet and their ability to find enjoyable video clips (e.g., "I feel knowledgeable about the vast selection of new video clips available on the internet", "I am skilled at selecting new video clips that are enjoyable to watch among the many available on the internet."; $\alpha = 0.93$). Participants then completed an exploratory measure regarding their decision to browse videos online (see Web Appendix A for the measure and the results).

Next, participants indicated their intent to have conversations about domain-related topics. This intent was measured by having them rate the value of discussing the video domain for impression management purposes. Specifically, participants indicated how much they would value the act of discussing videos they found online with their friends (e.g., "I feel that talking with my friends about video clips I find online will create a positive impression of me", "I feel that having conversations about video clips I find online will positively influence my friends' view of me."; $\alpha = 0.83$).

Additionally, participants reported the extent to which they identified with the video domain (e.g., "Watching entertaining video clips on the internet makes life feel meaningful", "Being passionate about watching entertaining video clips on the internet makes life feel satisfying."; $\alpha = 0.81$). As a manipulation check, participants rated the extent to which the video clips they watched felt personalized for them ("Based on your experience in this survey, please answer the following questions"; 1 = Definitely false, 5 = Neither true nor false, 5 = Definitely true; e.g., "Earlier in the survey, I used a video aggregation service that compiled a set of video

clips specifically for me based on my personal preferences"; $\alpha = 0.98$). Finally, they answered demographic questions.

Results

Manipulation check. To check whether our manipulation was successful, we ran an ANOVA on content personalization perception, entering content type condition (categorical) as an independent variable. Results revealed a significant main effect of condition ($F(2, 321) = 241.67$, $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.60$). The Personalized Content condition produced a significantly higher personalization perception ($M = 4.75$, SE = 0.06), compared to the Control Content condition ($M = 3.15$, SE = 0.14; $t(321) = 10.97$, $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.27$) and the No Content condition ($M = 1.55$, SE = 0.10; $t(321) = 21.99$, $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.60$). Additionally, a regression involving the conditions × identification strength interaction indicated that the effects of content type on personalization perceptions were robust across both levels of identification strength (nonsignificant coefficients for the first dummy variable × identification strength interaction and for the second dummy variable × identification strength interaction). This confirms that our manipulation was successful.

As a secondary manipulation check, we also examined whether the Personalized Content and Control Content conditions differed in participants' satisfaction with the videos they watched. The Personalized Content (vs. Control Content) condition led to a significantly higher satisfaction, confirming that the Personalized Content condition featured videos that aligned more closely with participants' tastes (see Web Appendix A for details).

Confidence in video knowledge. To test H2, we examined how our manipulation affected participants' confidence in domain knowledge. We ran the pre-registered ANOVA on confidence in video knowledge, entering condition as the predictor variable. Results revealed a significant main effect of content type ($F(2, 321) = 4.26$, $p = .015$). As predicted, the Personalized Content condition produced a significantly lower knowledge confidence ($M = 5.72$, SE = 0.17), compared to the Control Content condition ($M = 6.29$, SE = 0.16; $t(321) = 2.57$, $p = 0.011$; $\eta_p^2 = .02$) and the No Content condition ($M = 6.27$, SE = 0.14; $t(321) = 2.49$, $p = 0.013$; $\eta_p^2 = .02$). These findings provide support for H2a, particularly in relation to knowledge confidence. A regression including the content type × identification strength interaction revealed non-significant effects.

Conversational intent for video-related topics. To test H1, we ran a regression on the perceived value of discussing videos with friends, entering experimental conditions (two dummy variables to represent the three conditions), identification strength (standardized), and interactions between experimental conditions and identification strength as independent variables. Importantly, consistent with H1, we found a significantly positive coefficient for the interaction between identification strength and the first dummy variable (Personalized Content = 0, Control Content = 1; B = 0.50, SE = 0.19, $p = .009$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$) as well as a significantly positive coefficient for the interaction between identification strength and the second dummy variable (Personalized Content = 0, No Content = 1; B = 0.43, SE = 0.20, $p = 0.035$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$)[8]. To identify the range of identification strength scores for which the effect of content type was significant ($p < .05$), we conducted a floodlight analysis using the Johnson-Neyman technique.

[8] Unlike in Study 1, the interaction signs were positive because Personalized Content was coded as 0, and Control Content or No Content as 1. This coding reversal allowed the inclusion of two key terms in the regression model following Spiller et al. (2013)—one contrasting Personalized Content versus Control Content and another contrasting Personalized Content versus No Content.

