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The Role of Differentiation in Attitude Formation Through Mere  
Co-Occurrence for New Brands on Established Markets

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### **Abstract**

People tend to base their attitudes more strongly on features that distinguish objects, individuals, or brands from others than on features that are widely shared. This tendency has mainly been studied in situations where attitudes are based on specific features of an object. A similar pattern seems to occur in evaluative conditioning, where attitudes, for example toward a brand, are influenced by the mere co-occurrence with positive or negative stimuli that are not inherent attributes of the brand. Previous research on evaluative conditioning suggests that new brands benefit more from co-occurring with unique positive stimuli than from co-occurring with positive stimuli shared across multiple new brands. However, it remains unclear whether this advantage persists when new brands use the same positive stimuli as an established, positively perceived brand. The present study investigated whether new brands paired with distinct positive stimuli are evaluated more favorably than new brands paired with redundant positive stimuli that had previously co-occurred with an established brand. A  $2 \times 2$  mixed-design experiment ( $N = 51$ ) was conducted, with brand type (distinct vs. redundant) as a within-subject factor and brand order (distinct-first vs. redundant-first) as a between-subjects factor. Brand attitudes toward the new brands served as the dependent variable. Although new brands paired with unique positive images were evaluated slightly better than new brands paired with redundant positive images, the difference was not significant. The expected advantage of differentiation did not reliably emerge in the present setting. The implications for brand attitude formation and brand strategies are discussed.

*Keywords:* brand attitude, competitive market, differentiation principle, evaluative conditioning, new brand

Menschen neigen dazu, ihre Einstellungen stärker auf Merkmale zu stützen, die Objekte, Individuen oder Marken von anderen unterscheiden als auf Merkmale, die viele gemeinsam haben. Diese Tendenz wurde bislang vor allem untersucht, wenn Einstellungen auf konkreten Eigenschaften eines Objekts basieren. Ein ähnliches Muster scheint sich jedoch auch bei evaluativer Konditionierung zu zeigen. Bei dieser wird beispielsweise die Einstellung zu einer Marke durch das reine Ko-Auftreten mit positiven oder negativen Stimuli beeinflusst, ohne dass diese Stimuli inhärente Eigenschaften der Marke sind. Bisherige Forschung zur Evaluativen Konditionierung legt nahe, dass neue Marken stärker davon profitieren mit einzigartigen positiven Stimuli gepaart zu werden als mit positiven Stimuli, die mit mehreren neuen Marken auftreten. Unklar ist jedoch, ob dieser Vorteil bestehen bleibt, wenn neue Marken dieselben positive Stimuli verwenden wie eine etablierte, positiv wahrgenommene Marke. Die vorliegende Studie untersuchte, ob neue Marken, die mit distinkten positiven Stimuli gepaart werden, besser bewertet werden als neue Marken, die mit redundanten positiven Stimuli gepaart werden, die zuvor gemeinsam mit einer etablierten Marke aufgetreten sind. Hierzu wurde ein Experiment mit einem  $2 \times 2$  Mixed-Design ( $N = 51$ ) durchgeführt, wobei der Markentyp (distinkt vs. redundant) den Innersubjektfaktor und die Markenreihenfolge (distinkt zuerst vs. redundant zuerst) den Zwischensubjektfaktor bildete. Die Markenbewertung der neuen Marken diente als abhängige Variable. Obwohl neue Marken, die mit einzigartigen positiven Stimuli gepaart wurden, tendenziell etwas positiver bewertet wurden als neue Marken, die mit redundanten positiven Bildern gepaart wurden, war dieser Unterschied nicht signifikant. Der erwartete Vorteil von Differenzierung zeigte sich im vorliegenden Kontext nicht zuverlässig. Die Implikationen für die Einstellungsbildung gegenüber Marken sowie für Marken-Strategien werden diskutiert.

*Schlüsselwörter:* Markenbewertung, kompetitiver Markt, Differenzierungsprinzip, evaluative Konditionierung, neue Marken

## Introduction

In a competitive marketplace, brand perception can make or break a brand's legacy. Consider Apple, a company whose branding has turned it into a symbol of aspiration and loyalty, far beyond its functional product features (Neglur & Rajeswari, 2024). By contrast, Nokia, once a market leader, struggled to adapt during the smartphone revolution, highlighting how quickly negative perceptions can erode a brand's standing (Haba et al., 2017; Jia & Yin, 2015).

Studies indicate that a positive brand image helps companies establish themselves in the market. It is associated with a higher market value, superior financial performance and lower cost of capital (Smith et al., 2010). In addition, a positive brand image enhances greater customer loyalty (Tahir et al., 2024; Tu & Chang, 2014). The importance of a positive brand image even extends beyond customers. Companies with a positive brand image are also more attractive to potential employees (Padhi & Joshi, 2022). While these benefits are relevant for all companies, they are particularly important for new brands. They often operate with fewer resources, which makes building a positive brand image an important factor in establishing a market presence in competitive environments (Khan et al., 2024).

Given the benefits of a positive brand image, understanding how such perceptions are built becomes essential, especially for new brands. This requires a closer look at how people form attitudes in general. Typically, people form attitudes based on the attributes of an object such as a brand or a person. People tend to prefer attitude objects whose attributes they like or find useful and dislike those with negative attributes (e.g., Asch, 1946; Hogarth & Einhorn, 1992). However, not all attributes contribute equally to attitude formation. Some attributes weigh more heavily in influencing evaluations than others (Fiske, 1980; Hogarth & Einhorn, 1992). One key mechanism in this process is differentiation. Studies suggest, that attributes uniquely tied to a specific object have a stronger influence on attitudes than those shared with

multiple objects (Alves, 2018a; Fiske, 1980). In the context of branding, this would mean that attributes uniquely linked to a particular brand are more likely to shape consumer attitudes than attributes shared with multiple brands.

While differentiation has primarily been studied in the context of attribute-based attitude formation, attitudes are not always based on the evaluation of an object's attributes. Alves et al. (2020) extended the principle of differentiation to evaluative conditioning. A process where attitudes toward objects, people or brands are influenced through the mere co-occurrence with positive or negative stimuli (De Houwer, 2007). This concept is particularly relevant for attitude formation toward brands because it reflects a mechanism frequently used in advertising. For example, when a brand is repeatedly presented next to a famous actor, the positive associations with the celebrity can transfer to the brand itself (e.g., Sweldens et al., 2010). Alves et al. (2020) demonstrated that unknown brands paired with distinct positive or negative stimuli resulted in stronger evaluations than unknown brands paired with redundant stimuli. Consequently, unknown brands paired with distinct positive stimuli led to more favorable brand evaluations compared to those paired with positive stimuli shared by multiple brands. These findings indicate that differentiation enhanced attitude formation even when based purely on co-occurrence, highlighting its importance for positive brand images.

While these findings offer valuable insights into how differentiation influences attitudes toward unknown brands, they do not address how this principle operates when a well-established, positively perceived brand is already present in the market. For new brands facing such competition, a critical question arises: Should they co-occur with positive stimuli that are distinct from – or similar to – those of established brands?

The present study examines whether, in the specific context of evaluative conditioning, new brands should aim for distinct positive pairings or rather benefit from imitating the positive pairings of an established, positively perceived brand.



### **Attitude Formation and the Role of Differentiation**

People often form attitudes toward objects such as brands, products or individuals by evaluating their features (e.g., Asch, 1946; Hogarth & Einhorn, 1992). Some features are more influential than others. The principle of differentiation describes how people rely more strongly on features that uniquely characterize an object than those shared with others (Fiske, 1980). This idea builds on Tversky's (1977) feature model of mental representations. It proposes that people represent objects through sets of qualitative features that can be either present or absent. Some features are present simultaneously across many objects (i.e., redundant), while others are present in one object but absent in the other objects (i.e., distinct). Distinct features allow for differentiation and often define how an object stands out within its category. Impressions of people, for example, are more strongly influenced by unusual or rare behaviors than by those shared with many others (Alves, 2018a). Fiske (1980) argued that rare features are especially informative because they help distinguish an object from the broader population.

