

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING USE AND ROLE OF COLOUR IN MARKETING

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Abstract

Carl Jung considered that color "is the native language of the subconscious." Overlooking the importance of subconscious in creating consumers' behavior, the understanding of the "language" in which color speaks to us can not be neglected in carrying out marketing activities. Speaking the language of the subconscious can be one of the most powerful marketing tools ever created by the human being. We intend in this study to identify the most important elements which characterize the use of color in marketing.

Key words: brand, colour, marketing

INTRODUCTION

Color is a significant element, both of our daily life, but also of the ancestral life. The human being appeared and evolved in a colorful environment.

Trademark can be made in words or in combined pictures. It seems that the marks represented in words are read faster and are stored more easily. Besides the brand symbol, color is the second element in identifying packaging in the whole world.

Use of color in marketing messages has been the subject of certain scientific studies, existing an extensive experience of the use of color for most popular brands.

In the present study, we aimed to identify the most important arguments that support the use of color in marketing.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

There have been extensively studied several bibliographical sources in the fields of marketing, psychology, sociology, and economics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Several researchers have studied the influence of color on human and animal behavior. *Harry Wohlfarth and Catharine Sam* (University of Alberta) showed that 14 children (8-14 years old) with severe disabilities and behavioral disorders, had diminished blood pressure and aggression level, as a consequence of interchanging yellow and blue with orange, white, beige and brown and replacing the neon light with the total spectrum light [22].

Rose H. Alschuler and Berta Weiss Hattwick concluded by studying the drawings of young children, that blue color implies self control and repression of emotions, red color is uninhibited expression, yellow color indicates infantilism and dependence, green color shows balance, few emotional impulses and a simple nature [1].

Faber Birren used to associate warm and cold colors of the spectrum with human personality. Heat means the contact with the environment, and cold means the withdrawal in itself. Thus red color excites, blue color

calms. Also, complementarity exists on the physical and physiological level. Red color increases blood pressure, stimulates the nervous system, while green and blue colors relax [4,5].

Jaensch shows that people are classified into two categories, namely: more sensitive to hot end of the spectrum and less sensitive to the cold end [19].

The identity of a brand is fixed in memory by associative mechanisms. This is evident in global companies: British Petroleum (green), Hershey's Chocolate (brown), Cadbury's Chocolate (purple), Kodak (yellow), Coca Cola (red), Tide (orange) and John Deere (green) (Figure 1).



Fig. 1 The color in the identity of some global brands

Emotions generated by the symbolism of colors are different in different populations and cultures. It is necessary a careful analysis of the attitudes of the target audience at the beginning of any construction based on color marketing. A publication from the year 2000 revealed the perception method of color in different countries and cultures. It has been pointed out that blue is the favorite in 5 of 8 countries, while in the other three countries, blue is on second place [17].

Another example shows that white color symbolizes mourning in Eastern Asia, but happiness and purity in Australia, New Zealand and the U.S.

Blue is the most popular color in the U.S. and most often used by corporates. It is perceived as cold and demonic in Eastern Asia, as warm in the Netherlands, as cold in Sweden. Blue symbolizes death in Iran, purity in India. It shows femininity in Belgium and the Netherlands, but masculinity in Sweden and the USA [17].

There are two schools with separate views, on the reaction of human behavior on color. The first, represented by *Humphrey* (1976) and

Grossman (1999), argues that reactions to colors are instinctual. The second school argues that the reaction to color is related to associative learning [17].

Other studies have shown that demographic factors such as age, sex, ethnic origin, must be taken into consideration regarding the communication through color .

The colors and contrasts decrease in intensity in the areas with very bright sun. For example, people living at the equator have a better sight, due to a larger number of rod cells on retina. These people have an increased intraocular yellow pigment, resulting in a reduced power of differentiating the color shades (reduced blue color perception). Populations from northern latitudes, where light is less reflected directly, have a better color acuity. It can be explained psychologically why different populations respond differently to stimulation by color.

Color is present everywhere and becomes a source of information. People interact with people and objects in approx. 90 seconds, 62-90% of this process being based solely on color. So, use of color can contribute not only to differentiate brands, but also influences buyer's feelings (positively or negatively) and finally the buyer's attitude towards the product. It is necessary for managers to understand the importance of color in marketing, as feelings and moods are unstable and color plays an important role in shaping attitudes [18].

The Seoul International Color Expo 2004 secretary emphasized that 92.6% of buyers consider color as the most important, when purchasing a product. Only 5.6% of the questioned people considered sense of touch as most important, and 0.9% smell as the most important factor. In assessing the importance of color to purchase, 84.7% respondents considered that color is more important than 50% [25].

The **Henley Centre** researches suggest that 73% of the product purchase decision takes place in the store, and a study of the University of Loyola (Maryland) showed that color determines brand recognition by 80%.

Color improves the marketing object activity and influences the behavior of target

audiences. For example, many fast food restaurants are decorated in vivid shades of red and orange, which encourage food consumption rapidly, by increasing consumers' local transit. Intense red and black colors are also used in websites' design for adults, because they have erotic connotations and stimulate sexuality. Sites and books for children are constructed with blocks with bright primary colors. Children respond better to them, than in case of using color mixtures.