First, we compared the Personalized Content condition with the Control Content condition. Consistent with H1, compared to the Control Content condition, the Personalized Content condition produced a significantly lower domain conversational intent for values of identification strength scores above 4.85 (B_{JN} = 0.65, SE = 0.33) and a significantly higher conversational intent for values of identification strength scores below 2.05 (B_{JN} = -0.52, SE = 0.26). These findings support H1a and H1b.

Second, we compared the Personalized Content condition with the No Content condition. Compared to the No Content condition, the Personalized Content condition produced a significantly lower conversational intent for values of identification strength scores above 4.58 (B_{JN} = 0.54, SE = 0.27), providing support for H1a. Conversational intent across the two conditions was not significantly different for values of identification strength scores below 4.58. Contrary to our expectations, the Personalized Content condition did not produce a significantly higher conversational intent than the No Content condition even at the lowest observed value of identification strength scores. This finding fails to support H1b.

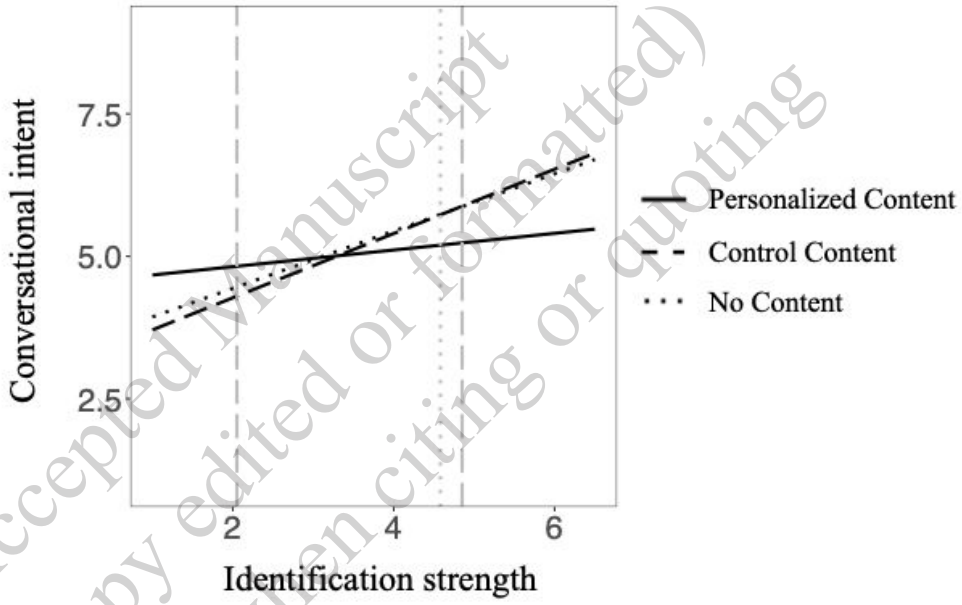
We also analyzed the simple slopes for each condition. Conversational intents increased as identification strength increased in the Control Content condition (simple slope = 0.67, SE = 0.13, $p < .01$) and the No Content condition (simple slope = 0.60, SE = 0.15, $p < .01$). This aligns with previous research that has linked stronger self-identification with a domain to a greater tendency to discuss domain-related topics (Chung and Darke 2006; Oyserman 2009; Reed et al. 2012). However, in the Personalized Content condition, such a linkage disappeared, with a non-significant slope (simple slope = 0.17, SE = 0.14, ns).

Overall, these findings provide support for our hypothesis (H1a) that personalized content (vs. control content or no content) can decrease strong identifiers' domain-related conversational

intent. We also found support for the idea that personalized content can increase weak identifiers' intent to discuss the video domain, although it was a less consistent effect.

FIGURE 3

CONVERSATIONAL INTENT FOR VIDEO-RELATED TOPICS AS A FUNCTION OF CONTENT TYPE AND IDENTIFICATION STRENGTH



NOTE.– This figure shows predicted lines based on model estimates. Gray dashed lines are fixed at Johnson–Neyman points contrasting Personalized Content and Control Content (significant differences below 2.05 and above 4.85). Gray dotted lines are fixed at Johnson–Neyman points contrasting Personalized Content and No Content (significant differences above 4.58).

Discussion

This study provides further support for the robustness of the hypothesized interaction (H1) between identification strength and personalized content in two key ways. First, by introducing a "No Content" control condition, we demonstrate that the Personalized Content

condition, rather than the Control Content condition, significantly influences discussion intentions. Second, we replicated our results in a new entertainment domain—short-form video clips—thereby enhancing the generalizability of our findings.