When several options are evaluated in the same context, this process becomes even stronger. People tend to focus on attributes that distinguish one option from another and disregard features that are shared among them, a phenomenon known as feature cancellation (Hodges, 1997; Houston & Sherman, 1995). For example, when consumers compare two new coffee brands that both advertise sustainable sourcing and high quality, they are likely to cancel out these shared attributes and base their preference on what sets one apart, such as an innovative brewing concept. Research shows that this cancellation process is also sensitive to temporal order. When a new option follows previously encountered ones, its unique features tend to gain weight in evaluations, whereas redundant features lose influence (Alves et al., 2018b; Houston & Sherman, 1995; Kardes & Sanbonmatsu, 1993).

In summary, attitude formation based on attributes is guided by differentiation. Yet, attitudes do not always rely on evaluations of an object's features.

### **Attitude Formation Through Evaluative Conditioning**

In many real-world branding contexts, brand logos or names, often unfamiliar or affectively neutral at first, are repeatedly presented together with positive stimuli in advertising, such as smiling faces, pleasant imagery or soothing music. These stimuli are often not directly related to the brand's actual features but can positively influence the perception of the brand (Swelden et al., 2010). This form of attitude formation is important for the present research because it shows how brand evaluations can arise even without information about a brand's own features.

This process, known as evaluative conditioning, describes how attitudes can form through the repeated pairing of a neutral stimulus (conditioned stimulus) in spatiotemporal proximity with a positive or negative stimulus (unconditioned stimulus). Through such pairings, the initially neutral object acquires the valence of the affective stimulus, resulting in a corresponding positive or negative evaluation (De Houwer, 2007; Hofmann et al., 2010; Moran et al., 2023). Crucially, no semantic or causal connection between the stimuli is required, mere co-occurrence is sufficient (e.g., Hofmann et al., 2010). Therefore, it is considered a distinct form of attitude formation, as the co-occurring stimuli are not intrinsic attributes of the attitude object but separable elements that do not need to be related to it in any way and may simply appear together by chance (Alves et al., 2020; Hofmann et al., 2010). In essence, people can develop positive or negative attitudes toward something not because of its own characteristics, but because it repeatedly appears alongside pleasant or unpleasant stimuli.

### **Theories of Evaluative Conditioning**

To understand whether and why differentiation effects can arise in evaluative conditioning, it is necessary to consider how stimulus co-occurrence influences attitude formation. Over the years, researchers have proposed different theoretical accounts to explain the cognitive processes through which stimulus co-occurrence influences attitude formation (Hofmann et al., 2010; Moran et al., 2023). These perspectives differ in the extent to which they emphasize automatic associative mechanisms versus deliberate inferential reasoning. In the following, three of the most prominent theoretical accounts are outlined.

One of the earliest associative explanations is the referential account (Baeyens et al., 1992). According to this view, when a conditioned stimulus repeatedly appears together with an unconditioned stimulus, it becomes linked to the mental representation and affective tone of that stimulus. Later, encountering the conditioned stimulus can automatically activate this representation, even in the absence of the unconditioned stimulus. Crucially, the conditioned stimulus does not need to signal that the unconditioned stimulus will follow. Its role is simply to serve as a cue that reactivates the stored representation of the unconditioned stimulus. For example, seeing the logo of a favorite café may immediately evoke the taste and smell of coffee, even when none is present. In this sense, referential learning is assumed to be determined by the mere co-occurrence of stimuli, rather than by their statistical contingency.

A related but conceptually different associative explanation is the implicit misattribution account (Jones et al., 2009; March et al., 2018). Like the referential account, it assumes that evaluative conditioning can occur without contingency awareness and does not require the conditioned stimulus to predict the unconditioned stimulus. However, rather than emphasizing the formation of a memory link, this account attributes the effect to a misattribution of affect. According to this view, evaluative conditioning occurs when the affective response elicited by the unconditioned stimulus is unintentionally and mistakenly

attributed to the conditioned stimulus. Because affective and evaluative experiences are often difficult to localize, their source can easily be confused. This is particularly the case when the conditioned stimulus and the unconditioned stimulus appear close in time or space. In such scenarios, the positive or negative feeling “spills over” onto the neutral stimulus, which then takes on the valence of the unconditioned stimulus. In this view, every co-occurrence offers an opportunity for affective transfer, regardless of the structure or predictiveness of the pairing (Jones et al., 2010). For instance, a student may regularly enjoy conversations with friends while waiting at a particular tram stop. Even if the stop itself has no pleasant features, the positive emotions from these encounters may become associated with the location. Later, simply arriving at the tram stop can evoke a subtle feeling of positivity, even if no friends are there.

Both the referential account and the implicit misattribution account describe evaluative conditioning as the outcome of relatively automatic processes. In these views, evaluative change does not require that individuals consciously reflect on the relationship between the co-occurring stimuli (Hofmann et al., 2010).

In contrast, the propositional account assumes that evaluative conditioning depends on deliberate thinking and therefore is a higher order and effortful mental process (De Houwer, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2009). According to this view, people form explicit beliefs about the relationship between a conditioned stimulus and an unconditioned stimulus. Evaluative change results from the endorsement of such propositions rather than from an automatic transfer of affect (De Houwer & Hughes, 2016). In other words, people do not simply “feel better” about an object because it appears together with something positive, but because they draw and accept a conclusion about what this co-occurrence implies. An important implication of this account is that contingency awareness is necessary. Without noticing and interpreting the co-occurrence of the conditioned stimulus and the unconditioned

stimulus, no change in evaluation should take place (De Houwer, 2007). In everyday contexts, a similar process may occur when a consumer repeatedly sees a new sports drink advertised next to elite athletes. Instead of passively absorbing the positive emotions, the consumer may conclude that the drink is associated with athletic performance and therefore evaluate it more positively. From a propositional perspective, evaluative conditioning is more about how the relationship between the co-occurring stimuli is interpreted (De Houwer & Hughes, 2016).

Crucially, this account suggests that co-occurrence-based attitude formation follows similar inferential principles as attribute-based attitude formation. If attitudes are shaped through such inferences, the same differentiation advantage observed in attribute-based attitude formation may also emerge in co-occurrence-based attitude formation.

### **Differentiation in Evaluative Conditioning**

Building on the theoretical argument that evaluative conditioning may follow similar inferential principles as attribute-based attitude formation, prior research has examined whether differentiation effects also emerge in co-occurrence-based attitude formation. To test this, Alves et al. (2020) conducted a series of experiments, with Experiment 1 providing a particularly clear demonstration. In this experiment, participants were exposed to unknown brands (conditioned stimulus) that were paired with positive and negative images (unconditioned stimulus). The affective valence of the unconditioned stimuli was held constant across conditions (all brands were paired with positive and negative images) but the uniqueness of the pairings varied. In different conditions, either the positive or the negative images were unique, while the other type was shared. The results showed that participants formed more positive attitudes toward unknown brands co-occurring with distinct positive images, compared to brands co-occurring with shared positive images. These findings suggest that attitude formation through evaluative conditioning is sensitive not only to the

valence of co-occurring stimuli but also to their uniqueness. Consistent with the differentiation principle, unique pairings seem to exert a stronger influence on attitude formation than redundant ones, even when these associations are formed through mere co-occurrence (Alves et al., 2020).

While these results illustrate the role of differentiation among unknown brands, it remains unanswered how evaluative conditioning functions when new brands position themselves relative to established, positively perceived brands – whether by adopting similar co-occurring stimuli or by emphasizing distinct stimuli. In such competitive environments, differentiation is not the only conceivable strategy. New brands may alternatively attempt to benefit from existing positive associations by imitating the cues already linked to well-known brands.

