ABSTRACT

To develop a successful business, we need to identify the people or businesses we are aiming to sell our products or services to; it is therefore important that we identify and understand the colors that will attract our specific market. Color psychology is not an exact science and there are no right or wrong colors, only colors which may get a better response than others from your target market. Understand that there is a physiological and a psychological component to each color as well as the subjective meanings attached by each individual. Our color preferences are ‘colored’ by our gender, our age, our education, the culture we grew up in, preconceived color beliefs of the societies we live in, our childhood associations with certain colors, and our life experiences, whether those associations are negative or positive.

Keywords: Colours, branding, marketing, colour psychology.

I. INTRODUCTION

To develop a successful business, we need to identify the people or businesses we are aiming to sell our products or services to; it is therefore important that we identify and understand the colors that will attract our specific market. With many businesses now being global, color has also become global. Know the market you are trying to attract and speak the
color language that they will best respond to. Then test your color choices on a small sample of your market before implementing a large and expensive promotion. Compare several color options, get feedback and then choose the colors which give you the best response.

Color psychology is not an exact science and there are no right or wrong colors, only colors which may get a better response than others from your target market. Understand that there is a physiological and a psychological component to each color as well as the subjective meanings attached by each individual. Color and its psychological meaning impacts our lives in so many ways – although it surrounds us physically and psychologically every minute of the day and night we tend to be unaware of the enormous impact it has on us. We take color for granted, yet it has a powerful subliminal and subconscious effect on the physical and emotional wellbeing of each and every one of us. Imagine walking through a shopping mall that is devoid of color with everything in black, gray and white. How different would you feel in this depressing, colorless shopping environment? Would you be inspired to purchase beautiful clothing, makeup, items for your home, or even a delicious cake from the café? Probably not!! You would not be emotionally; sensually or physically stimulated enough to motivate you to make a purchase. Color stimulates all our senses and as a result it has an effect on all our purchasing decisions. Most purchasing decisions are made emotionally and then justified by logic! So it is essential that you are aware of both the positive and negative impact and response of each color on the emotions. There is no such thing as a bad color, just colors that are more suitable for your particular business purpose in order to get the response you want. The first step in making the best choices for your business colors is to establish who your target market is and then you can match the colors to that market to get the best response. Is your market male, female or both young children, teenagers, older people, a particular ethnic group, an industry group, or a hobby group? Be aware that colors can have different meanings depending on the culture, the industry and your target market. Also be aware that the buyer of your product may not be the user of your product - in this case you need to target the colors and marketing of the product at the user and target the advertising at the purchaser. By using a number of different colors in your marketing program and taking care with the balance of these colors you can counter balance and compensate for any negative cultural associations.

It is important you maintain your integrity and that of your business and its products or services when choosing colors for your marketing. Don't use colors that compromise your integrity by suggesting, through association, that your product is something it is not. For example, don't use blue just because it is the most favored color of all, it may not be the best choice for your business. Green is a color that is now associated with organic and natural
products - don't use it to deceive buyers into believing a product is organic and natural if it isn't. However, green is also associated with the outdoors and freshness and this may be the message you wish to impart, even though your product may not be organic and natural. Choose your colors appropriately and wisely. Color is subliminal and it can help to establish your brand and your image without even saying a word. You can’t just copy other successful businesses; but use the information on the psychological meaning of each color to give your business an individual and unique identity.

When it comes to picking the “right” color, research has found that predicting consumer reaction to color appropriateness in relation to the product is far more important than the individual color itself. Psychologist and Stanford professor Jennifer Aaker has conducted studies on this very topic via research on *Dimensions of Brand Personality* and her studies have found five core dimensions that play a role in a brand’s personality:

![Brand Personality Diagram](image)

Brands can sometimes cross between two traits, but they are mostly dominated by one. Additional research has shown that there is a real connection between the use of colors and customers’ perceptions of a brand’s personality. Certain colors do broadly align with specific traits (e.g., brown with ruggedness, purple with sophistication, and red with excitement). But nearly every academic study on colors and branding will tell you that it’s far more important for your brand’s colors to support the *personality* you want to portray instead of trying to align with stereotypical color associations.

Consider the inaccuracy of making broad statements such as “green means *calm.*” The context is missing; sometimes green is used to brand environmental issues such as Timberland’s G.R.E.E.N standard, but other times it’s meant to brand financial spaces such as Mint.com and while brown may be useful for a rugged appeal (think Saddleback Leather, when positioned in another context brown can be used to create a warm, inviting feeling.

It’s the feeling, mood, and image that your brand creates that play a role in persuasion. Colors only come into play when they can be used to match a brand’s desired
personality (i.e., the use of white to communicate Apple’s love of clean, simple design). Without this context, choosing one color over another doesn't make much sense, and there is very little evidence to support that 'orange' will universally make people purchase a product more often than 'silver'.