Additionally, this study provides insights into the underlying process (H2), highlighting the role of decreased confidence in domain knowledge regardless of identification strength. One may expect that personalized content decreases confidence for strong identifiers but increases confidence for weak identifiers by providing them with more experience in the domain than they are used to. However, our findings do not support this line of reasoning; instead, confidence decreased for both weak and strong identifiers. This finding was replicated in Studies S2A and S2B (Web Appendix B). Exposure to personalized content makes it salient to consumers that a vast library of content is being searched on their behalf; such salience likely leads consumers to question their ability to find content that they like and hence reduces their confidence.

One limitation of this study is that conversational intent was measured after assessing confidence. This sequencing may have led to a carryover effect, where measuring confidence could have influenced subsequent responses related to conversational intent. However, it is important to note that the interaction with identification strength was significant only for the conversational intent measure, not for the confidence measure. This suggests that while a carryover effect cannot be ruled out, it is unlikely to fully account for the observed interaction effect on conversational intent. Moreover, this effect was consistently replicated in Studies 1, 2, and S1, where discussion intent was measured first, without the measurement of confidence.

STUDY 4: EFFECT OF PERSONALIZED CONTENT CONSUMPTION ON DOMAIN ENJOYMENT AND CONFIDENCE IN DOMAIN KNOWLEDGE

Previous studies have provided evidence supporting our first hypothesis (H1) regarding the intent to discuss domain-related topics. These studies established the link between the independent variable (personalized content) and the dependent variable (domain discussion intent) and its interaction with identification strength. In the following studies (Studies 4 and 5), we probe the underlying mechanisms (H2) of this interaction more deeply.

We use an experimental causal-chain design to shed light on the underlying process (Spencer, Zanna, and Fong 2005). Study 4 explores whether personalized content consumption increases domain enjoyment while simultaneously decreasing domain knowledge confidence, (IV-to-mediator link). We then shed light on the mediator-to-DV link by manipulating each mediator separately in Study 5 (5A: enjoyment; 5B: confidence) and examining their individual effects on discussion intent. These studies should reveal how strong and weak identifiers differ in the factors they consider when forming their discussion intent.

Method

We manipulated the salience of personalized content experiences using a 2 (priming type: Personalized Content or Control) design. Following the pre-registered procedure[9], we requested a U.S.-census matched sample of individuals who used a music streaming service through Connect and obtained one hundred and ninety three participants. After performing the pre-

[9] Pre-registration can be found at: https://aspredicted.org/hh5x-9k4c.pdf. While the preregistration specified the experimental design and planned analyses, it did not specify the exact measures for each variable. Any discrepancies in the variable naming conventions are explained in Web Appendix A.

registered data cleaning procedure, one hundred eighty six participants (M_{age} = 45.39; 50% female) were retained for analysis (see Web Appendix A for details).

Upon joining survey, participants first indicated the name of a music streaming service they used. Following this, participants completed a writing task designed to manipulate their perception of how personalized the content they experienced on the service was. Specifically, participants in the Personalized (vs. Control) Content condition wrote about a time when the music service provided them with music recommendations that felt (vs. did not feel) personalized to them (see Web Appendix A for the specific prompt used). As a manipulation check, participants indicated the extent to which the content they experienced on the service felt personalized for them (see Web Appendix A for the scale and the results).

After the writing task, as a measure of domain enjoyment, participants indicated the extent to which they enjoyed listening to music in general (e.g., "It felt like I had a great deal of enjoyment from music listening"; see Web Appendix A for the full scale). Then, as a measure of confidence in domain knowledge, they completed a scale assessing their self-perceived ability to find enjoyable songs online (e.g., "How skilled do you feel you are at searching for and finding new music clips online without a music recommendation system?"; see Web Appendix A).

Next, participants rated the strength of their identification with the music domain using the same scale from Study 1. Finally, they answered demographic questions.

Results

Enjoyment of music. A regression on music enjoyment involving priming type (1 = Personalized, 0 = Control) revealed that the Personalized Content condition significantly

increased enjoyment with music listening (M = 7.78, SE = 0.12) compared to the Control condition (M = 6.68, SE = 0.22; B = 1.10, SE = 0.25, $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.09$). When the priming type × identification strength (standardized) interaction term was included in the model, the interaction term was not significant. This provides support for H2a.

Confidence in music knowledge. A regression on confidence in the ability to find enjoyable songs involving priming type (1 = Personalized, 0 = Control) revealed that the Personalized Content condition significantly decreased confidence (M = 6.52, SE = 0.20) compared to the Control condition (M = 7.13, SE = 0.17; B = -0.60, SE = 0.26, $p = .020$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$). When the priming type × identification strength (standardized) interaction term was included in the model, the interaction term was not significant. This provides support for H2a.