### **Differentiation Versus Imitation in Branding**

Evaluative conditioning research has not yet examined whether new brands benefit more from co-occurring unique stimuli or shared stimuli associated with established brands. Related questions of similarity versus differentiation have been extensively examined in the branding literature, where imitation typically involves brand-intrinsic elements such as logos, slogans, or product features. This literature therefore provides a useful reference for considering whether similarity or differentiation may be advantageous when new brands are evaluated relative to established brands. It shows that neither strategy is universally superior. Rather, their effectiveness depends on the specific situation and the evaluation context (e.g., Van Horen & Pieters, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2017).

A common theoretical explanation comes from knowledge accessibility theories (Martin, 1986; Schwarz & Bless, 1992; Wegener & Petty, 1995). These accounts propose that judgments are shaped by contextually activated knowledge. In other words, impressions that are retrieved from memory influence the evaluation of a target object. When a new brand

closely resembles a well-known brand, it activates the mental representation of the original brand. This similarity can initially elicit a positive evaluation, as consumers transfer favorable associations from the established to the imitating brand. However, research on impression formation shows that this initial reaction is not always accepted at face value. If the imitation is perceived as inappropriate or manipulative, consumers are likely to correct this influence, leading to more negative evaluations (Martin, 1986; Wegener & Petty, 1995). Persuasion knowledge theory explains these corrective processes by suggesting that consumers recognize attempts to influence their judgements and respond with psychological resistance (Friestad & Wright, 1994). From this perspective, the likelihood of correction depends on how clearly an imitative intention can be inferred from the observed similarity.

Consistent with this reasoning, branding research on the type of imitation has shown that the likelihood of corrective responses depends, for example, on how obvious the similarity is. Feature imitation, where a brand directly copies distinctive elements such as packaging, logos, or product design, is evaluated more negatively because these features are strongly tied to the original brand. Their replication is often perceived as inappropriate or misleading, prompting consumers to adjust their evaluations downward. More subtle forms of imitation, such as theme imitation, tends to be perceived as more acceptable. This type of imitation involves mimicking general category attributes or symbolic associations (e.g., sustainability, luxury). Because the overlap is more abstract and less directly tied to a specific brand, it is less likely to trigger correction (Van Horen & Pieters, 2012a).

Contextual factors also influence the impact of imitation. When the established brand is present or salient, consumers are more likely to compare the two brands, increasing the chances of noticing the imitation and correcting for it (Van Horen & Pieters, 2012b). In other situations, this pattern can reverse. Imagine being in a supermarket for the first time in a foreign country. Under such consumer uncertainty, similarity can provide a sense of

familiarity and safety. As a result, even more obvious imitations may be evaluated positively (Van Horen & Pieters, 2013).

Taken together, the branding literature indicates that both differentiation and imitation can lead to positive evaluations, depending on the context. This complements the preceding sections of this thesis. Research on attitude formation and evaluative conditioning has consistently pointed to an advantage of differentiation. The branding literature introduces an additional perspective. It suggests that redundant stimuli can activate positive associations linked to an established brand. Such associations may, in turn, result in more favorable evaluations of the imitating brand. Whether these effects also occur in evaluative conditioning contexts, or whether similarity instead elicits corrective responses, remains unclear.

### **Present Study**

The goal of the present study was to test whether the differentiation advantage found in co-occurrence-based attitude formation also applies when new brands are introduced alongside an established, positively perceived brand. More precisely, it tested whether distinct positive co-occurrences exert a stronger influence on brand evaluations than redundant positive co-occurrences that imitate positive cues of an established brand. To examine this question, participants completed a simulated branding scenario involving fictitious brands. The established brand was introduced through a brief success story and consistently paired with four positive images to create a positive impression. New brands were then paired either with two of these same positive images (redundant condition) or with two unique positive images (distinct condition). Each new brand was also paired with two unique negative images. This ensured that all new brands had a mix of positive and negative associations.



In the redundant condition, the shared positive images were expected to contribute little to the evaluation because redundant associations typically lose impact (Alves et al., 2020). As a result, the negative images should play a stronger role. In the distinct condition, however, both positive and negative images were unique to the new brand, meaning that all pairings should influence attitudes. This structure allowed to examine whether distinct positive pairings lead to more favorable evaluations than redundant ones. The full pairing structure is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1***Stimulus Pairings for the Established Brand and the Two New Brands*

a) Redundant-first condition

| CS 1   | CS 2   | CS 3   |
|--------|--------|--------|
| USpos1 | USpos1 | USpos5 |
| USpos2 | USpos2 | USpos6 |
| USpos3 | USneg1 | USneg3 |
| USpos4 | USneg2 | USneg4 |

b) Distinct-first condition

| CS 1   | CS 3   | CS 2   |
|--------|--------|--------|
| USpos1 | USpos5 | USpos1 |
| USpos2 | USpos6 | USpos2 |
| USpos3 | USneg3 | USneg1 |
| USpos4 | USneg4 | USneg2 |

*Note.* These figures illustrate the stimulus pairings used in the evaluative conditioning task and the order in which the brands were presented. In all conditions, participants were first exposed to the established brand (CS1). In the redundant-first condition (Figure 1a), the redundant new brand (CS2) was presented next, followed by the distinct new brand (CS3). In the distinct-first condition (Figure 1b), this order was reversed, with the distinct new brand

presented before the redundant new brand. The established brand (CS1) was paired with four positive images. The redundant new brand (CS2) was paired with two positive images shared with the established brand (displayed in light grey) and two unique negative images. The distinct new brand (CS3) was paired with two unique positive and two unique negative images. CS = conditioned stimulus; USpos = positive unconditioned stimulus; USneg = negative unconditioned stimulus.

Based on evaluative conditioning research, I predict that distinct positive pairings will exert a stronger influence on brand attitudes than redundant positive pairings. Following this reasoning, it is hypothesized that:

*H1*: New brands that are distinct from an established, positively perceived brand will be evaluated more positively than new brands that are redundant to an established brand.

In addition to this primary prediction, the study exploratively examines participants' experienced uncertainty during the evaluation phase. Prior branding research suggests that when consumers feel uncertain, similarity can provide a sense of familiarity and safety, which may make redundant pairings more appealing (Van Horen & Pieters, 2013).

The present research aims to clarify how differentiation in evaluative conditioning influences consumer attitude formation toward new brands in competitive markets.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

An a priori analysis with the software G\*Power indicated that a minimum sample size of 42 participants is required to detect a medium-sized effect of  $f = .20$  in a mixed-design analysis of variance (ANOVA), based on a targeted power of .80 and a standard alpha error probability of .05 (Faul et al., 2007). The effect size was chosen because it aligns with effect

sizes reported in previous research on differentiation in evaluative conditioning (Alves et al., 2020). A total of 51 individuals participated in the study. All participants were required to be at least 18 years old and to speak German sufficiently well to complete the experiment (at least B2). Participants were recruited via the University of Vienna's online participant pool system Laboratory Administration for Behavioral Sciences and through in-person recruitment on campus. Participants from the online pool received course credits, whereas those recruited on campus took part voluntarily without compensation. The sample consisted mainly of Austrians ( $n = 26$ ) and Germans ( $n = 17$ ), with a smaller number of participants from other European countries ( $n = 8$ ). Most participants had completed a secondary school degree equivalent to the Matura or (Fach-) Abitur ( $n = 40$ ), while 9 participants held a bachelor's degree, and 2 participants held a master's degree or equivalent. Overall, 76.5% of the participants identified as female, 21.6% as male, and 1.9% did not indicate their gender. The mean age was 23.1 years ( $SD = 3.7$ ), ranging from 19 to 40 years. The study was conducted in a laboratory with one to three participants completing the experiment simultaneously on computers.