Additional studies have revealed that our brains prefer recognizable brands, which makes color incredibly important when creating a brand identity. It has even been suggested in *Color Research & Application* that it is of paramount importance for new brands to specifically target logo colors that ensure differentiation from entrenched competitors (if the competition all uses blue, you'll stand out by using purple).

II. PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF COLOURS

In order to select the right colour for a product or a brand we should first understand what each colour implies and how it influences the customers. While perceptions of color are somewhat subjective, there are some color effects that have universal meaning. Colors in the red area of the color spectrum are known as warm colors and include red, orange and yellow. These warm colors evoke emotions ranging from feelings of warmth and comfort to feelings of anger and hostility. Colors on the blue side of the spectrum are known as cool colors and include blue, purple and green. These colors are often described as calm, but can also call to mind feelings of sadness or indifference.

The color psychology of Black

Black absorbs all light in the color spectrum. It is often used as a symbol of menace or evil, but it is also popular as an indicator of power. Black is associated with death and mourning in many cultures. It is also associated with unhappiness, sexuality, formality, and sophistication. In ancient Egypt, black represented life and rebirth. It is often used in fashion because of its slimming quality. Black is often associated with elegance. Used in home interiors, it can give a classy look to a wall. Black furniture or accent pieces in a predominantly white room can create a stark, dramatic contrast. For small-roomed houses or apartments however, painting the walls black is not recommended as this will make rooms more smaller and makes them restricting and depressing.
The color psychology of White

White represents purity or innocence. It is bright and can create a sense of space or add highlights. White is also described as cold, bland and sterile. Rooms painted completely white can look spacious but empty and unfriendly. Wearing white means a fresh outlook and new beginnings. White helps reduce any nagging feelings of disappointment or drudge. A predominantly white home interior gives a feeling of space and cleanliness. A few splashes of colors from accents or decors will not make it look bland and too sterile.

The color psychology of Red

Red is a warm, bright color that evokes strong emotions. It is associated with love, warmth and comfort. Red is also considered an intense or even angry color that creates feelings of excitement. Wearing red exudes charm, confidence and sexiness. Red is typically associated with energy, danger, power and love. This color has been known to increase blood pressure and raise appetites. Since the color is so strong, it can be unnerving and is best used as an accent.

The color psychology of Blue

Blue calls to mind feelings of calmness or serenity. It is often described as peaceful, tranquil, secure and orderly. It can also create feelings of sadness or aloofness. Blue is often used to decorate offices because research has shown that people are more productive in blue. It can also lower the pulse rate and body temperature. Blue has a soothing quality about it that makes people feel relaxed and comfortable.

The color psychology of Green

Green is a cool color that symbolizes nature and the natural world. It also represents tranquility, good luck, health and jealousy. Green is thought to relieve stress and helps heal. Those who have a green work environment experience fewer stomachaches. Green represents the spring season and new growth. Choose this color to wear whenever you are embarking on something new or wish to turn over a new leaf. Green also has the same calming qualities as blue. Neutral shades of green such as olive or sage are more accepted in room colors and decor than shades of aqua or yellow-green.

The color psychology of Yellow

Yellow is a bright color that is often described as cheery and warm. It is also the most fatiguing to the eye due to the high amount of light that is reflected on and by it. Yellow can also create feelings of frustration and anger. While it is considered a cheerful color, people are more likely to lose their tempers in yellow rooms. Since yellow is the most visible color, it is also the most attention-getting. It can also increase metabolism. While this color is known to make people feel happy and energetic, it is also known to cause people to become angry quicker. Used on home interiors, pale shades of yellow are best when painting walls.

The color psychology of Purple

Purple is the symbol of royalty and wealth. It also represents wisdom and spirituality. Purple does not often occur in nature, it can sometimes appear exotic or artificial. The color purple, especially shades of violet, will definitely make a statement. Wearing purple shows others that you want to be noticed. Light purple is seen as a feminine color, it might be a good paint color for a young girl’s room. Darker purples or mauves are more mature looking for other portions of a house, known to evoke feelings of wisdom and royalty.
The color psychology of Brown

Brown is a natural color that evokes a sense of strength and reliability. Brown brings to mind feelings of warmth, comfort and security. Brown is a safe, comforting and neutral color. It gives a feeling of warmth, security and belongingness. Browns can typically be combined with brighter colors like light blues, pinks, yellows and especially oranges. A medium brown color may be good for walls with accents of brighter colors placed throughout the room.

The color psychology of Orange

Orange is a very energetic color and calls to mind feelings of excitement, enthusiasm and warmth. Orange is often used to draw attention, such as in traffic signs and advertising. Orange is a warm, inviting color. It’s easier on the eyes than yellow, yet it is not as bold as red. Neon orange is not something you want to see on the walls of your house, but its warmer shades are more appropriate for walls. It is also known to increase appetites and may be a good color for dining rooms and as an accent to other rooms.