Discussion

We found evidence supporting the relationship between the independent variable and the mediators. Specifically, priming participants with experiences of personalized content increased their perceptions of enjoyment within the music domain but diminished their confidence in music knowledge. These effects emerged for both strong and weak identifiers.

In this study, the confidence measure asked participants to report their knowledge "without using the recommender system" to make it clear that they were rating their own ability to search for new content rather than the system's effectiveness in recommending new content. It is possible that the question's reference to the recommender system may have led participants to compare their knowledge to the system's and had an unintended effect. Specifically, the Personalized Content (vs. Control) condition may have caused participants to set a higher

benchmark for enjoyable content, thereby leading to lower ratings of their confidence. However, this possibility does not hold because a similar confidence drop occurred in Studies 3 and 2B, where the recommender system was not mentioned in the measure.

STUDY 5: ROLE OF DOMAIN ENJOYMENT AND CONFIDENCE IN DOMAIN KNOWLEDGE

In Studies 1 to 3, we found that the impact of personalized content use on the intent to discuss domain-related topics depends on self-domain identification (IV → DV link). Study 4 showed that personalized content elicits two psychological responses: high enjoyment and low confidence in knowledge (IV → mediator link). Our conceptual framework suggests that these two factors are weighed differently depending on the strength of an individual's identification with the domain when forming their domain discussion intent. In this study, we shed light on this mediator-to-DV link and its interaction with identification strength. We explore how strong and weak identifiers differ in how much they consider each of these factors when forming their intent to discuss domain-related topics.

Specifically, we propose that strong identifiers primarily consider their confidence in domain knowledge rather than their level of domain enjoyment. Strong identifiers are unlikely to focus on domain enjoyment, as even high levels of enjoyment do not necessarily lead them to view domain-related discussions as useful for conveying their specific identity. Therefore, the impact of domain enjoyment on their discussion intent is expected to be weak or non-significant, as tested in Study 5A. In contrast, these individuals would be mainly concerned with successfully conveying their identification with the domain, often through demonstrating superior knowledge

and skills. For them, experiencing low (versus high) levels of confidence in domain knowledge will lead them to avoid discussing the domain (to avoid being seen as lacking knowledge), negatively impacting their intent to discuss domain-related topics. This relationship is tested in Study 5B. Consequently, when both low confidence and high enjoyment are experienced simultaneously, the negative effect of low confidence will outweigh any positive effect of high enjoyment, resulting in an overall decrease in discussion intent. Consistent with this prediction, the Pilot Study revealed that strong identifiers focus relatively more on domain knowledge confidence than on domain enjoyment, compared to weak identifiers.

Conversely, weak identifiers may primarily consider enjoyment rather than confidence in knowledge when forming their discussion intent, or may weigh both equally as we suggested in the discussion of Study 2. These individuals aim to be perceived positively by others, such as being seen as likable or funny. For them, experiencing high levels of domain enjoyment can highlight the benefits of domain-related conversations for self-enhancement, positively impacting their intent to discuss domain-related topics (tested in Study 5A). In contrast, these individuals may not worry as much as strong identifiers about being seen as lacking knowledge, so the impact of domain confidence on their discussion intent is expected to be relatively weak (tested in Study 5B). When both low confidence and high enjoyment are experienced simultaneously, the positive impact of increased domain enjoyment is likely to outweigh the negative effect of low domain knowledge confidence, resulting in an overall increase in discussion intent (or, at best, no effect as seen in Study 2). The increased discussion intent prediction is consistent with the Pilot Study, which revealed that weak identifiers focus relatively more on their level of domain enjoyment than on their knowledge confidence, compared to strong identifiers.

Study 5A: Effect of Domain Enjoyment on Discussion Intent

We manipulated the level of enjoyment experienced in the music domain (high or low) and assessed willingness to discuss music-related topics. We predicted that higher (vs. lower) enjoyment would increase the intent to discuss music-related topics. Further, we predicted that the effect will be pronounced especially among weak identifiers than strong identifiers.

We used a 2 (priming type: High Enjoyment or Low Enjoyment) × Continuous (domain identification strength) design. Following the pre-registered procedure[10], we requested a U.S.-census matched sample of individuals who used a music streaming service through Connect and obtained two hundred participants. After performing the pre-registered data cleaning procedure, one hundred ninety two participants (M_{age} = 44.9; 48.4% female) were retained for analysis.

At the beginning of the survey, participants were first asked to indicate the name of a music streaming service they used. Following this, participants completed a writing task designed to manipulate the level of enjoyment they experienced from music listening. Specifically, participants in the High Enjoyment (Low Enjoyment) condition wrote about a time when they greatly enjoyed (did not enjoy) the music recommendations from the service (see Web Appendix A for the specific prompt used). A separate pre-test (N = 188; Study C3 in Web Appendix C) revealed that this manipulation successfully altered participants' perceptions of enjoyment from music listening.