### **Design**

A  $2 \times 2$  mixed-design was used, with brand type (redundant vs. distinct) and brand order (redundant-first vs. distinct-first) as independent variables. Brand type was manipulated within subjects such that each participant evaluated both a redundant and a distinct new brand. Brand order was manipulated between subjects by randomly assigning participants to one of two groups that differed in whether the redundant or the distinct new brand was presented first. The main dependent variable was participants' evaluations of the new brands (brand attitude).

The study was preregistered prior to data collection (AsPredicted #228924).

In addition, experienced uncertainty during impression formation was assessed at the end of the study as an exploratory variable to examine whether it moderated the effect of brand type on brand attitude.

The exploratory analysis was preregistered prior to data collection (AsPredicted #230120).

### **Stimuli**

The visual stimuli consisted of affective images (serving as unconditioned stimuli) and fictitious brand logos (serving as conditioned stimuli). Sixteen images (eight positive, eight negative) were selected from the Open Affective Standardized Image Set (OASIS; Kurdi et al., 2016). The OASIS database provides 900 color images, normed on valence and arousal, with each image rated by at least 101 participants in an online study (overall  $N = 822$ ). Images are standardized to  $500 \times 400$  pixels and depict a broad range of themes, including animals, objects, people and natural scenes. For the present study, images were chosen to represent positive (e.g., puppies, scenic landscapes) or negative (e.g., accidents, violence) affective content (Figure 2). Positive and negative image sets were matched on arousal to ensure that differences in evaluations could not be attributed to emotional intensity.

**Figure 2**

*Example of Four Affective Images Used as Unconditioned Stimuli in the Experiment*



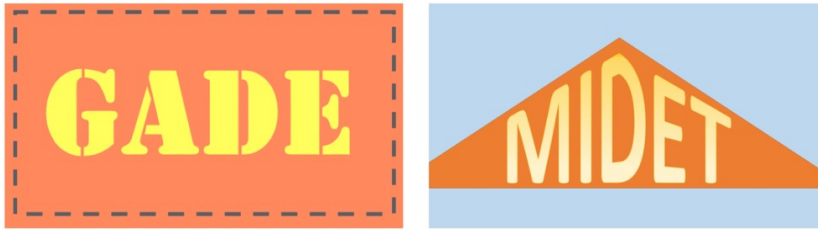
*Note.* Images on the left depict positive images; images on the right depict negative images.

The images shown are example stimuli from the OASIS database (Kurdi et al., 2016).

The brand stimuli consisted of eight fictitious, unknown brand logos developed by Alves et al. (2020). These logos featured simple designs, combined with generic brand names that did not convey specific semantic associations (Figure 3). The assignment of logos to the established brand, the redundant new brand and the distinct new brand was randomized across participants. The use of fictitious logos ensured that participants had no pre-existing attitudes toward the brands, allowing attitudes to be shaped entirely by the experimental manipulations.

**Figure 3**

*Example of Two Fictitious Brand Logos Used as Conditioned Stimuli in the Experiment*



*Note.* The logos were developed by Alves et al. (2020). They contain abstract designs and meaningless brand names to ensure that participants had no prior associations with the brands.

### **Brand Attitude**

The dependent variable brand attitude was measured using five 7-point semantic differential scales based on Keller and Aaker (1992). The scales included the following dimensions: *low quality–high quality*, *inferior–superior*, *bad–good*, *worse than most brands–better than most brands* and *negative–positive*. In the study the items were presented in German: *geringe Qualität–hohe Qualität*, *unterlegen–überlegen*, *schlecht–gut*, *schlechter als die meisten Marken–besser als die meisten Marken* and *negativ–positiv*. Participants rated each brand on these scales. Mean scores were then calculated, with higher values indicating more favorable evaluations. The scales showed high reliability across conditions (Cronbach's  $\alpha > .90$ ).

### **Experienced Uncertainty**

Experienced uncertainty during impression formation was assessed at the end of the study using a four-item scale adapted from decision uncertainty measures (Chuang et al., 2012; Sheng et al., 2005). The items were: (1) *“I felt unsure while forming an impression of the new brands”*, (2) *“I did not have enough information to form a clear impression of the*

*new brands*”, (3) “*I was very certain about the impression I formed of the new brands*”, (4) “*I am unsure whether the impressions I formed of the new brands are accurate.*”. In the study the items were presented in German: (1) “*Ich fühlte mich unsicher, während ich mir einen Eindruck von den neuen Marken bildete*”, (2) “*Ich hatte nicht genügend Informationen, um mir einen klaren Eindruck von den neuen Marken zu machen*”, (3) “*Ich war mir sehr sicher über den Eindruck, den ich von den neuen Marken gewonnen habe*”, (4) “*Ich bin mir unsicher, ob die Eindrücke, die ich von den neuen Marken gewonnen habe, zutreffend sind*”. Responses were given on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Item (3) was reverse-coded, and a mean score was calculated, with higher values indicating greater experienced uncertainty. The scale showed acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .79$ ).

### **Procedure**

Participants completed the study individually on computers in the social psychology laboratory of the University of Vienna. The experiment was programmed in PsychoPy (version 2024.2.4; Peirce et al., 2019) and conducted online via Pavlovia. At the beginning, participants were informed that their data would be processed anonymously and used solely for research purposes. They then provided informed consent and completed demographic questions. Afterwards, participants were informed that the study examines the perception of brands. They were instructed to imagine a simplified branding scenario in which they would be introduced to several fictional brands and asked to report their impressions based on the information presented.

The experimental task began with the presentation of the established brand, which was intended to create a positive impression. This brand was introduced through a short fictitious success story describing a well-established service provider that has been successfully positioned in the market for several years. The story emphasized attributes such



as high accessibility, reliable and customer-oriented service, and efficient handling of customer requests. A fixation cross was then displayed in the top center of the screen to guide participants' attention. Next, one logo was randomly selected from a pool of eight fictitious logos and displayed in the top center of the screen for 1,500 ms. The logo then remained visible while four positive images were presented sequentially at the bottom center of the screen for 3,000 ms each. These images were randomly selected from the set of eight positive images. The full sequence was repeated twice, so that each logo-image combination was presented three times. Immediately afterwards, participants evaluated the established brand with the multi-item scales for brand attitude (Keller & Aaker, 1992). This served as a manipulation check to confirm that the established brand was perceived positively.

Following this evaluation, participants were informed that new brands would be presented next. The order in which the redundant and the distinct new brand appeared was balanced across participants. Each new brand was assigned a fictitious logo randomly chosen from the remaining set and paired with four images. For the redundant new brand, two positive images were randomly selected from the four positive images previously paired with the established brand and two negative images randomly selected from the full set of eight negative images. For the distinct new brand, two positive images were selected from the remaining positive images not shown with the established brand and two unique negative images. Negative images were selected such that no image was shown with more than one brand. The presentation procedure for each new brand mirrored that of the established brand: a fixation cross preceded the brand logo (1.500 ms), and each logo-image pair was presented for 3,000 ms and repeated three times in total. After each brand presentation, participants immediately evaluated the brand with the multi-item scales for brand attitude (Keller & Aaker, 1992). These evaluations of the redundant and distinct new brands served as the main dependent variable of the study. After completing all brand evaluations, participants

responded to a brief questionnaire assessing their experienced uncertainty during the task. Finally, participants were thanked, debriefed about the study's purpose, and – when applicable – awarded their course credits.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Departmental Review Board of the Department of Occupational, Economic, and Social Psychology at the University of Vienna (DRB No. 2025/S/014).

### **Data Analysis**

Statistical analyses were conducted using JASP (Version 0.19.2). Before testing the main hypothesis, a manipulation check was conducted to confirm that the positivity manipulation for the established brand was successful. To this end, brand attitude toward the established brand was compared against the neutral scale midpoint (4) using a one-sample *t*-test. In addition, paired-samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare evaluations of the established brand with evaluations of the redundant and the distinct new brand.

