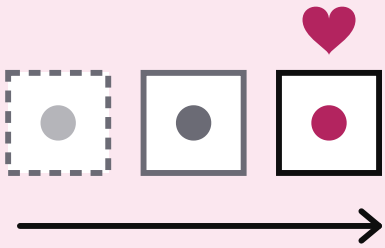
Concept

Mere-exposure effect

The more often we see something, the more we like it, even if we have no other reason to prefer it.



In Spanish
Efecto de mera exposición

Origin
Zajonc (1968)

What problem it addresses

It explains why the familiar seems better and why a new design may be liked less at first than after a while.

An example

An illustrative example: an app changes its logo.

The first day



Many people say the new one is worse. **Strange.**

A few weeks later



The same logo already feels normal, even pleasant. **Familiar.**

The design didn't change; what changed is how many times we had seen it.

Why it happens

1 

What we have already seen is processed with less effort.

2 

That ease feels pleasant.

3 

And we attribute it to the thing itself: we like it more.

Applications in design

Use it like this

Before judging a redesign, let some time pass and measure again: the first reaction isn't the final one.

Avoid

Repeating a message endlessly: with too many repetitions, it becomes tiresome.

Don't fall for it

When you like something "just because," ask yourself whether it's better or just more familiar.

0 → 25 times

What the research says

The more times people had seen an unfamiliar word, the more positive they thought its meaning was (Zajonc, 1968).

●●● **Solid evidence.** A meta-analysis of 208 experiments confirmed it: the effect is moderate, stronger with brief exposures, and levels off or drops after many repetitions (Bornstein, 1989).

Connections

Used in

- Brand design

Related to

- Distinctive brand assets
- Most advanced yet acceptable
- Status quo bias

Authors and works

1968	**Robert B. Zajonc**	Demonstrated it by showing unfamiliar words, characters and images a different number of times.
1989	**Robert F. Bornstein**	Reviewed twenty years of experiments and measured when the effect is strongest.

Sources

Original sources

- Zajonc, R. B. (1968). Attitudinal effects of mere exposure. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 9(2, Pt. 2), 1–27. View source (https://doi.org/10.1037/h0025848)

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- Bornstein, R. F. (1989). Exposure and affect: Overview and meta-analysis of research, 1968–1987. Psychological Bulletin, 106(2), 265–289. View source (https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.106.2.265)

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