The color psychology of Pink

Pink is essentially a light red and is usually associated with love and romance. It is thought to have a calming effect. While pink's calming effect has been demonstrated, researchers of color psychology have found that this effect only occurs during the initial exposure to the color. More than feeling feminine, wearing pink conveys compassion and an open heart. When people are wearing pink, whether they are male or female, they appear approachable and capable of loving others. Lighter shades of pink generally evoke a feeling of calmness. Stronger shades used on a wall will create stronger intensities of excitement.

III. COLOUR PREFERENCES

Our color preferences are 'colored' by our gender, our age, our education, the culture we grew up in, preconceived color beliefs of the societies we live in, our childhood associations with certain colors, and our life experiences, whether those associations are negative or positive.

The following are typical generalizations to help you understand your target market, but remember, there are always exceptions to the rules!
Gender Based Color Preferences

Blue is a color which is generally favored by most people, independent of which culture, country, age, socio-economic bracket, or gender they are from, so it is the safest color to use in all your target markets, although not always the best color to use. Universally, pink tends to be favored by females.

Males:
Prefer the color blue to red, and orange to yellow. Baby boys traditionally tend to be dressed in blue, except in Belgium where pink is used for baby boys. In the western world many men are color blind so you need to be aware of the red/green visual problems if this is your target market and choose other colors that are not as affected.

Females:
Prefer the color red to blue, and yellow to orange. Baby girls traditionally tend to be dressed in pink except in Belgium where blue is used for baby girls. Tend to have a broader range of color preferences to men and are more open to trying new colors.

Both Genders:
Blue, turquoise, green, red, yellow, black, white, gray and silver are colors that are the most suitable for use in business marketing to both male and female. Pinks and purples are now becoming more acceptable to males, with pale pink business shirts and purple casual shirts commonly seen on men.

Age Based Color Preferences

Babies:
Cry more in a yellow room. Respond best to high contrast visuals.

Pre-adolescent Children:
Prefer brighter primary and secondary colors - red, yellow, blue, orange, green and purple. Also prefer solid blocks of colors rather than patterns.
Adolescents/Teenagers:

More open to experimenting with more sophisticated and complex colors due to their exposure to computer graphics programs such as Photoshop. More influenced by cultural influences due to multiculturalism and greater access to world markets through the Internet. Many younger teenage girls love varying shades of purple and pink. As they reach their late teens they often show a preference for black - this relates to a psychological need for black during the transition stage from the innocence of childhood to the sophistication of adulthood - it signifies the ending of one part of their life and the beginning of another, allowing them to hide from the world while they discover their own unique identity.

Young Adults:

Similar to teenagers. Tastes begin to change around age 25 as they become more sure of themselves and find their direction in life.

Adults:

Prefer more subdued colors. Are less open to experimenting with color, tending to stick with their favorites.

Mature 65+ Years Old:

Yellow is the least favored color of this target market, unless it is a pale butter yellow. Preference for clear colors such as fresh blues, pinks, greens. Preference for cleaner colors such as blue-greens rather than olive-green. They are generally more comfortable with the calming colors of blue, green, pink and purple, than the bright, stimulating colors of red, orange and yellow, although some will choose muted blue based red sand pale yellow. Many females often choose colors in the purple range, varying from deep purple and violet, to mauve and lavender, and plum colors, as they grow older.
Corporate Color Preferences

The more serious the business, the darker the colors - dark blue, dark green, dark red, indigo, black, gray. The more casual and light-hearted the business, the brighter and lighter the colors - red, orange, yellow, bright green, bright blue, pink and purple.

Class Differences
Working class and blue collar workers tend to prefer the bright and warm primary and secondary colors of the rainbow. Wealthier people tend to prefer the more complex and sophisticated colors - tertiary colors, and shades and tints of primary and secondary colors.

Education Based Color Preferences
Research has shown that the more educated people are, the more sophisticated their color choices seem to be. Well educated people respond well to tertiary colors and those given unusual names. Less educated people tend to prefer the simpler basic primary and secondary colors. Broader education through the use of the Internet has resulted in greater access to worldwide influences and effects on color choices.

Climate Based Color Preferences
People tend to prefer colors that duplicate the colors relating to their climate. People from warm tropical climates respond best to bright, warm colors, while people from colder climates tend to prefer cooler and more subdued colors. In the Scandinavian countries, fresh and bright blues, yellows and whites are popular. In Switzerland, more sophisticated colors such as dark reds and burgundies, gray and dark blue are common. In South America the warm reds, oranges, yellows and bright pinks are popular. Australian Aborigines respond well to the earthy reds, oranges, blues and greens that are seen in the outback regions of Australia.
IV. CONCLUSION

Color is one of the most important considerations when establishing your business and its profile. Just as you can use color psychology to empower yourself, you can use it to empower your business. Take the time to understand the messages you are sending when you choose colors for your website, your marketing, advertising and promotions, your retail business, your office, or other business, your business stationery, your packaging, and your business clothing. These business color messages are instinctive, subliminal and powerful and they can convey both positive and negative impressions about you and your business. Whether you understand people's responses to color or whether your choice of color is based on your own like or dislike of a color, you need to understand the effect it has on your business.

REFERENCES