To test the main hypothesis, a mixed-design analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with brand type (redundant vs. distinct) as a within-subjects factor and brand order (redundant-first vs. distinct-first) as a between-subjects factor. The main effect of brand type tested the hypothesis that distinct new brands would yield more favorable evaluations than redundant new brands. The main effect of brand order and the brand type  $\times$  brand order interaction served as control tests to ensure that the results were not influenced by presentation order. Brand attitude served as the dependent variable.

To further examine the hypothesized effect, planned simple effects analyses were conducted to compare evaluations of distinct and redundant new brands separately within each brand order condition.

In an additional analysis, evaluative distance to the established brand was used as an alternative dependent variable. For each participant, two distance scores were computed by

subtracting the attitude toward the established brand from the attitude toward the distinct and toward the redundant new brand. These distance scores were analyzed using the same  $2 \times 2$  mixed-design ANOVA with brand type as within-subjects factor and brand order as a between-subjects factor.

For the exploratory analyses, experienced uncertainty was examined in two steps. First, a one-sample *t*-test against the scale midpoint (4) was conducted to test whether uncertainty was generally high during the task. Second, a linear mixed-effects model (LMM) was computed to test whether experienced uncertainty moderated the effect of brand type on brand attitude. The model included brand type, experienced uncertainty (grand-mean centered), and their interaction as fixed effects, as well as a random intercept for participants to account for the repeated-measures design. Degrees of freedom were approximated using the Satterthwaite method.

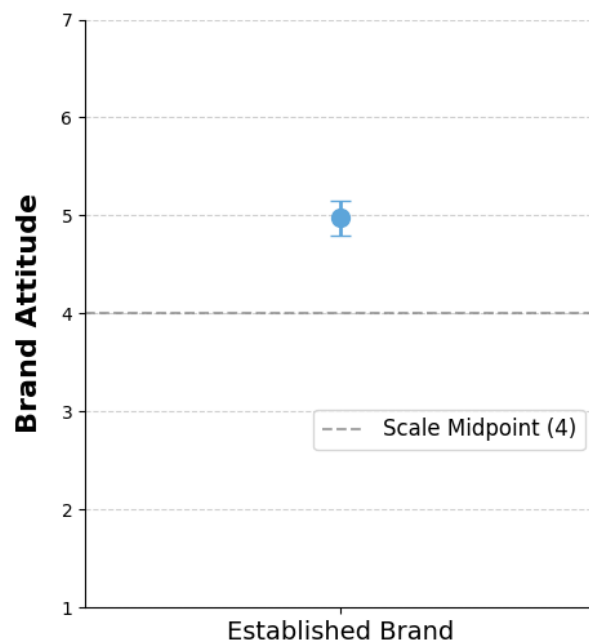
## Results

### Manipulation Check

A one-sample *t*-test against the neutral scale midpoint (4) confirmed that the manipulation was successful. The established brand was evaluated significantly more positively than the scale midpoint ( $M = 4.97$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ),  $t(50) = 5.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .76$  (Figure 4). To further validate the manipulation, paired-samples *t*-tests showed that the established brand was evaluated significantly more positively than both the redundant new brand,  $t(50) = 7.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .995$ , and the distinct new brand,  $t(50) = 4.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .65$ .

**Figure 4**

*Brand Attitude Toward the Established Brand Compared to the Scale Midpoint*



*Note.* The blue value represents the mean brand attitude rating of the established brand with standard-error bars. The dashed line indicates the scale midpoint (4). Higher values reflect more favorable brand evaluations.

### Main Analyses

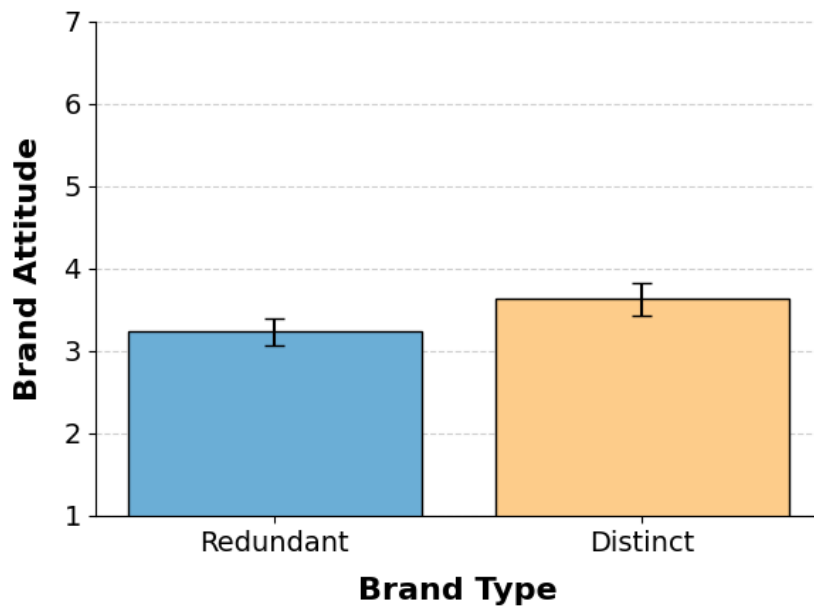
Descriptive statistics for brand attitudes by brand type and brand order are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1***Means and Standard Deviations of Brand Attitudes by Brand Type and Brand Order*

| Brand Type      | Redundant         |           | Distinct          |           |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
|                 | <i>M</i>          | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>          | <i>SD</i> |
| Brand Order     |                   |           |                   |           |
| Redundant-first | 3.41 <sub>a</sub> | 1.20      | 3.56 <sub>a</sub> | 1.40      |
| Distinct-first  | 3.00 <sub>a</sub> | 1.15      | 3.73 <sub>a</sub> | 1.35      |
|                 | 3.23              | 1.18      | 3.63              | 1.37      |

*Note.* Higher values indicate more favorable brand evaluations. Brand attitude was measured with five 7-point semantic differential scales. “Redundant” refers to the new brand paired with positive images previously shown with the established brand; “Distinct” refers to the new brand paired with unique positive images. “Redundant-first” indicates that participants viewed the redundant new brand before the distinct new brand; “Distinct-first” indicates the reverse order. Values in the bottom row represent means averaged across brand order. Means sharing the same superscript letter did not differ significantly in simple contrasts comparing redundant and distinct new brands within each brand order condition. Brand type was manipulated within subjects; Brand order was manipulated between subjects.

The hypothesis predicted that distinct new brands would be evaluated more positively than redundant new brands. However, this prediction was not supported. The  $2 \times 2$  mixed design ANOVA revealed no significant main effect of brand type,  $F(1, 49) = 2.66, p = .109, \eta_p^2 = .051$ . Although the distinct new brand ( $M = 3.63, SD = 1.37$ ) was evaluated more positively than the redundant new brand ( $M = 3.23, SD = 1.18$ ), this difference did not reach statistical significance (Figure 5).

**Figure 5***Mean Brand Attitude Scores for Redundant and Distinct New Brands*

*Note.* Higher values indicate more favorable brand evaluations. “Redundant” refers to the new brand paired with positive images previously shown with the established brand; “Distinct” refers to the new brand paired with unique positive images. Error bars represent standard errors of the mean.

Both control tests showed the expected non-significant results. There was no significant main effect of brand order,  $F(1,49) = 0.24, p = .624, \eta_p^2 = .005$ , indicating that the overall brand evaluations did not differ depending on whether participants first viewed the redundant or the distinct new brand. Likewise, the brand type  $\times$  brand order interaction was not significant,  $F(1,49) = 1.14, p = .291, \eta_p^2 = .023$ , indicating that the relative evaluations of redundant and distinct new brands did not depend on their presentation order.