The University of British Columbia study on 600 subjects showed that red color helps increasing attention at work, while blue enhances creativity. The red group responded better on tests of "attention" and the blue group subjects responded better to "creativity and imagination tests".

However, the association of colors with a certain meaning can not be standardized. In general, communities react differently to a particular color, based on the cultural experiences. Also, everybody has a personal attitude towards color. For example, choosing the makeup color depends on skin tone. Dark-skinned people prefer bright and warm lipstick colors and those with light skin prefer softer colors. High tech products (MP3 players, mobile phones, consoles etc) are more attractive in fancy colors. The living standard may influence the preference for a color: bright colors attract low-income shoppers, while high income earners prefer more sober colors. Observation is applied in the SEB marketing strategy (Rowenta, Moulinex and SEB).

The beverages packed in red glass can make a brand stronger than blue packaging, and elder people prefer more sober colors. Thus, mineral water brand "Badoit" (owned by Danone) was launched in the new red bottles in 2004, in France. This color was completely new, unusual for mineral water market. Use of red color attracted young consumers, who were searching the original. Sales increased in the following six months, reaching the market share of 3%.

According to Marc Jacheet, director of the aerated waters department, quoted by Capital France, the red color of the glass container Badoit was validated after a year of testing on

consumers in stores. Red color evokes the power of bubbles and gives a slightly transgressive imagine [3].

Other studies emphasized the effect of colors on consumers' behavior. Those who buy on impulse respond well to red, orange, black and royal blue. Buyers purchasing after a plan and a budget respond best to pink, turquoise, light blue and navy. Traditionalists respond well to pastels: pink, blue skies.

Jaguar site is based on silver (prestige) and black (sophistication). The market of the firm is oriented towards high-income and great itself image people, seeking for a vehicle to provide prestige to them [24].

Color influences brand identity in many ways. Thus, we have seen phenomenal success of **Heinz EZ Squirt Blastin 'Green** ketchup, ie more than 10 million doses sold in the first seven months from the day of changing the color of the packaging, and sales of 23 million dollars. An interesting case is that of **Apple Computer**, which introduced color on a market where it was not used. Selling colorful **iMac** computers has led to a renewed brand, which had already suffered losses of \$ 1.8 billion in two years.

Colored ads are 42% more read than black and white ads [21].

Color can increase the number of readers by 40%, learning ability from 55 to 78% and comprehension by 73% [8, 10, 6].

Tests have shown that black and white images can sustain interest for less than two-thirds of a second, while colored images can retain attention for two seconds or more. People can not process visually each object in their visual field. For this reason, the color can also be used to highlight a particular product.

A study made by **Xerox Corporation** revealed that 92% of respondents think that the presence of color determines the quality of an image to impress, 90% think that color can attract new customers, 90% think that the audience remembers best color presentations and documents, 83 % that color gives an appearance of success.

Every year, **Cooper Marketing Group** leads a national research in the United States on the colors preferred by American consumers, and sells the results to manufacturers and retailers

of clothing, automobile manufacturers or producers of household furniture.

This study involved 400 000 people, from a representative sample of the U.S. population. Consumers should answer different questions about preference for colors, such as: "What color is the car you want to buy?", "What is the color of clothing that you like to wear?" etc. Results obtained by **Cooper Marketing Group** allowed the classification of consumers into three categories, named "color lifestyle groups". The first category, called "*The Color Forward group*" includes progressive-minded consumers who want to try everything that is new and are prepared to spend more money for this. This group is dominated by women under 30 or over 50, men under 30 years, urban population, and impulsive buyers who earn less than 35,000 dollars per year.

The second group "*The Color Prudent group*" consists of people who buy a new color only after it has been tested by their entourage. They frequently consider the product quality before color. This group generally consists of men and women aged between 30 and 50 years of pre-urban environment, attentive and caring buyers, who earn over \$ 50,000 per year.

The third group (*The Color Loyal Group*) acquires "safe" colors, validated their experience of life: blue, gray, black colors rather than "trendy". This group includes men over 60 years of pre-urban or rural areas, people who dislike shopping [11]. When manufacturers decide the color chosen for a particular product, they must first analyze the group to which the color is addressed. Marketing Cooper concluded that the first group (Color Forward) is the smallest and also the most influential group of consumers. Prudent buyers group is the largest segment of consumers, while those loyal group is characterized as "small and predictable" [20].

Public preferences about a particular color can be correlated with the events that marked it. *Piirto and Montague* (1997) consider that wearing metallic fabrics, specific to disco generation, were due mainly to the publicity generated by the exhibition dedicated to the

artifacts of the Tutankamon pharaoh, which was hosted between 1976 and 1979 by The Metropolitan Art Museum, exhibition visited by over eight million people, as Wikipedia [23].

Black color's popularity in the 80s was influenced by the personality of Villain and Darth Vader in "Star Wars" and green, another popular color in those years, was maintained in trend by the environmental concerns which have began to emphasize at that time [26]. Periods of economic growth or recession influence people masses attitudes towards black. Economic growth leads to an increased appetite for "trendy" colors, while the recession makes people more lonely, withdrawn, inclined to classic colors (blue, gray, black) [7].