After the writing task, participants provided their evaluations of the music service. They then indicated their willingness to discuss music-related topics with people around them, which

[10] Pre-registration can be found at: https://aspredicted.org/y7nm-4927.pdf. While the preregistration specified the experimental design and planned analyses, it did not specify the exact measures for each variable.

was our key dependent variable. Three questions assessed their likelihood of talking about music they had listened to ("At this moment, how likely are you to discuss music you've listened to with people around you?") and their likelihood of discussing music from their music service ("How likely are you to discuss the music recommendations you received from [music service] with those around you?", "How likely are you to talk about the music you've found on [music service] with people around you?"). These three items were averaged to create a single measure of the intent to discuss music-related topics ($\alpha = .92$). Aftewards, participants indicated the strength of their identification with the music domain using the same scale from Study 1. Finally, participants answered demographic questions.

Study 5A Results

Intent to discuss music-related topics. An ANOVA on music discussion intent revealed that the High Enjoyment condition significantly increased this intent compared to the Low Enjoyment condition ($M_{\text{High}} = 6.62$ versus $M_{\text{Low}} = 5.16$; $F(1, 190) = 15.15$, $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = .07$). To explore whether this effect was moderated by identification strength, we ran a regression on music discussion intent with priming type (1 = High Enjoyment, 0 = Low Enjoyment), identification strength (standardized), and their interaction. As expected, we found a significant interaction (B = -0.69, SE = 0.33, $p = .039$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$).

To identify the range of identification strength scores for which the effect of priming type was significant ($p < .05$), we conducted the Johnson-Neyman technique (see Web Appendix A for the figure). As predicted, the High Enjoyment (vs. Low Enjoyment) condition produced a significantly higher discussion intent for identification strength scores below 5.65 ($B_{JN} = 0.85$,

SE = 0.43). For identification strength scores above 5.65, there was no significant difference in discussion intent between the two conditions. These findings indicate that people with weak identification in the domain (in this case, music) are more influenced (than strong identifiers) by their enjoyment of the domain when deciding to engage in discussions. In contrast, those with strong domain identification are less likely to be swayed by their enjoyment level. These findings provide support for H2b and H2c.

Study 5B: Effect of Domain Knowledge Confidence on Discussion Intent

We manipulated the level of confidence in music knowledge (high or low) and assessed participants' willingness to discuss music-related topics. Based on the findings from the Pilot Study, we predicted that lower (vs. higher) confidence in music knowledge will lead to lower intent to discuss music-related topics. We also tested whether this effect was pronounced especially among those with strong (vs. weak) identification strength.

We used a 2 (priming type: High Confidence or Low Confidence) × Continuous (domain identification strength) design. Following the pre-registered procedure[11], we requested a U.S.-census matched sample of individuals who used a music streaming service through Connect and obtained one hundred and ninety seven participants. After performing the pre-registered data cleaning, one hundred ninety three participants (M_{age} = 45.6; 49.7% female) were retained.

Upon entering the survey, participants indicated the name of a music service they used, as in Study 5A. They then indicated their identification with the music domain using the same scale from Studies 1 and 5A. Participants then completed a writing task designed to manipulate the

[11] Pre-registration can be found at: https://aspredicted.org/brqr-c5yz.pdf. While the preregistration specified the experimental design and planned analyses, it did not specify the exact measures for each variable.

level of confidence in their knowledge in the music domain. Specifically, they wrote about when they felt (High Confidence) or didn't feel (Low Confidence) confident in their music knowledge (see Web Appendix A for the specific prompt used). After the writing task, as a manipulation check, participants indicated their confidence using a scale adapted from Study 4.

Afterward, participants indicated their willingness to discuss music-related topics with people around them, assessed using three items as in Study 5A (e.g., "At this moment, how likely are you to talk about the music you've listened to with people around you?"; see Web Appendix A for the items; α = .94). Finally, they answered demographic questions.

Study 5B Results

Intent to discuss music-related topics. An ANOVA on music discussion intent revealed that the Low Confidence condition significantly decreased intent compared to the High Confidence condition (M_{High} = 6.71 versus M_{Low} = 5.96 ; $F(1, 191) = 4.62$, $p = 0.033$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$). To explore if this effect was moderated by identification strength, we ran a regression on music discussion intent with priming type (1 = Low Confidence, 0 = High Confidence), identification strength (standardized), and their interaction. The interaction term was not significant (B = 0.05, SE = 0.29, $p = 0.867$; $\eta_p^2 < .01$).