To further examine the hypothesized advantage of distinct over redundant new brands, simple effects of brand type were analyzed separately for each brand order condition.

Consistent with the overall ANOVA results, there was no statistically significant difference

between the distinct and the redundant new brand within either order condition. The difference did not reach statistical significance when the distinct new brand was presented first,  $t(49) = 1.68, p = .107$ , nor when the redundant new brand was presented first,  $t(49) = 0.45, p = .655$ .

As an additional (non-preregistered) analysis, brand evaluations were reanalyzed using the distance between the evaluations of the new brand and the evaluation of the established brand as the dependent variable. Descriptively, the distinct new brand was evaluated closer to the established brand than the redundant new brand. The mean distance for the distinct new brand was  $M = -1.34$  ( $SD = 2.06$ ), whereas the redundant new brand showed a larger distance to the established brand ( $M = -1.74, SD = 1.75$ ). However, this difference did not reach statistical significance. A mixed-design ANOVA revealed no significant main effect of brand type,  $F(1, 49) = 2.66, p = .109, \eta_p^2 = .051$ . The brand type  $\times$  brand order interaction was also not significant,  $F(1, 49) = 1.14, p = .291, \eta_p^2 = .023$ .

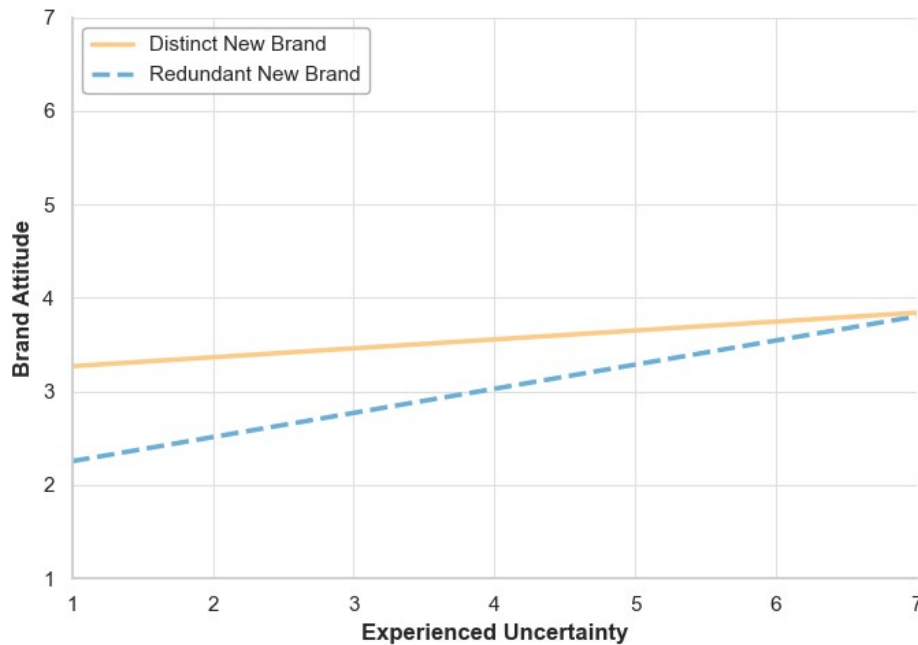
### **Exploratory Analyses**

Participants reported moderately higher experienced uncertainty during impression formation. A one-sample  $t$ -test against the scale midpoint (4) showed that experienced uncertainty was significantly above the midpoint,  $M = 4.78, SD = 1.25, t(50) = 4.48, p < .001, d = 0.63$ .

To examine whether experienced uncertainty influenced evaluations of the new brands an exploratory moderation analysis was conducted. Experienced uncertainty did not moderate the effect of brand type on brand attitude. The brand type  $\times$  experienced uncertainty interaction was not significant,  $F(1, 98) = 0.65, p = .424$  (Figure 6).

**Figure 6**

*Relationship Between Experienced Uncertainty and Brand Attitude for Redundant and Distinct New Brands*



*Note.* Lines represent predicted values from a linear mixed-effects model with brand type and experienced uncertainty as fixed effects and a random intercept for participants. Experienced uncertainty is shown on its original 1-7 scale.

## Discussion

People usually encounter new brands next to well-known brands. An important question is therefore whether new brands benefit more from clearly standing out or from resembling established brands. While prior research has mainly focused on imitation and differentiation in brand-intrinsic features such as logos or product design, less is known about cues that merely co-occur with a brand. The present study addressed this gap by examining how consumers evaluate new brands when they co-occur either with unique positive stimuli or with positive stimuli previously associated with an established, positively perceived brand.



Based on prior evaluative conditioning research, it was expected that new brands paired with unique positive stimuli would be evaluated more favorably than those paired with redundant stimuli (Alves et al., 2020). The results showed no statistically significant difference between the two brand types. However, the pattern followed the expected direction with slightly more positive evaluations for the new brands with unique positive pairings. A complementary analysis using evaluative distance to the established brand showed a consistent descriptive pattern, with distinct new brands being evaluated closer to the established brand than redundant new brands, although this difference was also not statistically significant. This did not appear to depend on whether the distinct or the redundant new brand was presented first.

This tendency aligns with previous findings in evaluative conditioning research showing that co-occurring distinct stimuli exert a stronger influence on attitude formation than redundant stimuli (Alves et al., 2020). Research on attribute-based attitude formation similarly shows that this pattern is particularly strong in sequential contexts, where features that distinguish a later option have a higher informational value than features that merely repeat what has already been encountered (Alves et al., 2018b; Houston & Sherman, 1995; Kardes & Sanbonmatsu, 1993). Within the present evaluative conditioning design, the unique positive co-occurrences therefore may introduce new information relevant for forming brand impressions, whereas the redundant positive co-occurrences added comparatively little.

A primary reason why this differentiation tendency did not reach statistical significance may lie in the strength of the established brand. In the present study, the established brand was paired with positive stimuli only a limited number of times, which may have resulted in a relatively weak conditioning of the established brand. Prior research on evaluative conditioning suggests that conditioning effects are influenced by how often conditioned and unconditioned stimuli co-occur (Hofmann et al., 2010). Moreover, the established brand was fictitious and embedded in a rather abstract experimental setting.

Although it was evaluated positively, it may not have been perceived as a clearly successful or dominant brand, making it difficult for participants to recognize that the redundant new brand was imitating an established brand. As a result, negative effects of imitation highlighted in the branding literature may not have occurred. Imitation of a clearly successful brand can lead to negative reevaluations of the imitating brand when such imitation is recognized, as it is perceived as less original or authentic (e.g., Van Horen & Pieters, 2012). In the present study, such correction processes may therefore have remained weak or absent.

Another factor that may have further reduced the differentiation effect concerns the uncertainty participants experienced during impression formation. Previous branding research indicates that high uncertainty can lead to a preference reversal, with imitation brands becoming more appealing than unique brands, as familiarity is valued under uncertain conditions (Van Horen & Pieters, 2013). In the present study, participants reported increased uncertainty during impression formation, which may have reduced the relative advantage of unique pairings. Although the exploratory linear mixed-effects model did not show a significant moderation by uncertainty, a potential influence cannot be excluded. Since uncertainty was not systematically manipulated and only a few participants reported low uncertainty, the analyses may not have had sufficient statistical power to detect such effects. Against this background, the generally high level of experienced uncertainty may have weakened the differentiation effect.

