The psychology of colors in branding

A psicologia das cores no branding

DOI: 10.46814/lajd4n5-013

Recebimento dos originais: 05/09/2022
Aceitação para publicação: 04/10/2022

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ABSTRACT
Color is a powerful communication element in branding. People react to colors from a psychological and deeply personal subconscious level through association. According to research, 93% of buyers focus on the visual appearance when buying a product, and 80% of consumers believe color is responsible for brand recognition. This paper addresses how choosing the right colors in branding design influences the company image, consumer perceptions, and purchase decisions.

Keywords: colors, branding, design, psychology, emotions, perception, consumer, purchase, image.

RESUMO
A cor é um poderoso elemento de comunicação da marca. As pessoas reagem às cores a partir de um nível psicológico e profundamente subconsciente através da associação. De acordo com pesquisas, 93% dos compradores se concentram na aparência visual ao comprar um produto, e 80% dos consumidores acreditam que a cor é responsável pelo reconhecimento da marca. Este artigo aborda como a escolha das cores certas no design da marca influencia a imagem da empresa, as percepções dos consumidores e as decisões de compra.

Palavras-chave: cores, branding, design, psicologia, emoções, percepção, consumidor, compra, imagem.

1 THE PSYCHOLOGY OF COLORS IN BRANDING
Some colors stimulate areas of the brain to promote all sorts of responses. Roger Dooley wrote in his book Brainfluence: 100 ways to persuade and convince consumers with neuromarketing that 95% of consumers make unconscious decisions when buying a product (Dooley, 2012). Colors use is a marketing tool that has different psychological effects on consumers, attracts them, and consequently shapes their perception. Corporations, businesses, and designers can target their market simply by picking the right combination of colors to design a visual identity, a marketing campaign, packaging, social media content, or a website. Choosing the right colors in branding influences the company image, consumer perceptions, and purchase decisions.
2 COMPANY IMAGE

A company's image is directly related to the colors it uses in its branding. Logo colors shape consumers' perception of retailer ethicality (Sundar & Kellaris, 2017). For example, companies who want to appear environmentally friendly use the green color in their trademark. Experiments show that if consumers are exposed to a logo featuring green, an eco-friendly color, it makes a retailer's practice more environmentally friendly or ethical. This effect is due to the incorporated meaning of color. The exposure to the color green appears to influence ethical judgments from consumers and retailers more than the exposure to the word "green."

Color is also used to enhance companies' values. For example, dark blue is the most common color used for offices and conservative corporate brands because this color provides a sense of security and reliability and promotes trust. Banks, law offices, and real estate businesses are examples of companies that often use blue in their logos. Another example of this same concept is the orange color. Orange is a warm color that promotes enthusiasm and stimulates the logical center of the brain. It is frequently related to creative corporations, such as advertising agencies or technology companies.

3 CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS

Colors can affect consumer perceptions. People respond to colors from a psychological and deeply personal place. Interior designers, for example, have long believed that colors in a room or colors of furniture can dramatically affect feelings, moods, emotions, and behaviors. In general, in clothing, interiors, landscape, and even natural light, color can change people's moods from sad to happy, from confusion to intelligence, or from fear to confidence, for example. Sometimes, those reactions result from a simple exposition of a particular color, the intensity of it. In many other cases, they are a product of past individual experiences and cultural influences.

Marketers and designers have long known that consumers react to colors based on their visual experience of surroundings and the emotions they trigger. For example, blue is used for represents the sky (emotion: welcome), green for nature (emotion: calm), red for blood (emotion: danger), and yellow for sunshine (emotion: happiness).

Various colors represent various moods. Green and red are complementary colors in the color wheel. Even complementary, they have completely different associations. In the color spectrum, green, blue, and purple are cool colors. Green is very often associated with nature, tranquility, and health (Cherry, 2020). It brings to mind the image of plants, trees, and forests, and it is often described as a refreshing color. This color is also used to relieve stress and help heal. Other common associations with the color green are money, good luck, and environmental awareness. The color green may
positively impact thinking, relationships, and physical health. Studies have shown that green may inspire creativity (Lichtenfeld, Elliot, Maier & Pekrun, 2012).