Based on the findings from the Pilot Study, we originally predicted that the effect of confidence on discussion intent would be greater for strong identifiers; however the findings of Studies 5A and 5B taken together suggest that enjoyment is the key mechanism driving discussion intent. Enjoyment drives weak identifiers more than strong identifiers. Collectively, these studies provide support for H2b and H2c. Consistent with H2b, strong identifiers are more

influenced by low knowledge confidence than high enjoyment (due to them focusing less on enjoyment). Consistent with H2c, weak identifiers are more influenced by high enjoyment within the domain than low knowledge confidence (due to them focusing more on enjoyment).

Discussion

Overall, Studies 4, 5A, and 5B collectively shed light on the underlying processes, using an experimental causal-chain approach. Study 4 provides support for the IV-to-mediator link, showing that the use of personalized content leads to high domain enjoyment and low confidence in domain knowledge. Studies 5A and 5B provide support for the mediator-to-DV link, as well as its interaction with identification strength, showing that strong identifiers are likely to consider confidence but not enjoyment when forming their discussion intent, whereas weak identifiers consider both confidence and enjoyment.

Therefore, when both low confidence and high enjoyment are experienced simultaneously (due to the use of personalized content), strong identifiers' domain discussion intent will be influenced only by low confidence, leading to an overall decrease in their intent. As a result, the use of personalized content consistently decreased discussion intent (Studies 1, 2, and 3). In contrast, weak identifiers' intent will be influenced not just by low confidence but also by high enjoyment. The counteractive nature of these two forces may underlie the inconsistency in the significance of effects observed among these weak identifiers. Specifically, the impact of high enjoyment may offset or even outweigh the negative impact of low confidence, potentially leading to an overall increase in their domain discussion intent in some cases (observed in Studies 1 and 3) or null effect on intent in other cases (observed in Studies 2).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

One of the most significant changes in consumers' entertainment experiences over the past few decades is the emergence of personalized content, or content that feels highly tailored to match an individual's tastes. We examine how consuming personalized content (vs. other types of content or no content) influences consumers' intent to discuss the broader entertainment domain associated with the content—such as music, movies, or podcasts—beyond the specific content they consumed. We measured this intent in various ways, such as the intent to discuss music-related items (Study 1), the intent to post news about a favorite musician on social media (Study 2), the intent to have conversations about video-related topics (Study 3), the intent to discuss a song listened to outside the study setting (Study S1), or the intent to discuss the music listened to on a streaming platform (Studies 5A and 5B).

We find that the use of personalized content increases enjoyment within the domain (Study 4) but reduces confidence in domain knowledge (Studies 3 and 4). The influence of these two factors on domain discussion intent varies depending on the strength of an individual's identification with the domain. Strong identifiers tend to consider low confidence but not domain enjoyment when forming their discussion intent (Studies 5A and 5B), which may lead to an overall decrease in discussion intent (Studies 1, 2, and 3). In contrast, weak identifiers tend to consider both low confidence and domain enjoyment (Studies 5A and 5B). Therefore, for these individuals, the impact of high enjoyment may offset or even outweigh the negative impact of low confidence, potentially leading to an overall null effect on discussion intent in some cases (Study 2) and an overall positive effect on discussion intent in other cases (Studies 1 and 3).

Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications

This research makes several theoretical contributions. First, it broadens our understanding of consumer responses to personalization in entertainment. Unlike prior studies that focused on reactions to specific personalized content (Tam and Ho 2006; Holtz et al. 2020; Liang, Lai, and Ku 2006), we demonstrate how personalized content influences consumers' discussions about the broader domain associated with such content. Notably, our findings show that the effect of personalized content on domain-related discussions varies depending on consumers' identification with the domain: it may increase discussions among weak identifiers but may decrease discussions among strong identifiers.

Second, we advance the identity-based behavior literature by identifying a novel situational factor that shapes consumer engagement in domains they strongly identify with. Research has shown that contextual factors, such as engaging in activities that fulfill the need for identity signaling, can paradoxically reduce consumers' interest in other related activities within the same identity domain (Grewal et al. 2019). We introduce an additional factor that may diminish engagement in the identity domain: experiences that undermine confidence in one's knowledge of the identity domain. Specifically, for those who strongly identify with a particular entertainment domain, personalized content —a prevalent real-world stimulus—can decrease confidence in their domain knowledge and, consequently, reduce participation in discussions about the domain. Conversely, for those who weakly identify with the domain, personalized content can increase participation in domain-related discussions by enhancing their enjoyment of the domain.