B.J. Eichorn, president of **BJ's Lifecode Merchandising** had to consider how to decorate two bowling alleys, in a specific location. She noticed that most customers who used the two tracks could be divided into two categories: those who belonged among workers and considered this work to be very serious, and those who belonged to the higher income class, who were playing bowling only for pleasure, relaxation and exercise.

Then she redecorated one of the tracks with triangles (suggesting energy) and used specific colors to southwestern U.S. (peach, green) and the other with curved style 'Art Deco', using complex color schemes. After this redecoration revenues for both tracks have soared.

Children tend to respond more directly to color than adults. For most children, the color of food is even more important than taste. *Dave Siegal*, general manager of **Small Talk**, a research company in Cincinnati, Ohio, said in 1991: "Children love neon colors, green and yellow topping the list". Siegal assigned children's preference for green-neon color to a popular show for kids in America (Nickelodeon's) [7].

Sometimes not only color helped creating a successful product, but also the name. Renaming the color of "off white" in "ancient silk" resulted in doubling sales for a paint company. A name such as yellow-sulfur is clearly disgraceful and uncommercial, while

the association of this with egg yoke, canaries' color, or citrine can bring great benefits. *Leatrice Eiseman*, color specialist designer and director of the **Paton Color Institute**, says that "when you name a color, you should choose something romantic. It is not the same thing to tell someone that you painted your room in 36485 color or to tell you painted it pink "angel wings" [9].

Ripolin paint manufacturer ranked in two years, 200 references to his products, not after use (bathrooms, rooms, etc.), but after their effects on customers. The main range of paints of the company, baptized *Colorterapia*, includes 7 parts: from the "moderate" - shades of green, and "tonic" (shades of yellow), to "soothing", characterized by dark red or pale pink tones. The concept of "caught" and brand awareness increased from 28% to 34% in a few months, amounting to today 11% of the french market⁷. Company officials concluded after this experience was that crisp, bright colors are sold best.

The importance of color in building brand identity led to specific enforcement of trademark protection. Registration of colors as own brand color is however difficult. Companies must be able to prove that it is different in relation to the original commodity. Some colors, such as those used to mark certain drugs, can not be recorded.

For a color to be "profitable" in financial terms, it should not have any connection with the recognized characteristics of the product. It could not record yellow color for banana juice, or red color for tomato juice because it had nothing distinctive. Instead, promoting purple color for **Cadbury**, which does not remind anything about the product origin or quality, requires a substantial financial effort to create a link in consumer's minds between chocolate and lilac color. At that time the color becomes profitable, and also becomes a right to be defended. "[9].

The best color for a product cannot always be easily identified. In 1950, **Procter & Gamble**, manufacturer of detergent "**Cheer**" decided to introduce splashes of color in detergent. There have been produced several boxes of detergent stained red, blue or yellow. Consumers reported that detergent with

yellow spots did not clean enough the clothes; some consumers even stated that detergent with red spots destroys laundry.

Detergent with blue spots was the only one who has been associated with a high cleaning capacity. Blue stained detergent helped "**Cheer**" to become one of the brands with the highest life expectancy on the market [7].

Assigning a color to a particular product is always doomed to success. If **Blu Pepsi** became notorious, blue soda bottle is a resounding failure of the company in Romania. It is not singular, however: **Nestle** made a wrong choice five years ago with yogurt or *LCI*, created to compete *Bio* from **Danone** and presented in a gray metallic glass. "Many consumers have assimilated the product to a medicine". *Brice Auckenthaler* from marketing consultancies **Experts Consulting** explained this situation in 2005,. Each color has its own symbolism and can not be used randomly, or applied to any product. Ketchup, for example, is associated with the red color of tomatoes. A record that **Heinz** has understood quite late. His green Ketchup, proved successful in the U.S., launched in Europe in 2001, did not work. Similarly, Romanians refused ketchup from Tommy [3]. Basically, color in shops identifies flavors, brands or products: green suggests the pine for a detergent; as for a toothpaste, green suggests the minty effect, white suggests no additives, red is associated with cherries, strawberries and apples. Brown and gray are less used like they are, as they are considered depressing and somber, but in addition to red can give a sense of weight and strength, attracting strong and stable customers. Certain colors can convey a message of strength and confidence (burgundy, light blue, purple, pearl) [16].

CONCLUSIONS

1. The emotional effect generated by color symbolism varies significantly between populations and cultures, depending on demographic factors such as age, gender and ethnicity. It requires a careful analysis of public attitudes toward color target in the

marketing activity based on this parameter.

2. Association of colors with a particular meaning, regarding the marketing message can not be standardized. In general, communities react differently to a particular color, according to their cultural experiences. However, there is also a personal attitude toward color, connected with makeup shade selection, depending on skin color.

3. Public preferences related to a particular color can be made in relation to the events that marked it.

4. Assigning a color to a product at random, it is not always doomed to success. Each color has its own symbolism and can not be used randomly, or applied to any product.

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