On the other hand, red is a controversial color. In the color spectrum, red is a warm color that can stimulate love, passion, and excitement, as well as power, dominance, and anger (Cherry, 2020). Studies show that exposure to red can cause physical effects like increased blood pressure, enhanced metabolism, elevated heart rate, and respiration rate (Ayash, Kane, Smith & Armytage, 2015). Red can grab people's attention or as a warning. For example, red is frequently used in traffic lights, stop signs, or sirens.

Blue is a cool color preferred by men (Ahmad, 2015). It is associated with peace, water, and reliability (e.g., Chase, HP, Facebook, Unilever). It curbs appetite and stimulates productivity. Blue color provides calm to the mind, a sense of tranquility, and space. Also, young people associate blue with maturity. Purple is also a cool color associated with royalty, wisdom, and respect. It stimulates the problem-solving area of the brain and creativity and is frequently used for beauty and anti-aging package products. Purple represents a creative, wise, and imaginative brand (e.g., Wonka, Yahoo!, FedEx, Taco Bell). Black is associated with power, authority, stability, and strength (e.g., Nike, Chanel, Bentley, Coach). It is often a symbol of intelligence. Grey symbolizes feelings of practicality, timelessness, and technology (e.g., Apple, Wii, Mercedes-Benz). White or shades of white are associated with purity, cleanliness, and safety. This color can also be used to project neutrality. It can spark a sense of creativity since it acts as a clean canvas.

3 CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISIONS

Colors affect consumer purchase decisions in many ways. Researches found in an article written by the Daily Mail, that using the color red encouraged impulse buying (Saad & Javed, 2015). The vibrancy of the red color attracts the consumer's eyes. In marketing and branding, red is frequently used for impulsive clearance sales or fast-food chains.

McDonald's is an excellent example of how brands use this color technique (Ahmad, 2015). The red and yellow logo is most appealing to children. In their logo, red is used to encourage both appetite and a sense of urgency. Because of that, McDonald's gets their customers to order in a hurry and leave faster. Yellow is the color of cheeriness, happiness, and optimism. The trademark "M" in their logo creates an atmosphere of positivity about the brand. Their mascot, Ronald McDonald, also wears red and yellow clothes, thrilling excitement, energy, and a high visual appeal to children.

Many consumers make purchases on a deeply personal subconscious level. For this reason, many companies choose colors for their products or packages that are somehow obvious with the traits
of the products they sell. An excellent example is using red in ads related to Valentine’s Day or orange when related to Vitamin C products.

Another exciting aspect of the psychology of colors is that they can be associated with tastes. This fact is evident in products' packages. For example, red is associated with sweet (e.g., Chupa Chups lollipops), green is associated with sour (e.g., La Croix Lime), blue with bitter (e.g., Bud Light beer), and yellow with salt (e.g., McDonald's French fries).

Colors can attract different shopper types. For example, the colors red, orange, black, and royal blue colors attract impulse buyers. Teal, pink, and navy blue colors attract savvy buyers with a limited budget. On the other hand, light blue and rose attract conformists.

Color is one of the elements in design that influences brand recognition. Color can often be the reason for customers to purchase a product. 84.7% of buyers claim color is the primary drawcard, and 80% of consumers believe color is responsible for brand recognition. An essential part of marketing is brand recognition and it represents a big role in influencing consumers' purchase decisions. Besides brand recognition, choosing the right colors are essential for an efficient visual identity and package. An article published by Digital Information World (Ahmad, 2015) says that when buying a product, 93% of buyers focus on the visual appearance, while 3% look at the texture of the product, and only 1% decide based on the smell or sound. The visual appearance of a product is responsible for most customers' buying decisions.

4 CONCLUSION

Choosing the right colors in branding influences the company image, consumer perceptions, and purchase decisions. Color is a powerful communication element that can influence psychological responses. Some colors stimulate areas of the brain to promote all sorts of responses. Although colors may have different cultural associations, consumers often choose brands and products in colors that evoke certain moods, feelings, and emotions. When designing a brand, a deep understanding of color psychology is essential and a huge advantage for companies and designers that can easily influence their target market by choosing the right combination of colors.
REFERENCES