This research offers practical insights for content creators and platforms seeking to enhance users' engagement in domain-related conversations. Our findings suggest that while personalization's overall impact on conversations may be neutral, this may result from two counteracting effects—an increase in conversations among weak identifiers and a decrease among strong identifiers. Therefore, as personalization becomes more widely adopted, companies should recognize user heterogeneity and take proactive steps to sustain engagement among strong identifiers. For example, musicians can help music enthusiasts restore confidence in their knowledge and thereby sustain their engagement by providing a taxonomy of key music attributes, a strategy shown to enhance knowledge development (West, Brown, and Hoch 1996). Additionally, recognizing and rewarding strong identifiers with symbolic acknowledgments, such as ambassador memberships, could help restore their confidence and sustain their engagement.

Future Directions

This research opens several avenues for future research. First, future studies could investigate the long-term effects of personalized content on engagement. One possibility is that the observed decline in conversational engagement among strong identifiers weakens their identification with the domain over time, consequently reducing their participation in other related activities that support the industry, such as concert attendance. This concern is particularly relevant given the significance of strong identifiers in the industry. For example, superfans—who constitute 15% of U.S. music listeners—spend over 80% more on music each month than the average listener (Luminate 2023). A decline in their engagement could negatively

impact the industry. Alternatively, the overall impact on the industry may not be negative. The decline in strong identifiers' engagement could be temporary, with their long-term behaviors remaining stable. Furthermore, if weak identifiers increase their engagement, their contributions could offset any losses from strong identifiers. Future research should examine the persistence of these effects over time and evaluate whether the overall impact is negative, neutral, or positive.

Second, future research can investigate the conditions under which low confidence in domain knowledge reduces the intent to discuss the domain. While we found that reduced confidence generally lowers discussion intent, this may not always be the case. For example, when reduced confidence leads to negative emotions, individuals may seek to restore their confidence by engaging more in domain-related discussions (Mandel et al. 2017). While personalized content may not have triggered aversive feelings due to the high level of enjoyment it generates, there could be situations where low confidence accompanies aversive feelings and thus increases domain-related discussions, such as when the gap between actual and ideal knowledge is highlighted (Packard and Wooten 2013).

Third, while our research focused on personalized content, it also highlights opportunities for future studies to explore other contextual factors that may shape users' ability, opportunity, and motivation to engage with the entertainment domain (McInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski 1991). For example, a lack of information about musicians on streaming platforms could limit consumers' ability and opportunity to learn about and connect with the domain. Articles in the popular press illustrate this possibility. In The New Yorker, Hsu (2024) describes how Spotify's user experience design can limit opportunities to learn about and connect with the domain: "For all the service's conveniences, one of my frustrations has always been the meagre amount of information displayed on each artist's page ... Except for a brief biographical sketch, sounds float

largely free of context or lineage. It's harder than it should be to locate a piece of music in its original setting. Instead of a connection to history, we're offered recommendations based on what other people listened to next. I've never heard so much music online as I have over the past few years yet felt so disconnected from its sources."

Fourth, future research could explore other post-consumption consequences of personalized content. Although prior studies primarily address consumers' immediate reactions (Tam and Ho 2006; Holtz et al. 2020; Liang, Lai, and Ku 2006), relatively little is known about how the use of personalized content affects behaviors following consumption. Our study begins to address this gap by examining engagement with the domain associated with the received content, but future work could investigate other downstream consequences, such as the likelihood of sharing specific content (Chen and Berger 2016), trust in unverified claims on the platform (Kim, Chung, and Johar 2025), or perceptions of the recommendation technology.

More broadly, our findings highlight the need for research on consumer responses to new technology (Faraji-Rad, Melumad, and Johar 2017; Puntoni et al. 2021; De Bellis, Johar, and Poletti 2023). In particular, the observed decline in discussion intent may reflect not only a decrease in confidence in domain knowledge but also a broader shift in how people view their roles in relation to technology, as suggested by Puntoni et al. (2021). For example, in this new landscape, tasks that require cognitive complexity, like browsing the content library or sharing recommendations, may increasingly be seen as better suited for technology, whereas simpler tasks like content consumption or evaluation might still be viewed as more fitting for humans. Future research could explore how humans redefine their roles relative to technologies.

DATA COLLECTION STATEMENT

The first author managed the collection and analysis of all data (Pilot Study using the Connect panel in the fall of 2024, Study 1 using the Prolific panel in the spring of 2022, Study 2 using the MTurk Cloudresearch panel in the fall of 2020, Study 3 using the Connect panel in the spring of 2024, Study 4 using the Connect panel in the fall of 2024, Study 5A using the Connect panel in the summer of 2024, Study 5B using the Connect panel in the fall of 2024), as described in Web Appendix. All data are currently stored in a project directory on the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/pcuxh/?view_only=7c55ccac79ed45309276335e902e72bf).