Moreover, it is possible that the true effect size in the specific context may have been smaller than anticipated, making it more difficult to detect with the given sample size. Meta-analytic evidence in evaluative conditioning points to substantial variability in effect sizes across contexts and procedural implementations, indicating that effect sizes do not generalize uniformly across paradigms (Hofmann et al., 2010). Because differentiation processes in evaluative conditioning have not previously been examined in a competitive branding context

involving an established brand, the expected effect size could only be estimated indirectly. Based on the observed pattern of results, a slightly larger sample of approximately 55 to 60 participants would likely have been sufficient to detect this effect more reliably. These considerations suggest that the differentiation effect in the present study may have been smaller than assumed a priori, thereby reducing statistical power to detect it reliably.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Overall, these considerations highlight several important directions for future research. Although no statistically significant differentiation effect was found, the descriptive pattern was consistent with theoretical predictions and prior findings. This suggests that the absence of a significant effect may not reflect the absence of an underlying differentiation process but rather indicate that this process was difficult to detect under the present conditions.

A central direction for future research concerns the strength of the established brand. Future studies could strengthen evaluative conditioning effects by pairing the established brand more frequently with positive stimuli. In addition, embedding brands in more realistic contexts that resemble real-world market leaders may make imitation more salient and thereby increase the likelihood that corrective evaluations, as described in the branding literature, occur when imitation is recognized.

A second research direction focuses on experienced uncertainty during impression formation. Future studies could aim to reduce uncertainty by providing clearer task instructions, practice trials, or additional contextual information. Beyond this, systematically manipulating uncertainty would allow researchers to test whether it moderates evaluative conditioning effects in branding contexts. This would help researchers to clarify whether the influence of uncertainty observed in branding extends to evaluative conditioning.

Another important direction for future research relates to the stimuli used in the present study. Although the use of the OASIS image database ensured standardized valence and arousal levels, this standardization may also have reduced how distinct the stimuli appeared to participants. Positive and moderately arousing OASIS images often depict similar themes such as landscapes or animals, which could have made the distinction between “unique” and “redundant” stimuli less obvious. Future studies could therefore benefit from using more varied or custom-designed stimuli that differ more clearly in content and that look more like real-world advertising and branding imagery.

Moreover, future research should consider larger sample sizes. If the differentiation effect in this context is relatively small, increased statistical power will be necessary to reliably detect it and to distinguish a genuine boundary condition from limitations related to sample size.

Finally, participants in this study took part in several experiments in sequence. This may have led to fatigue or cross-study influences. Future studies should aim to minimize such influences by limiting the number of experiments conducted within a single session.

### **Implications**

Given the limitations outlined above, the present findings should be interpreted with caution. Still, they offer several insights for research on evaluative conditioning and branding. Both literatures emphasize the role of differentiation, yet they have rarely been examined together. The present study offers an initial attempt to connect these perspectives by examining evaluative conditioning processes within a competitive branding context.

The observed tendency toward more favorable evaluations for new brands co-occurring with unique positive images suggests that differentiation may also matter in more complex environments in which new brands appear next to established competitors. Practically, this implies that new brands may benefit from pairings themselves with positive

stimuli that are not already associated with well-known market leaders. Imitating the cues of a successful brand may add little value, whereas using unique positive co-occurrences may contribute additional information that supports more favorable brand attitudes.

Overall, the findings provide initial indications that even subtle differences in how positive cues co-occur with a brand may influence early brand impressions. Considering the importance of a strong brand image highlighted in the introduction, these results suggest that unique positive co-occurrences may help new brands in building a more favorable initial market presence.

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## Appendix A

### Main Experiment

#### A1: Main Experiment Introduction

Liebe Teilnehmerin, lieber Teilnehmer,

herzlichen Dank für Ihre Bereitschaft, an dieser Studie des Instituts für Arbeits-, Wirtschafts- und Sozialpsychologie der Universität Wien teilzunehmen.

Im Rahmen dieser Studie beschäftigen wir uns mit Ihrer Wahrnehmung von Marken. Ihre Aufgabe wird es sein, sich verschiedene Markenlogos und Bilder anzusehen und anschließend Ihre Eindrücke anzugeben. Ziel ist es, besser zu verstehen, wie sich Markenimages bilden.

Die Studie wird ungefähr 10 bis 15 Minuten dauern. Sie nehmen an der Studie im Rahmen einer Lehrveranstaltung teil. Sie können die Studie jederzeit abbrechen und eine alternative Leistung erbringen. Es entstehen durch einen Abbruch keine Nachteile für Sie, und die bis dahin erbrachte Zeit wird im Rahmen der Lehrveranstaltung berücksichtigt.

Bei Fragen wenden Sie sich bitte an: a11935164@univie.ac.at

Weiter

#### A2: Declaration of Consent

Einverständniserklärung

Die Studie dient ausschließlich wissenschaftlichen Zwecken. Die Befragung wird vom Institut für Arbeits-, Wirtschafts- und Sozialpsychologie der Universität Wien durchgeführt. Ihre Studienergebnisse werden streng vertraulich behandelt. Die Daten der Studien werden zu jedem Zeitpunkt vollständig anonymisiert. Die Ergebnisse und Daten dieser Studie werden unter Umständen veröffentlicht. Dies geschieht in anonymisierter Form, d.h., ohne, dass die Daten einer spezifischen Person zugeordnet werden können. Anonyme und anonymisierte Daten unterliegen nicht dem Datenschutz.

Die Teilnahme an der Studie ist freiwillig und mit keinen bekannten Risiken verbunden. Sie können die Teilnahme an dieser Untersuchung zu jedem Zeitpunkt ohne Angabe von Gründen abbrechen. Daraus ergeben sich keine Nachteile für Sie. Eine Löschung Ihrer Antworten zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt ist nicht möglich.

Ich habe die oben genannten Informationen gelesen und verstanden und erkläre mich mit den Teilnahmebedingungen einverstanden.

Ja Nein

**A3: Age Question**

1. Bitte geben Sie Ihr Alter in Jahren an. \*

**A4: German Proficiency Question**

2. Bitte geben Sie ihre Deutschkenntnisse an: \*

  
Select... ▼

Muttersprache

C2 - Annähernd muttersprachliche Kenntnisse

C1 - Fachkundige Sprachkenntnisse

B2 - Selbstständige Sprachverwendung

B1 - Fortgeschrittene Sprachverwendung

A2 - Grundlegende Kenntnisse

A1 - Anfänger:in

**A5: Education Level Question**

3. Bitte geben Sie Ihren höchsten Bildungsabschluss an. \*

Pflichtschule (Volks-/Hauptschule)

Lehre / Berufsausbildung / BMS

Matura / Abitur (AHS, BHS, Gymnasium)

Studium – Bachelor

Studium – Master / Diplom

Doktorat / PhD

Andere

**A6:** Nationality Question

4. Bitte geben Sie Ihre Nationalität an: \*

Select... ▼

Russland

Schweden

Slowakai

Slowenien

Spanien

Tschechien

Türkei

USA

Ungarn

Zypern

Andere

**A7: Gender Question**

5. Bitte geben Sie ihr Geschlecht an: \*

Select... ▼

Weiblich

Männlich

Divers

Keine Angabe

**A8: Demographic Questionnaire Completion**

Vielen Dank für Ihre Angaben! Bitte klicken Sie auf „**Complete**“, um mit dem Experiment fortzufahren.

Complete



**A9: Experiment Instruction**

Bitte stellen Sie sich vor, Sie befinden sich in einer vereinfachten Welt, in der Marken ausschließlich durch wenige, grundlegende Elemente repräsentiert werden.

Im Rahmen dieses Experiments werden Ihnen sowohl fiktive etablierte Marken als auch fiktive neue Marken präsentiert. Diese existieren ausschließlich in diesem vereinfachten Kontext – es gibt keine dazugehörigen Produkte, Werbekampagnen oder sonstige Hintergrundinformationen.

Ihre Aufgabe besteht darin, die Marken allein auf Basis der gezeigten Informationen zu beurteilen. In dieser Versuchswelt gibt es keine weiteren Informationen.

Drücken Sie die LEERTASTE, um fortzufahren.