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3) Intent to post music-related content

2) Discussion

1) STUDY 3: SHORT-FORM VIDEOS AND VIDEO-RELATED DISCUSSIONS

2) Method

2) Results

3) Confidence in video knowledge

3) Conversational intent for video-related topics

2) Discussion

1) STUDY 4: EFFECT OF PERSONALIZED CONTENT CONSUMPTION ON DOMAIN ENJOYMENT AND CONFIDENCE IN DOMAIN KNOWLEDGE

2) Method

2) Results

3) Enjoyment of music

3) Confidence in music knowledge

2) Discussion

1) STUDY 5: ROLE OF DOMAIN ENJOYMENT AND CONFIDENCE IN DOMAIN KNOWLEDGE

2) Study 5A: Effect of Domain Enjoyment on Discussion Intent

2) Study 5A Results

3) Intent to discuss music-related topics

2) Study 5B: Effect of Domain Knowledge Confidence on Discussion Intent

2) Study 5B Results

3) Intent to discuss music-related topics

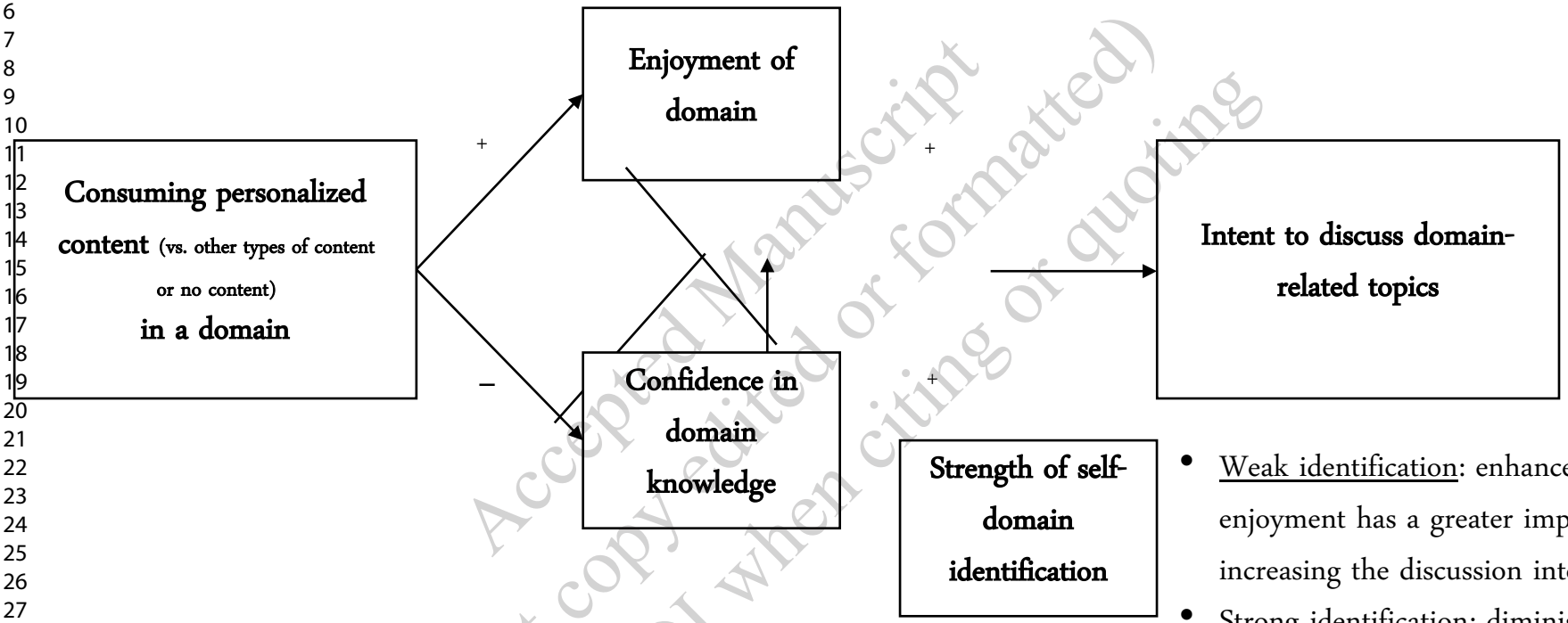
1) GENERAL DISCUSSION

2) Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications

2) Future Directions

1) DATA COLLECTION STATEMENT

1) REFERENCES



- Weak identification: enhanced enjoyment has a greater impact, increasing the discussion intent
- Strong identification: diminished confidence has a greater impact, decreasing the discussion intent