**A10: Established Brand Instruction**

Ihnen wird nun eine etablierte Marke anhand von Bilderpaaren bestehend aus einem Markenlogo und weiteren Bildern vorgestellt.

Diese Marke ist seit vielen Jahren erfolgreich im Markt positioniert und steht für herausragende Erreichbarkeit sowie einen verlässlichen, kundenorientierten Service. Sie gilt als vertrauenswürdiger Anbieter, der für seine freundliche Kommunikation und die effiziente Bearbeitung von Anliegen geschätzt wird.

Bitte verfolgen Sie die Präsentation aufmerksam und versuchen Sie, sich ein Bild von der Marke zu machen. Im Nachhinein werden Sie die etablierte Marke bewerten.

Drücken Sie bitte LEERTASTE, wenn Sie bereit sind.

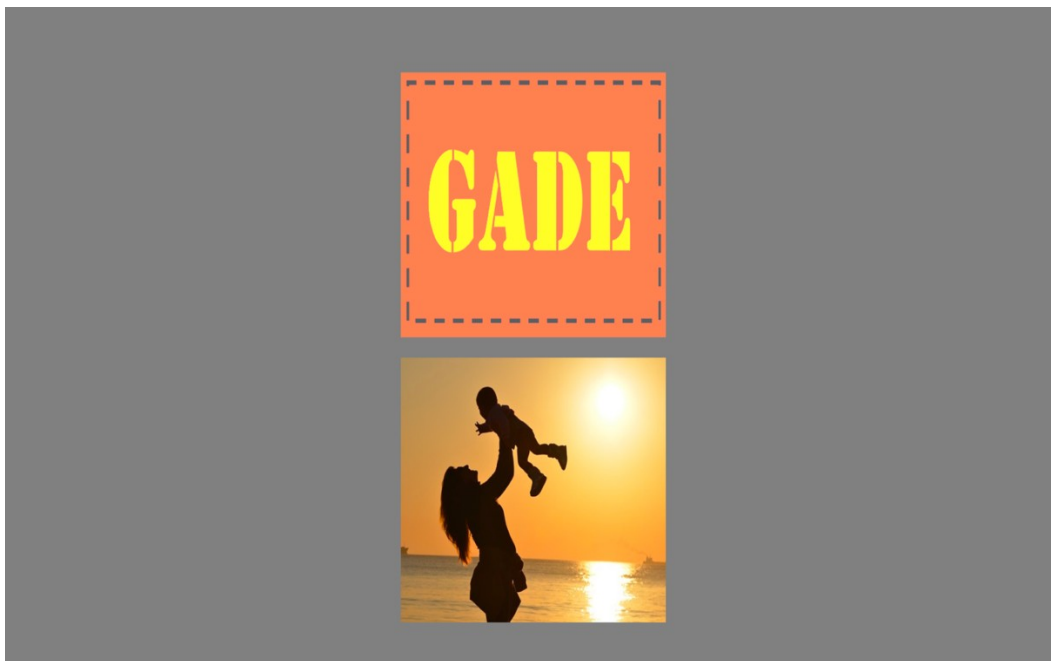
**A11: New Brands Instruction**

Nun werden Ihnen neue Marken anhand von Bilderpaaren bestehend aus einem Markenlogo und weiteren Bild vorgestellt.

Bitte verfolgen Sie die Präsentation aufmerksam und versuchen Sie, sich ein Bild von den Marken zu machen. Im Nachhinein werden Sie die neuen Marken bewerten.

Drücken Sie bitte LEERTASTE, wenn Sie bereit sind.

**A12: Fixation Cross**

**A13:** Example Logo**A14:** Example Pairing - Established Brand (Brand Logo and Positive Image)

**A15:** Example Pairing – Redundant Condition (Brand Logo and Redundant Positive Image)**A16:** Example Pairing – Redundant Condition (Brand Logo and Distinct Negative Image)

**A17:** Example Pairing - Distinct Condition (Brand Logo and Distinct Positive Image)**A18:** Example Pairing - Distinct Condition (Brand Logo and Distinct Negative Image)

**A19: Semantic Differential Scale**

Wie ist Ihr Gesamteindruck von der Marke?

niedrige Qualität hohe Qualität

unterlegen überlegen

schlecht gut

schlechter als die meisten Marken besser als die meisten Marken

negativ positiv

Weiter

**A20: Incomplete Rating**

Wie ist Ihr Gesamteindruck von der Marke?

niedrige Qualität hohe Qualität

unterlegen überlegen

schlecht gut

schlechter als die meisten Marken besser als die meisten Marken

negativ positiv

Weiter

Bitte beantworten Sie erst alle Items.

**A21: Debriefing Screen**

Sie haben das Ende der Studie erreicht. Vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme!

Ziel dieser Studie ist es zu untersuchen, wie sich neue Marken neben etablierten, positiven Marken positionieren sollten. Eine der neuen Marken hatte durch ihre positiven Bilder Überlappungen mit der etablierten Marke (redundant), während die andere neue Marke einzigartige positive Bilder hatte (distinkt).

Sie wurden zufällig zu einer von zwei Gruppen zugeteilt. Je nachdem haben Sie die redundante oder distinkte neue Marke zuerst gesehen.

Unsere Hypothese war es, dass neue Marken, die mit einzigartigen positiven Bildern dargestellt werden, positiver bewertet werden als solche, die positive Bilder mit der etablierten Marke teilen. Die Annahme basiert auf dem sogenannten Differenzierungsprinzip bei der evaluativen Konditionierung.

Wir danken Ihnen für Ihre Teilnahme an dieser Studie. Mit Ihrer Teilnahme haben Sie einen wichtigen Beitrag zu unserer Forschung geleistet. Wenn Sie weitere Fragen oder Anmerkungen haben, können Sie uns unter [a11935164@unet.univie.ac.at](mailto:a11935164@unet.univie.ac.at) erreichen. Wir möchten Sie außerdem bitten, Stillschweigen über die Inhalte dieser Studie zu bewahren.

Fertig

## Appendix B:

### Exploratory Analyses

#### B1: Experienced Uncertainty Scale

Wie haben Sie sich während der Bewertung der neuen Marken gefühlt?

1. Ich fühlte mich unsicher, während ich mir einen Eindruck von den neuen Marken bildete

stimme überhaupt nicht zu 

 stimme voll und ganz zu

2. Ich hatte nicht genügend Informationen, um mir einen klaren Eindruck von den neuen Marken zu machen.

stimme überhaupt nicht zu 

 stimme voll und ganz zu

3. Ich war mir sehr sicher über den Eindruck, den ich von den neuen Marken gewonnen habe.

stimme überhaupt nicht zu 

 stimme voll und ganz zu

4. Ich bin mir unsicher, ob die Eindrücke, die ich von den neuen Marken gewonnen habe, zutreffend sind.

stimme überhaupt nicht zu 

 stimme voll und ganz zu

**Weiter**

#### B2: Incomplete Rating

Wie haben Sie sich während der Bewertung der neuen Marken gefühlt?

1. Ich fühlte mich unsicher, während ich mir einen Eindruck von den neuen Marken bildete

stimme überhaupt nicht zu 

 stimme voll und ganz zu

2. Ich hatte nicht genügend Informationen, um mir einen klaren Eindruck von den neuen Marken zu machen.

stimme überhaupt nicht zu 

 stimme voll und ganz zu

3. Ich war mir sehr sicher über den Eindruck, den ich von den neuen Marken gewonnen habe.

stimme überhaupt nicht zu 

 stimme voll und ganz zu

4. Ich bin mir unsicher, ob die Eindrücke, die ich von den neuen Marken gewonnen habe, zutreffend sind.

stimme überhaupt nicht zu 

 stimme voll und ganz zu

Bitte beantworten Sie erst alle Items.

**Weiter**